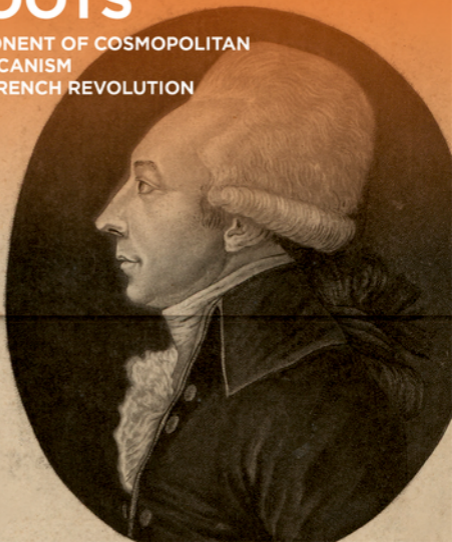


DE GRUYTER

Frank Ejby Poulsen

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ANACHARSIS CLOOTS

A PROPONENT OF COSMOPOLITAN
REPUBLICANISM
IN THE FRENCH REVOLUTION



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A Proponent of Cosmopolitan Republicanism
in the French Revolution

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This book is dedicated to the loving memory of my father, Karl Ejby Poulsen
21 April 1948, København – 20 July 2011, Paris

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Contents

Acknowledgments — VII

Introduction: The Importance of Cloots and Cosmopolitan Republicanism — 1

1 The Life of Cloots — 10

Family and Youth — 12

Education — 15

Beginnings in Paris — 16

Public Career — 22

Cloots's First Revolutionary Writings — 25

French Citizenship and Election — 30

Main Political Writings and Execution — 35

2 Rehabilitating Cloots — 41

Studies on Cloots — 44

Nineteenth Century — 44

Contemporary Studies — 49

Taking Cloots seriously — 54

A highly Educated Aspiring *Philosophe* — 54

A Self-fashioned Republican Orator — 55

Pamphlets Move the World — 59

Solving an Old European Problem — 60

A System of Civil Science — 61

Conclusion — 64

3 Reason and Science — 65

Reason — 67

Against Revelation and the Church — 67

Against Despotism and Tyranny — 84

Cosmopolitan Reason — 89

Source of Morals — 90

Science — 95

Universality and Unity — 96

Science of Man — 99

Nature and God — 101

4 Natural Law — 110

Natural Law Traditions — 112

Nature and its Laws — 118

 Moral Authority — 120

 Physiocratic Elements — 122

 Natural Borders — 125

Nature and Society — 128

 Absence of Social Contract — 128

 General Will — 132

Conclusion: Natural Republicanism — 145

5 Humanity — 147

Genre Humain — 151

 Unity and Diversity — 153

 Genre Humain and Humanité — 164

 Ennemi du Genre Humain — 166

 Régénération, Éducation — 168

Nation du Genre Humain — 173

 Individual — 174

 Nation — 177

6 Republicanism — 182

Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France — 186

Cloots and Republicanism Before the Revolution — 192

Cloots and Republicanism During the Revolution — 196

 Anti-Monarchism — 197

 Size and Federalism — 208

 Liberty, Virtue, Patriotism — 221

Conclusion — 225

7 Cosmopolitan Republicanism — 227

Bibliography — 235

Introduction: The Importance of Cloots and Cosmopolitan Republicanism

The merit of the ‘Orator of the Human Race’ consists in his having been the first to formulate Cosmopolitanism as a principle...

Bax, 1891¹

The assault on the King’s residence at the Tuileries Palace by the insurrection, which would later be known as ‘the 10 of August’ in 1792, initiated the process of establishing a republic that would challenge Europe. Amidst the ensuing six weeks of turmoil, Deputy Élie Guadet (1758–1793) proposed a decree to the French Assemblée Législative, suggesting the granting of French citizenship to foreigners ‘who served the cause of liberty’. The decree of 26 August 1792 justified its decision before officially designating the newly granted citizens as such:

« Considérant que, s’il n’est pas permis d’espérer que les hommes ne forment un jour devant la loi, comme devant la nature, qu’une seule famille, une seule association, les amis de la liberté, de la fraternité universelle n’en doivent pas être moins chers à une nation qui a proclamé sa renonciation à toute conquête et son désir de fraterniser avec tous les peuples ;

« Considérant enfin, qu’au moment où une Convention nationale va fixer les destinées de la France, et préparer peut-être celles du genre humain, il appartient à un peuple généreux et libre d’appeler toutes les lumières et de déférer le droit de concourir à ce grand acte de raison, à des hommes qui, par leurs sentiments, leurs écrits et leur courage, s’en sont montrés si éminemment dignes ;

« Déclare déférer le titre de citoyen français au docteur Joseph Priestley, à Thomas Payne, à Jérémie Bentham, à William Wilberforce, à Thomas Clarkson, à Jacques Mackintosh, à David Williams, à N. Gorani, à Anacharsis Cloots, à Corneille Pauw, à Joachim-Henry Campe, à N. Pestalozzi, à Georges Washington, à Jean Hamilton, à N. Madison, à H. Klopstock et à Thadée Kosciuszko.²

To this list, someone requested the inclusion of ‘le sieur Giller, publiciste allemand’, likely referring to Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805). However, this list was purely honorary and had no consequences, except for two individuals: Thomas Paine (1737–1809) and Anacharsis Cloots (1755–1794). Paine and Cloots were the only foreigners who utilized their citizenship to stand as candidates in the subsequent election for representatives in the forthcoming National Convention, as alluded to in the decree. In some ways, they shared similarities, but in other aspects, they were quite distinct.

1 Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘The Orator of the Human Race’, chap. 1 in *Outlooks from the New Standpoint* (London: S. Sonnenschein & co., 1891), 1–37.

2 https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Décret_du_26_août_1792, last checked 15 May 2023.

Both were foreigners residing in Paris and held great enthusiasm for the French Revolution. They shared a desire to actively participate in it. Additionally, they were both republicans, had travelled to some extent, and considered themselves cosmopolitans dedicated to constructing a superior political, social, and economic system for humanity. But Paine envisioned a republic of republics when Cloots imagined a single universal one. Paine was a self-taught commoner only educated at a grammar school; Cloots was a new aristocrat educated at elite institutions in Paris and Berlin. Paine was a famous revolutionary who changed the course of the American revolution with one pamphlet; Cloots was still making a name for himself in the Republic of Letters. Paine escaped miraculously the guillotine, Cloots did not.

Cloots expressed his gratitude to the National Assembly on 27 August 1792, commending it for involving the ‘philosophes cosmopolites’ in the revolutionary work. He solemnly swore an oath ‘à la nation universelle, à l’égalité, à la liberté, à la souveraineté du genre humain ...’. The French Republic was then established in September 1792, and the regicide took place on 21 January 1793. Cloots was elected in the first French Republic as representative and, after some hesitation, voted for the execution of the king. Prior to this, he had gained recognition through the publication of a few works and by presenting himself as the ‘orator of the human race’. He advocated for the concept of a ‘universal republic of united individuals’, forming a ‘nation of the human race’, based on the idea of the ‘sovereignty of the human race’. Certain historians ridiculed him and his ideas throughout the subsequent two centuries, which were predominantly influenced by ‘methodological nationalism’.³ However, in the past two decades, there has been a ‘rediscovery’ of his significance as part of an effort to develop cosmopolitanism as a political and social theory capable of addressing or replacing the injustices caused by nationalism and imperialism.

The French Revolution and the establishment of the first French Republic have often been interpreted as significant events that marked the emergence of the nation-state⁴ and an exclusivist, anti-monarchical perspective of republicanism.⁵ However, the contributions made by Cloots and Paine to the revolutionary debates demonstrate that the French Revolution also gave rise to a distinct understanding of the concept of ‘nation’ and republicanism, which I refer to as ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’. Cloots and Paine represent two different extremes on the spectrum of cosmopolitan republicanism during the French Revolution. Cloots developed a

3 Ulrich Beck, *Cosmopolitan Vision* (London: Polity, 2006).

4 Gurinder K. Bhambra, ‘Myths of the Modern Nation-State: The French Revolution’, in *Rethinking Modernity: Postcolonialism and the Sociological Imagination*, ed. Gurinder K. Bhambra (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 125–148.

5 Rachel Hammersley, *Republicanism: An Introduction* (Cambridge; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2020), 150–172.

comprehensive system wherein the French Republic was seen as merely the initial step towards a universal republic, where the human race alone held sovereignty. On the other hand, Paine adopted a more federalist approach, envisioning multiple independent republics as part of a larger republic. Within the spectrum of revolutionary cosmopolitan republicanism, other political thinkers can also be included.⁶ However, this study primarily focuses on Cloots, and a comprehensive analysis of diverse perspectives on ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’ will require further investigations in the future.

This book has two primary goals. Firstly, it aims to restore the reputation of Anacharsis Cloots as a significant political thinker, whose ideas deserve serious consideration, even though he primarily expressed himself through pamphlets and rhetorical devices. Secondly, it seeks to establish the basis for a neglected form of republicanism, with Cloots identified as its principal advocate. This form of republicanism, known as cosmopolitan republicanism, emerged during the Atlantic revolutions. While the focus of this study is primarily on the French Revolution, it would be valuable to explore the American Revolution that preceded it, as well as the Haitian Revolution that followed, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the development of cosmopolitan republicanism.

In this book, I propose, building upon previous studies of Cloots, that his political ideology should be referred to as ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’. However, I delve deeper into the understanding of ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’ by examining the concept of eighteenth-century French cosmopolitanism. The word hardly appeared at the time, and as late as 1801 it was introduced by Le Mercier as a neologism.⁷ However, there was a clear development of a philosophical theory of cosmopolitanism, even if the word rarely appeared. It is essential to differentiate between the the *signifié* and the *signifiant* of cosmopolitanism: cosmopolitanism as a mental representation, and cosmopolitanism as a word for describing this mental representation.⁸ By analysing occurrences of ‘cosmopolitanism’ in the eighteenth century, we can gain insights into its meaning and subsequently describe Cloots’s ‘system’ as either cosmopolitan, universal, or imperial.⁹ However, the term ‘cosmopolitan-

6 See last chapter.

7 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Néologie ou vocabulaire de mots nouveaux, à renouveler, ou pris dans des acceptions nouvelles*, vol. 1 (Paris: Moussard ; Maradan, 1801).

8 Ferdinand (de) Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1972), 97–103.

9 I have elsewhere argued about Cloots and the birth of cosmopolitanism, to which this book presents a substantial revision. See Frank Ejby Poulsen, ‘Anacharsis Cloots and the Birth of Modern Cosmopolitanism’, in *Critique of Cosmopolitan Reason: Timing and Spacing the Concept of World Citizenship*, ed. Rebecka Lettevall and Kristian Petrov, *New Visions of the Cosmopolitan*. Vol. 2 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 87–117.

ism' as a *signifiant* seems to be identified by two denominations in French and is infrequently encountered: 'cosmopolitisme' and 'cosmopolisme'. 'Cosmopolisme' appears once to describe cosmopolitanism as a political thought before the revolution. After the revolution, both 'cosmopolisme' and 'cosmopolitisme' appear to be used derogatorily to describe the practice of cosmopolitanism during that period.

Skinner has argued that a *signifié* may exist even if a *signifiant* does not; a concept is not necessarily based on a word, and a concept is not a necessary prerequisite for understanding the correct application of a corresponding term.¹⁰ Or, in Skinner's own study, liberty can exist without liberalism, before liberalism.¹¹ And liberalism may not necessarily be about liberty. What that means for cosmopolitanism in eighteenth-century France is that, even though the term rarely appears, it may exist nonetheless as a concept. In fact, the rare occurrences of the words *cosmopolisme* and *cosmopolitisme* may mark the beginning of the philosophical consciousness that such a thought exists (*signifié*), and hence needs a word to describe it (*signifiant*). What this also means is that the term 'cosmopolitan' or 'citizen of the world' may or may not be related to cosmopolitanism. In fact, the word 'cosmopolite' often meant a person travelling to various countries and without a fixed homeland. In this sense, it became a suspicious person who did not seem to be a patriot anywhere, as Voltaire noted. However, one does not need to travel the world to think about a moral and political system to benefit all humankind and there are different ways to travel the world, for instance through books.

By the same token, this perspective implies that the term 'nation' may or may not be associated with nationalism, and 'patrie' with patriotism. They can also have connections to cosmopolitanism and the might not be so much opposition between cosmopolitanism, on the one hand, and nationalism and patriotism, on the other. This viewpoint is shared by some scholars, and I adopt it in this book. Meinecke argued against the historical division of an Enlightenment era of cosmopolitanism and a nationalist nineteenth century, finding it unsatisfactory.¹² Van den Heuvel contended that eighteenth-century cosmopolitan thinkers understood 'cosmopolitanism' not as opposed to nationalism, but rather as international in nature.¹³

¹⁰ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1: Regarding Method (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159.

¹¹ Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹² Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State. Weltbürgertum Und Nationalstaat: Studien Zur Genesis Des Deutschen Nationalstaates*, trans. Robert B. Kimber (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1908] 1970), 21.

¹³ Gerd van den Heuvel, Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt, 'Cosmopolite, Cosmopoli(Ti)Sme', in *Handbuch Politisch-Sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, vol. 6 (München: Oldenbourg, 1986), 44.

Kymlicka demonstrated that the dichotomy between cosmopolitanism and nationalism was a cliché, suggesting that contemporary cosmopolitanism has been redefined by liberal nationalism, with minimal points of disagreement between the two.¹⁴ Conversi similarly argues that cosmopolitanism and nationalism share a common foundation in natural rights but diverge in their practical applications.¹⁵ Finally, Suratteau presents a similar argument concerning cosmopolitanism and patriotism.¹⁶

The crucial point, therefore, is not to seek cosmopolitan thought detached from the notions of nation and *patrie*, but rather to consider them as integral components of it. Rooted in the concept of universal natural rights, both cosmopolitanism and nationalism viewed the nation as the political entity that safeguards these rights for its citizens. Moreover, both ideologies appealed to patriotic sentiments in order to protect the nation and uphold these rights. The divergence between them lay in their interpretations and applications of this concept. As Cloots's political thought demonstrates, he perceived the nation as encompassing all individuals living within a state that safeguards universal natural rights. Thus, the nation, in his view, extended to encompass the entire human race. His patriotism, too, transcended boundaries and encompassed the entire world. However, he prioritized the defence of the French republic against monarchical tyrants who failed to recognize and uphold human rights during the French revolutionary wars.

Indeed, in the eighteenth century, the concept of cosmopolitanism was not explicitly expressed using terms like 'cosmopolitisme' or 'cosmopolisme'. However, Cloots employed the term 'cosmopolite' on a few occasions and with his own understanding of the term: a 'cosmopolite' is a citizen of the universal republic, which he envisions.¹⁷ He also used the expression 'citoyen du monde' (citizen of the world), although sparingly. During the revolution, Cloots referred to Jews becoming French citizens and citizens of the world through philosophical decrees.¹⁸ Prior to the revolution, he used the expression 'citoyen du monde' in a different context, emphasizing the vast circle formed by citizens of the world, with Paris as its center, whose in-

14 Will Kymlicka, 'From Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism to Liberal Nationalism', chap. 10 in *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 219–220.

15 Daniele Conversi, 'Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism', in *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, ed. Athena Leoussi and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Transaction Books, 2000), 35.

16 Jean-René Suratteau, 'Cosmopolitisme et patriotisme au siècle des Lumières', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 253, no. 1 (1983): 364–389.

17 Anacharsis Cloots, 'La République universelle ou adresse aux tyrannicides', in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1792] 1979), 265.

18 Anacharsis Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, 1979), 315.

fluence extended everywhere.¹⁹ This notion implied that the dissemination of ideas and publications could transcend censorship by being published in various locations.

An intriguing aspect of Cloots's political thought concerning cosmopolitanism is his juxtaposition of the 'théos' and the 'cosmos'. He adamantly rejected the 'théos', encompassing metaphysical discussions on theology, and consequently, he rejected the earthly implications tied to it, such as the authority of the church, revealed religion, and the divine appointment of kings and nobles. This notion also encompassed feudal thinking based on superstition and tradition rather than reason and science. Cloots labeled this system a 'theocracy'. Instead, he advocated focusing on the 'cosmos' through reason. Nature replaced God as the moral authority, and scientific principles were derived from observing natural laws. In this 'cosmos', the individual and the human race were at the core, serving as the legitimate source of authority and power. According to Cloots, the political system that respects nature and its natural laws, particularly the natural rights of liberty and equality, is a republic. Although Cloots did not employ the specific term, one could refer to his opposition to the 'theocracy' as a *cosmococracy*. In this framework, the human race becomes the sole sovereign, leading to the establishment of a universal republic. This universal republic is in complete opposition to the idea of universal monarchy, based on principles that derive from the 'cosmos' rather than the 'theos'.

While it is true that Cloots did not explicitly use the term 'cosmopolitanism', his political thought aligns with the principles of cosmopolitanism. To establish this characterization, it becomes necessary to examine the elements that constituted eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism. In this regard, a significant publication that sheds light on the understanding of cosmopolitanism is Joseph Honoré Rémi's pamphlet *Le cosmopolisme*, published in 1770.²⁰ I have conducted an analysis of this work in relation to eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism.²¹ Rémi, a freemason and a trusted associate of publisher Charles-Joseph Panckoucke (1736–1798), who initiated the successor to the Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* with the *Encyclopédie méthodique*, made contributions to the latter publication. In his pamphlet *Le cosmopolisme*, Rémi aimed to defend a particular perspective on humanity, countering

¹⁹ Anacharsis Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile : Suivis de mélanges ; & d'anecdotes sur Stiépan-Annibal, soi-disant prince d'Albanie, ou supplément au livre des Liaisons dangereuses ; & d'un drame sur la mort de Voltaire* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1786), 84–85.

²⁰ Joseph-Honoré Rémi, *Le cosmopolisme, publié à Londres à l'occasion du mariage de Louis-Auguste, Dauphin de France* (Amsterdam, Paris: Chez Valade, 1770).

²¹ Frank Ejby Poulsen, 'Transcending the Public and the Private: The Cosmopolitanism of Freemason Joseph Honoré Rémy', *Early Modern French Studies* 45, no. 2 (2023): 179–198.

what he perceived as ‘national egoism’ prevalent in royal courts. He referenced Fénelon’s *Télémaque*, a work that praised republican values within a monarchical government. Notably, Rémi provides what I consider to be the earliest definition of cosmopolitanism:

Pourquoi le Cosmopolisme est-il donc si rare sous cette planète ? A peine a-t-il un sens parmi nous : la plupart de nos langues si riches en mots honteux & barbares, n’ont rien qui peigne les premiers sentimens de l’homme social. Un sourire risiblement dédaigneux est la récompense de quiconque ose parler d’humanité aux nations. Noble & touchante humanité ! à ton foyer s’allume & s’épure dans nos ames le feu sacré des vertus privées & des vertus politiques (6) ; mais on t’abandonne, on te méprise, on t’insulte avec orgueil, on encense d’odieux Simulacres, & tes temples sont déserts. Nous avons des Maîtres pour enseigner à nos enfans les langues des nations qui n’existent plus ; en est-il un seul destiné à leur apprendre celle de la nature ?²²

The endnote (6) is explained later in the book with a quotation of Fénelon:

(N^o. 6.) Page 25. « J’aime mieux ma famille que moi-même ; j’aime mieux ma patrie que ma famille ; mais j’aime encore mieux le genre humain que ma famille [sic: patrie] ». Telle étoit la morale de ce Fénelon, qui dans une Cour où l’égoïsme national étoit honoré des plus glorieux titres, osa prêcher éloquemment le Cosmopolisme, & érigea à l’humanité un monument digne du siècle de l’Encyclopédie. Le sentiment associé à la raison, n’a jamais rien produit d’aussi noble & d’aussi attendrissant que le *Télémaque*.²³

Cosmopolitanism is first of all a revolt against wars and enmities that are detrimental to any part of humankind. Since wars in the seventeenth and eighteenth century have mainly been waged by monarchies, cosmopolitanism is tightly related to republicanism—understood as a critique of absolutism and monarchism detached from the interest of the people. Already in Fénelon’s work, which was influential in Europe and explicitly mentioned again in Rémi’s pamphlet, cosmopolitanism is intertwined with the language of republicanism. Rémi identifies several elements that constitute cosmopolitanism, which I will break down into the following categories: reason and science, nature and natural law, united humankind and feelings of humanity despite its diversity, along with republican values and the necessity for education.

The presence of nature and natural law as a category within cosmopolitanism is evident in the reference to the ‘premiers sentiments de l’homme social’, which alludes to the natural law theory of the social contract. Furthermore, there is a mention of the language of nature, which holds equal importance to learning the languages of foreign nations. Despite the diversity of nations and their different lan-

²² Rémi, *Le cosmopolisme*, 24–25.

²³ Rémi, 73–74.

guages, they should be united by the language of nature. This could be seen as a reference to natural law and its perceived universality during that time. The laws of nature are indeed learned and discovered through the use of reason, which is universally applicable.

Reason gives rise to science, and the *Encyclopédie* serves as a comprehensive reference for all its advancements. Reason and science should shape governmental policies in the service of humanity, not only because it is the rational course of action, but also because it is the compassionate one. As Fénelon remarked, all human beings are siblings, and no one would rejoice at becoming richer at the expense of their sibling becoming poorer. Therefore, there is a need to educate individuals not only in rational views of humankind (political science) but also in emotional views of our shared membership in the human race (moral philosophy). This education would then guide our actions to become virtuous both in private and in public (republican virtues) for the greater common good.

To sum up the elements of Rémi's definition, we get the following points:

1. Revolt against wars and enmities detrimental to humankind.
2. Tight connection with republicanism, understood as a critique of absolutism and monarchism.
3. Emphasis on reason and science as fundamental tools for understanding and advancing society.
4. Recognition of nature and natural law as guiding principles, including the idea of a social contract.
5. Belief in the unity of humankind and the importance of fostering feelings of humanity despite diversity.
6. Integration of republican values, such as liberty, equality, and the common good.
7. Emphasis on the necessity of education to cultivate both rational and emotional understanding of our shared humanity.
8. Cultivation of virtues, both in private and public life, for the betterment of society.

These elements reflect a holistic understanding of cosmopolitanism that encompasses political, philosophical, and ethical dimensions, aiming to foster a harmonious and just society grounded in reason, empathy, and the pursuit of common interests. The political dimension of cosmopolitanism is still vague as no concrete institutions are detailed. The American revolution would then offer concrete and radical solutions, followed by the French revolution and the 1789 *Declaration*, but especially after the flight of the king and the establishment of the first republic. This inspired Cloots to propose his model for a universal republic of united individuals. The early days of the French revolution were cosmopolitan, but the French revolu-

tionary wars triggered suspicion towards anyone and anything foreign. The Committee of Public Safety sent Cloots to the guillotine on 24 March 1794 together with the Hébertists, although he wasn't one of them.

The model I propose for studying cosmopolitan republicanism in the Atlantic revolutions is to focus on the following themes and their connection to universal principles and local contexts: reason and science, nature and natural law, humanity and individuality, and finally, republicanism beyond the local polity. This book will adopt this structure to analyse the political thought of Anacharsis Cloots. The first chapter will provide an introduction to the life and writings of Anacharsis Cloots. In the second chapter, I will aim to restore Cloots's reputation after discussing how historians have underestimated his life and legacy. I will explain his decision to write pamphlets and his own fashioning as the 'orator of the human race'. The third chapter will delve into an analysis of science and reason in Cloots's thought. In the fourth chapter, I will investigate Cloots's perspectives on nature and natural law in relation to the theories of his time. Moving on to the fifth chapter, I will explore how he perceived humankind and the individual and examine the implications for understanding his concept of a 'nation of the human race'. The sixth chapter will elaborate on the evolution of Cloots's republican thought and present arguments for why his ideas align with the category of cosmopolitan republicanism. The last chapter will offer a summary of what constitutes cosmopolitan republicanism and what further studies could focus on.

1 The Life of Cloots

Citizens of the jury, enter!
Sit down. Take off your coats.
Men, I am Jean Baptiste du Val
De Grace, Baron de Cloots.
Citizens of the jury, enter!
Sit down. Take off your boots.
I think you have known me better
As Anacharsis Cloots.
You pale... No, you don't pale.
What, no one? Ah, Posterity,
What crimes I've committed in your name!
What crimes! And you've forgiven me?
Ah so! Not even some anecdotes?
But out there, the Republic's flag still floats.
Well floated, floater! next world, I raise goats...
To have bawled through life's long witenagemots,
To have ground the axes for a hundred throats,
To have traded friends for jobs, and trust for votes—
This is to die in life, and live in footnotes.¹

Randall Jarell's poem epitomises three characteristics of Cloots. Firstly, he is forgotten by history, he 'live[s] in footnotes'. Secondly, when he is not forgotten, his reputation precedes him as a not so commendable figure. And thirdly, should his name be pronounced Cloots as in coats, or Cloots as in boots? Actually, being a Dutch name, it should be the former. Also, it must be noted that the name Cloots is not affiliated to the Yiddish *klots* that gave *klutz* in North American English, meaning an awkward, clumsy, and foolish person—despite, what Cloots's detractors may think of him.

Cloots is, nowadays, not a well-known figure; he was more famous in the nineteenth century. His name has been forgotten. One of the consequences, or reasons, of this posthumous anonymity is the numerous epithets wrongly attached to his name.² 'Utopian', Cloots, who admired Machiavelli and saw in him a guide for ministers of State: 'Un Etat ne saurait faire vie qui dure sans la science du profond Machiavel' in *Chronique de Paris*, 27 July 1791.³ Cloots had also stated the following 'realist' view on politics: 'Il suffit de connaître les éléments de la politique, pour ne

1 Randall Jarell, probably 1941, Stephen Burt, 'Two Poems by Randall Jarrell', *The New York Review of Books*, December 2002.

2 See the next chapter.

3 François Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots, le Prussien francophile* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999), 107, footnote 213.

pas ignorer que la morale y est étrangère'.⁴ 'Mad', 'dement', or 'insane', the author of a thick and erudite first book compiling all the eighteenth century's literature on the question of religion, and hammering home his argument, not without a certain sense of humour and derision?

There is no space here for an exhaustive biography of Anacharsis Cloots, and this is not the subject of this study either. Two excellent biographies are already dedicated to Cloots's life, and I will here only highlight the most important moments.⁵ While Mortier's biography has the quality of being well-written with an entertaining narrative, a thorough referencing of sources is sometimes lacking. Labbé's work is a good supplement and contains systematic referencing as well as a comprehensive analysis of Cloots's life and activities.

There are also a few 'portraits' of Cloots in works of biographical reference.⁶ Cheneval, who wrote on the history of cosmopolitanism, studied in particular Cloots's 'cosmopolitan republicanism' with some biographical elements, as mentioned previously.⁷ A book chapter on Cloots as the other 'citoyen du monde' appeared in a study on Thomas Paine.⁸ There was a book published on the occasion of an exhibition on Cloots in Cleves.⁹ There is also a short biography in German.¹⁰ Additional short biographical elements in relation to Cloots's political thought have been published focusing on his cosmopolitanism.¹¹

4 Anacharsis Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain, ou, Dépêche du Prussien Cloots au Prussien Hertzberg', in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1791] 1979), 108.

5 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*; Roland Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots, Ou, l'utopie foudroyée* (Paris: Stock, 1995).

6 Albert Soboul, *Portraits de révolutionnaires* (Paris: Messidor, Editions sociales, 1986); Claude Manceron and Anne Manceron, *La Révolution française : dictionnaire biographique* (Paris: Renaudot, 1989), 165–67.

7 Francis Cheneval, *Philosophie in weltbürgerlicher Bedeutung. Über die Entstehung und die philosophischen Grundlagen des supranationalen und kosmopolitischen Denkens der Moderne* (Basel: Schwabe, 2002); Francis Cheneval, 'Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus: Erläutert Am Beispiel Anacharsis Cloots', *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 58, no. 3 (2004): 373–396; Francis Cheneval, *La Cité des peuples : Mémoires de cosmopolitismes* (Paris: Cerf, 2005).

8 Madeleine Rebérioux, 'Anacharsis Cloots, l'autre citoyen du monde', in *Thomas Paine, citoyen du monde*, ed. Georges Kantin and la Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (Paris: Creaphis, 1990), 31–44.

9 Bernd Schminnes, ed., *Anacharsis Cloots: der Redner des Menschengeschlechts* (Kleve: Boss, 1988).

10 Rolf Schönlaue, 'Die Vernunft ist stärker als der Tod – Leben und Sterben des Anacharsis Cloots', *Merkur - Deutsche Zeitschrift für europäisches Denken* 73, no. 837 (2019): 89–97.

11 Anne Kupiec, 'L'« ici » et l'« ailleurs »', *Tumultes* 24, no. 1 (2005): 27–45; Alexander Bevilacqua, 'Conceiving the Republic of Mankind: The Political Thought of Anacharsis Cloots', *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 4 (December 2012): 550–569; Pauline Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism: The Philosophical Ideal of World Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012);

Cloots had a tragic destiny. His uncompromising truthfulness to his own ideals and ideas led him to a certain death under the reign of terror. Born a Prussian aristocrat, and inheriting his father's fortune at the age of twelve, he could have lived the life of a high civil servant in the Prussian bureaucracy under the 'Enlightened despot' Frederick the Great, whom he admired before the French Revolution. But he had intellectual ambitions that led him to Paris, the centre of philosophy and *Lumières*, in his eyes, the new Athens of Ancient Greece. In the French Revolution he saw the beginning of the end to tyranny on earth, and the accomplishment of the French Enlightenment ideas led by his intellectual idols Voltaire, and Rousseau. He dedicated his life and fortune to the French revolution, only to die from suspicion related to his Prussian origin.

But Cloots left a rich legacy. His writings can be considered as one of the elaborate examples of pushing the logics of Enlightenment and the French Revolution to a conclusion; what the universality of the rights of man meant to the concept of sovereignty—sovereignty of the human race. His intelligence, his wit, and his style should make his readers tolerant towards his equally prominent ego and sense of self-promotion. In a way, at a time when public opinion reigned in a new democracy led by freedom of expression, he invented and made himself his own public relation agent.

Family and Youth

Anacharsis Cloots was born on 24 June 1755 in the family castle of Gnadenthal (Val-de-Grâce in French) near Cleves (Kleve in German), a town near the Prussian border with the Netherlands.¹² He was baptised and given the Latin names of Joannes Baptista Hermannus Maria, and the family name Klootz (later spelled Cloots in French), as recorded in the family register.¹³

His family was of Dutch origins. His father, Thomas François Klootz, was a rich Dutch merchant from Amsterdam. He acquired the castle and property of Gnadenthal in Prussia as well as the title of baron. Cloots's biographers do not know why he settled in Gnadenthal, but it is probably because it was the only available property that suited both his ambition and the interest of Frederic II in having new devoted subjects and servants at the Prussian borders.¹⁴ Cloots's father was made a

Alessandro Guerra, 'Anacharsis cloots e la rivoluzione senza frontiere', *Nuova Rivista Storica* 102, no. 3 (September 2018): 1063–1090.

¹² Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 37 citing the Royal Archives of Zwolle (Acte 66).

¹³ Labbé, 37.

¹⁴ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 22.

member of King Frederic II's Council, *Geheimrat*, in 1748, and acquired Gnadenthal shortly after.¹⁵ He obtained the title of baron in 1756. He died on 31 December 1767, at the age of 47, of unknown cause.

The maiden name of Cloots's mother was de Pauw. Her brother, Anacharsis's uncle, was the philosopher and canon of Xanten, Cornelius de Pauw (born 1739 in Amsterdam, deceased 1799 in Xanten). He is famous for writing *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, an influential study rejecting travellers' accounts of native American populations in favour of a more 'scientific' anthropology.¹⁶ De Pauw inspired Anacharsis, who always had a great admiration for his works, and maintained a correspondance with him throughout his life. Cloots was six years old when de Pauw became canon of Xanten, a village in the vicinity of Gnadenthal. Cloots's father procured this position for de Pauw in Xanten, and de Pauw's presence was certainly beneficial to Cloots's education.¹⁷ De Pauw spent most of his life in Cleves.

According to Cloots's biographers very little is known about his childhood, and what is known stems from his own account, scattered through his work and correspondance.¹⁸ The Cloots were a typical bourgeois family desiring to climb the Prussian social ladder and become an aristocratic family. Anacharsis had an older brother, Egide, who died on 18 May 1766, making him the only heir of the family.

Cloots's education was in French, but he also spoke French at home—a necessity for social advancement—even though his father did not speak it with ease. From the tender age of childhood to his coming of age, Cloots's entire upbringing had been in French. In addition, Cloots knew both Dutch and German, but there are no writings from him in these languages. This is inferred by Labbé from his correspondance as he received letters written in these languages, as well as from his library of German and Dutch books.¹⁹ We know that some of his writings were translated, but not by him, so it is fair to assume that, if he knew Dutch and German

15 For the Dutch ties with the Duchy of Cleves see Volker Seresse, *Politische Normen in Kleve-Mark während des 17. Jahrhunderts. Argumentationsgeschichtliche und herrschaftstheoretische Zugänge zur politischen Kultur der frühen Neuzeit*, Frühneuzeit-Forschungen, 12 (Epfendorf/Neckar: Bibliotheca Academica, 2005).

16 Cornelius de Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains, ou Mémoires intéressants pour servir à l'histoire de l'espèce humaine: avec une Dissertation sur l'Amérique & les Américains par Don Pernety et la Défense de l'auteur des Recherches contre cette Dissertation*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Chez George Jacques Decker, Imp. du Roi, 1770).

17 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 39.

18 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 25; Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 38.

19 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 37–38.

enough to read and talk to Dutch and German foreigners during the revolution, he was probably not confident and fluent.

Cloots never married and, to the best of his biographers' knowledge, never had any children. It is not even known if he had any lover, nor of which gender. Cloots was discreet regarding his private life in his writings, besides the occasional boasting for his public feats. The little he did write about it was his ability to remain chaste. Mortier mentions that in the very first intimate letter written by his own hand to his uncle Adriaan Joan Cloeting van Westenappel about the death of a certain Miss Van de Mortel, Cloots sighed when he remembered her: 'elle était mon appui sur la terre ; elle sera mon appui dans le ciel'.²⁰ Mortier speculates that she may have been a governess, and, reading between his elegantly written lines, his lover: '... une gouvernante qui aurait pris soin de lui et qui, malgré une foi sincère, aurait failli aux yeux des hommes'. Labbé has the same suspicion quoting Avenel, who may have been in possession of documents that have, today, disappeared and who even wrote about a daughter they may have had together.²¹ There are two curious mentions of a wife in John Adolphus's *Biographical Memoirs of the French Revolution*. This wife of Cloots allegedly 'proposed that a statue should be decreed to the first priest who had abjured christianity, and that the present æra should be denominated the reign of Nature'.²² However, checking a reference to the source of this statement, there does not appear to be any mention of a wife.²³

One may add to this that in a letter 'A mon frère unique' in January 1793, Cloots wrote about his life away from Paris in the country side, where he found some relaxation: 'Je mène la vie d'un curé gros décimateur, avec de bonnes fermes et de jolies fermières'.²⁴ He compared himself humouristically with a parson, *décimateur*, the one who holds the right to levy a tax called *dîme*, a tax in nature levied by the Church on agricultural productions. The reference to the parson who levies a tax in nature on the farms and the mention of beautiful female farmers do not leave much doubt about his sexual orientation and his libertine nature. It was not uncommon in the eighteenth century to mock the hypocrisy of the clergy for its promiscuous life-

²⁰ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 278.

²¹ Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 124.

²² John Adolphus, *Biographical Memoirs of the French Revolution*, vol. 1 (London: T. Cadell, Jun. & W. Davis, in the strand, 1799), 295, 486.

²³ Philippe-Edme Coittant, *Tableau des prisons de Paris, sous le règne de Robespierre: pour faire suite à l'Almanach des prisons, contenant différentes anecdotes sur plusieurs prisonniers, avec les couplets, pièces de vers, lettres et testamens qu'ils ont faits*, vol. 1–4 (Paris: Chez Michel, rue Haute, 1794).

²⁴ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 456.

style— famous examples being Diderot or *Thérèse philosophe*.²⁵ This may be the case here with ‘la vie d’un curé gros décimateur’. This letter, addressed to Cloots’s ‘brother’, is rather curious since his only brother died when he was very young in 1766. However, the letter wished him, his wife, and his children a happy new year. It may simply be a very close friend of his, who lived in Gnadenthal.

Education

Anacharsis Cloots was sent on 26 June 1764, at the age of 9, to Brussels to a Catholic boarding school, *Les Pères de Bruxelles*, together with his brother. The boarding school was in the city centre, near the Saint Gudula Cathedral. Its director was a member of the clergy, father De Lannoy. Cloots was then sent to the Jesuits in Mons, probably before the death of his brother.²⁶ At 11, and at his request, he moved to the Jesuit *collège du Pléssis-Sorbonne* in Paris probably because friends of the family, the Vandenyvers, had recently moved to Paris and could receive and lodge the young Jean-Baptiste.²⁷ It is at their place that he became acquainted for the first time with members of the Parisian intellectual society, although it is not known who exactly. Philosophising on religion and its rituals, Cloots mentions in his *Lettres philosophiques* (added to *Certitude des preuves*) with pride an episode that got him into trouble: defiantly eating a bacon omelette on a Saturday, which was considered as a *jour maigre* (lean day: meat was not allowed).²⁸ Cloots argued that uncertainty prevailed over how that dogma applied also to children, and that, accordingly, one should not consider something uncertain as prohibited in general.

At the *Pléssis-Sorbonne* college, Cloots’s education was based on the study of rhetoric (argumentation and syllogism) and classical culture.²⁹ Not much is known precisely about the curriculum there. One work by Marie-Madeleine Compère on the history of all the collèges in France from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries lists all the existing secondary works and archives on the *collège*.³⁰ She notes, however, that there are few documents concerning the pupils. There is, however, no bibliographical reference on the Collège du Plessis. Regarding the actual cur-

²⁵ Jean-Baptiste de Boyer marquis d’Argens [?], *Thérèse philosophe, ou mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du Père Dirrag et de Mademoiselle Éradice* (La Haye: s.n., 1748).

²⁶ Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 41.

²⁷ Labbé, 42.

²⁸ Anacharsis Cloots, *La certitude des preuves du Mahométisme: ou, Réfutation de l’examen critique des apologistes de la religion Mahométhane* (London: s.n., 1780), 574–75.

²⁹ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 27.

³⁰ Marie-Madeleine Compère, *Les collèges français : 16e–18e siècles* (Paris: Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique, 2002).

riculum, there are very few documents regarding the time that Cloots spent there. His school fellows were, among others, future famous actors of the French Revolution such as La Fayette, as well as antiquary Millin de Grandmaison (1759–1818) and Antoine Joseph Gorsas (1752–1793), future publicist,³¹ but also the future lawyer Pierre Victorien Vergniaud (1753–1793) and future politician Pierre Gaspard Chaumette (1763–1794).³² It was during his stay in Paris that his father died in Brussels.

Cloots then attended the newly built *Académie militaire des nobles* in Berlin by Frederick II. I have elsewhere studied this school and the curriculum that Cloots may have followed there, as well as the potential influence on his intellectual development.³³ He was admitted as *élève pensionnaire* number 16 on 15 August 1770, and left on 1 May 1773.³⁴ That means that his family paid for his education at the *Académie* and that he followed the same courses as regular pupils. However, that also means that Cloots did not have any obligation to join Frederick's army afterwards, or be employed in the Prussian administration, although that was the purpose of the school. It was not uncommon for the pensionnaires to leave the *Académie* without entering the service in the army, or becoming a diplomat, but it was the exception. It may be his professor of philosophy, Johann Georg Sulzer (1720–1779), who inspired him to pursue a career as *homme de lettres*, in the footsteps of his uncle, Cornelius de Pauw. Sulzer was influenced by Christian Wolff, whose philosophical influence is diffuse in Cloots's writings.

French was the language in which courses were taught at the *Académie des nobles*. Frederick II designed himself the curriculum, which was more academic than in other military academies for nobles in Europe. Cloots had for instance courses in moral philosophy, law based on Grotius (civil law, public law, and law of nations), and history with the purpose of getting moral, philosophical or political lessons.

Beginnings in Paris

After finishing his education at the Berlin military academy, and being the heir of the family's vast fortune, Cloots chose to go back to Gnadenthal to start working on a book that, from his own account, would occupy him for four years fifteen hours a

³¹ Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 43.

³² Edmond Biré, *Journal d'un bourgeois de Paris pendant la Terreur*, vol. 4 (Paris: Perrin, 1897), 330.

³³ Frank Ejby Poulsen, 'The Education of Anacharsis Cloots (1755–1794) at the Berlin Académie Militaire Des Nobles (1770–1773)', *History of European Ideas* 44, no. 5 (2018): 559–574.

³⁴ Gottlieb Friedländer, *Die Königliche Allgemeine Kriegs-Schule und das höhere Militair-Bildungswesen 1765–1813* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler & Sohn, 1854), 336–337.

day.³⁵ The book was published a year later, in 1780, when Cloots was twenty-five. *La Certitude des Preuves du Mahométisme* is the title of this book, which Cloots claimed to contain the definitive theist argument, which would put an end to theological debates about the one true religion.³⁶ As Mortier notes, the field had already been widely covered and left little space for a beginner.³⁷ The book compiles a synthesis of what some Enlightenment authors had to say against any dominant monotheism, in favour of a reconciling theism, but it is also an introductory guide to Islam. The title and the pseudonym used are a direct reference to the Abbé Bergier's 1767 *La certitude des preuves du christianisme*, in which Bergier argues that Christianity is the only true religion.³⁸ Cloots takes the pseudonym Ali-Gir-Ber, alfaqui and doctor in theology, who is supposedly writing the book, which is *translated* and heavily annotated by the editor, whose footnotes are what constitute most of the book and Cloots's own views. Ali-Gir-Ber is presenting the same arguments as Nicolas Bergier, but replacing Christianity with Islam, and in the footnotes Cloots refutes every single statement and argument under the cover of the editor and translator, quoting many philosophers of the Enlightenment to make his point (Bacon, Bayle, Blount, Collins, Hume, Leibniz, Locke, Mosheim, Nicole, Taylor, Voltaire).³⁹ Doing so, the book works on several levels and the chosen narrative strategy allows Cloots to incorporate his arguments as part of this narration. By pretending to be Ali-Gir-Ber and reproducing the same argumentation as Bergier, but for Islam, Cloots demonstrates that Bergier's argument about the certainty and the proofs of the one true religion being Christianity could be used similarly by any other revealed religion, such as Islam, and is therefore refuted. In the footnotes commenting this argument, there are many explanations of the Muslim faith and practice; the book can therefore be read as a guide to Islam to European readers. But most importantly, Cloots's main argument in the footnotes is to refute Bergier, and any monotheist religion: if indeed there is a God, then this God would have intended his will to be accessible to everyone notwithstanding their intelligence or competence. God's will should be accessible to all, and therefore no religion is necessary to *translate* His will. The argument is not new, and is definitively theist in that it concludes that there is one God, but that there is no one true religion; all religions could agree on the same 'Supreme Being', and should stop claiming to be the only true religion of God. After the revolution, Cloots will declare himself an atheist, although his 'system' will be

35 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 39–40; Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 617.

36 Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*.

37 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 42.

38 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *La certitude des preuves du christianisme, ou Réfutation de l'« Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne »* (Paris: chez Humblot, 1767).

39 For more on Cloots's *Certitude*, see the chapter on reason and science.

based on nature, as a sort of new divinity or ‘Supreme Being’, as will be seen in the chapter on nature.

Cloots arrived in Paris in 1780 with his first publication as credentials. He joined the Musée, an intellectual circle for discussions and learning, where he remained a member from 1781 to 1791.⁴⁰ The topic of religion occupied him in a second and shorter book published in 1783 and entitled *Lettre sur les Juifs*.⁴¹ With his characteristic tolerance and search for truth, Cloots refuted the rabbis who preached faith on ‘chimerical events’, but also refuted the false prejudices against the Jews among the general population.⁴² This created controversy with the president of the Musée, Antoine Court de Gébelin (1725–1784), which was published in the form of public letters at the end of the *Lettre sur les Juifs*. Cloots’s book discussed the reason for which the Jewish people had not been exterminated despite several attacks against them. Contrary to his ‘ecclesiastical friend’, who argued that God’s will had saved the Jews, Cloots argued that it was trade that saved them. Gébelin criticised Cloots for not only stating a truism regarding the Jews and trade, but also for being ignorant of religion in general and Judaism in particular—an ignorance, he notes, due to the passions that the *philosophes* of the *république des lettres* feel when discussing religion, confusing ‘truth’ with their one-sided theistic view.⁴³ Cloots answered by denouncing the duplicity of Gébelin, who had previously praised his dissertation. Cloots defended himself against Gébelin’s attacks by stating that he had not obviously pretended to claim that he was the first to link the Jews with commerce.

The same year, Cloots joined another intellectual club, the Lycée français of Pilâtre de Rozier, who was the first to fly in a hot air balloon above Paris on 21 November 1783 together with the Marquis François Laurent d’Arlandes. It is in the Lycée that he met Gabriel Brizard (1744–1793), also known as ‘l’abbé Brizard’. He was named *abbé* due to his poor background that left him with only one option of receiving a catholic education. In reality he was not at all a member of the Church, but one of the *philosophes* of the *république des lettres* with whom he shared anti-clericalism. Cloots and Brizard became very close friends and their mutual admiration for

40 On the *musées* and *lycées* as intellectual circles of socialisation and education, see Hervé Guénot, ‘Musées et lycées parisiens (1780–1830)’, *Dix-huitième Siècle* 18, no. 1 (1986): 249–267.

41 Anacharsis Cloots, *Lettre sur les juifs, à un ecclésiastique de mes amis, lue dans la séance publique du musée de Paris, le XXI novembre 1782* (Berlin: s.n., 1783).

42 On the Enlightenment debates on the Jews see the first part, and particularly chapter 5 for France, of Léon Poliakov, *Histoire de l’antisémitisme. De Voltaire à Wagner*, vol. 3, *Liberté de l’esprit* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1968).

43 For Gibelin’s political thought see Anne-Marie Mercier-Faivre, *Un supplément à « L’Encyclopédie » : Le « Monde primitif » d’Antoine Court de Gébelin*, Collection « Les Dix-Huitièmes Siècles » (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999).

Rousseau—if not sheer idolisation—sent them on a pilgrimage to Ermenonville, a commune in the Oise *département* in northern France, where Rousseau was buried. Rousseau had reached the status of adulation only saints enjoyed among believers. His fiends came to visit his grave. The owner of the property where Rousseau spent his last days, René Louis de Girardin (1735–1808), made it clear in his guide that the place was open to anyone who wished to visit. Girardin had designed the landscape of the garden at Ermenonville inspired by Rousseau's philosophy, which was largely built by 1776. In this garden, he built Rousseau's house, where he left copies of his last manuscripts *Les confessions* and *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. The highlight of the pilgrimage was visiting the small island with poplars, where Rousseau's grave stood. Many people came to do the pilgrimage, including Marie Antoinette.⁴⁴ Girardin wrote a guide for the visitor,⁴⁵ whilst another guide mentioned Rousseau's grave.⁴⁶

In Ermenonville, the two friends bought objects that supposedly were in Rousseau's possession—some philosophical relics. They interviewed many of the town's inhabitants about Rousseau. At the end of their pilgrimage, they burned works attacking Rousseau on his tomb—a form of cathartic expiation. In his later writings, Cloots distanced himself from Rousseau and preferred Voltaire.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, he later acquired a farm and lands in the same *département* of Oise, where he was subsequently elected as a representant to the *Convention* in 1792. Brizard was editing and publishing the complete works of Rousseau from 1788 until 1793 when he died in poverty and oblivion.

Cloots frequented other intellectual circles such as the salons, thanks to his immense fortune that opened all doors easily.⁴⁸ According to Avenel, he attended the salons of Madame Helvétius, madame de Cheminot, Julie Talmat, and Fanny Talmat.⁴⁹ In particular, he frequented the salon run by the countess of Beauharnais, which was frequented by Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740–1814) and Nicolas Edme Restif de La Bretonne (1734–1806).⁵⁰

44 On the cult and pilgrimage see Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1989), 156–162.

45 René-Louis de Girardin, *Promenade ou Itinéraire des jardins d'Ermenonville, auquel on a joint vingt-cinq de leurs principales vues, dessinées & gravées par Mériqot fils* (Paris: Chez Mériqot, Gattey, Guyot, 1788).

46 Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Almanach du voyageur à Paris, et dans les lieux les plus remarquables du royaume* (Paris: Chez Hardouin, Gattey, 1785).

47 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 77.

48 Schminnes, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 17.

49 Georges Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots, l'orateur du genre humain* (Paris: Ivrea, [1865] 1977), 187.

50 David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 247.

In 1784, Cloots started his *grand tour* of Europe. He spent the summer of 1784 in London, where he met Lord Shelburne, and Edmund Burke. They socialised at the time, but later Burke famously wrote his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* arguing against it.⁵¹ This opus was meant as a reply to Dr Richard Price's sermon to the Revolution Society in the United Kingdom.⁵² Cloots responded with a letter that he subsequently published in May 1790, urging Burke to see how enlightened the Parisian crowd was and to forgive the 'few' barbaric acts that were to be put on the account of centuries of oppression.⁵³ Burke answered in French with some mistakes, but good enough to give a hint of his sarcastic tone when he stated that he would be delighted to meet the enlightened crowd in question.⁵⁴ There is however no proof that this unfinished letter was sent to Cloots or that he read it, but according to the editors of his correspondence, 'the style Burke used suggests that it too may have been intended for publication'.⁵⁵ This can be confirmed by what Cloots wrote himself in *Anacharsis à Paris* in October 1790: 'M. Burke m'a promis une réfutation volumineuse que j'attends encore'.⁵⁶ In another letter—published this time—Burke clarified his position regarding 'his old acquaintance' Cloots, and joined his voice to the many other ones regarding his embassy of the human race at the National Assembly and subsequently at the *fête de la fédération*.⁵⁷ Burke continued his critique against the French Republic and Cloots's delegation of the human race by expressing a rather sarcastic form of consolation:

Pity that Cloots had not had a reprieve from the Guillotine 'till he had compleated his work!
But that engine fell before the curtain had fallen upon all the dignity of the earth.⁵⁸

In February 1786, Cloots was perusing some books in a library in Amsterdam when he met someone introducing himself as Castriotto, of the house of Kastrioti—from

51 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France: And on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to That Event. In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris*, Second (London: J. Dodsley, 1790).

52 For a study of the political thought of Edmund Burke see in particular Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

53 Anacharsis Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', in *Ecrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Champ Libre, [1790] 1979), 44–60.

54 Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Cobban, Alfred and Robert A. Smith, vol. 6: July 1789–December 1791 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 135–36.

55 Burke, 135.

56 Anacharsis Cloots, 'Anacharsis à Paris, ou lettre de Jean-Baptiste Cloots à un prince d'Allemagne', in *Ecrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Champ Libre, [1790] 1979), 81.

57 Edmund Burke, *Select Works of Edmund Burke*, ed. Francis Canavan, vol. 3: Letters on a Regicide Peace, A New Imprint of the Payne Edition (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 342.

58 Burke, 343.

George Castriota, the great Prince of Albania, better known as Alexander Beg, or Skanderbeg. In reality, the Prince was Stefano Zannowich (or Stjepan Zanović), son of a donkey driver, born in Montenegro. He was one of these many self-fashioned imposters of the second-half of the eighteenth century who seemed to have read too many pretender novels depicting commoners parading as kings, and acted in real life as one of their protagonists.⁵⁹ Zanović actually used his alleged title of prince, not only to infiltrate the circles of French aristocracy, but also to publish himself in the hope of becoming an important author in the Republic of Letters.⁶⁰ The most famous of all adventurers and, at times, pretenders—Casanova—mentioned him in his memoirs, as the brother of ‘... Premislas Zannowitch, qui après devint fameux comme son frère... Ces deux grands grecs [filous, fripons] moururent mal tous les deux’.⁶¹ Cloots was the last victim of his imposture as he was arrested for debt shortly afterwards.⁶² Zannowich had previously taken the false identity of a rich merchant from Dalmatia, deceiving merchants in Amsterdam. He slit his wrists in detention.⁶³

Cloots related this encounter in 1786 in *Les vœux d'un gallophile*, his second major book mixing his analysis of the political economy of France, and elements of his personal life, with one common denominator: his love for France.⁶⁴ It also contained a small satirical play with Voltaire playing a last trick on a priest called to his deathbed, *Voltaire ou les prêtres déçus*. Interestingly, Cloots mentions influential authors that he read at that time, such as Bayle, Collins, Bolinbroke, Hume, Helvétius, Fréret, Boulanger, Voltaire, Rousseau, Robinet.⁶⁵ During the summer of 1786 Cloots visited Vienna, Buda, Italy, and Switzerland. Cloots was traveling throughout North Africa, Spain and Portugal when the news of the storming of the Bastille and the revolution reached him. He rushed immediately back to Paris.

59 Richard Maxwell, *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124.

60 See Stjepan Zanović, *Œuvres choisies du prince Castriotto d’Albanie contenant le portrait caractéristique du Prince héréditaire de Prusse ..., une lettre au Congrès de l’Amérique... Avec le portrait de l’auteur. Auxquelles on a joint Le fragment d’un nouveau chapitre du Diable boiteux, envoyé de l’autre monde par M. le Sage...* (The Hague: s.n., 1782).

61 Giacomo Casanova, *Histoire de ma vie*, vol. 3 (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2002), 949.

62 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 88.

63 For more on Stjepan Zanović, see Roland Mortier, *Le « Prince d’Albanie » : Un aventurier au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2000).

64 Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*.

65 Cloots, 78.

Public Career

In the context of the print explosion of 1789, and particularly newsprint from July 1789, Cloots is one of those who benefited, and he started a new career as a journalist and political commentator.⁶⁶ He changed his mind regarding his publishing strategy after the French revolution broke out. Rather than writing thick treatises of philosophy, read by just a few intellectuals, he considered the shorter genre of brochures and articles to be best suited for the dissemination of his ideas. As long as an idea is philosophically sound in his view it does not need long treatises.⁶⁷

Cloots was careful to remain independent and to reach as wide and varied a readership as possible. He thus wrote for many of the newspapers that appeared in the new public sphere, such as *la Chronique de Paris*, *la Gazette Universelle*, *le Moniteur*, *le Patriote Français*, *la Révolution de France et de Brabant*, *les Annales Patriotiques et Littéraires*, *le Courrier de Paris et des 83 départements*, *le Journal des Jacobins*, and *le Batave*. As Cloots wrote himself in 1793 in his *Adresse aux Français*:

En écrivant mes articles, je disais en voici un pour la flasque *Chronique* ; en voici un pour le réservé *Moniteur* ; en voici un pour la *Gazette* hermaphrodite, avant l'époque de sa perversion totale ; en voici un autre pour le lourd *Patriote*, un autre pour le trivial *Gorsas* ; un autre pour le mâle *Carra*. Je me servais de tous les carrosses, voire même des casse-cou et des tapeculs, pour faire voyager la vérité bien ou mal à son aise.⁶⁸

Mortier notes that Cloots was one of the great journalists of the French Revolution, and he enjoyed real popularity among a large audience.⁶⁹ Cloots made his opinion known. He wrote against the French *émigrés*, in favour of the separation of Church and state. However, he was not yet anti-monarchist as he still praised Frederic II's Enlightened despotism in Prussia. In December 1790, he became a member of the Jacobins Club and wrote in favour of the return of the king to Paris (leaving Versailles), and against the king as head of armies because Cloots feared a potentially charismatic military chief who could overshadow the legislative power.⁷⁰ A fear eminently prophetic.

One of the most well-known actions that made Cloots instantly (in)famous is his 'mediatic coup'—so to speak—performed on 19 June 1790 at the National Assembly. Self-proclaimed 'ambassador of the human race', Cloots led a delegation of

⁶⁶ Labbé sorted out in a table when and where Cloots published his articles between 1790 and 1793, see Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 525.

⁶⁷ See the chapter on self-fashioning and rhetoric for further details.

⁶⁸ Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 449.

⁶⁹ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 114–115.

⁷⁰ Mortier, 115–16.

thirty five foreigners in their vernacular costumes representing the diversity of humanity to the French Assembly. The object of this *mise-en-scène* was to draw the members' attention to the universality of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, and thereby the universality of the French Revolution, which was to be celebrated for the first time on the first anniversary of the Bastille-day, 14 July 1790.⁷¹ As Mortier notes, this shows, already before the publication of the *Universal Republic*, Cloots's commitment to the people as the only legitimate sovereign, rather than the monarch or head of state.⁷²

In his *Discours prononcé à la barre de l'Assemblée Nationale* Cloots insisted that this celebration '... ne sera pas seulement la fête des Français, mais encore la fête du genre humain'.⁷³ Therefore, he asked that some foreigners be admitted to the celebration:

Un nombre d'étrangers de toutes les contrées de la terre demandent à se ranger au milieu du Champ de Mars; & le bonnet de la liberté qu'ils élèveront avec transport, sera le gage de la délivrance prochaine de leurs malheureux concitoyens.⁷⁴

A vast polemic ensued about the authenticity of the delegates, which would last well into the nineteenth century, and even to the present days.⁷⁵ Contemporary historians such as Roland Mortier, François Labbé, but also Selma Stern in 1914, have investigated the case and all agree on the unfair and polemical nature of the claim of inauthenticity of the delegates. It is undeniable, according to the National Archive and authenticated at the time by *commissaires*, that most of these representatives of the human race were political refugees in France (the Italian painter Francesco Giuseppe Casanova (1727–1803), Giacomo's younger brother, was among them).⁷⁶

Mortier describes the vast polemic about Cloots's endeavour that mocked unfairly the delegation for not being composed of real foreigners. In particular, a Turk was accused of being an actor in costume. In reality, he was a Turkish specialist in Arabic literature at the Royal Library, and felt that he had to write an answer

71 Frank Ejby Poulsen, 'Self-Fashioning and Rhetoric in the French Revolution: Anacharsis Cloots, Orator of the Human Race', *Global Intellectual History* 6, no. 3 (May 2021): 302–304.

72 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 126.

73 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 28.

74 Cloots, 28.

75 One could note, for instance, that Daniele Archibugi in his book on cosmopolitan democracy, perpetuates these attacks on the authenticity of the delegation, see Daniele Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 83–84, footnote 62.

76 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 94–95, footnote 172.

to defend himself and Cloots's embassy.⁷⁷ This Turk, it has to be said, had had the unfortunate idea to express himself in what appeared to be an imperfect or unintelligible French, attracting the ill-intended and mean-spirited sarcasms of the aristocrats and monarchists. The other members of the delegation, according to Mortier, stemmed from the intellectual, financial, and economic world.⁷⁸

Cloots attended the celebration together with his delegation on the first *Fête de la Fédération*, a rainy 14 July 1790. His idea of an 'embassy' of the human race had much more importance in the evolution of Cloots's political thought. In his view, and also in his enemies', each of these individuals represented (or were supposed to represent) their country of origin better than official diplomats because the sovereign was not the monarch but the people. At the Fête, the 'real' ambassadors from these countries were equally present, and according to his own account, they did not seem very pleased by Cloots's delegation claiming to represent their country by representing their people rather than their kings.⁷⁹ The answer given by the President of the National Assembly, none other than Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, the theoretician of national sovereignty, was measured and cautious.⁸⁰

Oui, Messieurs, la France s'honorera en vous admettant à la fête civique dont l'assemblée nationale vient d'ordonner les préparatifs ; mais pour prix de ce bienfait, elle se croit en droit d'exiger de vous un témoignage éclatant de reconnaissance. Après l'auguste cérémonie, retournez dans les lieux qui vous ont vu naître ; dites à vos monarques, dites à vos administrateurs, quelques noms qu'ils puissent porter, que s'ils sont jaloux de faire passer leur mémoire à la postérité la plus reculée, dites-leur qu'ils n'ont qu'à suivre l'exemple de Louis XVI, le restaurateur de la liberté Française.⁸¹

Diplomatically, the President reaffirmed that the king was the sovereign who reinstalled liberty for the people, and not the people. The foreigners were invited to go back to their native country to beseech their own monarch to follow Louis XVI's example.

77 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 128.

78 Mortier, 127.

79 Anacharsis Cloots, 'Discours prononcé à la barre de l'Assemblée nationale, par M. de Cloots, du Val-de-Grâce, Orateur du Comité des étrangers, à la séance du 19 juin 1790', in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1790] 1979), 28–29.

80 Labbé writes that De Menou was the president, Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 92. However, according to the listing on the website of the French National Assembly, the president in function on the day 19 June 1790 was Sieyès, <http://tinyurl.com/mzfngr>. Jean-François Menou de Boussay was president from 27 March to 12 April 1790, while Sieyès was president from 8 to 20 June 1790.

81 Anacharsis Cloots, *Œuvres*, ed. Albert Soboul, vol. 3 (München; Paris: Kraus Reprint; EDHIS, 1980), 59.

Sieyès's affirmation is in very striking contradiction with what is already implied in Cloots's thought, a bottom-up 'regeneration' of the people creating a revolution thereby freeing themselves, rather than a top-down grant of liberty from the king. And to Cloots this 'regeneration' should be extended to other populations not yet 'regenerated'.

Cloots's First Revolutionary Writings

In his chronicle of 15 July 1790 for the *Chronique de Paris*, Cloots wrote about Holland and her geopolitical situation vis-à-vis Prussia.⁸² This marked the beginning of his thinking process on his 'system'. He called it 'nouveau système de la Gaule', and introduced the idea of incorporating another country—Holland—to the French Republic with representatives sent to the Parliament.⁸³ Cloots often insisted on the name 'Gaul' rather than 'France', showing a distinction to what he perceived as the embodiment of the French monarchy. France is the name given after all to the original kingdom 'Ile-de-France', and history shows the will of succeeding French kings to incorporate other provinces into the 'French' kingdom. The name France is thus tainted with the idea of monarchy. However, Cloots is not yet openly showing signs of a commitment to republican ideas, as will be studied in the chapter on republicanism. It is rather a re-appropriation of existing theses regarding the Frankish origins of aristocracy and the Gauls as the original people of 'France'. Cloots mentioned the Franks who invaded Gaul to deprive its inhabitants of their liberty. Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658–1722) popularised this narrative of a progressive alienation of political liberty, also known as *thèse nobiliaire* against the *thèse royale* from royal apologists such as Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742).⁸⁴ In this *thèse nobiliaire* narrative, the 'conquest' of Gaul by the Franks is the centrepiece, and Boulainvilliers identifies this moment as the foundation of the *nation française*, with an egalitarian republican government led by a 'national assembly'; but progressively the French nation

⁸² Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 32–33.

⁸³ For more on the Dutch and French Revolutions and the establishment of the Batavian 'Sister republic', see part 2, and particularly chapter 4 in Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (London: Collins, 1977), and chapter 6 in Wyger R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought*, Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, Volume 155 (Boston, MA: Brill Academic Publishers, 2006).

⁸⁴ Henri de Boulainvilliers, *Histoire de l'ancien gouvernement de la France : avec XIV lettres historiques sur les parlemens ou états-généraux*, 3 vols. (La Haye, Amsterdam: Aux dépens de la Compagnie, 1727); Jean Baptiste Dubos, *Histoire critique de l'établissement de la monarchie françoise*, 4 vols. (Amsterdam: Chez François Changuion, 1734).

was stripped of its sovereignty through feudalism, leaving it ultimately enslaved under ‘despotism’ enforced by the monarchy.⁸⁵

1790 is also the year that Cloots began his own regeneration. The ‘regeneration of man’ was a common theme of the revolution, developing a general project of education of man as enslaved subject towards a free citizen, a regeneration of the old world into a new one.⁸⁶ Cloots undertook a similar project with himself by changing his name and adding an epithet.⁸⁷ In the *Chronique de Paris* 15 March 1790, Cloots writes:

Je renonce à mon berceau tudesque et à mes titres gothiques pour me revêtir de l’honorable qualité de bourgeois de Paris. Article signé Cloots du Val de Grâce, baron en Allemagne, citoyen en France.⁸⁸

From February 1791 on, Cloots systematically signed his writings as the ‘Orateur du genre humain’. Since February 1790, Cloots had already rejected his Christian name Jean-Baptiste, and adopted instead the one of ‘Anacharsis’. According to Labbé, Cloots may have met the abbé Barthélémy, who published in 1788 a novelised biography of the Scythian philosopher Anacharsis.⁸⁹ *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* was a best-seller at the time.⁹⁰ The book was a fiction based on historical erudition, and its success was instantaneous, even if short-lived.⁹¹ As Labbé notes, it is highly likely that Cloots identified himself with the Scythian Anacharsis since they both travelled from their native North to the Southern capitals of philosophy of their time—Athens and Paris. They both learned a second language in their youth that was the language of Enlightenment at their time—Greek and French. They both adopted this new country and witnessed the beginning of a new Republic.⁹²

⁸⁵ See François Furet and Mona Ozouf, ‘Deux légitimations historiques de la société française au XVIIIe siècle : Mably et Boulainvilliers’, *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 34, no. 3 (1979): 438–450. Also Johnson Kent Wright, ‘National Sovereignty and the General Will: The Political Program of the Declaration of Rights’, chap. 5 in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. Dale Van Kley, *The Making of Modern Freedom* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 204–210.

⁸⁶ Mona Ozouf, *L’Homme régénéré. Essais sur la Révolution française*, Collection Bibliothèque des Histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1989).

⁸⁷ This topic will be dealt with in the chapter on self-fashioning and rhetoric.

⁸⁸ Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 98, footnote 181.

⁸⁹ Labbé, 99, footnote 184.

⁹⁰ Jean-Jacques Barthélémy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce, dans le milieu du quatrième siècle avant l’ère vulgaire*, 4 vols. (Paris: Chez De Bure l’aîné, 1788).

⁹¹ Carlo Ginzburg, *Il filo e le tracce. Vero, falso, finto*, *Campi del sapere* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2006), 138–152.

⁹² Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 99, footnote 184.

One may add that Cloots compared in many of his writings the current situation in France with classical Greece, and saw Paris as the central capital of philosophy as Athens had once been.

On 13 October 1790, Cloots received an invitation to join the Cercle Social for its first meeting at the Palais Royal. He attended the inaugural lecture given by the self-proclaimed *Procureur Général de la Vérité* Claude Fauchet (1744–1793)—a radical socialist priest, who was at Versailles before being expelled after violent sermons against the court. He was elected deputy in 1791, and guillotined on 31 October 1793. Fauchet exposed his views of a sort of Catholic socialism and theocratic ideas, explaining Rousseau through the Bible in public lectures.⁹³ This event at the Cercle Social received large publicity, but Cloots did not express himself even if he disagreed. It was only after Fauchet attacked Voltaire more directly that Cloots decided to write against him on 28 October 1790 in the *Courrier de Paris dans les 83 départements*. Until then, Cloots had been mainly a theist, as expressed in *Les Certitudes* and *Vœux d'un gallophile*.⁹⁴ Cloots affirmed his now materialistic and atheist convictions, and attacked Fauchet on this ground, and also for misusing and abusing Rousseau and Voltaire's names and ideas. However, after a personal encounter with Fauchet, Cloots presented his apologies and accepted Fauchet's ideas as some kind of temporary necessity, a transition to an eventual atheism and final liberation from religion.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the fight continued between Cloots and the Cercle Social, especially after the Cercle's expression of its view that only Freemasons should be elected to official positions.⁹⁶ In the end, Cloots continued his attacks and wanted to organise a public debate between him and Fauchet, which, disappointingly, could not take place as the two could not agree to the conditions of the debate.⁹⁷

This episode, and his later radicalisation from a theistic to an atheistic position, probably is the reason why Cloots would later be dubbed 'personal enemy of Jesus Christ', a sentence often written in the short entries in encyclopaedias. Mortier notes that the sentence that was later wrongly and apocryphally attributed to Cloots—'Je me déclare l'ennemi personnel de Jésus Christ'—is nowhere to be found in any of his writings, and constitutes part of anti-revolutionary propa-

93 For more on Fauchet's ideas, see Rita Hermon-Belot, 'L'abbé Fauchet', in *La Gironde et les Girondins*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, Bibliothèque Historique Payot. Librairie Du Bicentenaire de La Révolution Française (Paris: Payot, 1991), 329–349. For more on the Cercle Social see Gary Kates, *The Cercle Social, the Girondins and the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985).

94 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 87–89.

95 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 100–101.

96 Labbé, 102–03.

97 Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 226–70; quoted in Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 103 footnote 197.

ganda.⁹⁸ One may add that it is quite possible that this epithet originated from Riouffé's *Mémoires d'un détenu*, where he described Cloots as such: 'L'orateur du genre humain, l'ennemi personnel de Jesus-Christ, Cloots...'.⁹⁹ What was meant as an apocryphal semi-derisive addition to mark his atheism became part of his biography afterwards.

Mortier considers Cloots to be one of the most significant political thinkers in the years 1791–92.¹⁰⁰ Not only as a journalist, but also as a pamphleteer, Cloots wrote extensively on the subject that, already then, obsessed the revolutionaries — the perils from abroad threatening the French Revolution. He put his education at the Berlin military Academy to use and his knowledge of the country for his military and geopolitical analyses. According to Cloots, there was no threat from Prussia.¹⁰¹

On 20 April 1792, a decree declared war on Francis II, King of Hungary and Bohemia, which was meant to avoid involving the German states. Cloots appeared at the National Assembly:

C'est la crise de l'univers : le sort du genre humain est entre les mains de la France. Nous combattons pour les droits de l'homme, et nos victoires ajouteront un nouvel éclat à la dignité humaine ; nous frapperons les despotes et nous délivrerons les hommes.¹⁰²

Cloots also donated '12.000 livres qui serviront à équiper, habiller, armer et solder 40.000 à 50.000 combattants'.¹⁰³ Cloots added to this his new book entitled *La République Universelle*. In this 1792 pamphlet, Cloots developed his idea that there only can be one sovereign on earth, the human race, and that, therefore, the goal of the human race is to build a universal republic. The French Revolution is only the beginning of the universal revolution. One could interpret this as yet another act of megalomania, or one could interpret this as putting Machiavelli's teaching into practice. Cloots was a student of 'la science du profond Machiavel', who wrote and famously advocated the need for Florence to have its own army of citizens because a polity's own citizens fight better when they fight for their own land and know why.¹⁰⁴ In other words, according to Cloots, the French soldiers were fighting for 'the freedom' other 'oppressed sovereigns', with the creation of the universal republic in sight.

98 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 300.

99 Honoré Riouffé, *Mémoires d'un détenu, pour servir à l'histoire de la tyrannie de Robespierre*, Second edition (Paris: Louvet, Anjubault, B. Mathé, 1795), 90.

100 Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 194.

101 Mortier, 275.

102 Mortier, 275.

103 Mortier, 275.

104 See, for instance, Niccolò Machiavelli, 'Il Principe', in *Opere*, ed. Corrado Vivanti, vol. 1 I Primi Scritti Politici, Biblioteca Della Pléiade (Torino: Einaudi - Gallimard, 1997), 150–56, ch. 12–13.

Moreover, it was common practice for the revolutionaries to enlighten the soldier. In the process of forming the republic, the revolutionaries needed to educate the youth and re-educate adults to operate the 'regeneration' of the republic. As Hunt notes, 'one of the most important "Jacobin" schools was the army of 1792–94', and they sent them many newspapers and pamphlets as coursebooks.¹⁰⁵ Cloots's pamphlet was therefore only one among many others, and far from a megalomaniac idea, it was his attempt at spreading his ideas among the 'pupils' of the republic — the soldiers.

Cloots's pamphlet provoked once more a violent critique from the radical left of the Assembly. In 'L'Orateur du peuple', Martel wrote that Cloots was 'un fou dangereux', whose 'folie surpasse celle de l'abbé Pierre; il feint d'ignorer les intrigues de la Cour...'. Cloots was suspected and openly accused of being a double agent: on the one hand, paying lip service to the revolution while, on the other, serving foreign monarchies. The zeal with which he pushed for war against these monarchies was perceived as a sinister plan to lead the French Revolutionary armies to a certain death. Martel concluded in terms not so different from the way Sieyès as President of the Assembly had answered Cloots's embassy of the human race: '... que chacun dans sa patrie écrase ses rois, et il n'y aura de guerre nul part'. But not before he added that Cloots was a 'philosophe insensé', struck with 'démence'. This political hatred vocalised in the form of a libel regarding Cloots's sanity, and questioning his allegiance due to his foreign origins were already expressed in violent terms. The same hatred was to resurface in 1794; by then it was not solely limited to the rhetorical realm.

Cloots wrote an article entitled 'Origine du mot « Ça ira »' in *Chronique de Paris*, 4 May 1792, in which he expressed his belief that France would eventually get rid of her enemies the way America got rid of England in Boston.¹⁰⁶ He insisted on the liberation of Savoie, Valais, Vaud, Fribourg, Bern, and Zurich, and presented his military tactics of mobility and harassment. In this article, one can see how Cloots recycled widely shared arguments in order to disseminate his own. Cloots added his own ideal of the liberation of the whole of humankind to the argument of expanding France to her 'natural frontiers'. All extensions of France were based on the argument of 'unity'.¹⁰⁷

In the *Chronique de Paris* on 29 May 1792, Cloots published, in a rare public display of his private life, his mother's letter and his own answer to it. She implored

¹⁰⁵ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 69.

¹⁰⁶ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 343.

¹⁰⁷ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 280.

him to find shelter in England as she was worried about the hatred that the Jacobins created in the rest of Europe, but Cloots refused. He was as much confident that the citizen-soldiers would prevail as he was confident that the Prussian army would be defeated because, unlike the French, Prussian soldiers were not treated right and had no personal motivation in fighting. He firmly believed in what he perceived to be the struggle for truth against tyranny. In a way, if ‘l’infâme’ was for Voltaire religion, it is for Cloots religion and any other form of tyranny, in this moment represented by monarchy; the motto ‘écrasez l’infâme’ took a literal turn.

During this period, Cloots became openly republican and anti-monarchist. Previously, he still had been an admirer of Frederic II as ‘Enlightened despot’. In his anti-monarchism, he found support in many others, and especially the most famous of them all, Condorcet. He began collaborating with Condorcet at the *Chronique de Paris*, and the two were on good personal terms.¹⁰⁸

French Citizenship and Election

On 10 August 1792, the Tuileries—then centre of the executive power—was taken by a group led by the National Guard of the Insurrectional Paris Commune and revolutionary *fédérés* from Marseille and Brittany. When the insurrection of 10 August 1792 and the massacre of September occurred, Cloots was not yet engaged in political life, even if he considered—and rightly so according to Mortier—that his writings contributed to prepare the proclamation of the Republic.¹⁰⁹

After these events, the Legislative Assembly decreed the king’s removal and the convocation of a new ‘Constituante’ named ‘Convention’ on the model of the American revolution. Its purpose was to draw up a new constitution, after deliberation and vote for elected deputies. Elections were called, but Cloots lamented that he was not eligible because of the rule concerning ‘residency’. Cloots suddenly took pride again in being Prussian. He explained that high ranked Prussian military officers were in favour of the French Revolution, including Hertzberg—of whom he was highly critical in his 1791 *Dépêche du Prussien Cloots au Prussien Hertzberg*.¹¹⁰ Consequently, Cloots asked for the incorporation of Prussian officers into the French army.¹¹¹ Condorcet supported his initiative. Mortier notes that Cloots was well aware of the ongoing trends in German public opinion.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 296.

¹⁰⁹ Mortier, 297.

¹¹⁰ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’.

¹¹¹ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 298.

¹¹² Mortier, 290.

The *député* Guadet took the initiative to promulgate a decree on 26 August 1792 to grant French citizenship to foreigners ‘who served the cause of liberty’.¹¹³ This honorific title was given to several foreigners, among the most famous Priestley, Paine, Bentham, de Pauw, Washington, Hamilton, Madison, and Schiller. This list was only honorific and did not have any consequence except for Cloots and Paine, who were both elected member of the Convention — and subsequently were both condemned to be guillotined. However, Cloots did not have the same incredible twist of fate that saved Paine.¹¹⁴

Cloots was declared a French citizen on 26 August 1792, with effect on 6 September 1792.¹¹⁵ Cloots thanked the National Assembly on 27 August 1792, praising it for associating the ‘philosophes cosmopolites’ to the work of the revolution, and swearing an oath ‘à la nation universelle, à l’égalité, à la liberté, à la souveraineté du genre humain...’.¹¹⁶

Cloots wrote on 28 August 1792 *Pétition des domestiques*, which took position against the law on the right to vote excluding those employed as domestic servants, showing his egalitarian views on society. In this pamphlet, Cloots defends universal suffrage for men and ask for household servants to be included. He later declared himself ‘sans-culotte’, and it is this social egalitarianism that made him a personality of interest to nineteenth-century socialist historians.

Cloots was elected to represent the Oise *département*, where he had bought a farm and land. He was elected at the second run with 279 votes out of 452 voters. ‘Nous ne saurons jamais si c’est le vote de ses fermiers qui aura été déterminant ou bien la préparation soignée des listes par les milieux de la capitale’.¹¹⁷ He was elected as ‘Jean-Baptiste Cloots, citoyen français, demeurant à Paris, connu sous le nom d’Anacharsis Cloots, orateur du genre humain’.

Cloots accepted his election on 5 September 1792:

Mr le Président, j’accepte avec reconnaissance le poste honorable et périlleux où mes concitoyens m’appellent. Et je jure au nom du genre humain que le département de l’Oise ne se repentira pas de son choix¹¹⁸

¹¹³ https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Décret_du_26_août_1792.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1794] 2013), 61–68.

¹¹⁵ Jean Baptiste Duvergier, *Collection complète des lois, décrets d’intérêt général, traités internationaux, arrêtés, circulaires, instructions, etc* (Paris: Recueil Sirey, 1834), 516.

¹¹⁶ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 386–87.

¹¹⁷ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 301.

¹¹⁸ Mortier, 301.

Cloots was also elected in the département of Saône-et-Loire, arrondissement Châlon-sur-Seine, where someone had added his name to the list. However, Cloots chose the Oise because he had been elected there first. He added that he swore ‘... de maintenir l’unité de l’empire français, en attendant l’unité de la grande nation du genre humain’. Priestley was also elected, but he declined the position, arguing that he did not speak French good enough. Paine was equally elected in Oise, and also in Pas-de-Calais, which he chose, even if he did not speak very good French either.

The events on 10 August 1792, and the massacres in September were mostly due to the disaster of the war on the Eastern front for the French armies.¹¹⁹ Paris believed in a quick and easy victory. This situation created panic and an obsession of suspecting treason. The commune of Paris and the blood thirst that ensued provoked tortures and executions of the most barbaric nature. The Girondins blamed the Montagnards, but many of them chose to leave these terrible events behind after the victory at Valmy on 20 September 1792. Condorcet was one of them.

Cloots did not take part in these events which occurred prior to his election and, hence, political engagement. Nonetheless, Cloots chose to take responsibility for these acts and tried to tone them down by considering them as catharsis by an oppressed population in a situation of crisis: ‘*Salus populi suprema lex*’. As Mortier notes, in an attempt to explain the posthumous propaganda surrounding Cloots: ‘Aussi est-ce sur lui, démuné de toute autorité politique, que l’histoire fera retomber le stigmate ignominieux d’un crime qu’il n’a pas commis’.¹²⁰

On 17 November 1792, Cloots published *Ni Marat ni Roland*.¹²¹ The pamphlet expressed Cloots’s opinion regarding the aftermath of the September massacres and the political opposition between the *Gironde* and the *Montagne*. Cloots denounced in this pamphlet what he viewed as populist manoeuvres by Marat, Roland, and Brissot, which manipulated popular emotion created by the massacres. They were his former Girondin friends. Instead, Cloots called for unity and for the people to rally around against the divisions of the *fédéralistes*. Cloots repeated his argument expounded in *La république universelle* regarding the unification of the human race. In particular, he recalled a conversation he had with Brissot and Paine in which Paine backed him in his view of a universal republic when Brissot thought that even France was too big a territory to be an undivided republic. This positioning above political parties and siding with his philosophical principles resulted in his isolation

¹¹⁹ On the September massacres see Pierre Caron, *Les massacres de septembre* (Paris: La maison du livre français, 1935).

¹²⁰ Mortier, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 308.

¹²¹ Anacharsis Cloots, *Ni Marat, ni Roland. Opinion d’Anacharsis Cloots* (Paris: Desenne, 1792).

at the Convention. Ultimately, it garnered collective resentment, turning him into a scapegoat. In retrospect, the Girondin Guadet, who suggested that Cloots be granted French citizenship, regretted his motion.

As député de l'Oise, Cloots was very busy, but he did not care so much about local politics and individual interventions. According to Labbé, Cloots was not often present at the Convention.¹²² However, he participated in the *Commission particulière pour les Archives*, in charge of evaluating the state of national archives.

Concerning the King, Cloots, as many other revolutionaries, was initially not against a parliamentary monarchy. In a pastiche letter by Louis XVI to all the other kings on earth—'Le roi des Français à tous les rois de la Terre, salut' published in *Chronique de Paris* 2 March 1791—Cloots called all monarchs to imitate the French king and change their inherited 'despotic throne' to a 'throne over free men'.¹²³

A year later, in his article 'Monarchie sans roi' published in *Annales patriotiques et littéraires* 27 July 1792, Cloots pleaded for a monarchy without a king, that is to say a presidential regime similar to the one in America with

Un monarque (*Monos*) à peu près comme Washington, élu pour cinq ans et salarié modestement Le *veto*, entre ses mains, sera un contrôle national dont le peuple ne s'alarmera jamais ; le *veto*, cette belle prérogative des tribuns romains, cette sauvegarde de la liberté contre les atteintes aristocratiques ; le *veto*, qui ranimait les espérances du citoyen de Rome, est devenu chez nous un mot odieux, un cri de désespoir en passant par la bouche d'un roi des Français.¹²⁴

Cloots opposed his republicanism to the monarchists, whom he called 'les royaumes'.

The deputy Cloots finally voted for the execution of Louis XVI. In *Chronique de Paris* 10 May 1790, he had argued against the death penalty, considering the sentence of being enchained far worse than death in a country of free men.¹²⁵ But so had Robespierre, who changed his views on the death penalty. Cloots argued for the death of the king, invoking the precedent of modern England and ancient Rome in his *Harangue*.¹²⁶ According to Cloots, five hundred thousand copies of his *Harangue* were printed at the National Assembly, and he wrote that this was not even enough as people had to copy these printed versions.¹²⁷ This figure seems highly unlikely ac-

122 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 104.

123 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 98.

124 Cloots, 371.

125 Cloots, 23.

126 Anacharsis Cloots, *Procès de Louis le dernier. Harangue d'Anacharsis Cloots, député du département de l'Oise à la Convention nationale* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1792), 8.

127 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 93, footnote 171.

ording to bibliographic surveys made on this period. It has been estimated that ‘the average print run for a single eighteenth century edition’ was ‘no more than 1,000 copies’.¹²⁸ Economic reasons limited the number of copies printed to be above 500, and below 2,000.¹²⁹ However, Hunt notes that, for instance, the Convention sent directly one million copies of the *Père Duchesne* over nine months, and thirty thousand newspapers per day to the army.¹³⁰

It was not only the king, but also partisans of the king, counter-revolutionaries, who were denounced by Cloots. He called for a ‘purification of the Republic’, and to ‘execrate’ all monarchists. Cloots made here direct reference to Mirabeau, without mentioning his name. Mirabeau’s ashes were transferred to the Pantheon, but the case of the ‘iron chest’, ‘l’armoire de fer’, revealed secret documents and correspondance to the interior minister Roland, notably between Mirabeau and the king. Honoré Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau (1749–1791) was a figure of the French Revolution who used his oratory talents to favour the cause of the people, and a constitutional monarchy. He was a national hero when he died, and his ashes were transferred to the Pantheon. The correspondance revealed his duplicity because of his ties with the king and created a scandal among the revolutionary establishment.

One of the Convention’s tasks was to draft and adopt a new constitution. The members proposed many drafts in 1793. However, Cloots’s project *Bases constitutionnelles* was not one of them. Cloots presented his universal republic based on the recognition of the sovereignty of the human race, which was subsequently published as *Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain* on this occasion, but his intervention was for taking a decree proclaiming the sovereignty of the human race in view of automatically incorporating any future country who would recognise the same principle. However, Cloots does acknowledge that this decree is formulated in the view of finding a stable constitution, for which the Convention was elected.¹³¹ This is also why Cloots suggested despending with the name *Français* in front of republic, and take instead the name ‘*Germain*’ as in ‘kindred’, so that there would be no misunderstanding for future countries about joining a *cosmopolitan* universal republic and not an imperialist French republic.¹³²

128 Simon Burrows, ‘Books, Philosophy, Enlightenment’, in *The Oxford Handbook of the French Revolution*, ed. David Andress (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 78.

129 Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Winchester: St Paul’s Bibliographies, 1995), 161.

130 Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 69.

131 Anacharsis Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain’, in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Editions Champ libre, [1793] 1979), 475.

132 Cloots, 493.

He read the text of his proposition to the Convention, which was received with laughter.¹³³

Main Political Writings and Execution

Cloots's pamphlets that elaborated on his political 'system' are *L'orateur du genre-humain, ou, Dépêche du Prussien Cloots, au Prussien Hertzberg* (1791),¹³⁴ *La république universelle ou adresse aux tyrannicides* (1792),¹³⁵ and *Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain* (1793).¹³⁶ These three pamphlets constitute for the greater part the subject of this study on the political thought of Anacharsis Cloots because nowhere else did he develop as much his main political 'system'.

The first pamphlet was written as an answer to Prussia's *Kabinettsminister* (chief minister), Ewald Friedrich Graf von Hertzberg (1725–1795). As every year since becoming the curator of the Berlin Academy in 1786, Hertzberg read a *mémoire* presenting his political views. Hertzberg was initially in favour of the revolution as he praised its principles to be already implemented in Prussia, but he subsequently rejected it when he saw that it attacked the Prussian regime.¹³⁷ It remains unclear as to which *mémoire* Cloots was responding. In his 1789 *mémoire*, Hertzberg praised the French Revolution for putting an end to the preceding 'monarchical despotism', and heading towards the Enlightened model already implemented in Prussia.¹³⁸ It is only in 1791 that Hertzberg condemned the French Revolution for the violence exerted in its name.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, in 1790, Hertzberg's *mémoire* was more severe

133 Jean Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, ed. Albert Soboul, vol. 6 (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1972), 72–77.

134 Anacharsis Cloots, *L'orateur du genre-humain, ou, Dépêche du Prussien Cloots, au Prussien Hertzberg* (Paris: Desenne, 1791).

135 Anacharsis Cloots, *La république universelle; ou, Adresse aux tyrannicides* (Paris: Chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1792).

136 Anacharsis Cloots, *Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain* (Paris: De l'imprimerie nationale, 1793).

137 See James van Horn Melton, 'From Enlightenment to Revolution: Hertzberg, Schlözer, and the Problem of Despotism in the Late *Aufklärung*', *Central European History* 12, no. 2 (June 1979): 103–123.

138 Ewald Friedrich Graf von Hertzberg, *Mémoire sur la troisième année du règne de Frédéric Guillaume II, Roi de Prusse, & pour prouver que le gouvernement prussien n'est pas despotique* (s.l.: Académie des Sciences, 1789).

139 Ewald Friedrich Graf von Hertzberg, *Mémoire sur les révolutions des états, externes, internes et religieuses, lu dans l'assemblée publique de l'académie des Sciences de Berlin, le 6, Octobre 1791: pour célébrer le jour de Naissance de Frédéric Guillaume II, Roi de Prusse, et la cinquième année de son règne* (s.l.: Académie des Sciences, 1791).

on the French Revolution than in 1789 as he condemned its policy towards abolishing hereditary nobility.¹⁴⁰ Presumably, this is the *mémoire* Cloots answered to a few months later. However, in his answer Cloots cited Hertzberg's attack on him and his embassy in his response. But this is nowhere to be found in Hertzberg's *mémoire*. Cloots even quotes a passage from this *mémoire* where he is supposedly attacked.¹⁴¹ But this excerpt does not exist in the *mémoire* or in any of Hertzberg's published works. What matters the most in his answer for the study of cosmopolitanism is that Cloots expressed for the first time the idea of a single society of the human race, extending the popular concept of 'regeneration' of the people to the whole human race organised in a 'confederation of united individuals'.¹⁴²

Cloots elaborated further on this idea a year later in *La république universelle*, written in February–March 1792. The occasion for publishing the pamphlet was the constitution of a group of tyrannicides with the aim of sending assassins throughout Europe to kill monarchs renamed 'tyrants'.¹⁴³ In December 1790, Sylvain Maréchal (1750–1803) proposed to form a '*légion sacrée des tyrannicides*', which aimed at enrolling young patriots to defend the Revolution against 'tyrants'. The proposition was subsequently criticised, but the flight of the King, stopped at Varennes during the night of 20–21 June 1791,¹⁴⁴ reignited the rhetoric of 'tyrannicide', although another project presented at the Convention on 26 August 1792 by Jean Debry (1760–1834) equally failed.¹⁴⁵ Debry suggested forming an organisation of 1200 volunteers to individually attack 'tyrants', which was then dubbed 'Vengeur de l'humanité' by the deputies Chabot and Merlin, and was followed by a debate regarding the morality of such action and the possibility of attracting retributions against French generals between Vergniaud and Mailhe, who answered that it was a war between liberty and despotism and therefore beyond ancient questions of ethics and customs

140 Ewald Friedrich Graf von Hertzberg, *Mémoire sur la quatrième année du règne de Frédéric Guillaume II, Roi de Prusse, & sur la noblesse héréditaire* (s.l.: Académie des Sciences, 1790).

141 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 102–103.

142 Cloots, 158–162.

143 See in general for a historical view of tyranny Mario Turchetti, *Tyrannie et tyrannicide de l'antiquité à nos jours*, Fondements de la politique. Essais (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2001). On the revolutionary period see Raymonde Monnier, 'Évolution d'un thème républicain en révolution : les expressions du tyrannicide dans la crise de Varennes', in *La voix & le geste: une approche culturelle de la violence socio-politique*, ed. Philippe Bourdin, Mathias Bernard and Jean-Claude Caron, Collection Histoires croisées (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005), 29–47.

144 For an account of the King's flight see for instance Timothy Tackett, *When the King Took Flight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

145 Monnier, 'La voix & le geste', 37–47.

in war.¹⁴⁶ In *La république universelle*, Cloots presents his idea of ‘confederation of united individuals’ in a ‘universal republic’. Following the belief that ideas overturn whole populations while the sword only kills one ‘tyrant’, Cloots imagined that the French Revolution would spread to the whole world, which would join the renamed French republic as ‘*départements*’ with representatives.

Cloots had been elected at the end of 1792, and his *Bases constitutionnelles de la république du genre humain* reiterated in length his idea of ‘universal republic’ finishing very succinctly by presenting three articles for a decree in order to integrate other countries during the revolutionary wars, notably: ‘Article I. Il n’y a pas d’autre souverain que le genre humain’.¹⁴⁷ Cloots’s idea was that any nation (peoples) recognising this principle would automatically be included in the French republic.

Cloots’s last work, which remained unfinished, was a summary of the history of the French Revolution.¹⁴⁸ This series of articles opened the first issue of a new publication named *Le Batave* created together with Dutch revolutionaries in Paris. Not surprisingly, the history of the revolution is written with a clear anti-monarchist tone, and is presented as the dawn of the universal revolution of freedom against despotism. It is also set inside a theoretical framework of scientific inevitability; revolutions are a healthy physiological reaction to the diseases of the political body.

From 11–29 November 1793 Cloots was chosen to be the president of the Jacobins. However, Cloots’s presidency was immediately followed by his exclusion from the Jacobins at Robespierre’s demand. Cloots often changed his affiliations and sympathies. He denounced his Girondin friends in *Ni Marat, ni Roland*, alienating the whole group against him. He criticised Robespierre and the theists in his own Jacobin group, as aristocrat he denounced the aristocrats and declared himself sans-culotte. As Prussian he refused his titles and criticised Prussian politics. As French he suggested that the country adopted the name of ‘Republic of Germans’. Cloots’s contrarian views towards his own friends and club attracted critiques easily. After writing the *Universal Republic*, and in particular his view that the French Republic should be called ‘Germaine’, understood in its original sense of kinship, he was accused of being German and of plotting the demise of France by taking her very

146 See *Le Moniteur* n°241 in *Réimpression de l’ancien Moniteur*, vol. 13: Assemblée législative (Paris: Henri Plon, 1862), 542.

147 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 502.

148 Anacharsis Cloots, ‘Résumé historique de la révolution française’, in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1793] 1979), 520–607.

name.¹⁴⁹ It was not difficult for Robespierre to accuse Cloots of opportunism and of being a Prussian spy.¹⁵⁰

Cloots opposed Robespierre and his men on two fronts. Firstly, on the question of war in 1792, and secondly on the question of secularisation in 1793. Robespierre was initially sympathetic to Cloots and his ideas, and, according to Cloots, told him that he was the only one to raise adequately the question of sovereignty.¹⁵¹ Reading Robespierre's writings and project of constitution in 1793, one cannot but draw a parallel with Cloots's own ideas. For instance, Robespierre also spoke of speaking from a 'universal tribune' to the 'human race' in the name of 'truth and justice'.¹⁵²

As Robespierre's influence grew, he succeeded in getting bankers, nobles, and foreigners expelled from the Jacobins; priests were also targeted, but Robespierre finally agreed to spare them. Cloots was one of those Jacobin foreigners. Robespierre managed to get important powers with the institution of the Comité de Salut Public in December 1793. He participated in the instigation of a movement of suspicion and verification among members of the various clubs. Foreigners were in particular under scrutiny and Cloots was called to explain himself on 12 December in front of the Jacobins, after several attacks in the newspapers, notably on his views of religion.¹⁵³ Cloots, however, did not defend himself, and left without explanation. Instead, he responded only on 20 December 1793 in a brochure entitled 'Appel au genre humain', in which he explains his political orientations and choices.¹⁵⁴ There is no doubt concerning his sincerity and the evolution of his philosophy, but it was too late; his fate was sealed. Cloots was the victim of a wider machination against the 'Hébertistes'—a group he was not a part of—and a paranoid fear of foreigners. The Hébertists were a group formed around Jacques Hébert (1757–1794). Labbé quotes a contemporary, the fellow German Konrad Engelbert Oelsner, who met Cloots during this period and described his solitude and isolation: 'On l'évitait pour ne pas être soupçonné d'espionnage. Il cherchait sans espoir un visage compatissant vers lequel se retourner'.¹⁵⁵

149 Selma Stern, *Anacharsis Cloots Der Redner Des Menschengeschlechts: Ein Beitrag Zur Geschichte Der Deutschen in Der Französischen Revolution* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1914), 211; Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 118, footnote 239.

150 Maximilien de Robespierre, 'Discours de Robespierre à la Société des Jacobins, séance extraordinaire du 22 frimaire an II', chap. Annexe in *Anacharsis Cloots: Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1793] 1979), 653–54.

151 Anacharsis Cloots, 'Appel au genre humain', in *Écrits révolutionnaires, 1790–1794* (Paris: Editions Champ libre, [1793] 1979), 630.

152 Maximilien de Robespierre, *Le défenseur de la constitution*, 1 (Paris: P.-J. Duplain, 1792), 3.

153 Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 121.

154 Labbé, 122.

155 Labbé, 122.

On 25 December 1793, Robespierre attacked violently the foreigners of Paris in a speech at the Convention. Cloots was subsequently arrested during the night of 27–28 December at his Parisian residence on rue Ménars, and sent to an improvised prison in the Luxembourg Palace.¹⁵⁶ Cloots still had time to write a few letters in prison, before being transferred to Saint-Lazare, and on 20 March 1794, to the Conciergerie. His letters were desperate appeals to reason and common sense in a turbulent period of passion and terror. Cloots seemed to continue hoping for a change whilst accepting his fate in recognition of his own mistakes: ‘Si je pêche, c’est par trop de franchise et de naïveté... Effectivement, si mes principes sont universels, mes talents ne le sont pas...’.¹⁵⁷ Cloots still believed that he could reason with Robespierre, and reminded him that they shared the same idea of the sovereignty of the human race. Remaining in prison, Cloots then believed in the people, this political entity that he wrote was never wrong, representing the general will; he wrote to the ‘Hommes de bonne volonté’, and signed himself ‘Anacharsis Cloots, homme’.¹⁵⁸ His very last recovered letter dated 1 March 1794, addressed to the ‘Amis du genre humain’, ended on these ominous words: ‘Citoyens-hommes, la liberté ou la mort!’.¹⁵⁹

Cloots was guillotined on 24 March 1794. According to witnesses, he remained courageous, even comforting his fellow inmates equally sentenced to death.¹⁶⁰ One can find an account of his last moments in *Mémoires d’un détenu, pour servir à l’histoire de la tyrannie de Robespierre* by Honoré Riouffé (1764–1813), a politician.¹⁶¹ His account, retold almost word for word by Adolphe Thiers in his *Histoire de la révolution française*, depicts a prison scene where passions flared quickly between Hébert and other prisoners the night before going to the guillotine, each blaming the other for their condition.¹⁶² Cloots began to murmur a poem, apparently famous at the time, written by an ‘ancient poet’ — Patris — that can be found in its entirety in an *Encyclopédie poétique*:

Le Rêve du Riche :
 Je rêvais cette nuit que, de mal consumé,
 Côte à côte d’un pauvre on m’avait inhumé,
 Et que, n’en pouvant pas souffrir le voisinage,
 En mort de qualité je lui tins ce langage :

¹⁵⁶ Labbé, 123.

¹⁵⁷ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 631.

¹⁵⁸ Cloots, 645–48.

¹⁵⁹ Cloots, 652.

¹⁶⁰ Labbé, *Anacharsis Cloots*, 123.

¹⁶¹ Riouffé, *Mémoires d’un détenu*, 90–91.

¹⁶² Adolphe Thiers, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, seventh edition, vol. 3 (Bruxelles: Société typographique belge, Adolphe Warlen et compagnie, 1838), 399.

Eloigne-toi, coquin, retire-toi d'ici ;
Il ne t'appartient pas de m'approcher ainsi.
— Coquin ! ce me dit-il d'une arrogance extrême :
Va porter tes coquins ailleurs ; coquin toi-même.
Ici tous sont égaux ; nous ne nous devons rien ;
Je suis sur mon fumier comme toi sur le tien.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Louis Philipon de La Madelaine, *Petite encyclopédie poétique, ou choix de poésies dans tous les genres, par une société de gens de lettres. Mélanges*, vol. 12 (Paris: Capelle et Renand, libraires Commissionnaires, 1805), 202.

2 Rehabilitating Cloots

Qu'est-ce qu'un Orateur du genre humain ?
Cloots, 1792¹

Who was Cloots? And how can his ideas be qualified? Cloots was not an obscure figure during the French Revolution; he was well-known during his life-time as he sparked controversies, while his name lived on throughout the nineteenth century. His fame even transcended borders. A German study presented him as one of the 'Helden der französischen Revolution' who had an unfortunate fate despite loving and fighting for his chosen second homeland.² His name also crossed the Atlantic and made it into the English speaking world as Herman Melville in his classic novel *Moby Dick*, an in two successive novels, used the name Cloots for his descriptions of human diversity. Melville, for instance, described Captain Ahab's crew as: 'Anacharsis Cloomz [sic] deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth...'.³

However, Cloots's name in the nineteenth century started to carry a negative reputation. In French 'popular culture', a vaudeville comedy entitled *Athènes à Paris, ou le nouvel Anacharsis* staged a German baron and his son, both crazy about Ancient Greece.⁴ They are tricked into learning French, while being told they are actually learning 'modern Greek', and travelling to Paris instead of Athens. There, the young baron meets a woman reading *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce* (a reference to Barthélémy's book that inspired Cloots to change his first name).⁵ The whole play is an obvious reference to Cloots, and a chauvinist mockery of the Germans: 'Ah ! J'avre été attrapé comme un véritable Allemand', says Anacharsis when he discovers the supercherie.⁶

This nineteenth-century negative reputation is what survived in contemporary culture, remembering Cloots as an endearing eccentric with subversive ideas. Curiously, his name survived in the world of French indie punk-rock music as a band de-

1 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 243.

2 Karl Richter, *Anacharsis Cloomz* (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1865), 10.

3 Wyn Kelley, *A Companion to Herman Melville* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 113, 282; Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, the Whale* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 133.

4 Thomas Sauvage, Michel-Nicolas Balisson de Rougemont and Gabriel de Lurieu, *Athènes à Paris, ou Le nouvel Anacharsis, comédie-vaudeville en 1 Acte [Paris, Variétés, 1er Décembre 1821.]* (Paris: Pollet, 1821).

5 Barthélemy, *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*.

6 Sauvage, Balisson de Rougemont and Lurieu, *Athènes à Paris*, 36.

cided to name itself ‘Anacharsis Cloots’.⁷ The band chose the name based on Cloots’s reputation as a radical anti-conformist, carried by a book more amusing than seriously researched, which unfortunately keeps spreading false information such as Cloots declaring himself ‘ennemi personnel de Jésus Christ’.⁸ This fake quotation has been reproduced regularly, even in a work of reference such as the 1911 *Encyclopædia Britannica*.⁹ It can still be found on Cloots’s wikipedia page.¹⁰ The origin of this fake citation attributed to Cloots stems from an 1814 pro-monarchist pamphlet claiming to prove that a majority voted against the execution of Louis XVI.¹¹ The author despises Cloots, claiming he died with dementia, and invents the quotation ‘Je me déclare l’ennemi personnel de Jésus Christ’,¹² by adding it at the end of a real speech given by Cloots, albeit with a wrong date.¹³

Due to nineteenth-century defamation of his name, twentieth-century historians started to ignore or play down Cloots’s role in the revolution, despite one study at the start of the century.¹⁴ That Cloots is not well-known is true for the history of cosmopolitanism—where Kant is the uncontested eighteenth-century founding figure. It is also true, even more curiously, for the history of the French Revolution. A look at Furet’s history of the French Revolution, for instance, shows no mention of Cloots.¹⁵ No mention either in the *Dictionnaire critique*.¹⁶ François Furet ignores him all together, whilst Mona Ozouf and Allan Forrest mention him in Furet and Ozouf’s dictionary.¹⁷ Cloots is equally absent in different interpretations of the Revolution.¹⁸

7 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x34VFxqy_9A. Last accessed 5 May 2023.

8 Noël Godin, *Anthologie de la subversion carabinée* (Paris: L’Age d’Homme, 2008), 156–158.

9 Hugh Chisholm, ed., ‘Cloots, Jean Baptiste du Val de De Grâce’, in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 11th ed., vol. Volume 6: Châtelet – Constantine (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 556.

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anacharsis_Cloots, last checked 16 June 2023.

11 Jean Baptiste Magloire Robert, *Vie politique de tous les Députés à la Convention Nationale, pendant et après la Révolution. Ouvrage dans lequel on trouve la preuve que dans le procès de Louis XVI. la peine de mort avait été rejetée à une majorité de six voix*. (Paris: Chez L. Saint Michel, libraire, 1814).

12 Robert, 423.

13 The author writes that Cloots delivered the speech at the National Assembly on 17 [August] and without the correct year. However, the speech quoted was delivered at the National Assembly on 27 August 1792 and does not contain this sentence. See M. E. Laurent, ed., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860*, vol. XLIX: du 26 août 1792 au 15 septembre 1792 au matin (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1896), 41.

14 Stern, *Anacharsis Cloots Der Redner Des Menschengeschlechts*.

15 François Furet, *La Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

16 François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992).

17 François Furet, *La Révolution : De Turgot à Jules Ferry (1770–1880)*, Histoire de France Hachette (Paris: Hachette, 1988); Furet and Ozouf, *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*.

He is also absent from a study in which he should be a centre piece.¹⁹ Most studies of the Revolution mention him in passing²⁰—some with a negative tone,²¹ and some more positive.²² Only more recent studies with a global perspective or a study of the international system mention Cloots profusely.²³

When the historiography of the French Revolution does mention Cloots, it seems that historians have difficulties with how to evaluate him due to the reputation that precedes him. For instance, Ikni wrote in his article on Cloots in the *Dictionnaire Historique de la Révolution Française*: ‘Cloots souvent entraîné par ses visions fumeuses développa une activité brouillonne qui masque mal un cynisme de nanti’.²⁴ Bronisław Baczko considers Cloots as one of the ‘sub-products... of the Enlightenment’.²⁵ In the *Histoire et dictionnaire de la Révolution française*, only a few acerbic lines are dedicated to him.²⁶

Cloots seems to have been accepted as a left-wing figure. His name stands on the website, ‘Marxists Internet Archive’, which published Mitchell Abidor’s translation of three of his speeches into English.²⁷ A dated biography by Georges Avenel has

18 Bailey Stone, *Reinterpreting the French Revolution: A Global-Historical Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Colin Lucas, ed., *Rewriting the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

19 Donald Sutherland, *The French Revolution and Empire: The Quest for A Civic Order* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

20 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 103, 145; Jacques Godechot, *Les Révolutions (1770–1799)*, Third edition, *L’histoire et ses problèmes* : 36 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 198, 336; Colin Jones, *The Longman Companion to the French Revolution* (London: Longman, 1988), 35, 181, 183, 184, 192, 251, 264, 266, 267, 334.

21 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 160, 172, 178, 194, 270; Guy-Robert Ikni, ‘Cloots, Jean-Baptiste, dit Anacharsis Cloots’, in *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française*, ed. Albert Soboul (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 233–234.

22 Ian Collier, ‘The Revolutionary Mediterranean’, in *A Companion to the French Revolution*, ed. Peter McPhee (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 424–426; Annie Jourdan, *La Révolution, une exception française?* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), 167, 222, 226.

23 Suzanne Desan, Lynn Hunt and William Max Nelson, eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

24 Albert Soboul, *Dictionnaire historique de la Révolution française* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 234.

25 Bronisław Baczko, ‘Il cosmopolitismo illuminista e le sue frontiere’, in *La frontiera da stato a nazione: Il caso Piemonte*, ed. Carki Ossola, Claude Raffestin and Mario Ricciardi (Roma: Bulzoni, 1987), 364.

26 Tulard et al., *Histoire et dictionnaire de la Révolution française: 1789–1799*, Bouquins (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998), 654.

27 <https://www.marxists.org/history/france/revolution/cloots/index.htm>. Last accessed 30 January 2017.

been re-printed by a left-wing publishing house.²⁸ This *parti pris* may be the result of the nineteenth-century polarisation between a republican pro-revolutionary left, and a monarchical anti-revolutionary right; each tried to find heroes and foes in the French Revolution.

This book reappraises Cloots's political thought and seeks to restore him in his context and his place among Enlightenment thought and revolutionary politics. I will first present how nineteenth-century historians saw Cloots as a proponent of cosmopolitanism, but with a nineteenth-century understanding of cosmopolitanism as opposed to nationalism. I will then look at contemporary studies on Cloots's political thought, which start to take his writings more seriously.

Studies on Cloots

Regarding Cloots's ideas, nineteenth-century historians were clear that Cloots was the foremost proponent of cosmopolitanism. For better or worse. For his advocates he was a visionary, and, because of his fate, a martyr. For his opponents he was a mere madman, and, perhaps even worse in their eyes, a German. However, they all agreed that his ideas represented the first and best example of cosmopolitanism as a political theory: 'The merit of the "Orator of the Human Race" consists in his having been the first to formulate Cosmopolitanism as a principle...'.²⁹ An analysis of nineteenth-century conceptions of cosmopolitanism could be interesting to understand why Cloots was then identified as a proponent of cosmopolitanism, but this is not the subject of this thesis. The author's political leaning often indicates whether Cloots is represented as a cosmopolitan visionary and martyr or a cosmopolitan madman and German. The French Revolution, after all, did not end with Napoleon, but lasted well into the nineteenth century as intellectuals and politicians fought over its legacy and over the restitution of monarchy or the foundation of the republic.³⁰

Nineteenth Century

On the one side, left-wing or republican historians are very sympathetic to Cloots, who is recuperated in its republican fight against monarchism, and its socialist fight against liberalism. The first historian to publish a portrait of Cloots, with a

²⁸ Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*.

²⁹ Bax, 'The Orator of the Human Race'.

³⁰ Furet, *La Révolution*.

sympathetic view, was Léonard Gallois (1789–1851) in his *Histoire des journaux et des journalistes de la révolution*, noting that Cloots was famous.³¹ French historian Georges Avenel (1828–1876) published a flamboyant panegyric as an historical biography of Cloots. It is, nonetheless, the most comprehensive nineteenth-century biography of Cloots. His two-volume monograph has been reprinted by a Parisian publishing house, Éditions du Champ Libre, which is mainly publishing works from the far-left and communist tradition.³² His biography is written with a narrative technique conjuring up to an heroic style, whilst his sources are mainly Cloots's own writings and confessions throughout his work. The tone is dithyrambic, and much akin to Cloots's own lyrical expressionism — although the latter's was in line with eighteenth-century revolutionary harangues, and the former's was in touch with nineteenth-century romanticism. In many respects, Cloots is restored favourably in Avenel's biography due to an appreciation for his personality and thoughts.

Jean Jaurès (1859–1914) attributed a great role to Cloots.³³ In his ground-breaking *Socialist History of the French Revolution* Jaurès wrote enthusiastically about Cloots and his system, seeing him as a visionary, a political thinker superior to the other revolutionaries, combining Rousseau, Adam Smith, Diderot, Humboldt, Helvetius, and Spinoza.³⁴ There is no doubt that Jaurès contributed to Cloots's reputation as a left-wing thinker, without the Marxist's stages of history in human development:

Il n'est pas vrai de dire avec les économistes que le libre échange des produits fera tomber les antagonismes nationaux. Il n'est pas vrai de dire avec les révolutionnaires que la propagande de la liberté fera tomber les antagonismes économiques. Il y a là deux aspects liés et inséparables de la guerre. Et l'harmonie ne sera vraiment instituée que quand la libre communication des produits et l'exercice politique de la liberté se produiront à l'intérieur d'un seul État, d'un État unique enveloppant toutes les activités humaines. J'ose dire que Cloots a admirablement posé le problème ; j'ose dire que l'histoire, dont le travail infiniment complexe paraît convenir si peu au schéma simple de Cloots, se meut en ce sens : ... elle tend à constituer, en effet, sous l'apparente diversité des nations et sous la violence persistante des antagonismes, l'État unique, l'État humain, expression de la civilisation générale.³⁵

31 Léonard Gallois, *Histoire des journaux et des journalistes de la révolution française (1789–1796)* (Paris: Bureau de la Société de l'industrie fraternelle, 1845), 375–384.

32 Avenel, *Anacharsis Cloots*.

33 Jean Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste : 1789–1900*, ed. Jean Jaurès, vol. 3: La convention nationale (Paris: Jules Rouff, 1901); Jean Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste : 1789–1900*, ed. Jean Jaurès, vol. 4: La Convention II, 1793–1794 (9 Thermidor) (Paris: Jules Rouff, 1901); Jean Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, ed. Albert Mathiez, vol. 5: La révolution en Europe (Paris: Librairie de l'Humanité, 1922).

34 Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, Vol. 6, 66–87.

35 Jaurès, 78–79.

Jaurès praises Cloots's analysis, but he tempers it with its shortcoming for jumping directly to the goal, notwithstanding Marxist historical materialism and the different steps leading to a unique state; the current step being nationalism. Cloots's faith in the people, the *sans-culottes*, is readapted as a socialist view of the growing strength of the proletariat. Jaurès added:

Le nationalisme fragmentaire, le nationalisme national ne s'élargira pas d'emblée en nationalisme humain : il passera par des formes « d'internationalisme » et une de ces formes sera la fédération des États.³⁶

Jaurès approves of Cloots's analysis, but considers that he is too enthusiastic and too optimistic. The nation-state is the necessary step before internationalism, and finally the unity of humankind. Interestingly, Jaurès uses the terms of 'national nationalism' and 'human nationalism'. Jaurès had a non-nationalist approach to nationalism and understood what Cloots meant by the 'nation of the human race'.³⁷ Ernest Belfort Bax (1854–1926), English barrister, socialist and anti-nationalist philosopher, historian, and journalist, was another example of an author who recognised Cloots as a cosmopolitan thinker: 'The merit of the "Orator of the Human Race" consists in his having been the first to formulate Cosmopolitanism as a principle...'.³⁸ However, not all socialist historians are favourable to Cloots. Albert Mathiez (1874–1932), another French historian specialised in the revolution and famous for his Marxist interpretation, sketched a derisive portrait of Cloots, stressing that he was 'universal' with quotation marks.³⁹ More interestingly, Mathiez presented Cloots as someone who wanted to 'suppress the nations', sarcastically noting that he believed that the human race was one despite the differences of colours, languages, and mores.⁴⁰ Even if Mathiez did not appreciate Cloots, he recognised in him an anti-nationalist, and a universalist.

However, the view of Cloots as a left-wing figure should be nuanced. On the one hand, it is true that Cloots favoured a highly democratic and egalitarian view of society; for instance, Cloots's letter to Burke asking him to witness in person how enlightened the people of Paris were, to his motion defending the right to vote of servants, and the establishment of his system as the culmination of the march of history into a world society without war and without inequalities.⁴¹ On the other, Cloots did favour a libertarian approach to capitalism considering that the end of

³⁶ Jaurès, *Histoire socialiste de la Révolution française*, Vol. 6, 80.

³⁷ See chapter on concepts of community *infra* for an explanation of these concepts.

³⁸ Bax, 'The Orator of the Human Race'.

³⁹ Albert Mathiez, *La Révolution et les étrangers* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 1918), 48–57.

⁴⁰ Mathiez, 55.

⁴¹ See chapter 1.

national rivalries would lead to a fruitful redistribution of wealth through unbridled trade, without the need for much governmental regulation. Moreover, Cloots was adamant regarding the necessity to defend property: 'La propriété est la base de tout régime social ; quiconque y porte atteinte aura contre lui tous ceux qui possèdent, et la majorité de ceux qui ne possèdent pas.'⁴²

On the other side, non-socialist historians questioned his sanity, calling him a 'madman', and mostly wrote his name 'Cloutz' instead of 'Cloots', in an attempt to accentuate his Prussian origins and extraneity to the French Revolution, as well as exacerbating nineteenth-century French nationalism and opposition to Germany. This is the reason why Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–1889) criticised Avenel. Barbey d'Aurevilly was catholic, partisan of absolute monarchy, and a romantic novelist, who theorised his own dandyism in Paris. His criticism is not against Avenel's method, but against what he perceives as a new trend to rehabilitate the least glorious deeds and actors of the revolution. Least of them all Cloots! According to Barbey d'Aurevilly, no one had ever thought of writing a biography celebrating

... ce jocrisse allemand, pesant comme trois jocrisses français, et qui s'était intitulé lui même, avec la solennité d'un fou dans sa loge : *l'Orateur du genre humain* !⁴³

Not particularly informed about Cloots, Barbey d'Aurevilly's knowledge seems to be based on what had previously been disseminated about this 'madman' by Cloots's opponents during the revolution. His behaviour, reportedly, was nothing more than ridiculous, if not the the very definition of ridicule:

... Anacharsis Cloots était, lui, non pas ridicule, mais le ridicule en soi ; et sans la goutte de sang de Louis XVI qui lui tâcha la main, il serait le ridicule *tout seul*, le ridicule le plus complet et le plus pur de la Révolution française !⁴⁴

Another reason, according to Barbey d'Aurevilly, for not holding Cloots in high historical esteem was that he was German. And a Frenchman like Barbey d'Aurevilly knows how idiotic being a German means. Even Voltaire, whom Cloots idolised, would have mocked such a German, who could venture to believe that one can change nationality like breeches:

... Cloots resta Prussien et mourut tel, avec son utopie dans la tête, comme tout bon Allemand doit mourir. Rien n'y fit ! Ni sa parenté maternelle qui était hollandaise, ni ses trente quatre ans passés en France pour se faire *vif* et Français, ni son adoption par deux départements

⁴² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 313.

⁴³ Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly, *Portraits politiques et littéraires* (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1897), 225.

⁴⁴ Barbey d'Aurevilly, 226.

français qui l'envoyèrent à la Convention, ni ses livres écrits dans cet enthousiaste langage tudesque que sa tête et son oreille allemande croyaient bonnement du français, ni son culte à deux genoux et à plat ventre pour Voltaire, qui se serait, lui, le Français, diablement moqué d'un pareil Prussien s'il l'avait connu ! Cloots resta, sous pavillon bonnet, ou cocarde étrangers, l'incommutable Allemand primitif qu'il était. Il n'y a qu'un Allemand, et un Allemand d'excellente race encore qui puisse croire sérieusement qu'on peut se dépouiller de sa nationalité, comme on ôte sa culotte, pour marcher dans la beauté de la nature nu et superbe humanitaire au conspect méprisé des nations.⁴⁵

But Barbey d'Aureville's main intention appeared to be ridiculing Cloots and thereby Avenel's work. His absolutist monarchism and extreme nationalism may explain his opposition to a biography of Cloots.

François Laurent (1810–1887), a Belgian administrator, legal scholar, and historian also presented Cloots as the main proponent of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism. Kant is not mentioned under cosmopolitanism, but instead studied under 'liberal protestantism' and for his views on 'law and perpetual peace', where Laurent argues that his understanding of a republican regime is a regime under the rule of law.⁴⁶

Pourquoi donnons-nous une place dans des études sur l'histoire de l'humanité à un homme qui frise la folie ? C'est que l'orateur du genre humain prêchant la république universelle nous montre l'écueil du cosmopolitisme qui enthousiasma le dix-huitième siècle et qui donna à la Révolution cette ardeur immodérée de propagande dont Anacharsis est le représentant le plus exagéré. Or c'est un devoir pour l'historien de signaler les erreurs qu'il rencontre sur son chemin quand elles ont égaré d'illustres penseurs et une grande nation.⁴⁷

This was, of course a different time, when history served as a guide for policy-making. Today, the historian may adopt Skinner's view on 'the duty of historians': 'don't write history like that!' It is equivalent to foreclosing before even knowing one had to foreclose a whole gamut of explanations. Declaring a belief to be false and giving a causal explanation for what led to this delusion is solely the work of imagination and it is more likely to be wrong than historical.⁴⁸

45 Barbey d'Aureville, *Portraits politiques et littéraires*, 226.

46 François Laurent, *Histoire du droit des gens et des relations internationales*, vol. 18: La philosophie de l'histoire (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1870), 616–19.

47 François Laurent, *Histoire du droit des gens et des relations internationales*, vol. 15: L'Empire (Paris: Librairie Internationale, 1869), 186.

48 See Skinner's paper presented at the conference on intellectual history: Quentin Skinner, 'Belief, Truth, and Interpretation', in *Ideengeschichte. Traditionen Und Perspektiven* (Bochum: Ruhr-University Bochum, November 2014).

Contemporary Studies

During the nineteenth century, therefore, Cloots was not only still well-known, but he was known as a central figure of cosmopolitanism. This notoriety and this identification with cosmopolitanism disappeared during the twentieth century, except for a PhD thesis on Cloots and ‘French cosmopolitanism’.⁴⁹ It is only recently that Cloots has reappeared from the footnotes of history to the footnotes of cosmopolitan political theory.⁵⁰ A couple of studies are devoted to him. Bevilacqua and Cheneval have written articles on his political thought.⁵¹ Cavallar has briefly compared his ideas with Kant’s in a study on a history of international law, while Kleingeld has dedicated a whole chapter to him equally comparing his ideas with Kant’s.⁵² Israel has also mentioned Cloots as part of these French Revolutionaries that were inspired by what he calls the ‘Radical Enlightenment’.⁵³ However, this is a gross generalisation of Cloots’s thought.

Intellectual historians who have studied Cloots have labelled him under different categories. Firstly, I think Israel’s labelling Cloots as part of the ‘Radical Enlightenment’ is mistaken. Israel argues that Cloots is among the revolutionary leaders who derived their egalitarian and democratic concepts from the ‘Radical Enlightenment’.⁵⁴ By ‘Radical Enlightenment’, Israel designates the intellectual movement that stems from Spinoza and the underground philosophical movement known as Spinozism that succeeded it, which, according to Israel, influenced the revolutionary rhetoric of Robespierre and the Jacobins, more than the English republican tradition.⁵⁵ Israel considers Cloots as criticising Frederick notably for

49 John Christopher Stevens, ‘Anacharsis Cloots and French Cosmopolitanism: The Death of an Idea’ (PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 1954).

50 See Archibugi, *The Global Commonwealth of Citizens: Toward Cosmopolitan Democracy*, 83; H. Patrick Glenn, *The Cosmopolitan State*, Oxford Constitutional Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 174; James D. Ingram, *Radical Cosmopolitics: The Ethics and Politics of Democratic Universalism*, New Directions in Critical Theory (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2013), 38–39.

51 Bevilacqua, ‘Conceiving the Republic of Mankind’; Cheneval, ‘Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus’.

52 Georg Cavallar, *Imperfect Cosmopolis: Studies in the History of International Legal Theory and Cosmopolitan Ideas* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011); Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*.

53 Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

54 Israel, 26.

55 Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 22; Jonathan I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 43–60.

condemning monarchy and aristocracy, and for his ‘unenlightened’ intolerance of Jews.⁵⁶ However, this study will show that Cloots praised Frederick in his pre-revolutionary writings. It is true to argue that Cloots defended the Jews, and that may be a ‘radical theme’, but it is a rather thin connection to the thesis of ‘Radical Enlightenment’.⁵⁷ Israel also includes Cloots with Mirabeau, Sieyès, Condorcet, Volney, Brissot, Paine, Maréchal, and Mercier for being in favour of ‘representative democracy’. But Cloots’s thought was to have all countries to send a representative to the national assembly in Paris, a rather unique proposition even if it had affinities with Volney, Paine, and Condorcet to some extent.⁵⁸ Moreover, Cloots is perhaps closer to Maréchal and Mercier when it comes to the ‘natural republican’ tradition, but closer to Paine and Condorcet when it comes to the ‘cosmopolitan republican’ tradition, as this study hopes to demonstrate. In general, Israel puts Cloots in a group with other revolutionaries concerning very vague positions such as being *anti-philosophes*, or against kings and monarchy itself.⁵⁹ That is true to some extent, but this is a very wide category, and again, Cloots had different ideas of what a republic without a king should be, and, like many others, was not opposed to kings before the revolution. It is wrong to affirm that Cloots ‘openly disdained the multitude for their ignorance and addiction to “superstition”’.⁶⁰ As this thesis will argue, Cloots fought superstition, but believed in the progress of reason among the population as Parisians showed with the revolution; Cloots was even mocked by Burke for praising so highly the commoners of Paris in their philosophical knowledge.⁶¹

Cheneval was the first to label Cloots’s political thought as ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’.⁶² Cheneval fleshed out many of the elements that this thesis will analyse in order to qualify Cloots’s system as ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’. Cheneval notes the foundational role of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits* as a ‘primitive contract’ in Cloots’s system and how liberty granted by nature gives every individual sovereignty. Cheneval also notes how Cloots dismisses climate theory and Montesquieu in order to justify the universality of individual liberty, and how Cloots uses Rousseau’s concept of general will dismissing the need for a small population in any political association for the same reason that corporations should not exist. Cheneval very rightly explains Cloots’s concept of ‘nation unique du

⁵⁶ Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 29, 277.

⁵⁷ Israel, 495.

⁵⁸ Israel, 644.

⁵⁹ Israel, 942.

⁶⁰ Israel, 915.

⁶¹ See the biography chapter.

⁶² Cheneval, ‘Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus’.

genre humain' by noting how the concept of 'nation' was not yet *nationalist* and was used to express a revolutionary cosmopolitanism. Cheneval also notes the tension in such a view with the imperialism that followed the French Revolution after Cloots's death, whilst emphasising how Cloots's system is tolerant and inclusive of the diversity of religions and opinions. Cheneval also notes Cloots's praise for a global liberal economic order, and how this goes hand in hand with world peace, albeit in a very different scheme than what other eighteenth-century peace projects had devised. This thesis analyses all of these elements in more detail. However, Cheneval does not give a definition or an understanding of what cosmopolitanism is, or at least not directly and explicitly, even if he compares Cloots's thought with contemporary cosmopolitan theories such as 'cosmopolitan communitarianism'.⁶³

Cavallar argues that Cloots's thought 'can be labelled cosmopolitan republicanism or republican cosmopolitanism'.⁶⁴ By that, Cavallar identifies Cloots together with other thinkers who tried to 'reformulate republicanism with a focus on large states', and classifies them into two categories: partisans of an alliance of republics, on the one hand, and Cloots, who is in favour of a world republic without states, on the other, because the 'social contract should be global'.⁶⁵ In a way, Cavallar is right in his description of Cloots. However, as the following chapters will show, there is much more to it, because there is much less to it: the republicanism that Cloots adopts is close to the natural republicanism of the Jacobins that Edelstein has identified. Cloots's republicanism is actually the absence of any state and even government on the world scale. Moreover, it is wrong to see Cloots as being in favour of a global social contract. Again, the natural republicanism in which his thought emerges denies the existence of a state of nature that has been left through a social contract to join a state of society. Society is nature, and we all live in the state of nature, which is society. Unfortunately, humankind did not follow the natural order in which there are no borders. These divisions were, for Cloots and the Jacobins, the work of monarchs and priests, a result of centuries of wrong thinking and superstition. The French Revolution marked, for Cloots, the beginning of a new era under the sign of science and the application of the 'science of man'. Finally, it is misreading Cloots and the revolutionaries to state that he represented cosmopolitanism as opposed to nationalism. It is debatable whether nationalism and cosmopolitanism could be said to exist at the time, and equally debatable whether they are opposed to one another.

⁶³ Cheneval, 'Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus', 391–392.

⁶⁴ Cavallar, *Imperfect Cosmopolis*, 103.

⁶⁵ Cavallar, 103.

Bevilacqua does not explicitly refer to Cloots's system as 'cosmopolitan republicanism', but he does refer to it as 'a chapter in the history of cosmopolitan thought' and as articulated in the context of a 'republican experiment'.⁶⁶ Bevilacqua is also right in considering Cloots as articulating several political concepts in his own original way. However, as can be inferred from this present study, Bevilacqua is taking a limited view of the context of Cloots's thought to characterise his system as the abolition of the state system for a world state and the abolition of politics, in order to situate Cloots as a precursor of anarchism. It is true that Cloots's system considers the disappearance of the state system, but it is not exactly his identified purpose, as it would be the purpose for an anarchist. It is more rightly a consequence of his analysis regarding nature and universality; as will be argued, a thought closer to that of the physiocrats, according to whom obeying nature leads to the good functioning of society, and hence dispenses for the need of administration. By the same token, Bevilacqua states that Cloots professed the end of politics, and in a way this is true, but, again, this is the result of Cloots's analysis regarding nature and natural law: only through unity, which is observed everywhere in nature, will conflicts cease between peoples, and the respect of the laws of nature should render an executive government unnecessary.

Kleingeld considers Cloots's thought in the second chapter, 'Kant and Cloots on global peace', of her account of Kant's cosmopolitanism.⁶⁷ However, the chapter is more an analysis and praise of Kant's federalist plan as opposed to a perceived imperialistic imposition of a despotic world state that Cloots is supposed to represent. The mere uses of the terms 'world republic' and 'world state' to Cloots's thought are already problematic: Cloots never used those expressions. 'République du genre humain', 'république universelle', 'république régénératrice', 'république des hommes', 'république des individus unis', 'république des droits de l'homme', or 'république des sans-culottes', those are some of the expressions Cloots employs, but not 'république du monde' or 'république mondiale', and even less 'État mondial' since he rarely mentions the concept of 'state' at all. Once, Cloots does write: 'L'Univers formera un seul État, l'État des Individus-Unis, ... la République-universelle',⁶⁸ but Cloots is hardly advocating 'world-state cosmopolitanism' on a Rousseauian social contract theory.⁶⁹ Cloots moved intellectually away from Rousseau through the years. In his revolutionary writings, if Cloots mentions positively Rousseau and the *Social Contract*, it is in his answer to Burke for justifying

⁶⁶ Bevilacqua, 'Conceiving the Republic of Mankind', 550, 569.

⁶⁷ Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*, 40–71.

⁶⁸ Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 396.

⁶⁹ Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*, 40.

equality among men, and thus popular sovereignty, from which the king's authority derives, and leads Cloots to deride the attitude of the king's brother claiming a *right of passage*, so to speak, the pre-eminence of his royal coach over others in the streets of Paris.⁷⁰ Otherwise, Cloots is critical of Rousseau's views on religion that he considers intolerant, and characterised Rousseau's small republics as a mistake, not only because of their size, but also because of their multiplicity. Most importantly, Cloots rejects any notion of a transition from a state of nature to a state of society, and hence rejects the existence of a social contract. If contract at all, Cloots mentions a 'primitive contract' of the human race, which grants moral authority to humankind, thus conflicting with the moral authority of nature as argued in the chapter on nature and natural law. I do not think it is fair to read Cloots as Kleingeld does and present him as proposing a theory of an imposed contractualist world state.⁷¹

There is therefore a Western 'rediscovery' of Cloots and his political thought in this century.⁷² His views on religion with his transition from deism to atheism has also received attention recently.⁷³ There is a Schmidtian analysis of his political theology.⁷⁴ And his constitutional plan has been studied in relation to constitutionalism and legal dogmatic.⁷⁵ Cloots's main writing, *La république du genre humain*, has been reedited in French as a pocket book,⁷⁶ and, together with *La république universelle*, translated into Italian and Spanish.⁷⁷ All these studies are right in tak-

70 Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', 45.

71 Pagden also mentions Cloots among other thinkers of universal peace projects, but solely relies on Kleingeld's reading of Cloots. Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 290–291.

72 Luca Addante, 'La riscoperta di un rivoluzionario: Anacharsis Cloots', *Rivista storica Italiana* CXXXIII, no. 2 (August 2021): 631–663.

73 Daniella Müller, 'Anacharsis Cloots - der kosmopolitische Atheist', *Rund Um den Schwanenturm. Zeitschrift des Klevischen Vereins für Kultur und Geschichte* 36 (2017): 26–33; Daniela Müller, 'Revolution statt Religion: Anacharsis Cloots – der atheistische Revolutionär', *NTT Journal for Theology and the Study of Religion* 76, no. 1 (January 2022): 18–41.

74 Alan Żukowski, 'Anacharsisa Clootsa ujęcie ów suwerenności i teologii politycznej', Publisher: Komisja Nauk Filologicznych Oddziału Polskiej Akademii Nauk we Wrocławiu, *Academic Journal of Modern Philology*, no. 10 (2020): 269–281.

75 Daniel Schulz, 'Die Verfassung der Weltrepublik im kosmopolitischen Universalismus: Anacharsis Cloots', in *Verfassungsidee und Verfassungspolitik*, ed. Daniel Schulz and Marcus Llanque (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 181–190.

76 Anacharsis Cloots, *La république du genre humain*, ed. Louis Lourme, Mille et une nuits (Paris: Fayard, 2013).

77 Anacharsis Cloots, *La repubblica universale*, trans. Placido Currò (Messina: Edizioni il Grano, 2014); Anacharsis Cloots, *La República universal: seguido de Bases constitucionales de la República del género humano*, trans. Francisco Javier Espinosa Antón (Pamplona: Laetoli, 2018).

ing Cloots seriously and dismiss previous negative reviews and portraits of his life and thought. I explain why in this next section.

Taking Cloots seriously

Few twentieth-century historians took Cloots seriously, perhaps based on negative portraits painted by some nineteenth-century historians. As mentioned in the previous section, twenty-first-century historians have begun to analyse Cloots's thought, indirectly considering him worthy of analysis. In this section, I argue how and why historians should consider him and his writing as part of Enlightenment philosophy and revolutionary political thought.

First, Cloots received an elite academic training, and subsequently started to make a name for himself in the republic of letters.

Second, the revolution offered him the opportunity to reinvent himself as a classical orator dispensing his philosophy using all the rhetorical training he had received during his education. His title of 'Orator of the human race' is a republican position he gave himself as a foreigner in this new political system before he was granted citizenship and elected at the parliament.

Third, he deliberately chose to write pamphlets rather than academic treatises after the Revolution, following the model set by Thomas Paine and his *Common Sense*. His writings should therefore be considered and analysed within this genre, and not dismissed as non-philosophical simply because they are not the work of scholars at a university.

A highly Educated Aspiring *Philosophe*

Cloots was not only educated at a Parisian *collège*, but also at the *Académie des Nobles* in Berlin. This academy was founded on the model of the French academies. This model of education for noblemen—first *collège* then *académie*—was a recent phenomenon for eighteenth-century elites. Before that, the *noblesse d'épée* would only get an education from an *académie*, which were moulded on the Neapolitan model concentrating mainly on exercises for the body and little for the mind besides elements of geography and fortification.⁷⁸ Richelieu and Mazarin introduced a vast reform to integrate the noble elites into the service of the realm by focus-

⁷⁸ Roger Chartier, Dominique Julia and Marie-Madeleine Compère, *L'éducation en France du XVIème au XVIIIème siècle* (Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1976), 181–183.

ing heavily on the humanities instead of physical disciplines. Logic, physics, metaphysics, moral, geography, universal history, Roman and French history formed part of the new curriculum, and were taught exclusively in French.⁷⁹ The *académie Richelieu*, for instance, taught the following subjects: grammar, poetry, rhetoric, figures, orators, history, geography, logic, physics, geometry, arithmetic, music, astronomy, optical mechanics, moral, economics, politics, metaphysics, and some Greek and Latin.⁸⁰ Cloots received the same kind of education, all in French, at the Berlin *académie*. Frederick II, known for his philosophical writings, established the *académie des nobles* devising himself the curriculum and closely monitoring the progress of the pupils.⁸¹ It is safe to conclude, therefore, that Cloots had received one of the best educations at the time, with a high-level academic training, consistently in French.

Moreover, Cloots was the nephew of the renowned philosopher Cornelius de Pauw. Their correspondence shows that Cornelius de Pauw was fond of his nephew, and they exchanged and discussed ideas. Cloots had read the works of his uncle and commented on them in his first publication, *Certitude*. The fact that Cloots wrote this book discussing revealed religion also demonstrates his good command of the literature of his time on the topic. It may not be an original piece of work that adds a definitive argument to the discussion, but it certainly shows that Cloots was not a madman with a confused mind, as some nineteenth-century biographers portrayed him. He was an intellectual figure trying to make a name for himself. He frequented the Parisian salons and the Musée, participating in the debates of ideas in the intellectual public sphere of the republic of letters.

Before the Revolution, Cloots was already regarded as an intellectual figure, and his ambition was to follow in the footsteps of his uncle, de Pauw, even if those were large shoes to fill. The Revolution offered him the opportunity to reinvent himself, as it did to many other revolutionaries.

A Self-fashioned Republican Orator

As mentioned previously, Cloots was mocked for his supposedly exaggerated admiration for Greek antiquity.⁸² However, during the Revolution, it was not uncommon

79 Chartier, Julia and Compère, *L'éducation en France du XVIème au XVIIIème siècle*, 183.

80 Chartier, Julia and Compère, 184.

81 Poulsen, 'The Education of Anacharsis Cloots'.

82 Sauvage, Balisson de Rougemont and Lurieu, *Athènes à Paris*.

to draw inspiration from Greek and Roman antiquity.⁸³ Cloots, like other revolutionaries, had received an education that highlighted the significance of Greek and Roman antiquity as examples of history, politics, and moral philosophy. As he became increasingly atheist, he rejected his Christian name of Jean-Baptiste and adopted the name of a philosophical figure from Greek antiquity, who had gained fame through a popular novel.⁸⁴ Other famous revolutionaries also changed their first names to those of well-known Roman political or military figures. This type of self-fashioning and reinvention was a common practice in the early modern period and was widely used during the Revolution.⁸⁵

Cloots was also ridiculed for the public stunt that made him famous afterward, his delegation of foreigners to the National Assembly as the ‘ambassador of the human race’. The intention behind the delegation was to request that foreigners be allowed to participate in the first celebration of the federation on the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1790. The purpose of the celebration was to symbolize the unity of the French departments and the reunion of the three estates in a celebration of universal liberty and equality. Throughout the country, celebrations were held with women dressed in traditional folk costumes representing all the departments of France. Therefore, it was not unusual in the context of revolutionary celebrations for Cloots’s delegation to represent foreign countries with people dressed in corresponding traditional costumes.⁸⁶

Moreover, when considering the speech that Cloots delivered and his subsequent writings about his delegation, there is nothing outlandish or far-fetched. Cloots wanted the celebration to be universal, which aligns with the idea that the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen was meant to be universal and served as the cornerstone of the celebration. Therefore, his petition was to admit other nations, a request that the assembly accepted. Furthermore, Cloots’s argument, in line with the discourse of the Revolution, was that a monarchical form of government deprived its population of freedom and, therefore, did not truly represent the people who had not chosen their government or had a say in the country’s policies. Since there were actual ambassadors of foreign countries at the *Fête de la Fédération*, Cloots claimed that they did not represent the people and asserted that his delegation represented them more accurately. He proclaimed him-

83 Harold Talbot Parker, *The Cult of Antiquity and the French Revolutionaries: A Study in the Development of the Revolutionary Spirit* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1937).

84 Poulsen, ‘Self-Fashioning and Rhetoric in the French Revolution’, 307–310.

85 Stephen Jay Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

86 Mona Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire 1789–1799*, Bibliothèque des histoires (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1976).

self the ‘ambassador of the human race’, representing all the nations that were not present.⁸⁷

Subsequently, Cloots referred to himself as the ‘Orator of the human race’ rather than an ambassador. In a way, this title is more modest, as an ambassador typically holds an institutional and state-related position. Cloots, lacking French citizenship, was unable to exercise any official function. However, it is evident that he was enthusiastic about what he perceived as the practical application of many Enlightenment ideas he had studied. One role that he believed he could fulfil in this contemporary experiment of republican principles was that of an ‘orator’. As all revolutionaries were aware from their classical education, the ‘orator’ had a distinct role in the Roman republic.

Cloots’s function as the ‘Orator of the human race’ should be understood as an emulation of classical republicanism combined with the role of an Enlightenment philosopher. On one hand, Cloots compared himself to Voltaire when he proclaimed to represent the philosophers in the republic of letters:

« Je persiste à croire, disait Voltaire, que les philosophes m’ont daigné prendre pour leur représentant, comme une compagnie fait souvent signer pour elle le moindre de ses associés. » Anacharsis Cloots persiste, avec la même modestie, à croire que les peuples opprimés ont daigné le prendre pour leur représentant.⁸⁸

On the other hand, as the chapter on reason and science demonstrates, it is evident that the philosophy preached by this orator is rooted in the modern political thought of the Enlightenment and not in outdated classical republicanism.

As noted by Cicero and Quintilian, the orator was considered a *vir civilis*, a man actively engaged in political affairs, capable of pleading in courts and public assemblies to defend justice and truth. According to Cicero, the orator shares similarities with a philosopher skilled in rhetoric.⁸⁹ The role of the orator is to grasp the truth, like a philosopher, and to present it to his fellow citizens who may not perceive it through their own reason. This is where eloquence becomes crucial, as it enables the orator to persuade and move the audience.⁹⁰ Indeed, there is compelling evidence of the influence of Cicero on Cloots, particularly in his choice of the title ‘Orator’, as well as numerous references to Cicero in his writings and his study of Cicero during his education. In his speech to the National Convention, where he justifies his decision regarding the execution of the king, Cloots mentions Cicero and draws a com-

⁸⁷ Poulsen, ‘Self-Fashioning and Rhetoric in the French Revolution’, 302–304.

⁸⁸ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 244.

⁸⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 75.

⁹⁰ Poulsen, ‘Self-Fashioning and Rhetoric in the French Revolution’, 315–322.

parison between himself and the Roman orator in terms of their respective roles as orators: 'L'Orateur romain... se trouvait dans une position moins avantageuse que l'Orateur du genre humain...'.⁹¹

Cicero wrote about the perfect orator in *De oratore* where Crassus enumerates the qualities that an orator must possess:

Non enim causicum nescio quem, neque proclamatorem, aut rabulam, hoc sermone nostro conquirimus, sed eum virum, qui primum sit eius artis antistes, cuius cum ipsa natura magnam homini facultatem daret, tamen dedisse deus putabatur; ut et ipsum, quod erat hominis proprium, non partum per nos, sed divinitus ad nos delatum videretur; deinde, qui possit, non tam caduceo, quam nomine oratoris ornatus, incolumis, vel inter hostium tela, versari; tum, qui scelus fraudemque nocentis possit dicendo subicere odio civium, supplicioque constringere; idemque ingenii praesidio innocentiam iudiciorum poena liberare; idemque languentem labentemque populum aut ad decus excitare, aut ab errore deducere, aut inflammare in improbos, aut incitatum in bonos, mitigare; qui denique, quemcumque in animis hominum motum res et causa postulet, eum dicendo vel excitare possit, vel sedare.⁹²

Cloots gives a very similar definition of what is the 'Orator of the human race' using the same figure of repetition, *mesarchia*, amplifying the role and the qualities of the orator, and the use of similar other *tropi* such as the metaphor of fire:

Qu'est-ce qu'un Orateur du genre humain ? C'est un homme pénétré de la dignité de l'homme ; c'est un tribun qui brûle d'amour pour la liberté, et qui s'enflamme d'horreur contre les tyrans ; c'est un homme qui, après avoir reçu la sanction de son apostolat universel dans le sein du corps constituant de l'univers, se dévoue uniquement à la défense gratuite de tous les millions d'esclaves qui gémissent d'un pôle à l'autre sous la verge des aristocrates ; ... c'est un homme qui s'exile volontairement des foyers qui l'ont vu naître, des contrées qu'il a parcourues, des climats divers où un doux souvenir le caresse, pour rester inébranlablement assis dans le chef-lieu de l'indépendance, en renonçant à toutes les places honorables et lucratives où son zèle et

⁹¹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 451.

⁹² 'For in this talk of ours we are not seeking some pettifogger, declaimer or ranter, but that man who, to begin with, is high-priest of that art which, though unaided nature bestowed on mankind a great capacity for it, was yet deemed to have been the gift of a divinity, so that a property peculiar to humanity might seem no offspring of ourselves, but to be sent down upon us from heaven; who secondly can abide unharmed even on the field of battle, through the respect felt for his title of orator rather than any heraldic staff; who furthermore can by his eloquence expose to the indignation of fellow-citizens, and restrain by punishment, the crimes and iniquities of the guilty; who also, by the shield of his talent, can deliver innocence from legal penalties; who again can either inspire a lukewarm and erring nation to a sense of the fitting, or lead them away from their blundering, or kindle their wrath against the wicked, or soothe them when they are excited against good men; who lastly can by his eloquence either arouse or calm, within the souls of men, whatever passion the circumstances and occasion may demand'. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *On the Orator: Books 1–2*, trans. E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library 348 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), I.LXVI.202, vol.1, pp. 140–143.

ses talents l'appelleraient indubitablement. La mission de l'Orateur du genre humain ne finira qu'après la déroute des oppresseurs du genre humain.⁹³

Pamphlets Move the World

The best way to move people to action and change their mind is through philosophy, but the best way to convey philosophy and rhetoric is not through academic treatises for Cloots. His decision to write pamphlets rather than long treatises like his *Certitude* was deliberate.⁹⁴ He attributes the American and French revolutions to two pamphlets written by Sieyès and Paine as the best proof of what they achieve rather than academic treatises:

Ce n'est pas avec de gros livres qu'on opère des révolutions ; les grands ouvrages de Paine et de Sieyès n'ont que cent pages d'impressions ; ces deux brochures ont remué les deux mondes. Le vrai moyen d'éviter le poids du papier, c'est de viser au poid des idées.⁹⁵

At the time, brevity was considered the only means to deliver universal truths.⁹⁶

Moreover, Cloots writes pamphlets with general principles rather than complete details because these matter most, and the details will come later:

Je me contente de poser des principes, d'indiquer des développements, et d'effleurer les résultats : car, en ne disant pas tout, on est sûr d'être tout lu : donnons à penser, et non pas à bâiller. Les têtes creuses mesurent la profondeur d'un écrivain sur la grosseur de ses ouvrages ; mais les bons esprits ressemblent aux gourmets qui préfèrent un consommé restaurateur à une soupe allongée. C'est un grand mal qu'un gros livre, cela ne sert qu'à cacher l'insuffisance des auteurs superficiels...⁹⁷

Those who consider all the details are the professors of university, who were considered part of the *ancien régime* problem—together with the church—by Cloots and other revolutionaries.⁹⁸ This led to establishing new teaching and research institutions than universities in 1794 (year III).

Pamphlets and pamphleteers—like Cloots—should receive more attention as works of philosophy by philosophers using a cultural context of rapid development

93 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 243–44.

94 Poulsen, 'Self-Fashioning and Rhetoric in the French Revolution'.

95 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 244.

96 Michel Delon, 'Anacharsis Cloots : Identité et légitimité révolutionnaire', *Revue de littérature comparée* 63, no. 4 (October 1989): 456.

97 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 130.

98 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 317–18.

and faster communication. It is also important to note that the French society was less literate than it later become and the oratory culture of eloquence was dominant. As an anonymous pamphlet shows, people enjoyed the battles of eloquence that the newly created national assembly offered. Since the assembly met in the old horse house, the *salle des manèges*, the audience quickly nicknamed the most talented ones after a type of horse: ‘*le Pétulant*’ Mirabeau, ‘*l’Étonnant*’ Barnave, ‘*l’Intrépide*’ Abbé Grégoire, and so on.⁹⁹ Pamphlets and speeches were read out loud to others as well, in cafés or clubs. In this oratory culture, therefore, it was necessary to write sufficiently brief works with all the tools of rhetoric incorporating images, metaphors, and strong emotions such as laughter or indignation. However, behind the rhetoric was the belief in a true philosophical system, at least for those who had received an education in the classics, like Cloots, or who educated themselves later in life, like Thomas Paine.

Solving an Old European Problem

By Cloots’s own admission, his system stems from attempting to solve an age-old European problem: how to achieve peace in Europe (and, by extension, the entire world)? According to Cloots and many of his contemporaries, the ‘old’ solution was a ‘political balance’ between states, governed by ‘l’horreur de la monarchie universelle’, which was only capable of temporarily ending wars.¹⁰⁰ Cloots refers to this as ‘la vaine science de nos vieux politiques’.¹⁰¹ In contrast, he proposes his own new ‘science’ based on Enlightenment philosophy, ranging from Newton to Diderot and Rousseau, Hobbes to d’Holbach, and even Machiavelli to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*.

Cloots is in line with other philosophers who attempted to map out a political system that would bring peace to Europe and unite it, from the Duke of Sully’s *Mémoires* describing the ‘magnifiques desseins’ of Henry IV, to Saint-Pierre’s *Project for Perpetual Peace*.¹⁰² Cloots acknowledges this line himself, but he considers his system to be unique and original.¹⁰³ According to Cloots, people have compared his

99 Anonymous, *Les chevaux au manège, ouvrage trouvé dans le porte-feuille de monseigneur le prince de Lambesc, grand-écuyer de France* (Paris: s.n., 1789).

100 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 155.

101 Cloots, 111.

102 Maximilien de Béthune de Sully, *Mémoires ou œconomies royales d’estat domestiques, politiques et militaires de Henry le Grand*, vol. 4 (Paris: Chez Augustin Courbé, 1662), 77–260; Charles-Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre, *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* (Utrecht: Antoine Schouten, 1713).

103 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 259.

system to Saint-Pierre's, which he rejected as a preposterous comparison since Saint-Pierre's project was a council of monarchs, whilst his project is based on the individual.¹⁰⁴

The problem is posed in these terms: 'Il en est des nations entre elles comme des individus dans l'état de nature ; les forts règnent'.¹⁰⁵ If the solution to inequalities between individuals in the state of nature was to unite and form a political community, it should be the same solution for states, which are in a state of nature where the strong ones survive. Cloots finds the solution to this problem in the French constitution with national unity: 'C'est dans la constitution française que je trouve la solution d'un problème insoluble jusqu'à présent'.¹⁰⁶ The same way the new French constitution ended inequalities, which became unbearable under Louis XVI, between individuals according to their corporations or 'classes', the same unification shall end all inequalities in the world through national unity. However, there is only one single nation — the whole of humankind — and one single *patrie* — the globe. In other words, the French revolution is just a prelude to the universal revolution, and the French assembly will one day become the world assembly:

Hommes de tous les climats, une vérité-mère doit vous être continuellement présente à l'esprit, c'est que la révolution de France est le commencement de la révolution du monde.¹⁰⁷

In order to do so, Cloots argues against climate theorists who suggest that various populations have different political regimes due to the climate they inhabit, which influences their physical constitution. This will be the subject of the chapter on humanity.

A System of Civil Science

Cloots refers to his political thought as a 'system': 'mon système',¹⁰⁸ 'mon système de la nation unique';¹⁰⁹ 'mon système philanthropique'.¹¹⁰ Cloots's 'system' of a 'universal republic of the human race' is comprehensive, as it encompasses questions of cosmology and the creation of the universe, God, natural theology, and some elements of ontology and human psychology, as well as natural law. This 'system'

104 Cloots, 248. I will discuss further Rousseau and Saint-Pierre in the chapter on nature.

105 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 155.

106 Cloots, 155.

107 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 266.

108 Cloots, *La république universelle*, 195.

109 Cloots, 7.

110 Cloots, 12.

stands in opposition to other ‘monstrous’ systems such as the ‘aristocratic system’ including monarchism, the ‘system of federation’, or the ‘theocratic system’.¹¹¹ Cloots declares that his political system stems from observing nature.¹¹² Cloots’s ‘system’, or political philosophy, is meant to be a comprehensive theory of human organisation around nature and its laws. Whether Cloots succeeds or not is another question, but it is clear that he means to develop a whole political system that is universally valid for all time and the whole humankind. That is the reason why, for Cloots, the whole humankind would agree to it, without the need to impose the system on anyone.

Cloots consistently referred to geometry and mathematics regarding his system. For instance, to argue why Paris is the capital city of France, Cloots writes:

Paris est à la France ce qu’un point mathématique est pour les géomètres : quatre-vingt et tant de rayons [allusions au nombre de départements] aboutissent à la commune nationale.¹¹³

In another text, Cloots again makes a reference to the hierarchy of powers, mathematically ordered:

La hiérarchie ingénieuse des cantons, des districts, des départements, l’Assemblée nationale et le roi, cette gradation mathématique jette la France dans un seul moule, d’où sort, par une fusion parfaite, un ouvrage que vous adorerez quand vous le connaîtrez, la constitution française. L’attraction inhérente à notre nouveau système politique tend évidemment à réunir des parties détachées sous l’Ancien Régime, telles qu’Avignon, la Savoie, Liège et le Brabant. Les forces centrifuges de ce beau système n’auront d’action que pour repousser les ennemis du dehors.¹¹⁴

For Cloots, therefore, the new French constitution is a ‘system’, and it is the ‘true system’ because of its mathematical quality: every part is mathematically calculated in proportion, and is represented gradually in a pyramid of powers, with such force that it attracts other parts that were hitherto not included in this whole. This political system works, contradicting what anti-revolutionaries said against the division into *départements*, and it works because it conforms to how the laws of political organisation should be, for Cloots. By the same token, it exercises its own laws in applying a ‘centrifugal force’ on ‘enemies’ who cannot join this system.

This reference to geometry and mathematics was not exclusive to Cloots. He merely made a reference to the geometrically equal division between French *départements* as a way of illustrating the concept of dividing a cheese into equal

¹¹¹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 133, 187, 248.

¹¹² Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 476.

¹¹³ Cloots, 480.

¹¹⁴ Cloots, ‘Adresse d’un Prussien à un Anglais’, 47.

parts.¹¹⁵ As Cloots remarks himself, this ‘géométrie sublime’ belongs to Sieyès.¹¹⁶ Cloots also cites Giuseppe Antonio Giachimo Cerutti (1738–1792) — another foreigner in the French revolution — for using a similar metaphor between physics and politics using geometry:

Voici la métaphore de l’ingénieur Cerutti, au nom des électeurs de Paris : « Le plus hardi des géomètres disait : donnez-moi de la matière et du mouvement, et je crée un monde. Il dirait aujourd’hui : donnez-moi des hommes et la constitution française, et je crée une nation. »¹¹⁷

This political system is based on the laws of nature, which makes it as scientific and universal as a mathematical system. In this system, there is no law of nations *per se*, because only the law of nature exists, and men are born in a natural state of society; nations are only temporary human aberrations until the natural nation of the human race is formed.¹¹⁸ In his view the ‘universal republic’ is a very minimalistic *state* (if state at all), where only a couple of matters are discussed, whilst the former countries and new *départements* continue to decide locally of their social, economic, cultural, and political organisations.¹¹⁹

The government of this universal republic is minimalistic. Cloots predicts a lesser need for decrees in his universal republic.¹²⁰ All ministries will disappear and a ‘fraternal government’ will replace it:

La trésorerie nationale ne donnera plus d’inquiétude au public ; personne n’y puisera impunément ; car les impôts seront à peu près nuls, et chaque département entretiendra ses chemins, ses hôpitaux, ses tribunaux, ses ateliers, de manière que la dépense commune se réduira au salaire du corps législatif, et du gouvernement suprême, et de l’administration générale. Ce gouvernement fraternel ne sera qu’un vaste bureau central de correspondance pour avertir officiellement les cosmopolites, de tous les événements qu’il importe de savoir.¹²¹

Cloots uses the term ‘cosmopolite’ literally to refer to citizens of his universal republic. He envisions that, with the establishment of liberty worldwide, there would be no need for an executive power. While this is undoubtedly utopian, it aligns with two prevailing views at the time regarding the executive power. Firstly, according to Rousseau, the purpose of the executive power would be to enforce the laws es-

¹¹⁵ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 209.

¹¹⁶ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 283.

¹¹⁷ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 123.

¹¹⁸ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 245, 271.

¹¹⁹ Cloots, 265.

¹²⁰ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 489.

¹²¹ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 265.

tablished by the legislative power and safeguard liberty.¹²² Secondly, Cloots, along with other physiocrats and proponents of ‘natural republicanism’ (as we will explore later), believed that the need for a government, including an executive branch, would diminish once liberty was restored and society operated harmoniously in accordance with nature. The necessity to enact laws arises primarily from the failure to respect the laws of nature in human affairs. Consequently, in a world where liberty is upheld, there would be less requirement for legislation.

Furthermore, Cloots suggests that the division of powers would no longer be labeled as ‘power’ but as ‘duty’ since there is only one power—the power of the sovereign.¹²³ Ministers in this ‘executive council’ would be selected from the Assembly, but they would not participate in lawmaking, except to express their opinions. The council would not possess the right of veto, which would only be exercised by a sufficiently representative portion of the public.

Regarding the assembly, Cloots favours unicameralism over bicameralism for the same reason as advocating for the unity of the nation. If there is one nation comprising the human race, there should be one representative chamber. As Cloots eloquently states:

Montrez-moi deux chambres dans la nation et je vous accorderai deux chambres dans la constitution. Un peuple homogène doit avoir une représentation homogène.¹²⁴

Conclusion

It is therefore Cloots as a philosopher who devised a political system that I study in this book. He chose to write pamphlets and short pieces as part of his function as an orator in a republican sense. The orator was considered a philosopher with rhetorical skills in antiquity, which is the same conception people had during the revolution, a period when eloquence mattered greatly. As a philosopher/orator, he devised a political system, the principles of which he explained in his main writings. I call his system cosmopolitan republicanism because it combines a particular view of cosmopolitanism with a particular view of republicanism. Before considering Cloots’s republicanism, I will analyze his cosmopolitanism, which can be separated into several main topics: a certain view of reason and science; a certain view of nature and natural law; and a certain view of the unity and diversity of humankind and the individual.

¹²² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Du contrat social ou principes de droit politique’, in *Rousseau : Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Gallimard, [1762] 1964), Ch. 3.1.

¹²³ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 485.

¹²⁴ Cloots, 481–82.

3 Reason and Science

... la raison appartient à tous en général ; mais la science est le prix d'une étude particulière.
Cloots, 1791¹

As we saw previously, Cloots fashioned himself as Anacharsis, a Northern wise man who came to the capital of philosophy, and as 'orator of the human race', in classical Roman fashion. The 'orator' was a figure with special qualities. Possessing at the same time reason and knowledge, which gave him the capacity to access the truth, he was a philosopher. But he also possessed eloquence and through the mastery of rhetoric was able to communicate this truth and persuade the people of it through the appeal of emotions.

There is thus a paradox, which Roman rhetoricians had already noted: how can it be necessary and possible to instruct and persuade at the same time? If the truth is the truth, it simply needs instruction without persuasion.² If it needs the art of persuasion through rhetoric, is it then the truth? This paradox is equally apparent in Cloots, especially when he argues in *La république universelle* that truth was on the revolutionaries' side, therefore there was no need to spread violence through acts of regicide across the neighbouring countries.³ In other words, the pen is mightier than the sword and people will easily see the truth of the French Revolution and join it against their monarchs. However, Cloots later argued the case for declaring war to spread the revolutionary truth, for instance in 'Adresse aux Français' on 22 May 1792, Cloots calls for the extension to the 'Batavia', Belgium, and Savoy.⁴ Again, in 'Aux armes ! Aux armes !' published in *Chronique de Paris* on 24 July 1792, Cloots calls for the formation of a *sans-culotte* army to galvanise the regular army.⁵ The reasoning then, is that it is first necessary to defend the revolution against enemies, and also that other populations are enslaved by their monarchs and, therefore, should first be freed before they can freely use their reason.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on the *eloquentia* as the important part of the formation of *scientia civilis*, this chapter focuses on the other part: *ratio*, 'reason', and *sapientia*, 'knowledge'. Focusing in this chapter on the substantial part of Cloots's rhetoric, other paradoxes come to the fore, such as the claim of a descriptive yet normative science, and the claim of determinism yet freedom through this

1 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 141.

2 Skinner, *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, 101–102.

3 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 243–246.

4 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 344–349.

5 Cloots, 367–368.

science. The reason and the truth used by the orator of the human race are those of the Enlightenment. And even more particularly, of the atheist French philosophy as developed by Diderot or d'Holbach.

The *sapientia* during the eighteenth century was linked to the 'science of man'. This human science attempted to discover a new definition of human nature in a 'scientific' manner, that is using the same observation and experimental tools as natural sciences.⁶ There were a plurality of different views of this science, but a work such as the *Encyclopédie* shows an agreement on two basic claims: the separation between secular and theological 'scientific' knowledge, and the universal nature of secular science.

This chapter examines how Cloots understood reason and science, and how it compares to other eighteenth-century traditions. Thomson has studied how religious and scientific debates on the soul developed in England in the early Enlightenment, and how these debates 'echoed' in France during the eighteenth-century, culminating with the materialists.⁷ Cloots was clearly influenced by these debates, even if he did not touch the question of the soul, as the influence of Collins, Locke, and Hume shows through his writings, as well as the French 'echoes' with Voltaire and d'Holbach, in particular:

For Cloots, sciences, communication, and arts, are gifts from nature to humankind to form one single 'reasonable' family—the human race.⁸ Reason is universal and singular; it leads to the unity of humankind in science and truth by forming a universal law. This universal reason, Cloots describes it as 'common strength'. It is a social power in the end that moves nations, such as France, towards the truth, towards universal law. Particular interests must therefore be in harmony with this 'common strength', and this 'universal law', or they will sooner or later be overcome by it, as the revolution showed.⁹

Reason and science are thus linked as the former leads to the discovery of the latter, and the latter allows the former to form a single community, for Cloots. The science that Cloots is considering is the 'science of man', that is the science of government and political organisation.

Cloots uses the concept of reason under two main aspects, which ultimately merge to form what he calls 'cosmopolitan reason'. The first use of the concept of

6 Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters*, 11–12.

7 Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ann Thomson, *L'âme des lumières. Le débat sur l'être humain entre religion et science, Angleterre-France (1690–1760)*, Collection Époques (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2013).

8 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 299.

9 Cloots, 299.

reason is in relation to debates on religion and revelation. The second use of the concept of reason is for understanding the world and for founding a ‘science of man’. I argue that these two uses of reason merge into one concept that Cloots calls ‘cosmopolitan reason’.¹⁰ By opposing a ‘*théos*’ to a ‘*cosmos*’, Cloots opposes two uses of reason — respectively a ‘bad’ use and a ‘good’ use — when considering matters of the metaphysical realm (*théos*) or matters of the physical realm (*cosmos*). Cloots suggests that we focus our reason solely on the *cosmos*, on the physical realm, for our political system. Doing so, leads to adopting the French constitution, and ultimately the universal republic. The world as a community will ultimately adopt the principles of the universal republic because it will use its reason, its ‘cosmopolitan reason’. Cloots used his reason to discover this scientific law of the single sovereign, the human race, forming the universal republic. Everyone possesses reason, but science is the product of long application of this reason.¹¹ Ultimately, however, everyone with reason will recognise the principles of this science.

Reason

Cloots uses reason primarily as opposed to religion, but also as opposed to ‘despotism’, that is to say a monarchy where one person has an arbitrary power over others. In this sense, Cloots uses a republican understanding of reason, a sort of *republican reason* that has three further characteristics: first, reason is a source of morality; as such, and second, reason is used either correctly or incorrectly; third, reason is opposed to passions. Furthermore, Cloots considers reason as universal, eternal, and singular, which allows him to argue for a unique political system, the unity of the whole world in one polity. This leaves us with the expression of ‘cosmopolitan reason’, which Cloots uses that must be fleshed out.

Against Revelation and the Church

As a continuation of his reflection engaged in *Certitude des preuves*, Cloots mainly uses reason as opposed to revealed religions throughout his revolutionary writings. It is therefore important, in order to understand Cloots’s concept of reason, to have a look at *Certitude des preuves*. As mentioned in the biography chapter, the book is an answer to Bergier’s own book *Certitude des preuves du Christianisme*. Bergier was an important theologian and apologist of Roman catholicism in the eighteenth

¹⁰ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 492–493.

¹¹ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 141.

century.¹² His first work, *Le Déisme réfuté par lui-même* (1765), was a critical and personal answer to Rousseau's *Émile* and marked the beginning of his career.¹³ In 1769, Bergier came to Paris, and he published another answer to one of the *philosophes*, this time d'Holbach and his *Christianisme dévoilé*, with an apology of Christianity.¹⁴ Bergier actually frequented the same salon as d'Holbach, as well as Diderot, in Paris and this led him to publish a refutation of their materialism in a direct critique of d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*.¹⁵ This provoked a definitive break-up between Bergier and the *philosophes*. Bergier continued his attacks, with a *Suite de l'apologie* oriented towards Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* at the end of his second edition of the *Apologie*.¹⁶ Towards the end of his life, Bergier published two important works of reference with a *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion*,¹⁷ and a *Dictionnaire de théologie* reedited several times.¹⁸ Bergier with this body of works constituted therefore one of the major proponents what has been labelled 'anti-philosophy' or 'anti-Enlightenment', despite the fact that they contributed with their critiques to the Enlightenment itself.¹⁹

Bergier was a renowned figure of the opposition to the *philosophes*, and it is probably his opposition to Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot, and d'Holbach—Cloots's role models—that inspired Cloots to criticise him and the arguments he presented in

12 For more on Bergier, see Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, *L'Abbé Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier (1718–1790). Des Monts-Jura à Versailles, le parcours d'un apologiste du XVIIIe siècle*, « Les dix-huitièmes siècles » 128 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2010); and Alain Cabantous, 'Bergier, Nicolas-Sylvestre', in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors, vol. 1: Abbadié–Enlightenment Studies (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 139–140.

13 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Le déisme réfuté par lui-même, ou Examen des principes d'incrédulité répandus dans les divers ouvrages de M. Rousseau, en forme de lettres* (Paris: Chez Humblot, 1765).

14 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Apologie de la religion chrétienne contre l'auteur du Christianisme dévoilé, & contre quelques autres critiques*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Humblot, 1769).

15 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Examen du matérialisme, ou Réfutation du système de la nature*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Humblot, 1771).

16 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, 'Suite de l'apologie de la religion chrétienne, ou Réfutation des principaux Articles du Dictionnaire Philosophique', in *Apologie de la religion chrétienne*, Second, vol. 2 (Paris: Chez Humblot, 1770), 298–576.

17 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Traité historique et dogmatique de la vraie religion, avec la réfutation des erreurs qui lui ont été opposées dans les différens siècles*, 12 vols. (Paris: Chez Moutard, 1780).

18 Nicolas-Sylvestre Bergier, *Dictionnaire de théologie*, 8 vols. (Liège: La Société Typographique, 1789).

19 See on the anti-philosophy Didier Masseau, *Les ennemis des philosophes. L'antiphilosophie au temps des Lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001). On the contribution of the 'anti-Enlightenment' to the Enlightenment, see Jean Deprun, 'Les Anti-Lumières', in *Histoire de la philosophie*, ed. Yvon Belaval, vol. II: La Renaissance, l'Âge classique, Le Siècle des Lumières, La Révolution kantienne, Encyclopédie de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 717–727.

one of his books. This book constituted for Cloots his letter of accreditation to the Republic of Letters to be admitted as *philosophe*. Cloots in the footnotes includes himself as one of the *philosophes* by using the pronoun ‘*nous*’ and often calling the attention of the reader as rational accomplice. At the end of the book, Cloots writes that

Tout lecteur pénétrant se sera d’abord aperçu que cet Ouvrage, qui manquoit absolument à la République des Lettres, est très-propre à opérer une révolution générale dans les esprits....²⁰

The sarcastic tone Cloots chose for his comments is not far from Voltaire’s wit, thereby also attempting to garner the sympathy of fellow deists. It must be noted, however, that many apologists also adopted the rhetoric and the language of the *philosophes* in order to give a contemporary popularity to their arguments; they used irony and ridicule the same way Voltaire did, and used reason as well to argue for the rationality of Christianity.²¹ Bergier was one of them, and his works were prepared by studying an ‘entire library’ to provide a rational historical argumentation through ‘facts’.²² In this sense, Cloots is right when he notes ironically that Bergier contributes to the work of the *philosophes* (Voltaire and d’Holbach’s attack on the church).²³ However, not everyone among catholics shared Bergier’s way of refuting the deists by adopting their style and rationalism. Jansenist André Blonde (1734–1794) provided a public display of these disagreements in the camp of Christian apologists with several refutations of Bergier and a much harsher condemnation of and general intolerance to Rousseau and other deists.²⁴ Although, what he really means is that Bergier’s arguments are too poor to be taken seriously by a rational person and discredits therefore his side, rather than what contemporary historians mean by the ‘anti-philosophy’ contributing to the Enlightenment by taking their arguments seriously and trying to argue for revealed religion.

Cloots makes many citations, sometimes quoting excerpts at length. The goal with this is to publish in one single book a compilation of all the arguments against revealed religions by various philosophers for those who do not have the time to read much.²⁵ It is therefore an ambitious first book that Cloots intended to write as he had to demonstrate not only a strong knowledge of the main monotheistic

²⁰ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 636.

²¹ Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, ‘L’apologétique catholique française à l’âge des Lumières’, *Revue de l’histoire des religions* 205, no. 2 (1988): 151–180.

²² Albertan-Coppola, 159.

²³ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 123.

²⁴ See Monique Cottret, *Jansénismes et Lumières. Pour un autre XVIIIe siècle*, Bibliothèque Albin Michel histoire (Paris: Albin Michel, 1998), 104–111.

²⁵ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 116.

religions and other religions and sects, theological and historical, but also of the arguments presented by Bergier and others in favour of one of them as the true revealed religion, of the arguments against these presented by various *philosophes* and thinkers of the 'Republic of Letters', developing his own argument, and presenting the whole with a literary flair combining humour and seriousness. At the end of *Certitude*, Cloots added another short work entitled *Lettres d'un jeune philosophe à un jeune théologien*.²⁶ The title shows clearly what Cloots thought of himself and what he intended to do: become a philosopher in the Republic of Letters and participate in the Voltairean campaign, '*écrasez l'infâme*', with the use of reason.

Since Cloots intended *Certitude* to give the busy educated reader a compilation of the most important works and ideas by the *philosophes* on reason, deism, and natural religion, it is an excellent indication of his own intellectual influences. Obviously, it is also an indication of the most influential figures of the time for deist arguments, but Cloots does not mention all of them. The most cited author and work is Bayle's *Dictionnaire critique*.²⁷ Often, Cloots uses Bayle for his article on *Mahomet* to give an introduction to Islam to the reader, or about Spanish and Portuguese atrocities committed in the name of Christianity. We may remember from the biographical chapter that Bayle was on the curriculum at the Berlin *Académie des nobles*. Voltaire is then the other most cited author, especially his *Dictionnaire philosophique*.²⁸ Cloots quotes Voltaire, sometimes from his published correspondence, for some *bon mots* or well formulated reflections, mostly against the church and superstitions. The third most cited author is Collins with the French translations of *Discours sur la liberté de penser*, and less often *Examen des prophéties qui servent de fondement à la religion chrétienne*.²⁹ Cloots quotes passages on individual freedom of thought, and the necessity to individually assess with reason all collective movements of thought. Cloots quotes Hume several times, mainly for his translated *Histoire naturelle de la religion*,³⁰ but also his *Essais* with the tenth and elev-

26 Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 529–593.

27 Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, First edition, 2 vols. (Rotterdam: Chez Reinier Leers, 1697). However, the Gnadenthal library catalogue mentions only an abridged version, which is the one Cloots may have used: Pierre Bayle, *Extrait du dictionnaire historique et critique*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Chez Chrétien Frédéric Voss, 1765).

28 This work had several editions, and the last one was published under the appropriate name: Voltaire, *La raison par l'alphabet*, Sixth edition, 2 vols. (s.l.: Chez Cramer, 1769).

29 Anthony Collins, *Discours sur la liberté de penser écrit à l'occasion d'une nouvelle secte d'esprits forts, ou de gens qui pensent librement. Traduit de l'anglais et augmenté d'une lettre d'un médecin arabe* (London: s.n., 1714); Anthony Collins, *Examen des prophéties qui servent de fondement à la religion chrétienne. Avec un Essai de critique sur les prophètes et les prophéties en général*, trans. Paul Henri Dietrich baron d'Holbach (London: s.n., 1768).

30 David Hume, *Histoire naturelle de la religion* (Amsterdam: Chez J. H. Schneider, 1759).

enth essays, respectively on superstition and enthusiasm, and on human nature.³¹ Cloots also uses Locke for his *Essai sur l'entendement humain*, quoting passages on reason rejecting arguments based on faith. This work is fundamental in the history of reason and marked the beginning of eighteenth-century discussions on the limits of reason.³² Another frequent quote is the French translation of German Lutheran Church historian Johann Lorenz von Mosheim's (1693–1755) Latin *Institutionum Historiae Ecclesiasticae Antiquae Et Recentioris*.³³ Other notable authors cited several times are d'Argens's *Lettres juives*,³⁴ d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*,³⁵ *De la cruauté religieuse*,³⁶ and, under Fréret's name, *Œuvres philosophiques*.³⁷ Leibniz's *Théodicée* is also mentioned several times.³⁸ Absent from the list of quoted authors are, among others, Condillac, Spinoza, Toland, Herbert of Cherbury, Matthew Tindal, Lessing, Samuel Clarke, William Paley, and Kant. These authors were otherwise important and influential at the time.³⁹ This confirms, therefore, the hypothesis that Cloots meant to develop his own argument by selecting authors with similar views to his, notwithstanding their own philosophy.

Indeed, these mentioned authors held different views, and were sometimes opposed; for instance Bayle and Leibniz, even though they both were writing letters to each other and held each other in high intellectual esteem.⁴⁰ Moreover, even apologists, whom Cloots mentions as well, had various views and used reason as part of their arguments to actually demonstrate the existence of God and the true

31 David Hume, *Œuvres de M. Hume*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Chez J. H. Schneider, 1764).

32 Manfred Kuehn, 'Reason and Understanding', chap. 6 in *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Aaron Garrett (London, New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 167–187.

33 Joahnn Lorenz von Mosheim, *Histoire ecclésiastique ancienne et moderne, depuis la naissance de Jésus-Christ jusqu'au commencement du XVIIIe siècle*, trans. Archibald Maclaine, 6 vols. (Maestricht: Chez Jean-Edme Dufour & Philippe Roux, 1776).

34 Jean-Baptiste de Boyer marquis d'Argens, *Lettres juives, ou Correspondance philosophique, historique et critique, entre un juif voyageur à Paris & ses correspondans en divers endroits* (La Haye: Chez Paul Gautier, 1736).

35 Paul Henri Thiry baron d'Holbach, *Système de la nature ; ou, Les loix du monde physique, & du monde moral*, 2 vols. (London: s.n., 1770).

36 Paul Henri Thiry baron d'Holbach, *De la cruauté religieuse* (London: s.n., 1769).

37 Nicolas Fréret and Paul Henri Thiry baron (auteur présumé) d'Holbach, *Œuvres philosophiques* (London: s.n., 1776).

38 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Essais de théodicée sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme, et l'origine du mal* (Amsterdam: Chez Isaac Troyel, 1710).

39 See for example Maria Rosa Antognazza, 'Reason, Revelation, and Arguments for the Deity', chap. 5 in *The Routledge Companion to Eighteenth Century Philosophy*, ed. Aaron Garrett (London, New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 145–166.

40 Pierre Rétat, *Le dictionnaire de Bayle et la lutte philosophique au XVIIIe siècle*, Bibliothèque de la faculté de lettres de Lyon, XXVIII (Paris: Société d'édition "les belles lettres", 1971), 102–111.

revealed religion. It is therefore not a monolithic and homogenous block of *philosophes* against another homogenous block of *apologistes*, as Cloots presents, but an intricate and vast field of discussions around God, religion, and reason. It is beyond the scope of this chapter and this section to present this discussion. What is important here is to focus on Cloots's views on reason, either directly or through quoted authors.

Cloots does not deny the existence of God, nor does he discuss it in *Certitude*. It is a deist argument that he presents, and the goal is to argue in favour of a natural religion. Reason is given to mankind by God, and it is universal; therefore, reason provides the same guide to everyone and Cloots can quote Confucius with the same argument to show that all populations on earth share the same view.⁴¹ The main point that Cloots hammers home is that if reason is given by God, then religions should not ask to set reason aside in order to serve God; hence all the religions that ask to do so are false. Cloots quotes in length English Deist Charles Blount (1654–1693) in a French translation of his edited and commented version of *La Vie d'Apollonios de Tyane* by Philostratus (c. 170–c. 245 AD); reason is the surest guide to avoid falsehood from any religion: 'Nous savons que tout ce que nous dicte la raison ordinaire, est vrai ; & nous ne pouvons pas croire ce que la foi enseigne : croire n'est pas savoir'.⁴² Cloots also takes the same argumentation from members of the Church in order to show that theologians agree on that point. For instance, Cloots quotes abbot Daniel Le Masson des Granges in *Le philosophe moderne, ou l'incrédule condamné au tribunal de sa raison*, who cites French priest Louis Bourdaloue (1632–1704), who in his *Pensées* notes that God gave the human race reason in order to serve as guide and never intended to exclude it even from religious matters; faith is a 'reasonable submission' to God, otherwise it would no longer constitute a virtue and would be vague and without principle.⁴³ Cloots takes another example from Welsh deist (although he always denied being a deist) David Williams (1738–1816), who held a public service in a rented chapel in Margaret Street in London in 1776,⁴⁴ and whose sermon, stating that reason was a gift from God for truth and tolerance, was translated in *Gazette littéraire de l'Europe*.⁴⁵

By the same token, in his argument against the Muslim Gier-Ber, Cloots notes sarcastically that even the 'good Christian' Bergier regards reason as a universal

⁴¹ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 230, 469, 495.

⁴² Cloots, 26.

⁴³ Cloots, 117–118.

⁴⁴ On this sermon and David Williams, see James Dybikowski, 'David Williams and the Margaret Street Chapel', *Man and Nature* 8, no. hors série (1989): 99–106.

⁴⁵ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 166–168.

gift from God (thus pointing at contradictions in Bergier's argumentation).⁴⁶ Cloots, then, uses reason ironically to form an argument against Bergier in favour of another revealed religion — Islam. Bergier's argument was that 'savages' and even 'civilised peoples' would be able to distinguish among all the sects and religions between 'true and false revelationism'. Since Bergier is transformed into the Imam Ali Gier-Ber in Cloots's narrative, Cloots remarks ironically in a footnote that, he is *right* indeed: Islam is better equipped to convince anyone of being the true revelation because unlike Christianity and its 'ridiculous' 'triumvirat' of God, Islam only has one God; moreover, unlike Christianity and its incarnation of an unlimited God in a mortal Jewish man, the Muslim God is eternal, and His body is also not offered for 'lunch', and finally, unlike Christianity and its plurality of codes and versions of the Bible, Islam has only one Quran; not to mention the progress of incredulity among Christians with so many philosophers and scientists refusing revelationism.⁴⁷ However, this was just meant as a counter argument to Bergier's claim of the *rationality* of Christianity compared to other religions. The real rational religion is natural religion:

... puisqu'il s'agit de la raison (& de quoi s'agiroit-il sans elle?) le Théiste a cause gagnée, il peut convaincre l'homme le plus stupide de la vérité de sa religion : son *Alcoran* ne sera point un Livre inutile à ceux qui ne savent pas lire, & un Dédale obscur pour quiconque le lit, quoiqu'incomparablement moins inintelligible que l'*ancien* et le *Nouveau Testament* ; son *Coran*, dis-je, sera le Ciel & la Terre ; la nature entière confirmera ses paroles.⁴⁸

Cloots imagines then a fictitious dialogue between a 'savage' and 'Revelationist missionaries'. Cloots's use of a dialogue with a 'savage' is not the same as Rousseau's use of the myth of 'noble savage'. Cloots is not trying to show a better natural society with a natural religion, but how any person without knowledge of the three main monotheist religions could reason towards a deist argument instead of revealed religion. This dialogue in favour of nature and reason is closer to Diderot's dialogues in *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*.⁴⁹ At the end of this dialogue, the 'savage' concludes:

La raison, l'évidence, poursuit le Sauvage, me disent de n'en croire aucun, puisqu'il est impossible à tout homme inéruité de savoir lequel de ces argumentans, seroit Orthodoxe ; & cette impossibilité prouve qu'ils battent tous la campagne : c'est une leçon pour ne jamais s'écarter du chemin tracé par le sens-commun. Le Déiste a raison, car il me parle raison ; ses preuves

⁴⁶ Cloots, 268.

⁴⁷ Cloots, 256–258.

⁴⁸ Cloots, 258.

⁴⁹ Denis Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, ed. Michel Delon, Folio classique (Paris: Gallimard, 2002 [1772]).

sont à ma portée : le révélationiste a tort ; car il me tient un langage & absurde, & contradictoire, & inintelligible.⁵⁰

Cloots quotes thereafter Collins's *Discours sur la liberté de penser* in French, who quotes the archbishop John Tillotson (1630–1694) depicting the second Council of Nicaea — which discussed the use of icons — as ridiculous as an assembly of the most famous Greek mathematicians to decree that two plus two equals five. To which Cloots concludes:

Voilà ce que c'est quand la saine raison est bannie de l'esprit-humain ; sans ce *palladium*,⁵¹ les plus graves personnages se conduisent en enfans & font rougir les Sauvages.⁵²

For Cloots, reason is an individual assessment of how much religions make sense with their stories, customs, and traditions. The only religion that makes sense, in the end, is natural religion — a religion stripped of any scriptures, or human interpretations, an individual communion with God through nature and its observation.

In this sense, Cloots writes to his uncle de Pauw about religion in these terms:

Ces réflexions justifient assez la prédilection des Philosophes en faveur du Protestant. Quoiqu'il erre d'ailleurs, ses principes radicaux sont avoués, sont d'accord avec la saine Philosophie. Il y a toujours espérance de ramener des gens qui font cas, qui encensent la raison.⁵³

What Cloots means is that protestantism is more in line with d'Holbach, Voltaire, and his own views because it has been critical of Church traditions that led to abuses in Roman Catholic Christianity. Protestantism also suggested a critical reading of the Bible, and to consider it a higher authority than church traditions. Moreover, protestantism has equally emphasised the individual relation with God and religion — universal priesthood — rather than a dependance on a mediator between God and the people. All these elements, for Cloots, are part of the '*écrasez l'infâme*' movement: denouncing the abuses and absurdities in the practices and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, rejecting through rational critical reading of religious writings anything contrary to reason, and finding an individual, natural, and rational relation with God. However, protestants still roam in other matters, and Cloots may mean here, among other things, that they still believe in the Bible as an authentic document.

⁵⁰ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 261.

⁵¹ Palladium means what protects an individual or a thing. It is a figure of speech in relation to the Greek statue of Pallas, the icon protecting Troy. Cloots therefore, wittily extends the metaphor on the theme of the second Council of Nicaea regarding icons.

⁵² Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 261–262.

⁵³ Cloots, 618.

Cloots notes, in this ‘*écrasez l’infâme*’ battle, that God is not on trial, it is the institution of the church and its ministers who spread lies, false doctrines, and impose on other men to deny the use of God’s given gift that sets mankind apart from ‘brutes’. In any case, ‘la raison n’enseigne point l’Athéisme’.⁵⁴ What reason leads to is a critical view of revealed religions and their customs and traditions in particular. This is an important argument because it is against Bergier, who argues that ancient traditions and customs observed by populations are proofs of revelation, beyond the need to know about written accounts such as the Scriptures.⁵⁵ Cloots uses Bayle’s *Dictionnaire*, Collins’s *Examen des prophéties*, Voltaire’s *La Bible enfin expliquée*, and Locke’s *Entendement humain* to show historical and factual examples of how easily false traditions and customs entered various sects.⁵⁶ In the end, reason is about common-sense applied to past events, and past testimonies: should one trust what some claim to have witnessed in the past? Are they trustworthy and impartial? Are their testimony in accordance with the normal observation of the rules of nature? All these questions must be asked as Locke pointed out in his *Essay on Human Understanding*.⁵⁷

Against Bergier’s argument that reason is part of faith, Cloots adopts Locke’s opposition of faith and reason, but Cloots seems to stay on the practical level of things in that he only quotes Locke on what is directly of use against Bergier. Cloots does not quote Locke, for instance, on his conception of reason as discussed in book IV chapter XVII, and instead quotes chapter XVI. If it seems that Cloots takes Locke’s conception of reason as based on sensible ideas (there are no innate ideas, and the bounds of our senses cannot be overcome by reason), it is not clear if Cloots accepts Locke’s distinction of what is contrary to reason and what is beyond reason (a distinction rejected by Toland, self-proclaimed disciple of Locke, but whom Cloots does not mention). When Locke considered the resurrection from the dead as beyond reason, Cloots focuses instead on refuting the fact of believing in testimonies of resurrection by taking examples of many sects and religions that paid tribute to resurrected individuals and worshipped them with monuments and statues. Why, then, asks Cloots, would Christianity and Bergier only recognise one of them and not the other? For this, Cloots takes examples in other religions from Bayle’s *Dictionnaire* and Pluche’s *Histoire du ciel*.⁵⁸

54 Cloots, 254.

55 See chapter 5 in François Laplanche, *La Bible en France entre mythe et critique (XVIIe –XIXe siècle)*, Collection « L’évolution de l’humanité » (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994), 87–106.

56 Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 6–7, 46–47.

57 Cloots, 131–132.

58 Cloots, 46–48.

Cloots does not directly write that resurrection is contrary to reason, or that it is beyond reason, but that many religions have made the same claim, and that it has been proven to be false by Christian authors who demonstrated how these errors entered religious traditions, and how the custom of worshiping monuments cannot be considered proof of its veracity. So, why believe Christianity, asks Cloots? Reason teaches scepticism towards man's words.⁵⁹ Cloots distinguishes between miracles that are simply based on ignorance quoting Mosheim regarding so-called miracles that can be explained by natural causes.⁶⁰ In other words, some miracles are called so due to a lack of reason applied to natural causes. Other miracles reported by some witnesses, are due to their whole social and intellectual *conditioning* in believing that miracles do exist, so that they can persuade themselves of the veracity of a miracle; here, Cloots quotes La Bruyère's *Caractères* (1688), famously depicting all the gamut of human psychology in various literary portraits.⁶¹

All in all, Cloots seems to reject miracles—even when understood as within the bounds of reason, but extraordinary events—and only recognise one true miracle that he is witnessing himself with Bergier:

c'est que dans le siècle où nous vivons, il se trouve, hors des petites-maisons,⁶² un Personnage grave, qui débite sans pudeur, & avec privilège, des idées aussi creuses.⁶³

Although Cloots does not mention this affiliation and although he quotes Wolff only twice for his *Logique* rather than natural theology, he seems to be closer to Wolff than Locke in that he also considers natural theology within the strict boundaries of reason. It seems that Cloots agrees with Wolff's theological rationalism in that theology is about certainty since God cannot have revealed anything that would not be found outside the realm of human reason. However, Cloots avoids all these metaphysical discussions, and quotes Voltaire much more than Wolff.

Reason also leads to profound doubts. Scepticism was a theme explored by several philosophers, starting from Bayle, pondering the limits of reason.⁶⁴ Cloots quotes Hume on reason and doubt, noting that philosophy presents itself as a shelter, whilst various superstitions fight one against another amidst widespread

⁵⁹ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 57.

⁶⁰ Cloots, 201.

⁶¹ Cloots, 329.

⁶² Bedlam; institution for the care of mentally ill people.

⁶³ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 18–19.

⁶⁴ See Sébastien Charles and J. Smith Plínio, eds., *Scepticism in the Eighteenth Century: Enlightenment, Lumières, Aufklärung*, International Archives of the History of Ideas, 210 (Dordrecht; New York, NY: Springer, 2013); Anton M. Matytsin, *The Specter of Skepticism in the Age of Enlightenment* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).

doubt, uncertainty, and irresolution.⁶⁵ If any religion should be followed, it is natural religion. Cloots quotes this, for instance, Locke in a French translation of *Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain* with this argument:

L'Être suprême ... a accordé au Genre-Humain une assez grande mesure de raison pour que ceux qui n'ont jamais entendu parler de sa Parole écrite, ne puissent point douter de l'existence d'un Dieu, ni de l'obéissance qui lui est due, s'ils appliquent leur Esprit à cette recherche. Puis donc que les Préceptes de la Religion Naturelle sont clairs & tout-à-fait proportionnés à l'intelligence du Genre Humain....⁶⁶

Unlike revealed religion, natural religion does not depend on any human doing — be they writings or customs.⁶⁷

The revolution marked a break in Cloots's thought on religion. During the revolutionary period, Cloots revised this view in favour of atheism: 'les athées ont raison contre les théistes'.⁶⁸ This time, Cloots attacks the existence of God, and particularly the theist argument of design. There is no contention regarding the eternal existence of the universe, but the existence of a divine mould is contrary to reason, for Cloots: if something that exists is necessarily a creation (of God), then God is necessarily also a creation; hence, the syllogism makes no sense. As the chapter on nature will show, Cloots, in his revolutionary writings, moves closer to d'Holbach's view about God in *Système de la nature* as a mere anthropomorphic way of talking about nature, which is eternal.⁶⁹ Cloots's revolutionary evolution from deism to atheism is meant as a balance between a left-wing and a right-wing position. Against the left, Cloots's atheism opposes any form of religious intolerance. Against the right, Cloots's atheism is opposed to a religion of state.

In a first stage, reason is still not opposed to religious practice, for Cloots, but it is opposed to the domination of one religion in the state to the detriment of other religions. In *Chronique de Paris*, 27 May 1790, Cloots writes that he has just finished reading *Le despotisme de la maison d'Orange*, by Mirabeau,⁷⁰ mentioning the episode where the republican Barneveld was sent to the scaffold because of his republican sympathy against state religion. This serves Cloots in his argument to send Voltaire's remains to the Panthéon. Cloots also notes that Voltaire fought against the domination of a state religion, and his works therefore 'respirent le zèle de la raison

⁶⁵ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 190.

⁶⁶ Cloots, 482–483.

⁶⁷ Cloots, 10.

⁶⁸ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 252.

⁶⁹ See the next chapter on natural law.

⁷⁰ Honoré Gabriel Riqueti Mirabeau (comte de), *Le Despotisme de la maison d'Orange, prouvé par l'histoire* (Hollande: s.n., 1788).

et l'amour de l'humanité'.⁷¹ This qualification is reminiscent of Rémi's understanding of '*cosmopolisme*' and fits in the eighteenth-century understanding of cosmopolitanism. Cloots explicitly rejects Rousseau and Mably in favour of Voltaire regarding religious tolerance, even equating Rousseau in his intolerance of religious zealots with the same zealots: 'fanatiques de Rome et de Genève'.⁷² To Rousseau suggesting the expulsion of catholics from the state in his *Contrat social* ('quiconque ose dire : hors de l'Église point de salut, doit être chassé de l'État'),⁷³ Cloots answers that '... chasser les intolérants est la plus absurde des intolérances'.⁷⁴ Cloots's target is not only Rousseau and Mably, but the revolutionaries who use Rousseau and Mably 'blindly' and without thinking.

Cloots's position must be understood in the context of the debates on religion before and during the revolution. As Tackett sums up, in the period after mid-century, the catholic clergy faced four sources of attacks; two from outside, and two from inside.⁷⁵ From the outside, the most visible source was the *philosophes*, as already seen, and Cloots's position among them has already been considered. Another external source of attack was 'parliamentary Gallicanism', which claimed power for the courts (*parlements*) over church matters. From the inside, the lower clergy identified with the general population, and expressed discontent towards the upper clergy and their outrageous privileges; principally, regarding rank in the church based on birth rather than merit, but also luxury and wealth. This movement has been called 'curé syndicalism' or 'Richerism'.⁷⁶ The other internal source of attack came from the Jansenists against the Jesuits, the former successfully suppressing the latter in the mid-1760s. All these groups had an influence on the deputies during the revolution.

Regarding his position against a religion of state, Cloots writes that he had 'une part très active' in the decree of 13 April 1790.⁷⁷ It is not clear what part he had, but he may be referring to his pre-revolutionary writings against ecclesiastical institutions.

71 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 25.

72 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 148.

73 Rousseau, 'Du contrat social', 469.

74 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 148.

75 Timothy Tackett, 'The French Revolution and Religion to 1794', chap. 27 in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 7: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 539–541; Timothy Tackett, *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 6–11.

76 Timothy Tackett, *Priest and Parish in Eighteenth-Century France: A Social and Political Study of the Curés in a Diocese of Dauphiné, 1750–1791*, Princeton Legacy Library (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 225–268.

77 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 148.

It seems therefore to be a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* argument about his writings and his position *influencing* the Assembly, or participating to the intellectual climate, in issuing the decree:

Il a été décrété le 13 avril dernier, et je l'avais imprimé auparavant, et la raison l'avait décrété le premier jour du monde, qu'un corps national ne saurait avoir de religion ; cette relation ne pouvant exister qu'entre Dieu et un individu, « entre Dieu et ma conscience, et non pas entre Dieu et des consciences prises collectivement ». ⁷⁸

In this decree, the national assembly refused to recognise a state religion. This was an answer to the third motion tabled by the right wing of the Assembly to adopt Catholicism as state religion; this time by the Carthusian monk Don Gerle on 12 April 1790, which led to 'perhaps the single most impassioned and divisive debate since the beginning of the Revolution'.⁷⁹ Not everyone agreed with the decree,⁸⁰ and part of the assembly published a declaration expressing their disagreement and their refusal to vote on this decree because they considered catholicism to be the state religion as 'une vérité de fait'.⁸¹ The refusal to adopt Catholicism as state religion was also motivated by the proclamation of toleration and civil rights for Protestants and Jews. Protestants had been granted religious liberty on 24 December 1789, and Sephardim Jews had been granted equal rights on 28 January 1790. However, the populations of some strongholds of Catholicism in the East and South of France did not accept them, and episodes of violence against these minorities erupted. We have already seen that Cloots expressed toleration and a defence for these religions. Catholic populations saw 'the Revolution as a "Protestant attack" against their faith'.⁸² Considering Cloots's own views—his preference for protestantism among revealed religions and his view of an individual relation to God—it was not far-fetched.

To this climate of violence and tension between religions, one should emphasise the tension also created by the civil constitution and the Oath of 1791. Gallican lawyers and Jansenists sympathisers passed a reform at the assembly regarding the 'Civil Constitution of the Clergy' on 12 July 1790. According to Tackett, '[t]he great debates in the Assembly itself, which climaxed in the passage of the Civil Constitution on July 12, 1790, contributed in further exacerbating divisions between a clerical Right and an anticlerical Left...'.⁸³ The Civil Constitution was a consequence of the

⁷⁸ Cloots, 139.

⁷⁹ Tackett, 'The French Revolution and Religion to 1794', 543.

⁸⁰ *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, n° 104, mercredi 14 avril 1790.

⁸¹ Jean-Lambert Tallien, *Déclaration d'une partie de l'Assemblée nationale, sur le décret rendu le 13 avril 1790, concernant la religion* (Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Vezard & Le Normant, 1790).

⁸² Tackett, 'The French Revolution and Religion to 1794', 544.

⁸³ Tackett, *The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791*, 12.

abolition of privileges on 4 August 1789, as the remuneration of the clergy had to be re-organised accordingly. If several measures were asked in the *cahiers de doléances* by sympathisers of ‘curé syndicalism’, and therefore agreed upon, such as the suppression of some fees and a fairer remuneration of clergymen, other measures requiring a rationalisation of the clergy and the abolition of socially ‘useless’ positions gathered some resentment.⁸⁴ However, it is the requirement of a formal oath in favour of the constitution that provoked a crisis in 1791, not so much because of the requirement of taking an oath—a common form of revolutionary allegiance—but because it seemed, for some clergymen, to impinge on spiritual matters and might be contrary to their oath to the church. Already on 27 November 1790, Voidel, the president of the *comité des recherches* proposed a decree on the oath, following a vehement speech pronounced the day before, denouncing part of the clergy as refusing to obey the will of the sovereign and obeying a foreign one instead (the papacy).⁸⁵ The decree imposed clergymen to take the oath within eight days or to face prosecutions.⁸⁶ The king reluctantly signed the oath on 3 January 1791, and the debates on 3 and 4 January at the Assembly demonstrated the stark polarisation between the left and right as a Manichaean position for or against the revolution.⁸⁷ The Assembly later adopted a more conciliatory tone, and the oath was not required to be taken within eight days, and refractory priests would be retired with a small pension and not prosecuted, and so only after a replacement could be found.

Cloots is in the left camp against the right; he is in favour of the re-organisation of the clergy, even a radical re-organisation towards natural religion, particularly to save money: ‘La religion ramenée à sa simplicité primitive, épargnerait au peuple libre et éclairé de l’heureuse France, plus de cent millions annuellement’.⁸⁸ But he also addresses these left radicals for their intolerance towards the intolerants. Cloots writes that, in the end:

C’est vraiment un prodige que le parti national du corps constituant n’ait pas succombé sous les efforts de tout le côté droit, et des ministériels de la gauche, et des fourbes de la gauche, et des oisons de la gauche, et de la secte de Rome, et de la secte de Jansénius, et de la secte de Rousseau, dont la gauche offrait le funeste mélange.⁸⁹

84 Tackett, *The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791*, 11–16.

85 M. J. Mavidal and M. E. Laurent, eds., *Archives parlementaires de 1787 à 1860. Recueil complet des débats législatifs et politiques des chambres françaises*, Second edition, Première série (1787 à 1799) (Paris: Librairie administrative de Paul Dupont, 1879), 21:7; cited in Tackett, *The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791*, 23.

86 Mavidal and Laurent, *Archives parlementaires*, 21:81–82.

87 Mavidal and Laurent, 22:8; cited in Tackett, *The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791*, 25.

88 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 45.

89 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 148–149.

In another example of perceived exaggeration from the left against Catholics and refractory priests, Cloots addresses Charles de Villette (1736–1793), in whose home Voltaire died, and who therefore took the initiative to change the name of his home street from Quai des Théatins (name of the neighbouring church and congregation) to Quai Voltaire on 13 April 1791 and requested a decree to legalise the change.⁹⁰ Villette wrote in *Chronique de Paris*, on 5 June 1791, about a mass held by a refractory priest in precisely this Theatine church, next to his home.⁹¹ The event created a bit of an uproar among the local Parisians, accusing the priest of instigating hate against revolutionaries. Villette tried to defend the priest in the name of religious tolerance, but was won over the argument of potential danger caused by refractory priests. Therefore, Villette asked to evict refractory priests, and in this case, to use the church as storage for wheat. But Cloots answered to Villette that it was precisely the same irrational fear that led to the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre; the spirit of Voltaire is to let 'eternal reason' guide the policies of a 'free people' and tolerate masses held by refractory priests: 'La persécution répercute le *virus* religieux, et la liberté le fait évaporer par tous les pores'.⁹²

In the end, Cloots is an atheist who believes that reason ultimately prevails, and overcomes faith. Science and truth will reign instead of religion because freedom of ideas promotes truth — 'Je ne crains rien avec les armes de la raison dans un pays libre. Dans la patrie du genre humain. Une proposition vraie peut y paraître choquante aujourd'hui ; mais elle sera revue, pensée, adoptée la semaine suivante' — and because they are mutually exclusive — 'La raison et l'illumination ne sauraient s'asseoir sur le même trône'.⁹³ However, Cloots also believes in freedom of conscience and absolute tolerance of people's opinions. Reason and science shall not prevail out of impositions and sanctions, but as a natural imposition in peoples' minds as the best thing for society after a free exchange of ideas: 'Laissons les églises aux prêtres, laissons la messe aux dévots, jusqu'au moment où la raison donnera congé à la messe, aux dévots et aux prêtres'.⁹⁴ Reason always triumphs, and violence must not and need not be used for that: 'Discutons, disputons ; mais ne nous battons pas. La raison aura le dessus tôt ou tard ; en la brusquant, nous gâterions nos affaires'.⁹⁵ The context of this sentence is the discussion following the flight of the king and the debates concerning the future of the country; Cloots

90 Charles Villette, *Lettres choisies de Charles Villette, sur les principaux évènements de la Révolution* (Paris: chez les Marchands de Nouveautés, 1792), 109–111.

91 *Chronique de Paris*, vol. 3 (1790–1791) (Paris: s.n., 1790), 622.

92 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 192.

93 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 127, 170.

94 Cloots, 167.

95 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 275.

calls for rational debates without violence. Cloots's position regarding religion is equally that of a *laissez faire* of opinions, with the certainty that reason and truth prevail in the end: 'c'est que la raison vient de renverser plus de murailles en peu d'heures, que l'oppression n'en éleva durant dix siècles'.⁹⁶ To Claude Fauchet, Cloots writes: 'Invoquez votre Saint-Esprit, j'invoque ma sainte raison'.⁹⁷ To each his/her own rationale.

However, if freedom and tolerance entail the same equal right to expression, for Cloots, it does not mean that all opinions are equal in terms of right and wrong. Cloots in his revolutionary rhetoric systematically opposes a 'wrong' reason to a 'right' reason, mostly in relation to religious views, but also progressively in relation to counter-revolutionary and then non-republican views. For instance, Cloots writes on the power of reason against non-sense: 'Le torrent de la raison entraînera les immondices de nos temples : et les orateurs du bon sens feront disparaître les prédicateurs du non-sens'.⁹⁸ What makes the difference between a 'good' and 'bad' use of reason, besides the popular judgement, is the capacity to recognise one's own errors and change opinion accordingly:

J'ai pourtant par-devers moi quelque chose qui me dit que je raisonne juste ; car la différence entre une bonne et mauvaise judiciaire,⁹⁹ ne consiste pas à ne jamais errer, mais à ne jamais revenir de son erreur.¹⁰⁰

Cloots makes a distinction between 'wrong' reasoning and 'bad' reasoning, where bad reasoning is linked to 'aristocrats' or those in favour of monarchy, and wrong reasoning are revolutionaries, who, according to Cloots, are making a mistake in their policies, which leads to the same result: anarchy. In this case, it is about prohibiting betting, rather than taxing the revenues from it, which would help consolidating the state's finances.¹⁰¹ Reasoning 'wrong' or 'bad' is also called 'perverse' or 'stupid', when it comes to a natural law such as the Rights of man:

Mépris aux raisonneurs pervers ou stupides qui oseraient encore nier la possibilité de l'établissement universel des Droits de l'homme : droits sacrés qui remplaceront l'universelle tyrannie, et qui répareront les maux de toutes les institutions barbaresques.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 162.

⁹⁷ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 179.

⁹⁸ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 166.

⁹⁹ 'JUDICIAIRE s.f. La faculté de juger'. *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, Fourth edition (Paris: Chez la Veuve B. Brunet, 1762).

¹⁰⁰ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 172.

¹⁰¹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 220.

¹⁰² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 250.

The revolutionary rhetoric easily shifts from ‘bad’ reason, to ‘perverse’ reason, to ‘enemy of reason’.¹⁰³ The category is close to that of ‘enemy of the human race’, which we will analyse in the chapter on humankind. Indeed, Cloots writes in an earlier article about the ‘genre humain raisonnable’.¹⁰⁴ It is therefore a thin rhetorical line that Cloots, together with other Jacobins, threads on. On the one side, freedom of speech entails the free expression of ideas and beliefs, even those contrary to one’s own. On the other, the rhetorical attacks *ad hominem* that ensues—‘bad’ use of reason or ‘stupidity’—is closely related to declaring someone an ‘enemy’, therefore justifying sanctions against him or her. It is however true, that Cloots never did cross the line, except when voting the death penalty for the king, but the rationale was his ‘treason’ against the nation, not a ‘bad’ use of reason.

This then leads to a qualification of ‘good citizen’ against a ‘bad citizen’ depending on how reason is used: a good citizen is a revolutionary anti-clerical republican. ‘Les préjugés, les opinions erronées prêtent des armes aux méchants, aux mauvais citoyens, contre les bons citoyens qui consultent la raison avant tout.’¹⁰⁵

The argument behind this good and bad use of reason is that there is only one ‘single’ reason, ‘eternal’, ‘invariable’, ‘imperishable’ and ‘universal’. These expressions appear often in Cloots’s revolutionary writings.¹⁰⁶ As previously mentioned, it is difficult to pinpoint intellectual origins for Cloots’s views since he wrote short pamphlets rather than academic treatises. However, we have seen how his education at the *académie des nobles* focused on Locke and very likely Wolff, through Sulzer’s teaching. It can be useful here to compare Cloots’s views on reason with theirs, noting that nowhere Cloots mentions Kant, whose *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* was published in 1781 and could have been known to Cloots.¹⁰⁷

There is an interesting justification of why Cloots was right in predicting an economic outcome without the need of *experience*, when commenting on the law regarding hats. Cloots writes that in 1789 he argued against those who predicted the ruin of French hat makers in favour of Spanish hat makers, supposedly because hares and rabbits were being destroyed in France:

... des raisonneurs dont la logique est d’autant plus caduque, qu’ils prétendaient raisonner comme tout le monde. Moi, qui me défie beaucoup des raisonnements de tout le monde, je soutins, en 1789, que nous aurions dorénavant plus de gibier que jamais, et que nos chapeaux seraient aussi communs qu’auparavant. Cette thèse sonna mal aux oreilles un peu sourdes. Il

103 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 237, 474, 534.

104 Cloots, 236.

105 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 124.

106 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 36, 251, 268, 344, 450, 458, 474, 477, 481, 500, 501, 597, 601, 618, 622, 630, 649.

107 Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Riga: verlegts Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1781).

fallut donc recourir à l'expérience, language dont l'homme clairvoyant n'a pas toujours besoin, mais dont le vulgaire des hommes ne saurait jamais se passer.¹⁰⁸

What is interesting is less whether Cloots was right or wrong, and why, but what he writes in the last sentence regarding the need or not of experience. 'L'homme clairvoyant', which means the philosopher using reason, need not wait for the 'experience' of a thesis induced or deduced through reason, to be proven right. It seems, in this way of reasoning, that Cloots follows more closely a Wolffian rationalism rather than a Lockean empiricism in that experience and reason seem to be two different ways of acquiring knowledge for Cloots. Wolff explained this clearly in his *German Metaphysics*.¹⁰⁹

§371. Weil man nun von demjenigen / was man durch blosse Erfahrung erkennt / daß es ist / nicht einsieht / wie es mit andern Wahrheiten zusammen hanget (§. 325); so ist bey dieser Erkänntnis gar keine Vernunfft (§. 370) / und wird dannenhero die Erfahrung der Vernunfft entgegen gesetzt.

§372. Wir haben demnach zweyerley Wege / dadurch wir zur Erkänntnis der Wahrheit gelangen / die Erfahrung und die Vernunfft.¹¹⁰

Wolff then gives the example of the sunrise, which most people experience, but cannot explain, as opposed to those who know through reason that the cause for this is the movement of planets around the sun, and can predict it without the need of experience.

In Cloots's view, another proof of the 'progress' of reason, and the proof by *experience* that the French Revolution provides, is the republican turn of institutions in the *new regime*. Republicanism will be dealt with in the final chapter; here, I will focus on Cloots's argumentation of reason as part of an argument for republican freedom against monarchical tyranny.

Against Despotism and Tyranny

After the revolution, Cloots used reason not only against revealed religion and the Church, but also to argue for republican institutions by opposing reason to despotism and tyranny. They are both related in a republican meaning: against an institu-

¹⁰⁸ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 269.

¹⁰⁹ See Matt Hettche, 'Christian Wolff', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2016, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2016).

¹¹⁰ Christian Wolff, *Vernünfftige Gedancken von Gott, Der Welt Und Der Seele Des Menschen, Auch Allen Dingen Überhaupt* (Halle: Renger, 1720), 202.

tionalised dominant religion (Christianity) imposing its views and demanding to set aside the use of reason, based on faith, tradition, superstition; against an institutionalised dominant political régime (monarchy) also demanding to set aside the use of reason because it requires an individual to obey another individual's arbitrary will.

Cloots assigns a sort of *Renaissance* narrative to reason in political history, comparing monarchism and the nobility with the Middle Ages and its feudal structures. The 1789 revolution, with the progress and triumph of Enlightenment reason, is a rebirth of classical antiquity. In an article published in *Le courrier de Paris dans les 83 départements* on 21 August 1790, while commenting on the duel between Jacques Antoine Marie de Cazalès (1758–1805) and Antoine Barnave (1761–1793), Cloots condemns this 'medieval' practice that is the equivalent of letting God decide human affairs instead of human reason through laws and institutions:

La raison nous a délivrés du joug féodal ; elle nous délivrera, sans doute, des tristes effets de ce joug atroce ; l'indiscipline et le mépris des lois faisaient partie de l'héritage des nobles...
Prenons l'Antiquité pour modèle, servons d'exemple à nos contemporains, si nous voulons mériter les suffrages de la postérité. Votre génie donnera l'impulsion à la raison éternelle.¹¹¹

A little later, in a letter to Madame Beauharnais published in August 1790, Cloots comments the day after the first celebration of the *fête de la fédération*:

Cette fête nationale vous transporte à deux mille ans en arrière, par je ne sais quelle teinte d'antiquité ; elle vous transporte à deux mille ans en avant, par les progrès rapides de la raison dont cette fédération est le fruit précoce et délectable.¹¹²

Classical antiquity seems to be a model, to which Cloots combined Enlightenment reason, to create a sort of *modern antiquity*. The Revolution is the result of *modern antiquity*, but also its future. Such a futuristic vision based on classical antiquity was not uncommon in the second half of the eighteenth-century. It was perhaps best materialised in some monuments and buildings (actually carried through or left as projects) labelled as 'neo-classicism'. The architects Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736–1806) and Étienne-Louis Boullée (1728–1799) played a major role in this movement. Cloots's renewal of antiquity through enlightened reason towards a futuristic utopia is akin to Boullée's 1784 cenotaph for Newton and 1785 project for a royal library, or Ledoux's 1804 project for the ideal city of Chaux.

Reason led revolutionaries to form a 'cult of reason', reminiscent of antiquity, replacing the void left with abolishing religion. This 'cult of reason' was preached

¹¹¹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 35, 36.

¹¹² Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', 54.

by Jacques René Hébert (1757–1794), Pierre Gaspard Chaumette (1763–1794), Joseph Fouché (1759–1820), and Antoine-François Momoro (1756–1794). Hébert was the most famous of them for founding the ‘worship of reason’ and organising the ‘festival of Reason’ on 10 November 1793 for which many churches were re-assigned to the new cult of reason.¹¹³ Women were dressed in Roman togas in order to represent the new goddess of reason, Liberty.¹¹⁴ They were called the ‘*Hébertistes*’, and since they opposed Robespierre and his ‘cult of the Supreme Being’, they were sent to the guillotine, together with Cloots even though he was not one of them. However, Cloots’s thought bears many similarities with the *Hébertistes* regarding his cultic view of reason:

Croyez à mes prophéties ; car ce n'est pas le ciel qui m'inspire ; ma vaticination ne descend point du Vatican ténébreux, mais elle jaillit abondamment de la nature des choses.¹¹⁵

There is paradoxically a risk of isolation in seeing ‘truth’ and thus claiming to be its missionary; ‘Comme s'il ne suffisait pas de la faculté de voir la vérité et d'exprimer la vérité, pour en être le missionnaire’.¹¹⁶ On the one hand, Cloots accepts criticism, but on the other he is blindly convinced of seeing everything. His faith in the cult of reason is a reflection of the general spirit of his time.¹¹⁷ It is also a reflection of the danger of producing an intellectual terror. It is perhaps best represented with Robespierre’s own celebration of the Supreme Being on 8 June 1794 in Paris, where he descended from a mountain like God or the messiah.¹¹⁸ However, to Cloots and his contemporaries there is only one truth. This truth for Cloots comes from the French Enlightenment and the French Revolution, and the whole of humankind will understand it and benefit from it, like oracles in classical antiquity:

Le genre humain comprendra les oracles de la raison invariable. J'occupe la tribune de l'Univers, et la catholicité de nos principes doit frapper l'oreille de tous les hommes. Les dénominations de français et d'universel vont devenir synonymes, à plus juste titre que les noms de chrétien et de catholique.¹¹⁹

113 Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 343.

114 Robert Roswell Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution*, Princeton Classic, with a foreword by Isser Woloch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1941] 2005), 119.

115 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 303.

116 Cloots, ‘L'orateur du genre humain’, 125.

117 Michel Vovelle, *1793, La Révolution contre l'Église : De la Raison à l'Être Suprême* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2002 [1988]), 155–192.

118 Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 277.

119 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 481.

Republicanism was an antiquated idea, as the chapter on republicanism will show. One did not think that it was applicable to a large modern nation, such as France. But, for Cloots, reason reinterpreted anew this old concept, which proves to be the future for France and the world. The feudal regime that was monarchy was based on the rationale that one should accept to belong to one man, but that is obviously irrational; instead, one ought to belong to reason: 'Appartenir à un homme au lieu d'appartenir à la raison, subordonner le choix de mon domicile et ma manière d'être à la volonté arbitraire d'un individu !'¹²⁰ With these words, Cloots explains to Hertzberg why he chooses to inhabit revolutionary France rather than Prussia, and thereby also characterises monarchism as opposed to republicanism. Monarchism is the realm of superstition, tradition, authority, faith, whilst republicanism is the rule of reason, truth, and science: 'on est vigoureux avec la raison, on est invincible avec la vérité. Une fierté républicaine m'inspire le mépris des tyrans'.¹²¹ The opposition between this irrational monarchism and rational republicanism is exacerbated by the fact that Cloots defends the revolution representing the new regime as opposed to Hertzberg, representing Prussia and the *ancien régime*. The revolutionary rhetoric of classical republicanism serves to accentuate the opposition of a country of liberty, of free citizens, to a country of slavery, of enslaved subjects: 'la raison est la seule politique des peuples libres'.¹²² This is a theme that Cloots continues throughout the revolution, and opposing despotism imposed by monarchs with despotism imposed by reason, is similar to the 'legal despotism' that will be analysed in the chapter on republicanism as a main component of 'natural republicanism'. Cloots writes in these terms about the 'despotism of reason':

Le despotisme de la raison est aussi exclusif que celui des monarques. Une note ineffaçable couvrira d'infamie quiconque prêchera désormais la pernicieuse doctrine royale.¹²³

In a speech to the Assembly on 9 September 1792, Cloots addresses an audience well-versed in classical antiquity, men who followed the same curriculum in the *collèges* as described in the chapter on rhetoric. In order to make his case for the rational principle of sovereignty of the human race, Cloots presents the irrationality of the plurality of national sovereignties, with a parallel from Greek antiquity and republican Florence:

¹²⁰ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 111.

¹²¹ Cloots, 102.

¹²² Cloots, 119.

¹²³ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 388.

Le polythéisme historique est aussi déraisonnable que le polythéisme mythologique. Les hostilités divines sont des guerres civiles imaginaires ; mais les hostilités humaines sont des guerres civiles trop réelles. Vraisemblablement, la ridicule diplomatie de notre petite planète a fourni les matériaux de l'histoire fabuleuse du ciel d'Homère et de l'enfer de Dante.¹²⁴

Cloots makes here a reference to the internal wars in Ancient Greece and 14th-century Florence—the Trojan wars in Greece and the battle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines in Florence—that inspired Homer for his poem explaining war between gods in the sky, and inspired Dante for his poem explaining the circles of hell in the afterlife.

Cloots modernises classical republicanism with Enlightenment reason, thus, re-actualising republican themes of despotism, tyranny, and authority: 'toute autorité doit reposer sur l'inébranlable raison'.¹²⁵ For Cloots, reason is not only the basis of natural religion opposed to faith-based revealed religion, but also the basis of good government with republicanism built on liberty as opposed to authority being the cause of bad government in monarchical regime that is equaled with slavery. The power of theology, or 'theocracy', is against reason, and the power of one person, monarchy, is contrary to liberty: 'La théocratie universelle persécute la raison ; la monarchie universelle persécute la liberté ; la République universelle rend à chacun ce qui lui est dû'.¹²⁶ Liberty is universal, reason is universal, therefore the regime combining both is bound to be universal as well.

In his historical account of the French Revolution, Cloots notes:

Mais l'époque du règne de la raison, de la liberté et de l'égalité, l'époque du règne du peuple, en un mot, était irrévocablement arrivée ; il n'était plus au pouvoir des oppresseurs d'arrêter les progrès de la vérité ; il n'était plus en leur pouvoir de concentrer le génie humain dans le cercle de l'ignorance, des préjugés et de l'esclavage : toutes les idoles étaient renversées.¹²⁷

The narrative in which Cloots interprets the revolution is one of modern antiquity with the re-instatement of Ancient Greek and Roman principles within Enlightenment reason. Republican reason is nothing but the renaissance of the Republican Athens and Rome of the revolutionaries' schoolbooks, fired up with the power of imagination that reason cast for the future.

¹²⁴ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 395.

¹²⁵ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 153.

¹²⁶ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 488.

¹²⁷ Cloots, 'Résumé historique', 537.

Cosmopolitan Reason

In Cloots's project for a decree he uses the expression 'cosmopolitan reason', which is a continuation of his argument on the irrationality of a plurality of national sovereignties:

Le salut du peuple repose sur le nivellement complet des autorités constituées, sur l'indépendance respective des citoyens, sur le despotisme de la loi qui enchaîne tous les despotismes individuels. Ce serait une erreur bien funeste de ne songer qu'à nous ; l'humanité nous fait un devoir de ne pas oublier les autres hommes. Si la constitution française ne peut convenir au reste du monde, elle sera mauvaise ; elle s'écrasera aux applaudissements du genre humain, de la raison cosmopolite dont la sanction est indispensable. Le genre humain, régénéré dans toutes les branches législatives, ne connaît ni plage étrangère,¹²⁸ ni souveraineté partielle, ni deux volontés suprêmes, ni deux majorités et deux minorités contradictoires, incompatibles.¹²⁹

The context for this project of a decree is the perceived menace of federalism in France, and the issue that new territories at the French borders represent. The solution, for Cloots, is the establishment of the universal republic, of which the French constitution is the foundation, with the recognition of the principle of 'sovereignty of the human race'. Any new population that would recognise this principle would automatically be part of the universal republic. Therefore, the Constitution as it now stands and is being discussed is French, but it has to be universally valid in order to be applicable to the whole world in the long term. This is only possible when political science is a universal truth, and the human race is universally equal. When the human race is 'regenerated', like the French nation was 'regenerated' after the revolution, it will participate in the making of laws in the same universal republic. There are therefore no 'foreign countries', and therefore the same philosophical reasoning behind the making of laws in a nation applies to the nation of the human race. These are the 'supreme will' and the 'majority', of which there can only be one and not several.

Cloots is therefore engaging with the same concepts used by others about national sovereignty, but instead of a nation confined within the limits of a country, it is the whole human race. The same questions discussed between the concepts of general will and the issue of majority over the minority apply, but for Cloots on the global scale. For instance, let us see what Condorcet writes about the issue of majority and minority, and the question of the general will and reason. In *De la*

¹²⁸ 'Plage. se dit aussi poétiquement, pour signifier, Contrée, climat'. *Dictionnaire de l'académie française, 4th edition*, vol. 2.

¹²⁹ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 492–93.

nature des pouvoirs politiques dans une nation libre, published in 1792, Condorcet writes:

La raison, d'accord avec la nature, ne met qu'une seule borne à l'indépendance individuelle, n'ajoute qu'une seule obligation sociale à celles de morale particulière : c'est la nécessité et l'obligation d'obéir dans les actions qui doivent suivre une règle commune non à sa propre raison, mais à la raison collective du plus grand nombre ; je dis à sa raison et non à sa volonté, car le pouvoir de la majorité sur la minorité ne doit pas être arbitraire ; il ne s'étend pas jusqu'à violer le droit d'un seul individu ; il ne va point jusqu'à obliger à la soumission lorsqu'il contredit évidemment la raison. Cette distinction n'est pas futile : une collection d'hommes peut et doit, aussi bien qu'un individu, distinguer ce qu'elle veut, ce qu'elle trouve raisonnable et juste.¹³⁰

When Cloots writes of 'cosmopolitan reason', it is a way to emphasise that reason is not limited to the borders of the French polity, but it is the reason of the whole future polity of the human race. That is because reason is universal and is the same to all humankind. In this way, Cloots argues that the French Constitution must conform to 'cosmopolitan reason', and this is not only about the French constitution adopting universal principles, but also about not imposing itself on other as 'French', which is to say a minority on the majority of the rest of the world. Cloots continues with this thought in the following paragraph in presenting a procatleipsis by raising an argument made against him: that he wants to submit the whole world to French domination, the majority to a minority. Cloots answers that he knows nothing of any 'French domination' or 'French constitution', he only knows of the rights of man that gather all individuals under the domination of the human race.¹³¹ In other words, the natural rights of man and the citizens are not 'French', they are universal, conform to and discovered by 'reason', and therefore, the constitution based on them is not 'French', it is universal, conform to 'cosmopolitan reason', and the republic it establishes is not 'French' but 'universal'. Moreover, it is part of 'cosmopolitan reason' that the universal republic would encompass all other countries but always in respect of the 1789 Declaration.

Source of Morals

If faith and revealed religion are contrary to reason, and therefore rejected, what is to be the source of morals? For Cloots, it is nature and its observation through

¹³⁰ Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat marquis de Condorcet, 'De la nature des pouvoirs politiques dans une nation libre', in *Œuvres*, ed. Arthur Condorcet-O'Connor and François Arago, vol. 10 (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, imprimeurs de l'Institut, [1792] 1847), 589–90.

¹³¹ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 493.

reason. Already in *Certitude*, Cloots stated that, in natural religion, reason replaces authority and faith as source of morality:

La vérité de sa Religion ne se fonde point sur des preuves équivoques, obscures, banales, il ne fait pas dépendre sa foi d'un fatras de vieux Livres ; mais le Ciel & la Terre, voilà sa Bibliothèque. Le Révélationisme est multiple, parce que les livres sont des productions humaines : la Religion Naturelle est unique; parce que l'Univers est l'ouvrage de Dieu : comme si la Morale n'étoit pas naturelle à l'homme : comme si le Créateur en lui donnant la raison, l'eût privé de ce qui constitue la raison. Pour faire naître, ou plutôt, pour développer la Morale dans notre entendement, il ne faut que la Société de deux individus, comme pour la formation du fœtus, il suffit que l'homme connoisse la femme, le reste s'acheve de soi-même.¹³²

Cloots develops the same idea even a little further in his revolutionary writings, and to simply get rid of any ecclesiastical institution, as well as any book containing principles of morals; they are not universal but temporally, spatially, and culturally located:

... les places publiques, les plaines, les bosquets rassembleront la commune, le septième jour de la semaine, autour du plus vertueux paroissien, qui développera les maximes salutaires de la raison universelle. Comme la morale est de tous les temps et de tous les lieux, je conseillerais de ne faire aucun usage ni du *Coran*, ni de *l'Évangile*, ni du *Zend-Avesta*, sous prétexte de quelques bons préceptes clairsemés dans ces livres fameux.¹³³

However, Cloots does not elaborate here on what universal principles of morals could be, nor why and how 'the most virtuous parishioner' could find them. Cloots's goal is first and foremost to undermine the Church institutionally, but not by force, these are merely suggestions for a post-ecclesiastical society. By the same token, Cloots praises clergymen who turn to natural religion such as Antoine de Courmand (1742–1814), abbot of the Parisian church Saint-Étienne-du-Mont, member of the Jacobins, who defrocked himself in 1790, and married secretly in 1791 after lobbying for clerical marriage. Cloots calls him 'Prêtre de la raison, prédicateur de la nature'.¹³⁴

Cloots elaborates a little more on morals with the debates surrounding the first criminal code adopted between 25 September and 6 October 1791 by the National Assembly, shortly after adopting the constitution on 3 September 1791. Cloots states that against the saying 'point de mœurs, point de lois', it is, on the contrary, the law that makes the mores: 'mauvaises lois, mauvaises mœurs ; bonnes lois, bonnes mœurs'.¹³⁵ Therefore, Cloots urges the Assembly: 'Consultez la raison en dictant

¹³² Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 469.

¹³³ Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', 45.

¹³⁴ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 120.

¹³⁵ Cloots, 122.

vosre code, et vous effacerez nombre de péchés mortels et véniels de votre catéchisme barbare'.¹³⁶ Cloots's target are so-called 'sins' prescribed by religion's law that translated into human law with crimes and sentences. It concerned, in this case, the domain of sexuality such as 'sodomy', which included many non-procreative sexual acts.¹³⁷ It has to be noted that the identification of sodomy with male homosexuality dated from the end of the eighteenth century, but that the crime of 'sodomy' in this sense had not been applied since 1750.¹³⁸ It had become less a matter of criminal law, and more a matter of social policy in Paris to make homosexuality less visible.¹³⁹ It also concerned 'imaginary crimes', such as blasphemy or sacrilege. Cloots's views are part of the general discussions of the time comparing these practices with nature. For instance, Jean-Baptiste Boyer d'Argens (1704–1771) in *Thérèse philosophe* argues that God created everything that exists, including desires and inclinations that are found in nature, which are therefore not 'antiphysiques', not against nature.¹⁴⁰ Cloots's analysis with the observation of nature goes perhaps even further in using a metaphor with the laws from physics in order to talk about physical acts, particularly among the youth:

On s'étonne de la corruption des gymnases, comme si des corps électriques revêtus de houes nerveuses, pouvaient se mouvoir ensemble, sans éprouver de fréquentes détonations. J'aimerais autant appeler les chatouillements et les démangeaisons, des crimes contre nature.¹⁴¹

What matters is more the issue of physical exhaustion and loss of energy than the identification of crimes, and Cloots quotes here the work by Doctor Tissot on onanism, suggesting abstinence to avoid physical degeneration.¹⁴² Regarding anything

136 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 123.

137 'In the eighteenth century the word "sodomy," derived from the name of the Biblical city destroyed because of the sins of its inhabitants, could be applied to a considerable variety of nonprocreative sexual acts, ranging from masturbation to bestiality, including anal and oral intercourse within marriage'. In Jeffrey Merrick, 'Sodomical Inclinations in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 3 (1997): 290.

138 Thierry Pastorello, 'L'abolition du crime de sodomie en 1791 : un long processus social, répressif et pénal', *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique*, nos. 112–113 (2010): 197–208.

139 Michel Rey, 'Police et sodomie à Paris au XVIIIe siècle : du péché au désordre', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 29, no. 1 (1982): 113–124.

140 d'Argens [?], *Thérèse philosophe, ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Père Dirrag et de Mademoiselle Éradice*; cited in Pastorello, 'L'abolition du crime de sodomie en 1791 : un long processus social, répressif et pénal'.

141 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 125.

142 François-Auguste Tissot, *L'onanisme. Dissertation sur les maladies produites par la masturbation* (Lausanne: François Grasset, 1760).

else, Cloots suggests considering the relativity of what is considered vice and virtue, and therefore crime or not, which has been different among societies and through time. Cloots concedes that nothing is outside the domain of legislation, but instead of religious views, Cloots suggests using reason (universal) and argues that, by defining vice and virtue, one can find a universal standard. The definition is set in terms of usefulness or harmfulness to society: ‘Tout ce qui est utile à la société est vertue, tout ce qui lui est nuisible est vice’.¹⁴³ In that sense, Cloots suggests softening the law, and to agree that only a minimal list of crimes that are truly hurtful to society: rape, kidnapping, seduction, and adultery.¹⁴⁴

Cloots never mentions Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) in his writings, but this definition is close to Bentham’s principle of utility based on the acceptance that nature gave man two leading forces of behaviour with pleasure and pain—as described in *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, printed in 1780 and first published in 1789.¹⁴⁵ It is not clear if Cloots knew about Bentham, but Etienne Dumont translated Bentham’s 1790 *Draught for a New Plan for the Organization of the Judicial Establishment in France as Sur le nouvel ordre judiciaire en France* in 1790 and the text was presented to the National Assembly.¹⁴⁶

Cloots’s reference may be Claude-Adrien Helvétius (1715–1771), who believed that humans were born with equal aptitudes and only slight differences.¹⁴⁷ As such, and since they are motivated by pleasure and pain, laws and education could mould individuals.¹⁴⁸ However, Helvétius was not interested in the human race as an entity, as the diversity of laws and models of education meant a great diversity of societies.¹⁴⁹ As Thomson argues, Helvétius posited a utilitarian form of natural law in stating that the ‘sole inviolable law’ was the ‘general interest’, the ‘happiness of the majority’.¹⁵⁰ Cloots mentions Helvétius several times, and quotes Helvétius on God and religion:

143 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 123.

144 Cloots, 124.

145 Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: T. Payne & Son, 1789).

146 Jeremy Bentham, *Sur le nouvel ordre judiciaire en France, ou extraits des dissertations de M. Bentham adressées par l’auteur à l’Assemblée Nationale*, trans. Etienne Dumont (Paris: Imprimerie du « Patriote français », 1790).

147 Ann Thomson, ‘French Eighteenth-Century Materialists and Natural Law’, *History of European Ideas* 42, no. 2 (2016): 252.

148 Thomson, 253.

149 Thomson, 253.

150 Thomson, 254.

Helvétius disait que si Dieu avait daigné se révéler aux humains, il aurait fait descendre du ciel un bon plan de législation sur la terre. En effet, une religion quelconque est inutile ou nuisible, sans une bonne constitution : celle-ci tient lieu de toutes les religions possibles.¹⁵¹

Against Raynal, Cloots quotes Helvétius who allegedly advised precaution towards 'l'espion Raynal'.¹⁵² Helvétius is cited elsewhere among other great French thinkers, or cited as part of an argument for his work on friendship—probably from *De l'esprit*¹⁵³ on 'need' as the engine of friendship.¹⁵⁴

In *République universelle*, Cloots reiterates the idea of reason against religion being the source of morals:

En effet, toutes les religions battent en brèche la raison ; car la Divinité disparaît en y réfléchissant une heure tout au plus. Or, plus les hommes seront raisonnables, et plus ils seront vertueux, c'est-à-dire utiles à la société : donc la religion est une maladie sociale qu'on ne saurait guérir trop tôt.¹⁵⁵

What follows is a diatribe against religious men, who pretend to be virtuous, but are corrupt because they let 'prejudice' and 'sophism' be the masters of their *entendement*: clergymen will only lead society to 'ruin, anarchy, slavery', unless rational men (*bons raisonneurs*) are there to police them.¹⁵⁶

What reason leads to, according to Cloots, is the respect of nature ('... la nature est plus sage que les hommes'),¹⁵⁷ which the law should encourage, since reason also leads to republicanism. Cloots writes: 'La Loi bienfaisante remplacera un Dieu insignifiant'.¹⁵⁸ But leaving nature unhinged is not the solution, for Cloots, who takes the argument of determinism from revealed religion to natural religion. The law is there to balance nature, which is globally good, but leaves moral freedom to men; therefore, virtue and vice do exist.¹⁵⁹ Laws, for Cloots must take these into consideration, and as a result: 'La société présentera des appâts à la vertu et des obstacles au crime'.¹⁶⁰

In this sense, reason is also opposed to passion, which is again correlated with revealed religion and monarchism. For instance, regarding the 'aristocrats', encom-

151 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 82–83.

152 Cloots, 189.

153 Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *De l'esprit* (Paris: Chez Durand, 1758).

154 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 142, 255.

155 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 253.

156 Cloots, 253.

157 Cloots, 255.

158 Cloots, 254.

159 Cloots, 254.

160 Cloots, 255.

passing both the nobility and the clergy, Cloots writes: ‘L’orgueil et l’avarice sont les démons familiers de nos aristocrates’.¹⁶¹ What follows is the need to re-establish reason in the the highest law of the republic, the constitution:

Les hommes de la constitution sonderont l’abîme des passions : les lumières de la raison corrigeront les erreurs de l’instinct. J’ai calculé tous les inconvénients de la royauté ; mais je calcule aussi toutes les bizarreries d’un peuple novice.¹⁶²

The *bizarreries* in question is the tendency of the people, as Cloots notes, to express sympathy towards the king and the *ancien régime*, which Cloots excuses as one of the consequences of attaining a higher degree of civilisation. Cloots refers to the need, according to him, to suppress the *liste civile* (civil list), which defines the expenses supporting the monarch. One of the decrees taken on 10 August 1792, following the storming of the Tuileries and the suspension of the king, abolished the civil list.

Education, or elsewhere called ‘regeneration’, is the solution that Cloots and the revolutionaries saw for the future of the nation: ‘Moins la raison est développée, plus les passions sont déchaînées. En améliorant l’éducation, nous améliorerons la nation’.¹⁶³ Education had been the monopoly of the clergy, and became an important project for the revolutionaries in their plan for the ‘regeneration’ of the nation, which will be explore more in details in the chapter on humankind. The basis of this education of reason is of course based on ‘science’ as understood in the second half of the eighteenth century. The role of nature in Cloots’s thought will be analysed further in the next chapter. It is now time, in the following section, to say a word about science, which is the the end product of reason. The last subsection on the ‘science of man’, will then continue this discussion on reason as the source of moral.

Science

We saw in the first part of the first section how Cloots aligned with Voltaire’s position regarding reason against faith, and thereby authority and tradition. Cloots opposed reason to the church based on superstition, and which maintained ignorance to usurp moral and social authority. The solution to this, for Cloots, is its opposite—the product of reason—science, and the education of people to science:

¹⁶¹ Cloots, 299.

¹⁶² Cloots, 299.

¹⁶³ Cloots, 312.

L'ignorance étant l'atelier de l'imposture, il devoit s'ensuivre, par la raison des contraires, que la science remédieroit aux ravages de son ennemie : la force des préjugés, le respect-humain, la cupidité, l'empire de la coutume, s'opposent, il est vrai, à la destruction totale de l'erreur ; mais du moins la principale partie des hommes, celle qui donne le ton aux autres, brise ses fers, & cela suffit.¹⁶⁴

Universality and Unity

Science is universally valid and understandable, and because of that, Cloots means that it is the reason why the whole humankind should unite rather than be divided. Science means the development of transports, exchanges, communication technologies, all possible means for Cloots to make human beings understand one another and share things together despite great distances, as opposed to animals:

Ce morcellement est d'autant plus honteux et funeste, que la nature nous a doués de la parole et de l'invention des arts et des sciences, de l'imprimerie, et de la poste et de la navigation, pour ne former qu'une seule famille raisonnable sur notre petit globe. Je pardonne aux singes de Sumatra de n'avoir aucune parenté avec les singes du Paraguay ; mais l'homme des Indes occidentales, qui ne fraternise pas avec l'homme des grandes Indes, est doublement inepte, doublement coupable et doublement puni. Ses relations incohérentes deviennent criminelles : il en résultera des guerres, des fratricides, tant que tous les intérêts particuliers ne seront pas en harmonie avec une force commune, avec une loi universelle.¹⁶⁵

Another example of the universality of science, for Cloots, is that it is imported from abroad, and every country's scientific improvement is built on another country's discoveries. Cloots seems to paraphrase the Latin metaphor of dwarfs standing on the shoulder of giants (*'nanos gigantum humeris insidentes'*), also expressed by Newton, when he writes this defence of foreigners: 'Rappelons-nous que chaque nation doit ses arts, ses sciences, ses lumières, sa philosophie aux étrangers'.¹⁶⁶

This science, for Cloots, is of course the one gathered in the *Encyclopédie*, it is the science of all the *philosophes* who identify with the intellectual principles of '*les lumières*', the 'Enlightenment':

Malgré le penchant de l'homme vers la superstition, l'Encyclopédie parviendra néanmoins, tôt ou tard, à son but, en tirant l'esprit de l'assoupissement qui le rend crédule.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 324.

¹⁶⁵ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 299.

¹⁶⁶ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 143.

¹⁶⁷ Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 330.

Cloots sees the Revolution, and the ‘new regime’ as the result of the progress of reason and of ‘*les lumières*’, hence the defeat of ignorance, superstition, corruption, and all the ills associated with the *ancien régime*, which was not based on reason and science; it was an ‘encyclopaedic explosion’:

Le délabrement des finances, voilà la cause; la philosophie, voilà les moyens. Les frondeurs ridicules, sous les Mazarin, sont devenus révolutionnaires sous le Breteuil,¹⁶⁸ grâce à l’explosion encyclopédique.¹⁶⁹

The science of the Enlightenment created the revolution, and the ‘new regime’ enacts the scientific principles of the Enlightenment in the fields of morals and politics, opposing therefore an ‘old’ and a ‘new’ science, in Cloots’s revolutionary writings: ‘La vaine science de nos vieux politiques est en défaut depuis le jour de l’insurrection parisienne’.¹⁷⁰ Of course, the context of this pamphlet is the perceived attack on the French Revolution and Cloots by Prussian minister Hertzberg, and therefore Cloots attacks him and his profession as ‘*charlatanerie*’. Later on in the revolution, Cloots also attacks Fauchet and other writers on the same premise: ‘Le malheur du jour, c’est cette nuée d’écrivailleurs nés d’hier à la science profonde des publicistes...’.¹⁷¹ This old science is based on the founding principle of universal monarchy, that guides certain policies such as the European ‘balance’ of power.¹⁷² Cloots denounces this policy based not on moral or reason, but on reason of state calculated to maintain an equal amount of power among European states so no one is closer to achieving a ‘universal monarchy’. That does not mean that Cloots considers this true political science solely based on morals. As Cloots writes in *Chronique de Paris* on 27 July 1791, justifying his postponing of putting an end to the slave trade: ‘La morale est essentielle dans l’intérieur d’un ménage, mais un État ne saurait faire vie qui dure, sans la science du profond Machiavel’.¹⁷³ This ‘old science’ in politics is also based on tradition and authority, particularly the deference to older men in society, as is the case in the Orient and was the case in ancient republics, which is why republics failed and despotism succeeded, according to Cloots.¹⁷⁴ However, despotism is bound to fall, even if Cloots admits that sciences and arts may some times flourish because a despot decides to sponsor them. Ulti-

168 Louis Charles Auguste le Tonnelier, baron de Breteuil (1730–1807), was the last prime minister of Louis XVI, appointed a few days before the storming of the Bastille.

169 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 145.

170 Cloots, 111.

171 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 313.

172 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 155.

173 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 199.

174 Cloots, 147.

mately the corruption of a despot and his court will ruin the talent of the best artists (and scientists).¹⁷⁵

The ‘new’ science, the science of the *philosophes*, is universal and unified, because it is based on nature and the observation of its principles. As one of the *philosophes*, the ‘Orator of the human race’ claims to have found a basic principle of this ‘new science’ of human organisation by observing nature: the single sovereignty of the human race leading to the universal republic (as opposed to the single sovereignty of God appointing monarchs, leading to the universal monarchy). This new science is based on the *Encyclopédie*. The *Encyclopédie* aimed at containing and describing all the sciences and gives the following definition of science:

science, en terme de philosophie, signifie la connoissance claire & certaine de quelque chose, fondée ou sur des principes évidens par eux-mêmes, ou sur des démonstrations.¹⁷⁶

The article continues by stating that, in this sense, science is opposed to doubt, and opinion is in between the two.¹⁷⁷ Science is clearly connected to philosophy, and refers to the clear and certain knowledge of something. There is no mention of a scientific method beyond the reference to what is ‘self-obvious’ or ‘demonstrations’. The relation to philosophy is even clearer in Jaucourt’s following article classifying the various types of ‘Sciences (connaissances humaines)’, in which he makes reference to classical rhetoric and the understanding of science as needing eloquence to be communicated; he mentions, for instance, Aristotle and Cicero, and, later in the article, Quintilian.¹⁷⁸ Science to Jaucourt and the Enlightenment is related to philosophy and also to rhetoric and the *vir civilis*, who must acquire this *sapientia*, this science. Jaucourt even equates the reign of sciences with Ancient Rome, the fall of which was the fall of sciences and the beginning of centuries of superstition and prejudice that only the scientific ‘revolution’ put an end to by rediscovering antiquity. At the end of the article, Jaucourt emphasises that nobles of Ancient Greece and Rome devoted their time and fortune to the advancement of sciences, and he

175 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 303.

176 Unknown, ‘Science (Logique et Métaphysique)’, in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 14 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 787.

177 Unknown, 788.

178 Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, ‘Sciences (connaissances humaines)’, in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 14 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 788.

encourages the present king to do the same.¹⁷⁹ Sciences are the way forward to enlighten and reform society for the better.

What was understood as ‘science’ during the Enlightenment was different from our contemporary understanding of it, even if it is during this period that the categories of science that we know today began to form. ‘Science’ was also known under the general label of ‘natural philosophy’ or simply ‘philosophy’, as Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717–1783) states that the two are synonymous.¹⁸⁰ In the *Discours préliminaire des Éditeurs*, d’Alembert laid out the programme of the *Encyclopédie* regarding the presentation of all the sciences, crafts, and arts.¹⁸¹ At the end of the *Discours*, a figure maps the state of human knowledge following Bacon’s understanding: memory, reason, imagination. While memory is related to history, reason is related to philosophy, which includes the science of nature, the science of man, as well as the science of God. Science is everything that is the product of reason, branches of knowledge gathered under the general term of philosophy.

Science of Man

The eighteenth-century ‘science of man’ continued to advance the project that started in the preceding century with the ‘knowledge of ourselves’.¹⁸² In France, the search for a science of man before the revolution was linked to the pressing necessity for reforms as the organisation of society and the state was increasingly inefficient and ineffective — most notably the collection of taxes, from which the wealthiest were exempted, whilst the participation in the American revolutionary wars emptied the state’s coffers. In this context, already before the revolution, Turgot (1727–1781), when he was a minister of Louis XVI, explained to the king the necessity to develop a ‘new objective science of society founded on the constants of human nature and the mutual needs of all men and women’.¹⁸³ Condorcet was a friend of Turgot’s, and together they were the first to use the term ‘social science’ based on reason and experience as opposed to traditions.¹⁸⁴ Turgot and Condorcet’s views were that science would allow to bureaucratic reform because it could replace

179 Jaucourt, 789.

180 Jean le Rond d’Alembert, ‘Discours préliminaire des éditeurs’, in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 1 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), xlvi.

181 d’Alembert.

182 Pagden, *The Enlightenment: And Why It Still Matters*, 126.

183 Thomas L. Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 158–159.

184 Hankins, 159.

its opacity, inefficiency, and secrecy with universality, openness, and mathematical precision.¹⁸⁵ According to them, ‘politics itself was to be subjected to scientific rule’ and ‘natural reason, rather than political will, was to be the source of order and authority in political affairs’.¹⁸⁶

The science of man is included in the *Encyclopédie* as a particular branch of scientific knowledge regrouping morals, logic, and ‘science of the soul’.¹⁸⁷ The science of the soul is about the knowledge of the human soul through theology. The remaining division between logic and moral is explained by the fact that the science of man is presented following the faculties of man, which are *Entendement* and *Volonté*: The *Entendement* must conform to ‘truth’, which is the goal of logic; *Volonté* must be subjected to ‘virtue’, which is the goal of morals.¹⁸⁸ It is in this paradigm that Cloots wrote:

... tous les humains seraient vertueux, s'ils pouvaient en avoir la volonté. Rien au monde n'est plus volontaire que la volonté qui nous conduit irrésistiblement. On ne saurait donc trop rectifier notre jugement par des notions saines et lucides. Les lois doivent être assises sur ces données fondamentales.¹⁸⁹

Cloots here again follows Diderot (often cited by Cloots) directly in submitting human *volonté* to legal *entendement*, albeit with gentle incentives towards virtuous behaviours and obstacles to vicious ones.

The moral science is then divided between a general and a particular one, the particular one concerning ‘laws or jurisprudence’: natural laws, economic laws, and political laws. ‘Moral’ comes from Latin *mores*, meaning custom, manners; the moral sciences study human behaviour, the everyday life of human beings. It is within this science of man that Cloots wants to make a breakthrough, particularly with the discovery of natural laws and political laws. These laws, can be discovered through reason by observing nature, just as the laws of physics by a natural philosopher such as Newton. Here, Cloots claims to have made a discovery in the science of man regarding *entendement* with the principle of ‘sovereignty of the human race’, and compares it to Newton’s discovery of gravity.

As Hankins notes, ‘The ideology of Enlightenment tended to make natural philosophers into heroes, and in France the greatest hero of all was Newton’.¹⁹⁰ New-

185 Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 63.

186 Baker, 64.

187 d’Alembert, ‘Discours préliminaire’, xvii.

188 d’Alembert, xlvi.

189 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 254–255.

190 Hankins, *Science and the Enlightenment*, 9.

ton's accounts were circulated widely, and discussed by educated elites, for example Voltaire and Mme du Châtelet.¹⁹¹ What remains important in how Newton was perceived after the publication of *Principia Mathematica* in 1687 is that the physical world, the universe, nature, was an orderly place governed by laws, and that human reason was capable of discovering and understanding them.¹⁹² Newton was certainly a *hero* to Cloots, who mentions him several times as an important figure of philosophy, together with other scientists or philosopher such as e.g. Galileo, Copernicus, Leibniz, Locke, or Voltaire.¹⁹³ Cloots also adopts Newton's view of the world as an orderly place governed by laws—a 'system' as analysed in chapter two—and Cloots sets himself the goal to discover them in the realm of politics with the principle of sovereignty of the human race: 'Newton a réuni tous les philosophes par sa découverte physique ; je réunirai tous les hommes par ma découverte politique'.¹⁹⁴ This sort of comparison was not unusual in eighteenth-century France; although, it was made by *philosophes* to other *philosophes*: Bernardin de Saint Pierre called the work of the botanist Tournefort similar to what Newton did to astronomy; Quesnay was referred to as the Newton of economics.¹⁹⁵ The difference is that they did not call themselves that.

Nature and God

There is a clear indication that, for Cloots, philosophical principles induced through reason are as universal and perennial as the laws governing the physical realm. His principle against all religions is universally and eternally valid. Early in Cloots's thought there was a recognition that philosophy, the act of thinking, the use of reason, was connected to truth and science. In *Vœux d'un gallophile*, Cloots writes: 'Le Musée fera pour la philosophie ce que l'académie des sciences fait pour l'astronomie...'.¹⁹⁶ To Cloots all this scientific development is a replacement of Christianity with the equivalent of human science in philosophy. As such, 'nature' and the observation of its manifestations constitute the bulk of philosophical reasoning. Misusing reason leads to falsehood and sophisms, and a strong candidate for that is religious thinking, but also any idea based on 'prejudices'. In a letter to Charles

191 For the introduction of Newton in France see J. B. Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

192 See Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, Third edition, *New Approaches to European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 99–113.

193 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 75, 163, 187, 392, 422, 501.

194 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 477.

195 Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment*, 8.

196 Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile*, 84.

Stanhope published in *Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais*, Cloots writes: 'C'est à la philosophie de réparer les fautes des hommes et des dieux'.¹⁹⁷ It is clear to Cloots that knowledge and reasoning should serve the truth and be disseminated in order to 'fix' the errors of men (monarchism) and gods (the church).

For this purpose, Cloots opposes a *théos* and a *cosmos* as the two explanations of the universe. The *théos* is the immaterial universe or God, the *cosmos* is the material universe or nature. For Cloots, there is no point in wondering why the universe exists; it is enough to accept its existence without inventing something outside of it to explain its origins. Cloots writes:

Quant aux causes finales, il n'est pas plus étonnant de les trouver dans la nature éternelle que dans la divinité éternelle. C'est un grand phénomène que la nature, je l'avoue ; mais votre dieu invisible, indéfinissable, serait un phénomène bien moins compréhensible. Vous voulez expliquez une merveille par une autre merveille. Il est clair qu'en ajoutant un incompréhensible *théos* à un incompréhensible *cosmos*, vous doublez la difficulté, sans la résoudre.¹⁹⁸

Cloots is here answering to and arguing against two theses in the side of the *théos*: the *a priori* cosmological argument, and the *a posteriori* teleological argument. The 'cosmological argument' — or *a priori* argument — is a type of argument that seeks to explain the existence of the cosmos with the existence of a prior being, God.¹⁹⁹ The other argument regarding the existence of God is an *a posteriori* argument, also called *teleological* argument. This argument starts from the awe that strikes the observer of nature and the universe, whose structure, interconnectedness, balance, and order can only be explained by deliberate mind behind it all; there must be a *design*.²⁰⁰

Cloots's argument against theology is that it does not explain nature, but adds complexity to explaining nature. Theological explanations are really only adding complexity and even more questions, when physical questions are already complex enough. Therefore, for Cloots, it is better to stay within the realm of the physical and try to solve its mysteries with questions from physics rather than from metaphysics. In this way Cloots dismisses the 'cosmological argument' — 'why is there something rather than nothing?' — and the necessity argument for the existence of God as a watchmaker, prime mover, or designer. Cloots simply rejects the utility of metaphysics.

¹⁹⁷ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 59.

¹⁹⁸ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 251.

¹⁹⁹ For an overview of the argument, see William Lane Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (London: MacMillan, 1980); Bruce Reichenbach, 'Cosmological Argument', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2013, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2013).

²⁰⁰ Del Ratzsch and Jeffrey Koperski, 'Teleological Arguments for God's Existence', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2016).

ical considerations regarding who created what we observe and why; what matters is to focus on explaining what is visible and material. In his next pamphlet, *Bases constitutionnelles*, Cloots reiterates this argument against searching for metaphysical explanations. This time, Cloots opposes what he calls ‘divine nature’ to ‘palpable and visible nature’, which is sufficient to explain natural phenomena:

Quelque chose existe éternellement : c’est une vérité simple ; mais n’allons pas nous perdre dans les spéculations d’une nature divine et créatrice, pendant que tout s’explique avec la nature palpable et visible. Je nie l’existence d’une nature créée, et vous ne m’endormirez pas avec votre prétendue nature créatrice et motrice. Je ne veux point de fabrique, et par conséquent point de fabricant. Le bon sens rejette le premier moteur d’un mouvement éternel.²⁰¹

The observation of nature is, for Cloots, the beginning of starting to reject theology; or, nature is the only revelation acceptable, revealed religions should be rejected: ‘Ma doctrine est la révélation de la nature ; les autres révélations se dissipent devant elle comme les spectres du sommeil devant les veillés de la philosophie.’²⁰²

Cloots rejects the watchmaker argument. The world may not have appeared by itself, but the question of its origins is asked in a wrong way because asking for the origins of something and answering that a pre-existing being must have existed to create it leads to an endless chain of pre-existing beings: if the world did not create itself and therefore there must be a God to create it, then must there not be a God who created this God who created the world? In laying this argument Cloots makes an important distinction for his own argument later between *théos* and *cosmos*, which we will see in the conclusion more in details:

Les croyants disent que le monde ne s’est pas fait lui-même, et certainement ils ont raison, mais Dieu non plus ne s’est pas fait lui-même, et vous n’en concluez pas qu’il existe un être plus ancien que Dieu. Cette progression nous mènerait à la tortue des Indiens. La question sur l’existence de Dieu (*Théos*) est mal posée ; car il faut savoir préalablement si le monde (*Cosmos*) est un ouvrage. Demandez donc la question préalable, et vous passerez à l’ordre du jour dans le silence de vos adversaires stupéfaits.²⁰³

The Indians’ tortoise in question is a reference to Hindu mythology in which a world turtle, named Akupāra, holds the world on its back; or in some versions holds elephants on its back, who hold the world on theirs. It is very likely that Cloots takes this comparison from the French translation of Locke, who in *Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (book II, ch. 13, and ch. 23), writes about how wrongly some argue with *substance* to support an *accident*, comparing with an Indian arguing for

201 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 496.

202 Cloots, 496–97.

203 Cloots, 495.

a turtle supporting elephants supporting the world.²⁰⁴ In other words, Cloots uses Locke's argument about the limits of human understanding: explaining the world by being created by a God, leads to the question of who created God, similar to how the Indians' turtle leads to the question of who or what supports the turtle, which supports the elephants, which support the world. The science of man, for Cloots, is separated from the science of the soul because of the limits of *entendement*. All societies and governments based on scientific rules should be outside of theology (*théos*) and solely within nature (*cosmos*).

Following this passage, Cloots refutes the watchmaker argument because comparing the universe with a watch is comparing apples and oranges: the watch is man-made, whilst nature is not. Doing so, Cloots is paraphrasing Hume's argumentation in part II of his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* when he explains that when we see a house we know by experience that it is man-made and has an 'architect', but that we cannot make the same analogy for the universe because we do not have the same experience of someone creating the universe to infer this cause/effect reasoning.²⁰⁵ Cloots writes: '... mais cette différence ne me fera pas adopter une similitude entre l'architecte de ma maison et le prétendu architecte de la nature'.²⁰⁶ As we have seen previously, Hume's *Dialogues* was one of the sources for Cloots's *Certitude*, and it is likely that he remembered this part of the *Dialogues* in this argument, although he does not mention Hume.

Cloots also puts forward an argument similar to Bayle's regarding creation and time, equally one of his sources for writing *Certitude*.²⁰⁷ For Cloots, the universe and nature exist and must be accepted as facts, which are eternal, without wondering about their creation and therefore the concept of time outside the creation. Bayle intervened in a discussion about the eternity of creation and God. For Christian orthodoxy, the world was not eternal and had been created at some point in time by God. For some scholastics, like Aquinas, the world was created *ab aeternam*, but adversaries argued that it was not possible that God, eternal, also created the world eternal. Bayle recycled the argument already put

204 John Locke, *Essai philosophique concernant l'entendement humain, où l'on montre quelle est l'étendue de nos connoissances certaines, et la manière dont nous y parvenons*, Third edition, trans. Pierre Coste (Amsterdam: Chez Pierre Mortier, 1735), 126, 230.

205 David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Second edition (London: s.n., 1779), 51.

206 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 495.

207 See note (H) under the article Zabarella in Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, Third, vol. 3: N–Z (Rotterdam (Genève): s.n., 1715), 898–899. For its interpretation, see Todd Ryan, 'Bayle et la controverse sur l'éternité du monde', *Kriterion: Revista de Filosofia* 50, no. 120 (December 2009): 335–348.

forward by Anselm of Canterbury, Augustinus, Boethius, Aquinas, Suarez, and others, by making a distinction between *eternity*, that can be counted, and *sempiternity*, that cannot be counted.²⁰⁸ God is sempiternal, but has created the universe eternal:

C'est dans les idées de Dieu que se trouve la vraie mesure de la quantité absolue des choses, tant à l'égard de l'étenduë qu'à l'égard du tems. L'homme n'y connoît rien ; il ne connoît que des grandeurs ou des petites relatives.²⁰⁹

Cloots takes this argument of eternity, but again, drops the theological argumentation. Nature is eternal, and its creatures (animals and the human race) are equally eternal; this is a given fact that must be accepted and studied in order to explain it, but it should not be studied and explained by adding another 'fact' of an eternal or sempiternal God outside this world:

... la nature ne produit rien. Tout ce qui la compose existe éternellement : ce que nous appelons vulgairement l'enfant de la nature est aussi vieux que sa mère. N'allons pas expliquer l'existence de la nature incommensurable par l'existence d'une autre nature incommensurable. Vous cherchez l'Éternel hors du monde, et je le trouve dans le monde. Je me contente du *cosmos* incompréhensible, et vous voulez doubler la difficulté par un *théos* incompréhensible !²¹⁰

Cloots, then, seems to feel a need to fill the void that these theological answers then leave, once discarded; void, which is ultimately an existential one. A new type of secular natural religion based on science replaces revealed religion for this purpose, once theology has been discarded. Observing nature leads one to discredit theology, and to replace existential questions hitherto addressed by theology: why are we here? What is death? Cloots compares nature to a 'good mother', and death to a good night's sleep until a rebirth under a different form, alluding, perhaps to decomposition and recomposition:

La nature est une bonne mère qui se plaît à voir naître et renaître ses enfants sous des combinaisons différentes. Un profond sommeil ne laisse pas que d'avoir son mérite.²¹¹

In general, Cloots wants to propose a, philosophically-speaking, ecumenical system, one that is valid for all regardless of one's view on religion and one's belief. Only the observation of nature can lead to universal laws of morality, valid for any system of beliefs, any religion:

208 Ryan.

209 Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, 3, 899.

210 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 495–496.

211 Cloots, 497.

Ma philosophie est trop vraie pour être chagrinante ; et les esprits faibles qui ne sauraient soutenir cette clarté, devraient consulter la nature, qui couvre tous les systèmes spéculatifs d'un voile consolant. En effet, soyez athée ou déiste, matérialiste ou spiritualiste, vous irez toujours votre train ordinaire dans le cours de la vie.²¹²

For Cloots, revealed religions led to a clouding of reason and the application of false laws, which were wrong because they were man-made against nature. Men's laws are particular and temporary, whereas the laws of nature are general, universal, and eternal. Cloots there adds that the 'science' of the Enlightenment, physical sciences, in order to lay the principles of a *scientia civilis*. However, this *scientia civilis*, being based on a 'religion of nature', also has some repercussions on how to replace the metaphysical questions that are thus rejected. Thus, instead of a theological teleology with a beginning and an end, Cloots suggests a parallel to what Lavoisier expressed about the transformation of elements in nature by stating that plants and animals do live and die, but they are elements that decompose to form new ones in an eternal law of nature—a rebirth in other words:

La vaine curiosité des métaphysiciens et le furieux despotisme des théologiens ont rendu obscures les plus lucides notions de notre entendement. On a substitué, aux lois générales et immuables de la nature, les lois particulières et vacillantes de l'homme. Les modifications végétales ou animales, que nous appelons la naissance et la mort, nous ont fait supposer un commencement et une fin au grand tout, quoique nous avouions que rien ne s'anéantit dans l'univers. Les formes changent, les éléments se combinent et se décomposent ; mais les lois sont éternelles.²¹³

'Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout se transforme' is a quotation attributed to Lavoisier, but in reality a paraphrase of Anaxagoras, even if Lavoisier in his *Traité élémentaire de chimie* writes about matter in the same, but less catchy, terms:

... car rien ne se crée, ni dans les opérations de l'art, ni dans celles de la nature, & l'on peut poser en principe que, dans toute opération, il y a une égale quantité de matière avant & après l'opération ; que la qualité & la quantité des principes est la même, & qu'il n'y a que des changements, des modifications.²¹⁴

Cloots declared the same from nature to political organisation: 'La nature ne gagne rien et ne perd rien'.²¹⁵ Observing humankind like a scientist means observing human nature, and Cloots draws a parallel between humankind and other social anim-

²¹² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 255.

²¹³ Cloots, 252.

²¹⁴ Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier, *Traité élémentaire de chimie : présenté dans un ordre nouveau et d'après les découvertes modernes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Chez Cuchet, 1789), 140–141.

²¹⁵ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 306.

als like bees. Unlike animals, humans lack instinct and must use reason to palliate this handicap.²¹⁶ Cloots uses an argument completely at odds with his ‘cult of reason’. Reason is actually the faculty that led man to deviate from the natural principles on which social organisation should be based. One must thus look at the ‘primitive laws’, study human nature like a scientist in order to find the laws that govern it for designing the best government. However, it might be a ‘wrong’ use of reason, as opposed to a ‘right’ use of reason.

Cloots’s argumentation is solidly based on the claim to scientific truth, and he reflects this by making countless parallels and metaphors with scientists and scientific elements. He draws a parallel between political and moral sciences and physics, in line with contemporary epistemology: ‘La fameuse expérience d’Otto Guericke étonna les physiciens de l’Europe, et l’expérience de nos Français déconcerte vos publicistes modernes’.²¹⁷ German scientist Otto von Guericke (1602–1686) reached scientific fame for his work on the physics of vacuums. He invented a vacuum pump in 1654, and conducted an experiment in 1657, which disproved Aristoteles’ theory that that nature abhors a vacuum: substances are not pulled by a vacuum, but are pushed by the pressure of the surrounding fluids. For Cloots, physics and politics are equally hard sciences based on ‘experimentations’. This reasoning follows the Baconian division of sciences and the programme set out by the *Encyclopédie*. Cloots, as noted previously, claims to have made a political discovery on par with any scientific discovery. ‘Discovery’ had a particular meaning, as the *Encyclopédie* emphasised:

On peut donner ce nom en général à tout ce qui se trouve de nouveau dans les Arts & dans les Sciences ; cependant on ne l’applique guere, & on ne doit même l’appliquer, qu’à ce qui est non-seulement nouveau, mais en même tems curieux, utile, & difficile à trouver, & qui par conséquent a un certain degré d’importance. Les *découvertes* moins considérables s’appellent seulement *inventions*.²¹⁸

D’Alembert then states that discoveries are mainly made by genius, and sometimes by chance or both. Cloots’s ‘genius’ is thus to have come to realise that another principle from nature, which ensues from natural rights, is the sovereignty of the whole human race, and not individual peoples or ‘nations’. Mathematics or geometry are

²¹⁶ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 494.

²¹⁷ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 133.

²¹⁸ Jean le Rond d’Alembert, ‘Découverte (Philosophie)’, in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 4 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 705.

also often used comparisons.²¹⁹ Or writing about his system of the single nation of the human race:

Cette dernière découverte, dont l'universalité est aussi indubitable que l'ascension universelle de la montgolfière, renversera plus d'erreurs en douze ans que les pères de famille n'en accumulent sur la tête de leurs enfants depuis mille lustres.²²⁰

All these parallels with physics or mathematics point to the same intellectual project of developing a system based on nature, a natural system of politics and morals:

C'est en consultant la nature que je découvre un système politique dont la simplicité sera parfaitement saisie par quiconque désire toute l'indépendance, tout le bonheur dont l'homme est susceptible.²²¹

However, these arguments are just using nature, science, and reason as cautions for the 'truth' in Cloots's argument. This is not to say that Cloots, the politician, cynically tries to manipulate his audience in order to convince it of his views. Cloots does believe sincerely in his views, he sees himself as a philosopher who discovered that nature was preaching unity to humankind, and hence the science of man should preach unity of humankind in its political organisation: 'L'unité, l'unité ! la nature entière nous prêche l'unité'.²²² There are various reasons to be found in nature for claiming unity as a universal principle. There are no frontiers in nature, rivers and seas are naturally connected, and so mankind should imitate this natural principle. By the same token, mankind is one single species, and therefore should not be separated politically and economically, as it is against nature. These questions will be dealt with in the two following chapters on natural law and humankind.

These questions of God and metaphysical arguments in theology are important political ones too because they relate to the concept of legitimate sovereignty and legitimate moral authority. Cloots the philosopher fits the mould of revolutionary rhetoric in simplifying the world into 'us' against 'them', 'modern' against 'ancient', 'republic' against 'monarchy', 'nature's laws' against 'scholastic natural law', 'the people' against 'God', 'théos' against 'cosmos'. In these simplifications, the question of sovereignty is central, as Cloots seems to consider all natural law tenets as one and identifying God as the source of sovereignty deferred on earth to kings, priests, and any variant of them as there are cultures and civilisations.²²³ Natural law was

²¹⁹ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 480.

²²⁰ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 307.

²²¹ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 476.

²²² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 250.

²²³ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 494.

the paradigm within which all these discussions took place. It was not a unified view, and many different schools and thinkers had opposite views.

What this chapter showed, was the will for Cloots to expel any ecclesiastical influence from these debates, and ultimately, to expel any metaphysical consideration regarding the existence of God. Only the observation of nature through reason (as opposed to faith) should guide the establishment of the science of man, as orderly and obeying laws as physics. 'cosmopolitan reason' leads to a universal science of man because it is based solely on the observation of 'cosmos' and the exclusion of 'theos'. By observing human nature with cosmopolitan reason, one distinguishes between 'entendement' and 'volonté'. 'Volonté' concerns virtues, while 'entendement' concerns natural laws that apply to the social and political organisation of human activities. The first of those natural laws is the sovereignty of the human race. For those who considered God, the Supreme Being, as the creator of nature, sovereignty and morality were located in His will. For Cloots, the absence of God from the discussion leads to locating sovereignty and morality somewhere else: in nature, and in the human race. These are the objects of the next two chapters.

4 Natural Law

Vox populi, vox Dei : la voix du peuple est la voix de la nature.
Cloots, 1792¹

One of the central claims in the numerous *cahiers de doléances* (notebooks of grievances) drafted in preparation for the reunion of the estates general was the reference to rights that were not respected even though they were considered natural.² This is why one of the very first acts by the national assembly was to draft the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* on 26 August 1789. The *Declaration* is a central document in the Revolution, and it is equally central in Cloots's political system.³

The *Déclaration* in itself was the product of many projects and discussions, and only what was meant to be a draft of seventeen articles came out of the meeting held on 4 August.⁴ However, the National Assembly never came back to the 1789 *Déclaration* after completing the constitution in 1791.⁵ The preamble of the *Declaration* states that:

Les représentants du peuple français, constitués en Assemblée nationale, considérant que l'ignorance, l'oubli ou le mépris des droits de l'homme sont les seules causes des malheurs publics et de la corruption des gouvernements, ont résolu d'exposer, dans une déclaration solennelle, les droits naturels, inaliénables et sacrés de l'homme, afin que cette déclaration, constamment présente à tous les membres du corps social, leur rappelle sans cesse leurs droits et leurs devoirs

The rights of man are natural and as such are inalienable. The end of the preamble mentions that these rights are declared 'sous les auspices de l'Être suprême': this is a reference to the deist arguments against all religions as source of 'prejudice and

1 Anacharsis Cloots, 'Monarchie sans roi', *Annales patriotiques et littéraires*, 27 July 1792. In Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 372.

2 That is in all of the *cahiers* written by the third estate, in most of those written by the nobility, and in a few of those written by the clergy. See Stéphane Rials, *La déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, Pluriel (Paris: Hachette, 1988), 115–118.

3 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 160.

4 See Keith Michael Baker, 'The Idea of a Declaration of Rights', chap. 4 in *The French Idea of Freedom: The Old Regime and the Declaration of Rights of 1789*, ed. Dale Van Kley, The Making of Modern Freedom (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 154–196.

5 Peter McPhee, ed., *A Companion to the French Revolution* (Chichester; Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 85.

superstition', but admitting the existence of a 'supreme Being' to avoid the mention of God. Therefore, these natural rights are also 'sacred'.

When, in 1793, the *Convention* met to discuss a new constitution after the rejection of constitutional monarchy following the flight of the king, the *députés* presented almost three hundred projects.⁶ The question left by the principle of liberty and equality was the organisation of the making of the law and the participation of the people, which was a central point of discussion among the projects in 1793, showing a great political creativity.⁷ The amount of drafts for a constitution reflects the variety of interpretations of the *Declaration*, on which a radically new society was to be built.⁸ Cloots's project for a decree is not one of them, but he used the occasion to express his views on the basic principle the constitution should be based on: the sovereignty of the human race as the only sovereign on earth.⁹ Cloots's idea of 'sovereignty of the human race' is based on his analysis of the *Declaration*, in particular the principles of individual liberty and equality. Based on these principles, Cloots expresses the view that individuals, on their own, have sovereignty over themselves, but that upon encountering another individual they merge their individual sovereignty into a common one, creating a political body. This process goes on until the whole mass of individuals on earth have merged their individual sovereignties into the only single political body that is in accordance to natural law: the 'nation', but of the whole human race.

In order to understand Cloots's political system, and to situate it in the context of his time, it is necessary to look at natural law and the debates on natural law in the French Enlightenment that led to the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*. Many aspects are important, but most of all for this discussion the presence of a 'supreme Being', the 'political association' (article 2), and the principle according to which 'sovereignty resides essentially in the nation' (article 3), the definition of liberty as 'doing anything which does not harm others' and limited only by law (article 4), and finally the understanding of law as the expression of 'general will'. From this understanding of the context of natural law theories it is then possible to move on to the context of republicanism in their interpretation of natural law.¹⁰ Historians have long discussed these various interpretations, not only in relation to the

6 Jacques Godechot and Hervé Faupin, *Les constitutions de la France depuis 1789* (Paris: Flammarion, 2006), 71.

7 Pierre Rosanvallon, *La démocratie inachevée : Histoire de la souveraineté du peuple en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 56–64.

8 Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution*, E-Book (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2015), Ch. 1.

9 Cloots, *Bases constitutionnelles*.

10 This will be the object of the last chapter.

French Revolution and the French declaration, but also to the American revolution and *Declaration of Independence*.¹¹

Natural law had had a long history before the French Revolution in all Europe. There are various positions and various traditions, which are necessary to present before moving on to the natural law debates in France, and whose views influenced Cloots's. Synthesising here all the debates and the richness of the natural law tradition is attempting the impossible. I will here only sketch the main lines of the debates and present the main characters that are useful to situating and understanding the French debates on natural law and Cloots's views. This is thus only a sketch of the basis on which eighteenth-century jusnaturalists commented upon.

In this chapter, I argue that Cloots replaced God and His moral authority with the human race, and that he did so within the voluntarist school of natural law. Natural law traditions were built upon the idea that it was the law from God's will. However, the Enlightenment was a period of attacks upon revealed religion. This is why there is mention of 'Supreme Being', rather than 'God', in the 1789 *Declaration*. God is the moral authority decreeing and sanctioning natural law and natural rights. Men can only find them through reason; hence, the natural rights are 'declared'. Cloots was part of this Enlightened deist movement with his *Certitude*, but in the Revolution he became atheist, as the previous chapter showed. However, Cloots also based his political system on the *Declaration*. Therefore, the source of natural law cannot be the Supreme Being for Cloots, and the previous chapter already showed that Nature was the source of morality in his view. Nature is then the source of natural law and natural rights for Cloots. However, Cloots also writes about the people being the equivalent of God as a source of law with the general will leading to 'legal despotism', but also with moral authority based on reason leading to 'rational despotism'.

Natural Law Traditions

The central question in natural law is the location of absolute sovereignty. As Cloots points out:

On ôta la souveraineté au genre humain pour en revêtir un prétendu souverain dans le ciel, dont les représentants sur terre étaient des rois, des empereurs, des papes, des lamas, des bonzes, des brahmanes, et tant d'autres grands officiers ecclésiastiques et civils.¹²

¹¹ I will present this literature in the chapter on republicanism.

¹² Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 494.

Cloots makes here a reference to natural law traditions, in which God was the moral sovereign authority with natural law, and His representatives on earth were monarchs and religious figures with political sovereignty, and who struggled to monopolise it by claiming to be the representant of God's moral authority. It is here useful to sum up the natural law traditions that form the context of Cloots's political thought regarding sovereignty and moral authority.

There is a vast literature on the history of natural law, particularly rich in German countries and therefore called German natural law (also called modern, Protestant, post-scholastic, or secular natural law).¹³ It can be described as a non-unified 'tradition' or a 'genre in moral and political philosophy' with a variety of views.¹⁴ By the eighteenth century, it was a well established discipline in almost all universities and colleges in Protestant Europe.¹⁵ Hartung points to the Roman origins of natural law in the German debates with a *Begriffsgeschichte* of *obligatio naturalis* (natural duty) and the duties implied by the *lex naturae* (natural law).¹⁶ Until the eighteenth century, the paradigm of scholastic natural law was the proper division between law and morals, and natural law appeared as much of a law as statutory and customary law on the basis of *obligatio naturalis*.¹⁷ It is on this religious basis that other natural law theorists subsequently discussed natural law.¹⁸

In the eighteenth century, most of the debates on natural law focused on the issue raised by Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) regarding the paradox in scholasticism¹⁹ that, on the one hand, man used reason to understand natural law, and, on the other, was supposed to create positive laws conforming to natural law: how can one man's

13 See for instance the literature review in Michael Seidler, 'Pufendorf's Moral and Political Philosophy', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2015, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2015). See also the review article Ian Hunter, 'The Recovery of Natural Law: Hochstrasser's History of Morality', *Economy and Society* 30, no. 3 (2001): 354–367. For a general introduction: Knud Haakonssen, 'German Natural Law', chap. 9 in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, The Cambridge History of Political Thought (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 251–290.

14 Knud Haakonssen, 'Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation', chap. 4 in *New Essays on the History of Autonomy: A Collection Honoring J.B. Schneewind*, ed. Natalie Brender and Larry Krasnoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92.

15 Haakonssen, 93.

16 Gerald Hartung, *Die Naturrechtsdebatte. Geschichte der Obligation vom 17. bis 20. Jahrhundert*, Studienausgabe, Alber Praktische Philosophie 56 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Karl Alber, 1999).

17 Hartung, 22, 36, 50.

18 Hartung, 167.

19 For a presentation on scholasticism on the division between natural law and natural rights, see Knud Haakonssen and Michael Seidler, 'Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties', chap. 27 in *A Companion to Intellectual History*, First, ed. Richard Whatmore and Brian Young, Wiley Blackwell Companions to World History (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 381–383.

reason be objectively said to be better or more right than another one's?²⁰ It is this conundrum regarding the relativity of individual reason that occupied most of natural law debates and led to two schools of thought: realism (also called rationalism or intellectualism) and voluntarism. Representatives of the realist school are chiefly Gottfried Wilhelm (von) Leibniz (1646–1716) and Christian Wolff (1679–1754), whilst representatives of the voluntarist school are chiefly Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694) and Christian Thomasius (1655–1728), as well as Thomas Hobbes. The realist tradition is called like that because these thinkers assumed that there was an existing structure of moral and action, metaphysical (from God's natural world) but inherent in reality (in humanity's cultural world), which could be analysed and understood by the human mind. Since this structure was accessible to human reason, they are also called 'rationalists'.²¹ The voluntarist tradition, on the other hand, emphasised, mainly, that the human mind had no access to the divine mind through reason. In order to palliate this lack of knowledge of values and morals through rational probing of God's will, they suggested understanding human nature without considering any divine intention. It is therefore only possible to understand the values in humanity's cultural world by focusing on the human will.²²

Wolff's natural law was a teleological vision of human life in which humanity's destiny is perfectibility.²³ Wolff then distinguishes between the 'original state of natural liberty' in which an individual exercises freely one's individual right to perfection, and the 'adventitious state' of 'relations of governance' in which the individual exercises one's liberty to give up the future exercise of this liberty to a governing body more apt to maximise perfection and happiness than the individual on one's own.²⁴ In other words, this is the Wolffian version of the social contract. Pushed to its limits, this natural law theory posits a universal society encompassing humanity as a whole in a *civitas maxima*.²⁵ There are several ways to translate 'civitas', from city to *polis*, to state and commonwealth, but Onuf argues convincingly that republic would be the best understanding of what Wolff meant by 'civitas'.²⁶ The Wolffian

20 Tim J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

21 Haakonssen, 'Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation', 94.

22 Haakonssen, 96.

23 Haakonssen and Seidler, 'Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties', 391.

24 Haakonssen and Seidler, 392.

25 Haakonssen and Seidler, 392.

26 Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, 'Civitas Maxima: Wolff, Vattel and the Fate of Republicanism', *The American Journal of International Law* 88, no. 2 (April 1994): 292.

metaphysical framework for moral philosophy ultimately became dominant in German universities, and hence this was the doctrine taught to the governing elite.²⁷

Pufendorf was arguably one of the central figures in modern natural law,²⁸ although some questioned whether he could be considered a founding figure.²⁹ Together with his follower, Thomasius, Pufendorf took the debate on natural law towards what they considered a ‘true science of natural law’.³⁰ Continuing the separation between theology and natural law, Pufendorf argued that, God’s mind being inaccessible to the human mind, it could not serve as a basis for the organisation of social life; therefore ‘humanity had to rely on empirical observation of the world’.³¹ This kind of method that Pufendorf introduced, and his followers continued, was based on a Baconian understanding of science, and following in the footsteps of Grotius. Natural law was to be described using the same method as physics, a ‘quasi-mathematical approach’, to produce a ‘theoretical coherence’ and ‘empirical plausibility’.³² However, in his later works, Pufendorf also used the historical works of various authors, including classical ones, forming a more ‘eclectic’ method.³³ Equality among individuals is presumed to be natural since all moral categories are human made, and therefore inequality is a result of human interference in nature; as a consequence, there is no natural right to equality since all rights are created in social settings.³⁴ God and nature are framing human life in that they provide ‘laws of nature’, including the ‘law of sociability’, which regulates social interactions, but rights are human inventions that depend on the duties imposed by the law of sociability.³⁵ In any case, it is important to note that natural rights were

27 Haakonssen, ‘Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation’, 95.

28 Pufendorf’s thought was heavily commented upon in the Republic of Letters by philosophers such as Locke, Leibniz, Vico, Carmichael, Wolff, Hutcheson, Hume, Rousseau, and Smith. See the introduction by James Tully on Pufendorf in Samuel Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, ed. James Tully, Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), xvi.

29 See Detlef Döring, *Pufendorf-Studien: Beiträge Zur Biographie Samuel von Pufendorfs Und Zu Seiner Entwicklung Als Historiker Und Theologischer Schriftsteller*, Historische Forschungen 49 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1992). Cited in Simone Zurbuchen, ‘Samuel Pufendorf and the Foundation of Modern Natural Law: An Account of the State of Research and Editions’, *Central European History* 31, no. 4 (1998): 416.

30 Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment*, 3.

31 Haakonssen and Seidler, ‘Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties’, 388.

32 Seidler, ‘Pufendorf’s Moral and Political Philosophy’.

33 Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment*.

34 Haakonssen and Seidler, ‘Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties’, 389.

35 Haakonssen and Seidler, 389.

not a central notion in early modern natural law, and it is only with Scottish, Swiss, and American thinking that it became so.³⁶

Pufendorf was translated into French and annotated by the Huguenot Jean Barbeyrac (1674–1744), whose work then dominated discussions in French.³⁷ This led to the creation of a Swiss ‘school’ of natural law, whose writings in French influenced in turn French philosophers and physiocrats in particular.³⁸ Barbeyrac’s main concern was with freedom of conscience: it was a gift from God and as such was not only a right but a duty and could not be alienated in the contractual agreement between the people and the government.³⁹ Following Locke, Barbeyrac argued that this was in fact the very reason government was created: to protect this right. He thus contributed to make ‘Lockean ideas part of natural law in the Enlightenment’, which would influence Rousseau and later the French and American Revolutions.⁴⁰ For Barbeyrac, if ‘man’ is the philosophical starting point, then natural law should come from the will of God.⁴¹ Barbeyrac thought of the concept of a moral community of humankind with the ‘*communauté de Droite Raison*’.⁴²

Other figures of the ‘Swiss school of natural law’ were Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui (1694–1748) and Emmer de Vattel (1714–1767), who formed the intellectual context in which Rousseau conceived his views on natural law.⁴³ However, Cloots does not mention them, and it does not seem that his political thought was marked by their ideas. It is however useful to give a brief account Burlamaqui’s thought because he was a reference for the *Encyclopédie*, and Diderot wrote against his ideas, as we will see below. Burlamaqui introduced his own original ideas, notably with the refutation that society was based on self-preservation, as Hobbes and Pufendorf argued, but instead was based on the pursuit of happiness, since God created man to be

36 Haakonssen, ‘Protestant Natural Law Theory: A General Interpretation’, 104.

37 Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment*, 15.

38 Catherine Larrère, *L’invention de l’économie au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).

39 Haakonssen and Seidler, ‘Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties’, 393.

40 Haakonssen and Seidler, 393.

41 Tim J. Hochstrasser, ‘Conscience and Reason: The Natural Law Theory of Jean Barbeyrac’, *The Historical Journal* 36, no. 02 (June 1993): 289–308.

42 Hochstrasser, 298.

43 For an overview of the Genevan context see Helena Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva: From the First Discourse to the Social Contract, 1749–1762* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), ch. 3, 88–158; also for a nuanced view of the importance of the Genevan context see Richard Whatmore, *Against War and Empire. Geneva, Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2012), ch. 3, 54–97.

happy.⁴⁴ Man's natural qualities were a gift from God and comprised 'understanding, will, and liberty'; as a consequence, social institutions had to preserve and not corrupt them.⁴⁵ Another innovation from Burlamaqui was his distinction between a primitive and a natural state of man, in which what Hobbes and Pufendorf understood as 'natural state' is redefined as 'primitive state' by Burlamaqui in order to reject their negative standard that justified constituting the sovereignty of a superior, in favour of a natural state in which nature is a normative ideal to be preserved by the sovereign.⁴⁶ The issue that Burlamaqui identified is inequality, since the sovereign governs the rest.⁴⁷ However, this is contrary to the state of nature in which men are equals. Burlamaqui argues for the necessity of a distinction between a sovereign and a population governed by the sovereign, but rejecting Hobbes and Pufendorf he argues that '... le droit de Souveraineté dérive d'une Puissance Supérieure, accompagnée de Sagesse & de Bonté'.⁴⁸ God is wise, kind, and superior and thus universal sovereign who imposed a natural law on humankind that Burlamaqui defines as such:

Loi Naturelle, une Loi que Dieu impose à tous les hommes, & qu'ils peuvent découvrir & connoître par les seules lumières de leur Raison, en considérant avec attention leur nature & leur état.⁴⁹

Order in the world derives from God's principle of 'Sociability' given to humankind, from which all human laws and duties should come: 'Common Good'; the spirit of sociability is universal; we are obligated to consider ourselves naturally equal and treat each other as such, except when just defence is invoked.⁵⁰ These two societies—civil society and natural society—are connected in that civil societies must respect natural law from natural society, but the only sanction for disregarding it occurs during Judgement Day.⁵¹ God is thus the sovereign moral authority of natural law.

⁴⁴ Robin Douglass, 'Rousseau's Debt to Burlamaqui: The Ideal of Nature and the Nature of Things', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, no. 2 (April 2011): 211–212.

⁴⁵ Douglass, 213–214.

⁴⁶ Douglass, 215.

⁴⁷ Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, *Principes du droit naturel* (Genève et Copenhague: Chez Cl. & Ant. Philibert, 1756), 72.

⁴⁸ Burlamaqui, 81.

⁴⁹ Burlamaqui, 111.

⁵⁰ Burlamaqui, 149–150.

⁵¹ Burlamaqui, 246–248.

Cloots does mention Barbeyrac's preface to Pufendorf as 'excellent' in a *lettre philosophique* to a friend.⁵² As seen in the previous chapters, Cloots studied Grotius at the *Académie des nobles* in Berlin, and it is very likely that Sulzer also taught Wolff's views on natural law. But, regarding natural law, Grotius, Wolff, and Pufendorf through Barbeyrac seem to be distant references to Cloots, compared with Rousseau and French authors such as d'Holbach, Diderot, and Helvétius (Helvétius for his principle of pain and pleasure as seen in the previous chapter). There are also physiocratic elements present in Cloots's thought, although he does not mention any of them. However, it is a *revolutionary* natural law that Cloots also adapts and transforms, and this may be why he does not acknowledge the variety of traditions, but refers to all as imagining a 'sovereign in the sky', by definition illegitimate, with representatives on earth, illegitimate as a consequence. Instead, Cloots replaces the sovereign God with the people and nature, but doing so, Cloots seems to mix the voluntarist and rationalist traditions in their attempt to answer the deterministic conundrum of reason: using reason to understand natural laws, but also applying natural laws in human laws. Cloots seems to accept the voluntarist view of abandoning God from natural law, but replacing God with nature, Cloots seems to follow the rationalist view of understanding and observing nature and its laws. The next sections will present Cloots's views on natural law, compared with these authors to see what he took from them, where he differed from them. It must be noted here, as Thomson remarks, that, in French, one used two expressions: 'droit naturel' and 'loi naturelle'. These expressions were not the equivalent to the distinction in English between 'natural right' and 'natural law'. Depending on the context, these expressions could be used synonymously, and 'droit naturel' could refer either to 'natural law' or 'natural right'.⁵³

Nature and its Laws

That Cloots focused on nature to find social and moral laws is not an isolated case. As shown above, other philosophers took the observation of nature as the starting point for building their legal and moral systems.⁵⁴ Some, as Cloots did, also claimed a natural religion as the only true and universal religion. We have already seen in the

⁵² Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 540.

⁵³ Ann Thomson, *Materialism and Society in the Mid-Eighteenth Century: La Mettrie's Discours préliminaire* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1981), 245.

⁵⁴ On the understandings of nature in France on the first half of the eighteenth century, see Jean Ehrard, *L'idée de Nature en France à l'aube des Lumières* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970).

previous chapters that a fascination with classical republican authors led Cloots to call himself ‘orator’, a philosopher in search of truth and charged with the mission of educating and convincing others of this truth with the ‘scientia civilis’. We have also seen that the ‘science of man’ in the typology of all sciences including physical sciences, and was thought to be the precursor of the social sciences. Daston explains this relation between scientific observation of even tiny parts of nature such as insects, and a personification and valorisation of nature.⁵⁵ In a way, Daston argues, the dedication that naturalists put in the practice of observation and description of what was otherwise considered ‘trivial’ objects of knowledge, such as intestine worms or flower pistils, was a celebration of God in the marvel of His creation. This ‘natural theology’ in the practice of observing nature, its tools and rituals, was a way of admiring ‘God the artisan’ in the carefully crafted works such as a beehive or an anthill. These practices linked the work of the naturalists with the work of political economists through the analysis of ‘utility’ or ‘fitness’ in nature and how systems are regulated.⁵⁶ Daston compares the observation of ‘utility’ by naturalists in their studies, with the utility of the works of artisans as described for arts and crafts in the *Encyclopédie*. The works of insects and the works of locksmiths deserved the same respect according to naturalists and *philosophes*.⁵⁷ They believed that everything in nature was created to a particular end, it had a ‘utility’.⁵⁸ In art, nature so depicted as creating utility in all details was represented through personification as ‘Nature’, often a goddess in a Greco-Roman fashion, ‘mother Nature’. For Daston, this practice of observing nature and its values led to vesting nature of moral authority.⁵⁹

This moral authority vested in nature, and which justifies its study and the respect for its laws, can be found in Cloots. His ‘system’, based on a science of nature and a science of human mores, is heavily influenced by d’Holbach and Diderot, although Cloots disagrees with their views regarding borders and the organisation of society. There are also some physiocratic elements in Cloots’s views about economic organisation, and, most importantly, the ‘despotism of the law’, but these are not sufficient to label Cloots as a physiocrat.

55 Lorraine Daston, ‘Attention and the Values of Nature in the Enlightenment’, chap. 4 in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 100–126.

56 Daston, 102.

57 Daston, 119–120.

58 Daston, 123.

59 Daston, 126.

Moral Authority

Paul Thiry d'Holbach (1723–1789) rejected metaphysics in natural law associated with religious dogmas, and instead established a science with *physical* laws of nature. This move is very much in line with the question of how natural law became a parallel of the laws of nature, i.e. morality as a science obeying laws in par with the natural world.⁶⁰ Nature, for d'Holbach, is the only source of knowledge on humankind.⁶¹ Nature is also a superior power that universally sanctions excesses (for example gluttony) with consequences (a short life-span).⁶² It is therefore a *System of nature* with laws of *Natural politics*, and one must observe nature scientifically by accepting the world as it really is rather than trying to shape it according to metaphysical ideas of how it ought to be.⁶³ Therefore, man is in society not because it is better than a so-called state of nature, which only exists in some *philosophes'* mind, but because it is the natural state: 'L'homme ... fut toujours en Société'.⁶⁴ However, d'Holbach recognises the plurality of societies, rather than one society of humankind.⁶⁵ Moreover, the sovereign power is then based on the observation of nature and man, and must therefore protect it and do what leads to 'happiness'.⁶⁶

In a previous chapter, we have already seen how Cloots designed his political thought as a 'system', which seems to be in a Wolffian paradigm because of Cloots's understanding of knowledge. Moving away from natural theology, Cloots's revolutionary thought seems close to d'Holbach's understanding of nature: morals is akin to a science with laws to be respected, nature is a superior power, and natural laws must be respected as human laws because the state of society is the state of nature. We have seen in the preceding chapter how Cloots replaced faith with reason to find the source of morality in nature and its observation rather than scriptures. Very clearly, Cloots writes that nature is the guide for morality because 'la nature est plus sage que les hommes'.⁶⁷ In another speech to the National Assembly on 9 September 1792, Cloots reiterates the same view in order to argue for the single human race,

60 Lorraine Daston and Michael Stolleis, eds., *Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe: Jurisprudence, Theology, Moral and Natural Philosophy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).

61 d'Holbach, *Système de la nature*, 2.

62 d'Holbach, 448–452.

63 Paul Henri Thiry baron d'Holbach, *La politique naturelle ; ou, Discours sur les vrais principes du gouvernement, par un ancien magistrat*, vol. 1 (Londres [i.e. Amsterdam]: s.n., 1773).

64 d'Holbach, 5.

65 d'Holbach, 13.

66 d'Holbach, 20.

67 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 255.

and therefore the need to organise his universal republic: ‘La nature, plus puissante que les hommes dénaturés, nous ramène impérieusement à l’arbitrage de la famille humaine ; et cette famille est unique comme la nature.’⁶⁸ In his speech ‘Diplomatie révolutionnaire’ on 5 October 1793, Cloots declared again that ‘La nature n’a rien fait en vain, et une république fondée sur les lois naturelles ne contrariera jamais la nature’.⁶⁹

By the same token, Cloots often compares the human race to other species of animals in order to accentuate how humankind is a ‘child of mother nature’ just like other living beings on earth. ‘La famille humaine est soumise à des lois primitives, comme la famille des abeilles ou des castors’.⁷⁰ This primitive law, as we will see below, is natural law, which is in fact a political and social law since society is the natural state. Just like animals are observed naturally in flocks, so are human beings. Therefore, Cloots makes the comparison between bees and men, and a beehive and a city. Just like other animals—/castors, for instance—/man is naturally ‘sociable and industrious’. Society is nature, sociability is nature, there is no separation between a state of nature and a state of society, we live in both according to Cloots.

The comparison with other animals, and bees in particular, is not fortuitous. The allegory of the bees and the beehive is an old trope in Western literature and its representation of human society as industrious and chaste was still present in the eighteenth-century through the enduring influence of Virgil and Aristotle.⁷¹ So much so, that a book inverting the trope to argue in favour of vice for the collective good—*The Fable of the Bee* by the Anglo-Dutch philosopher and political economist Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733)—was ordered to be burned on a public square in Paris in 1740 when its French translation was published.⁷² Many books were ordered to be destroyed, but it is interesting that the book was burned because it inverted the trope. Through this inversion of the trope, Mandeville really wanted to deflate the anthropocentric view of humankind as superior and rational, ‘naturally good’, and through this Mandeville showed how the use of ‘nature’ had value attached to it and was not neutral.⁷³ What Mandeville really denounced was the confusion made

68 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 393.

69 Cloots, 614.

70 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 494.

71 Danielle Allen, ‘Burning *The Fable of the Bees*: The Incendiary Authority of Nature’, chap. 3 in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 74–100.

72 Allen.

73 Allen, 79.

between authority and nature by moralists using the bee trope ‘cunningly’ in order to mask authority without seeming to.⁷⁴

Physiocratic Elements

Cloots’s thought contains physiocratic elements, particularly when it comes to economics, even if he never acknowledges any of the physiocrats. His economic programme is in line with the ‘*laissez faire, laissez passer*’ of the physiocrats, as well as respecting the natural order in the socio-economic organisation of society:

La nature a donné à tel pays du vin, à tel autre du blé ; un pays occupe le haut d’un fleuve, un autre en occupe les bouches. Tout se détériore en élevant un mur entre le pays de la vigne et le pays du froment, entre la montagne des sources et la plaine des embouchures, entre les pressoirs de l’huile et les mamelles de la génisse ... et comme toutes les rivières, les fleuves et les mers communiquent ensemble naturellement, c’est à nous de multiplier ces communications par des chemins et des canaux, et non pas de les interrompre par des constitutions, des frontières, des forteresses, des escadres. Imitons la nature, si nous voulons être ses heureux enfants.⁷⁵

For Cloots, there is a virtuous circle between the economy and peace in aligning political and economic organisations with nature. The absence of obstacles to trade produces peace, and peace produces a surplus of goods that even natural calamities cannot undermine:

Le mal physique n’étant plus aggravé par le mal moral, on supportera patiemment l’inclémence des saisons et tous les maux naturels. ... La paix perpétuelle maintiendra un niveau perpétuel entre la consommation et les consommateurs, entre l’ouvrage et les ouvriers.⁷⁶

Physiocracy is a term coined from the Greek words *physis* (φύσις), nature, and *kratos* (Κράτος), power or government (from the god Kratos in Greek mythology).⁷⁷

74 Allen, ‘Burning *The Fable of the Bees*: The Incendiary Authority of Nature’, 80–85.

75 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 490.

76 Cloots, 488–489.

77 On physiocracy, see: Manuela Albertone, ‘Physiocracy’, in *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, ed. Alan Charles Kors, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Reinhard Bach, ‘Les physiocrates et la science politique de leur temps’, *Revue française d’histoire des idées politiques*, no. 20 (2e semestre 2004): 229–259; Yves Citton, ‘L’école physiocratique au cœur ou dans les marges des Lumières ?’, in *Les marges des Lumières*, ed. Didier Masseau (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 99–112; Bernard Delmas, ‘Les Physiocrates, Turgot et « le grand secret de la science fiscale »’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine* 56, no. 2 (April 2009): 79–103; Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy, Economic Revolution and Social Order in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University

Physiocracy is better known for its economic theory of minimal state intervention in trade as summed up in the motto '*laissez faire les hommes, laissez passer les marchandises*', coined by French economist Jacques Claude Marie Vincent de Gournay (1712–1759).⁷⁸ Physiocracy was the precursor of liberalism, and stood opposed to mercantilism that defended protectionist state intervention in trade. Its prominent figure was the physician and economist François Quesnay (1694–1774) and the statesman and economist Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot (1727–1781). Other notable members were the marquis de Mirabeau (1749–1791), Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours (1739–1817), and Pierre-Paul-François Le Mercier de La Rivière de Saint-Médard (1719–1801). Quesnay wrote several articles for Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* disseminating physiocratic principles regarding agrarian economy: 'Fermiers', 'Grains', 'Homme'. Under his supervision, Le Mercier de la Rivière wrote *L'Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (1767). Diderot recommended this book to the Russian tsarina for reforming her empire.⁷⁹ Since physiocracy considered economics as a science about organising society according to a natural order, it was also a political theory, and was focused on maintaining natural law.

In order to maintain natural order, physiocrats argued that a strong political power was needed, which they call 'legal despotism'.⁸⁰ There was therefore a tension between a general freedom and absence of state intervention, and the need for a strong state power to implement and protect the free order of nature. The physiocrats developed a different theory of representation, which departed from

Press, 1976); Tim J. Hochstrasser, 'Physiocracy and the Politics of *laissez-faire*', chap. 19 in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, *The Cambridge History of Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 419–442; Larrère, *L'invention de l'économie au XVIIIe siècle*; Pierre Rosanvallon, 'Physiocrates', in *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, vol. 2 (Paris: Flammarion, 1988), 359–371; Michael Sonenscher, 'Review Article—Physiocracy as a Theodicy', *History of Political Thought* 23, no. 2 (February 2002): 326–339; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 189–199; Philippe Steiner, ed., *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, 20, 'Les Physiocrates et la Révolution française' (L'Harmattan, 2e semestre 2004); Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Finally, Weulersse's work is the most important on physiocracy: Georges Weulersse, *Le mouvement physiocratique en France (de 1756 à 1770)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910); Georges Weulersse, *La physiocratie sous les ministères de Turgot et de Necker (1774–1781)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950); Georges Weulersse, *La physiocratie à la fin du règne de Louis XV (1770–1774)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959); Georges Weulersse, *La physiocratie à l'aube de la Révolution (1781–1792)*, ed. Corinne Beutler (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1985).

⁷⁸ See Albertone, 'Physiocracy'.

⁷⁹ Bach, 'Les physiocrates et la science politique de leur temps', 233.

⁸⁰ Albertone, 'Physiocracy'.

the representation according to estates or orders, emphasising the role of representing economic interests such as landowners. This theory of representation in turn influenced the revolutionaries in shaping the representative system of the republic, particularly through Condorcet and the Girondists.⁸¹ Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794) was a close friend and protégé of Turgot who procured his position as ‘Inspecteur général de la Monnaie’.⁸² Condorcet in his *Esquisse d’un tableau historique des progrès de l’esprit humain* writes about physiocracy as a ‘nouvelle science’, ‘système si simple’, ‘doctrine nouvelle’, ‘progrès dans la politique et dans l’économie politique’.⁸³

Regarding the French physiocrats, Cloots did not cite any of them with two exceptions. First, Dupont de Nemours, but only in his summary of the French Revolution mentioning his pamphlet defending the ‘pacte de famille’ (alliance treaty between the French and Spanish crowns) ‘en esclave’, when Sieyès attacked it ‘en homme libre’.⁸⁴ Second, in *Vœux d’un gallophile*, Cloots criticised Mirabeau’s book *Ami des hommes*.⁸⁵

J’ai lu Mirabeau & ne puis comprendre comment son *Ami des Hommes* a fait une si grande fortune. Ce livre peche par le principe. *Repoussez l’or & attirez les denrées de l’étranger*, nous dit-il. Maxime extravagante ! Je dis, au contraire : *attirez l’or ; repoussez les denrées étrangères ; exportez l’excédent de vos propres denrées*.⁸⁶

Cloots underlined the importance of gold in the international economy. In the Gnadenthal library catalogue, there are no listed books of the physiocrats. However, it is difficult not to see some parallels with physiocracy in Cloots’s thought, even if he disagreed with Mirabeau’s economic doctrine and did not cite any other physiocrats. In *Vœux d’un gallophile*, Cloots showed interest and emphasised the importance of ‘*économie rurale*’, the importance of cultivating and exploiting the land.⁸⁷

Cloots advocated, as the physiocrats did, a minimal political organisation based on simple principles derived from nature. Cloots also called his political thought a ‘simple system’, and ‘inspired by nature’, reminiscent of Condorcet’s formulations.

81 Albertone, ‘Physiocracy’.

82 Emma Rotschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 20.

83 Bach, ‘Les physiocrates et la science politique de leur temps’, 231.

84 Cloots, ‘Résumé historique’, 603.

85 Victor Riqueti Mirabeau (marquis de), *L’ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population*, 3 vols. (Avignon: s.n., 1756).

86 Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*, 42.

87 Cloots, 257.

This simplicity of a system based on nature is obvious in quotation used as epigraph to chapter two, or again here: ‘Mon système est si simple, si beau, si analogue à la nature humaine...’.⁸⁸ In the last chapter on republicanism, we will see how Cloots’s universal republic was meant as a minimal form of government, also in line with physiocratic views that following nature requires the absence of state intervention. But it is really the concept of ‘legal despotism’ that shows the affinity of Cloots with physiocratic political thought: ‘... la liberté civile est une force coercive qui enchaîne tous les despotismes individuels sous le despotisme de la loi’.⁸⁹ Cloots’s expression of legal despotism is however different from the physiocrats’ in that Cloots opposes it to monarchical despotism, on the one hand, and, on the other, attaches it to his conception of general will, as we will see below. Then again, Cloots also modifies Rousseau’s general will in adapting it to the whole human race as one single sovereign. The expression of general will is the law, that ‘despotically’ applies to all: ‘La paix ne sera faite sur la terre, que par l’expression unique de toutes les volontés individuelles ; par le despotisme de la loi universelle’.⁹⁰ We will analyse Cloots’s conception of general will further below.

Even if there are elements of physiocracy in Cloots’s thought, he was not a physiocrat. He did not cite any, and he disagreed with the only physiocrat he cited, Mirabeau. He used the concept of ‘legal despotism’ and economic ‘laissez-faire’ but, unlike the physiocrats, Cloots disapproved of having a political representation based on economic orders. Physiocrats rejected the traditional division of corporate assemblies of constituted orders with a representation based on property. On the contrary, Cloots shared Rousseau’s concept of the general will and the necessity to reject any corporation that may accumulate a strong individual will against the general will, as we will see below.

Natural Borders

Since nature is the basis for the new *scientia civilis*, and since one observes no borders in nature, Cloots considers that there can be no political borders either between human beings. However, his reasoning evolved and contradicted itself. Cloots moved from a position of ‘natural borders’ between countries to a position of ‘no borders besides the one between the earth and the firmament’. Prior to the Revolution, in *Vœux d’un gallophile*, Cloots expressed the idea, based on nature, of

⁸⁸ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 265.

⁸⁹ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 127.

⁹⁰ Cloots, 159.

‘Gaul’s natural borders’.⁹¹ He wrote that the ‘natural borders’ of Gaul are the Alps, the Pyrenees mountain, the Rhine, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean.⁹² When Cloots wrote in 1786 that the Rhine was the natural border of France, he was the first to take such a clear position so early; the same position on natural borders and the Rhine was only taken by the revolutionaries after five years of lengthy debates.⁹³ Cloots’s argument for the natural borders of France in 1786 was almost out of a sense of aesthetic and philosophical harmony; the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Atlantic ocean, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Rhine, all seem to delimit naturally the historical Gaul. Other natural borders, other rivers, delimit in the same manner the other European powers, in such a way that no one could ever again claim territory over another, and Europe will live in perpetual peace.⁹⁴ However, Cloots changed his position after the Revolution, after he ‘discovered’ his ‘system’ of the ‘single nation of the human race’. In early 1792, debates were renewed regarding the ‘natural borders’ of France.⁹⁵ Cloots’s argumentation, against any border, natural or political, is, to him, as much an empirical observation of nature from which a general law for governing humankind is induced, and an observation of human history and its progress:

On discute en Europe les intérêts d’un habitant des antipodes, et l’on doutera si une assemblée représentative des deux hémisphères peut exister pour le bonheur permanent de l’humanité ! Je ne connais de barrière naturelle qu’entre la Terre et le firmament.⁹⁶

The only natural border existing is the one that separates a planet from another one, or the earth from the firmament. And Cloots already recognises the progress in human communication and interdependence:

Les prétendues barrières naturelles qui s’opposent à cette union désirable sont des barrières aussi fragiles que factices. Les Alpes et les Pyrénées, le Rhin et l’Océan, dans les siècles ténébreux, n’ont pas été des barrières pour les Carthaginois et les Romains, pour les Grecs et les Scythes, pour les Goths et les Normands... Nous recevons chaque jour sur la Seine ... des cour-

⁹¹ See the biography chapter, section ‘Cloots’s first revolutionary writings’ for an explanation of the use of the name ‘Gaul’ rather than ‘France’.

⁹² Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*, 53.

⁹³ Joseph Smets, ‘Le Rhin, frontière naturelle de la France’, *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 314, no. 1 (1998): 676.

⁹⁴ Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*, 54.

⁹⁵ Hervé Hasquin, ‘La Révolution française, la Belgique et l’Europe’, in *Révolution et population. Aspects démographiques des grandes révolutions politiques*, ed. Éric Vilquin, Chaire Quetelet 1989 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Academia, 1990), 26.

⁹⁶ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 491.

riers et des *aviso* de Rome et de Dublin, de Lisbonne et de Pétersbourg, de Boston et de Batavia ; et l'on nous parle encore des barrières naturelles de la France !⁹⁷

Cloots thus contradicts himself and his previous position, actually debating against his own previous argument: the so-called natural borders were no borders at all to stop any foreign army. Moreover, communication between human beings is not stopped by any natural borders either. Therefore, according to Cloots, observing nature and observing human activities lead to the conclusion that borders simply do not exist in nature, and as a consequence neither should they in human societies. Instead, they must respect the principles set by nature. Moreover, Cloots argues that natural areas form ecosystems that are connected with one another and for each other's benefit:

Par exemple, les pacages de la Hollande et les guérets de la Beauce, et les graves de Bordeaux, et les côteaues de la Provence ne sauraient s'isoler sans se faire un tort mutuel ; et comme toutes les rivières, les fleuves et les mers communiquent ensemble naturellement, c'est à nous de multiplier ces communications par des chemins et des canaux, et non pas de les interrompre par des constitutions, des frontières, des forteresses, des escadres. Imitons la nature, si nous voulons être ses heureux enfants.⁹⁸

Furthermore, for Cloots, nature cannot stand the separation of the human race into different political units because man has been bestowed with an instinct and proselytism in order to build unity:

La nature abhorre ce morcellement dont nous sommes punis avec rigueur ; elle semble n'avoir donné à l'homme l'esprit de prosélytisme que pour rompre les barrières qui nous séparent.⁹⁹

It is true, however, that nature has given different colours of skin to mankind, but that should not be the principle on which to separate mankind into different sovereign states.¹⁰⁰ After all, man has the unique ability to find through different means a common ground for all:

Cette heureuse tendance des hommes de tout climat, pour trouver, par des moyens différents, le niveau commun de la nature nous annonce l'approche du nivellement final : la souveraineté universelle, la nation unique, le peuple humain.¹⁰¹

97 Cloots, 490–91.

98 Cloots, 490.

99 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 306.

100 Cloots, 271.

101 Cloots, 316.

To sum up this section, it seems that Cloots replaced God in natural law theory with nature. Doing so, Cloots seems to be influenced by d'Holbach and physiocratic views of nature as imposing a natural order or system that humankind ought to respect in order to build a functioning society. It is therefore within the rationalist tradition of natural law that Cloots seems to base his system, perhaps remembering his courses on Wolff by Sulzer in Berlin. If nature has laws that can be observed and deduced by reason in order to be imposed in society through 'legal despotism', here Cloots takes the other natural law tradition into consideration and builds his system, which is original, but also contradictory.

Nature and Society

Natural law traditions had various views about how societies came to be. Cloots adopts d'Holbach's position regarding the absence of a transition from a natural to a social state, and hence the absence of a social contract. The social state is the natural state, and the general will of the people is the sovereign law, the people being the whole human race. Regarding the general will, Cloots makes a distinction between the 'despotism of law' that it entails, and the 'despotism of reason'. This seems to be the result of combining Rousseau and Diderot's views on general will, and a reminiscence of voluntarism and rationalism in natural law theories.

Absence of Social Contract

Cloots rejects the transition from a supposed 'state of nature' to a state of society. Already in *L'orateur du genre humain* Cloots makes it clear when he writes an account of the debates held at the *Cercle Social*—also called *le Cirque* due to its location in the Cirque du Palais Royal. Cloots praises Fauchet, who established the *Cercle Social* with Brissot, for criticising Rousseau, and showing the 'mistakes' of the 'social contract'. After that, Cloots states that there is no transition from a natural state to a social state because the so-called social state is just as natural to man as it is to other gregarious animals:

On a perdu plusieurs mois au Cirque, à mesurer le passage de l'état naturel à l'état social ; comme si l'état social n'était pas l'état naturel de l'homme, de l'abeille, de la fourmi, du gros bétail, du menu bétail, des volatiles et des poissons.¹⁰²

102 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 114.

This rejection of a transition from a state of nature to society, and hence the rejection of a social contract, is what Edelstein identifies as the key element of ‘natural republicanism’.¹⁰³ It has to be noted that Scottish philosopher and historian Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), although not a natural republican, had already stated this absence of transition, or equated the state of nature with the state of society, in *Essay on the History of Civil Society*.¹⁰⁴ However, Cloots never mentions Ferguson, and his works do not appear in the catalogue of the Gnadenthal castle library. Edelstein sees the two political languages of ‘natural rights’ and ‘classical republicanism’ as mutually compatible and as fusing in the eighteenth century. The language of natural rights posited an imaginary state of nature from which individuals exited to a state of society by forming a social contract in order to either protect their natural rights — Lockean version — or to protect them against a violent state of nature — Hobbesian version. The language of republicanism implied a constitution between citizens to create a republic with laws to protect them. Edelstein identifies Mably as a perfect example of the fusion of these two languages, because he recognises the need for good laws, but also the need for political systems to obey the natural order.¹⁰⁵

Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709–1785), also known as Abbé de Mably, wrote *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen* in 1758, but it was only published after his death in 1789.¹⁰⁶ However, the manuscript was widely circulated before its publication.¹⁰⁷ The book opens with a quotation of Cicero from *De Republica*, of which the book is a long commentary: ‘Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna...’.¹⁰⁸ For Mably the state of nature was a state of perfect equality and freedom, where the only duty was to secure one’s own happiness.¹⁰⁹ However, individuals recognised its limitation and therefore made a contract to transfer their rights to magistrates, thus leaving the state of nature to civil society.¹¹⁰ Mably criticises here other natural law writers, caricaturing their positions and tar-

103 Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 73.

104 Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (Dublin: Boulter Grierson, 1767).

105 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right*, 71–75.

106 Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen* (Kell: [s.n.], 1789).

107 Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and the Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 336.

108 ‘True law is right reason in agreement with nature, universal, unchangeable, and eternal...’, in Johnson Kent Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France: The Political Thought of Mably* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 72.

109 Wright, 72.

110 Wright, 72.

ring them with the same brush: Grotius, Pufendorf, Wolff, and Hobbes.¹¹¹ According to Mably, these authors are mistaken in conceiving the natural state as if it had to be ended and cancelled, when it had to be secured and perfected.¹¹² Mably argues that, in order to understand the state of nature, we must examine human nature. The most essential and noble attribute is reason, understood as Cicero's *recta ratio*.¹¹³ Nature has bestowed upon us reason, liberty, and a desire to seek happiness; if any of these three faculties is threatened, one can invoke it against an unjust government.¹¹⁴ The sovereign power belongs to the people, who bestowed it to the magistrates and can always revoke it.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, Mably is a 'classical republican': he admired Athens and Sparta as republics. As such, he also admired the plurality of republics, as numerous as there are sovereign peoples.

Cloots often cites Mably but does not seem to follow him beyond his classical republicanism and the natural order in laws.¹¹⁶ Cloots agrees with Mably in that the natural state should be secured, although he follows d'Holbach in that there is no transition between the two rather than the need to secure the former in the latter. Cloots is very critical of Mably, as he was of Rousseau, regarding their views on religious tolerance, which he found intolerant.¹¹⁷ He is equally critical of both regarding their views on a plurality of republics and federalism, as we will analyse further in the chapter on republicanism.¹¹⁸

Cloots never uses the term 'sociability', the key concept to explain the transition from nature to society, throughout his revolutionary writings. Cloots only uses the term 'sociable' a little later in the same paragraph when comparing flocks of animals and humans:

... vous trouverez partout des peuples plus ou moins industrieux et sociables que le castor, l'éléphant et l'homme. Fontenelle a rendu gaiement une pensée profonde, en disant que « Paris est à la campagne ». Une ville, une ruche d'hommes est l'ouvrage de la nature, pas moins qu'une ruche d'abeilles. La différence entre nous et les étrangers, et je ne connais pas d'autres étrangers que les autres espèces d'animaux, c'est que nous n'atteignons pas directement à la perfection, nous avons malheureusement le choix des modifications.¹¹⁹

That the state of society is the state of nature is confirmed by observing how nature works, and how human nature behaves:

111 Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France*, 72.

112 Wright, 73.

113 Wright, 75.

114 Wright, 75.

115 Wright, 76.

116 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 147, 148, 410, 547.

117 Cloots, 147–148.

118 Cloots, 410.

119 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 114.

Il est dans la nature de l'homme d'aimer la société, et plus la réunion d'hommes est nombreuse, plus les agréments sont nombreux et variés. La foule attire la foule, et les déserts repoussent les humains.¹²⁰

So, man, this 'industrious and sociable' animal among others, is born in the natural state of society. And since nature does not know of any limit, of any border, this society of individual human beings does not recognise borders either. For Cloots, there is only one society as nature is one as well. Moreover, history shows how dangerous the plurality of societies, that is to say of sovereign powers, is: 'La nature est une, la société est une : les puissances collectives s'entrechoquent comme les individus indépendants'.¹²¹ Nature requires unity: 'L'unité, l'unité, la nature entière réclame l'unité !'¹²²

This unity of human society constitutes the sovereign: universal, single, and indivisible. Humankind takes therefore the role of God in natural law theories, in that it is the ultimate source of power. This is both a solution and an absolute contradiction.

Cloots makes the comparison several times in his works, but there is a confusion between God and nature. In his article 'La monarchie sans roi', published in *Annales patriotiques et littéraires* on 27 July 1792, Cloots wrote: 'Vox populi, vox Dei : la voix du peuple est la voix de la nature. ... Le genre humain est Dieu, les aristocrates sont des athées'.¹²³ In *Bases constitutionnelles*, Cloots writes:

... le genre humain, l'Être Suprême.... Les attributs d'une divinité fantastique appartiennent réellement à la divinité politique. J'ai dit, et je le répète, que le genre humain est Dieu, les aristocrates sont des athés.¹²⁴

The confusion between humankind as God and Nature may not be fortuitous. It may be a sign of the plurality of approaches that Cloots took regarding natural law. As we will see below on the general will, Cloots followed Diderot's version of general will replacing God with humankind, and based on reason and liberty. But Cloots also understood the general will with Rousseau as the sum of individual wills forming an indivisible general will. The problem is that the reason for taking each individual of the human race as forming a general will comes from having natural rights at birth. Being free and equal is what gives each individual the same equal right of sovereignty. So, who gave these natural rights to humankind if humankind is sovereign?

120 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 260.

121 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 159.

122 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 250.

123 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 372.

124 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 476.

If nature gave these rights to humankind, then how can humankind be sovereign at all in the way that God was sovereign in natural law theories?

By the same token, the ‘social contract’ is natural, or as Cloots puts it, ‘primitive’, and it is made by the whole human race:

Le genre humain ne doit trouver aucune résistance nulle part ; il agit comme bon lui semble, il ne souffre point de co-associé. Ce contrat primitif, cette condition éternelle est le seul cachet de la souveraineté.¹²⁵

Since there is no transition from a natural state to a social state, there is no ‘social contract’, understood as a contract marking a transition for a state of nature to a social one. The contract, if any, is primitive and natural, as eternal as the human race and nature. This again emphasises the contradiction between nature and the human race as both moral authorities that justify sovereignty; the issue that Rousseau saw after writing his *manuscrit de Genève* when discarding a state of nature, and the reason why nature reappeared in the published version of the *Contrat social*.

General Will

Another reason that Cloots argues for the unity of society is the notion of general will. We have already seen that Diderot and Rousseau are two of the names that Cloots often cited. They each developed influential and opposed theories of general will. Despite the lack of direct reference to their works, there is little doubt that Cloots read them, and it seems that he developed his conception of the general will as a sort of compromise between the two. However, Cloots is more inclined to follow Diderot because of his affinities with physiocratic thought. But Cloots also accepts Rousseau’s general will as indivisible and essential to the unity of a political body. Rousseau’s conception of general will is so crucial to the existence of society that he rejects any partition of it into any collective bodies. Moreover, Rousseau’s general will is not just any whimsical will of the majority, but based in natural law. Cloots uses the same notion of general will but enlarged to the whole human race, excluding any particular will of any other collective body.

Diderot did not discuss the questions of natural law traditions in any comprehensive treatise, but in various discussions or comments on other authors.¹²⁶ Diderot’s critique of Christian morality led him to establish a ‘science of mores’ in the

¹²⁵ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 477.

¹²⁶ Thomson, *Materialism and Society*, 248.

science of nature.¹²⁷ As such, Diderot sees morals as another form of the physical life, and determined by it in a mechanistic way. As such, only politics can determine morality, as a scientific conditioning of consciences.¹²⁸ With his views on political authority and general will, Diderot contributed to the political thought of his time and even preceded Rousseau despite having been eclipsed in this role by intellectual historians.¹²⁹

In his article on 'droit naturel (morale)' in the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot answered to Boucher d'Argis's article in the same *Encyclopédie* 'droit de la nature', which was based on Burlamaqui.¹³⁰ Diderot starts by stating that freedom is the precondition for any conception of justice/injustice, morality/immorality, good/evil, rights, or obligations.¹³¹ Secondly, reason is what sets the human race apart from other animals, and reason is the characteristic that leads to truth, which must be obeyed unless one is to lose the quality of being human.¹³² Once that is settled, one must recognise that an individual cannot decide alone what is just or unjust by virtue of his reason because that would be the equivalent of being judge and jury.¹³³ It is therefore the 'human race' ('genre humain'), which can decide what is good and evil, because of its passion for the well-being of all.¹³⁴ Next, Diderot introduced the notion of 'volonté générale' (general will) as the guide for the individual to know the extent of his/her freedom: 'Vous avez le *droit naturel* le plus sacré à tout ce qui ne vous est point contesté par l'espèce entière'.¹³⁵ This 'general will' is found everywhere in *nature*, from the *jus gentium* to the behaviour of 'peuples sauvages et barbares'.¹³⁶ The description is vague and includes the law of nations and anthropological observations about human nature, but the individual who solely responds to her particular will is an 'ennemi du genre humain'.¹³⁷ The general will is deduced through reason without regard for any human passion or emotion, for Diderot. The general will is always right and legislative power must therefore be the general will and not

127 Jacques Proust, *Diderot et l'encyclopédie* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), 295.

128 Proust, 320.

129 Maryse Deguerge, 'La conception de la volonté générale chez Diderot', *Revue d'histoire des Facultés de droit et de la science juridique*, no. 12 (1991): 107–126.

130 Proust, *Diderot et l'encyclopédie*, 346.

131 Denis Diderot, 'Droit naturel', in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, vol. 5 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 115.

132 Diderot, 116.

133 Diderot, 116.

134 Diderot, 116.

135 Diderot, 116.

136 Diderot, 116.

137 Diderot, 116.

individual wills, which can be wrong. As Proust notes, Diderot replaced the role that God played for Burlamaqui with the human ‘species’.¹³⁸

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) contributed to a sentimentalisation of the language of natural law.¹³⁹ As Hunt has shown, the rise of the discourse of human rights corresponded to a rise in best-selling novels such as Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761),¹⁴⁰ and, with it, the development of sentiments and empathy, which led to an emotional acceptance of rights in all human beings.¹⁴¹ We have seen in the biography chapter that Cloots was receptive to Rousseau’s novels and was therefore likely sharing the same sentimentalisation of natural rights. Scholars agree that Rousseau had knowledge of natural law thinkers such as Grotius, Pufendorf, Barbeyrac, and Burlamaqui, but they disagree regarding Rousseau’s intellectual position towards them.¹⁴² Rosenblatt has noted the importance of the intellectual and political context of Geneva to Rousseau’s position towards natural law,¹⁴³ and notably the fact that natural law theories—Barbeyrac and Burlamaqui in particular—were used to support the unjust patrician regime in Geneva.¹⁴⁴ However, Rousseau’s view of nature was close to Burlamaqui’s, which itself was close to Leibniz, in that he considered nature as a precise, harmonious, and ordered phenomenon, as his objection to Voltaire’s poem on the disaster of Lisbon shows in their correspondence.¹⁴⁵ Rousseau presented his view on natural law and nature in his *Second Discourse On the Origins of Inequality*.¹⁴⁶ Rousseau attacks the discrepancy in the natural law theories of Barbeyrac and Burlamaqui in that, on the one hand, they have a positive vision of human nature, but, on the other, they posit that the state of nature is negative nonetheless and pushed men to restrict their liberty in favour of a sovereign.¹⁴⁷

138 Proust, *Diderot et l’encyclopédie*, 387.

139 Haakonssen and Seidler, ‘Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties’, 395.

140 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettres de deux amans, Habitans d’une petite Ville au pied des Alpes*, First edition (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1761).

141 For this argument see Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 2008). However, for a view that the relation between the two is too loose see Samuel Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History* (London, New York, NY: Verso, 2014), 1–18.

142 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 88–89.

143 For an overview of the Genevan context see Rosenblatt, ch. 3, 88–158; also for a nuanced view of the importance of the Genevan context see Whatmore, *Against War and Empire. Geneva, Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century*, ch. 3, 54–97.

144 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 164.

145 Douglass, ‘Rousseau’s Debt to Burlamaqui’.

146 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discours sur l’origine et les fondemens de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (Amsterdam: Chez Marc-Michel Rey, 1755).

147 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 166.

In general, Rousseau accused previous philosophers of a sort of philosophical anachronism by putting in conceptions of nature conceptions that are from society.¹⁴⁸

Rousseau identified the source of this issue in a discrepancy between describing man as God made him, and as he was.¹⁴⁹ Natural man is described by Rousseau as strong, free, and virtuous; it is society that corrupted him.¹⁵⁰ This observation on man's strength stems from accounts published by travellers of their encounters with 'primitive societies': they are physically and psychologically strong.¹⁵¹ Why then did man enter society since there was no conflict and all lived in a state of independence?¹⁵² Rousseau mocked the concept of sociability and argued that it was some historical circumstances: when the first man found himself needing assistance and the first man found it useful to use other men as a result.¹⁵³ Rousseau presents instead an incremental history of the emergence of dependency, first material with property, and then psychological with the development of social groups.¹⁵⁴ A sort of self-sustaining vicious cycle was thus created in that dependency led to greater specialisation of workers, which led to inequality, which in turned fuelled the state of dependency.¹⁵⁵ The social contract presented by Pufendorf,¹⁵⁶ Barbeyrac, and Burlamaqui was presented as a way to avoid this exploitation, but as a matter of fact, Rousseau argues, it was a bogus argument, a trick for imposing a contract that only benefited a few, whilst taking away man's freedom.¹⁵⁷

Rousseau only provides a solution in the *Social Contract* to this critique of natural law in the *Second Discourse*. Doing so, he reintroduced contract theory in France, which had not been used since the sixteenth century, by merging the French conception of absolutist sovereignty and popular constitutionalist republic.¹⁵⁸ Rousseau answered in the first version of his *Social Contract* to Denis Diderot's (1713–1784) conception of 'general will' expounded in the *Encyclopédie*. In this *manuscrit de Genève* Rousseau rejects the idea of a 'golden age' of the state of

148 Iain Hampsher-Monk, 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau', chap. 4 in *A History of Modern Political Thought: Major Political Thinkers from Hobbes to Marx* (Oxford; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 163.

149 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 166.

150 Rosenblatt, 166.

151 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 164–165.

152 Hampsher-Monk, 166–167.

153 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 167.

154 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 168–169.

155 Hampsher-Monk, 170–171.

156 On Rousseau and Pufendorf see also Robert Wokler, *Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment, and Their Legacies*, ed. Bryan Garsten (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 93–96.

157 Rosenblatt, *Rousseau and Geneva*, 168–169.

158 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 175–176.

nature.¹⁵⁹ However, as Wokler argues, since this rejection of natural law led to a lack of overriding moral sanction for the social contract, he subsequently removed this part and wrote a new version.¹⁶⁰ In his chapter on natural law, later cut in the published version, Rousseau argued that, unlike what *'philosophes'* stated, the reasoning of entering society after being a man in the natural society of humankind was wrong and upside down: man is first a man in a natural sense after being a citizen in a society. Rousseau aimed directly at Diderot, and what he called the *'cosmopolites'* (meaning probably the collaborators of the *Encyclopédie*), as Diderot based his article on natural law and his conception of the general will on Pufendorf and Barbeyrac.¹⁶¹

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. Par où l'on voit ce qu'il faut penser de ces prétendus Cosmopolites, qui justifient leur amour pour la patrie par leur amour pour le genre humain, se vantant d'aimer tout le monde pour avoir droit de n'aimer personne.¹⁶²

Rousseau's view on how individuals become a people is similar to Hobbes's, although Rousseau had a different answer: without unity, a group is an aggregation and not an association; hence, the community and the sovereign are the same, legitimacy depends on the people retaining sovereignty, even if not all inhabitants need be citizens.¹⁶³ The transition operated through the social contract is an exchange of natural liberty for civil rights; through this act, personality is transcended in the contract and individuals gain self-mastery.¹⁶⁴ All individual particular wills, when combined together, form a moral person with a general will. The only sovereign must be this general will since it is the only force that can govern a state for the benefit of the *'common good'*.¹⁶⁵ Sovereignty is therefore inalienable and indivisible or it is not for the common good.

The idea of *'general will'* is an old one that dates back to theological discussions on God's will as general will leading to natural law, and distinguished from God's

159 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Du contrat social ou essai sur la forme de la république (première version, manuscrit de Genève)', in *Rousseau: Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, [1887] 1964), 283.

160 Wokler, *Rousseau, the Age of Enlightenment, and Their Legacies*, 90.

161 Wokler, 97–98.

162 Rousseau, 'Du contrat social (manuscrit de Genève)', 283.

163 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 177.

164 Hampsher-Monk, 178.

165 Rousseau, 'Du contrat social', 395.

actions which were His particular will expressed through miracles.¹⁶⁶ Rousseau recycled this originally divine general will already used by Pascal, Malebranche, Fénelon, or Leibniz, and directly as a political concept by Pierre Bayle in his *Pensées diverses sur la comète*.¹⁶⁷ Similar to the distinction between God's will and God's actions, the general will of the people is distinguished from the particular interests of its individual members, in order to reach the objective of a common good.¹⁶⁸ A difficulty arises in this transition from God's will to the people's general will: men's will must be made general, and for Rousseau this is done through education.¹⁶⁹ There is thus a conundrum between free will and morality, as Riley notes, but Rousseau's solution is that man must be educated before becoming free; the capacity to decide is made and not innate.¹⁷⁰

Since the general will is what identifies and sustains the existence of a collective body, Rousseau refused to see it diluted by allowing other collective bodies have a political role.¹⁷¹ The general will has to be willed by the citizens, but it is not equal to their whims; it is based on what sustains society as prescribed by natural law.¹⁷² Moreover, the general will is a principle of political right, and the object of political right is liberty and equality (as independence and procedure).¹⁷³ A majority is the only means to achieve this political right for Rousseau, so it may be that the majority is wrong, but the citizens cannot override the general will.¹⁷⁴ Some have called this view 'illiberal' as leading to a totalitarian despotism, although Rousseau would have disapproved of such a reading and would never have agreed that liberating the whole humanity would have 'justified shedding the blood of a single man'.¹⁷⁵ Blum has argued that the vision of Rousseau as spreading the seeds of totalitarian-

166 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 180. See also, Patrick Riley, *The General Will before Rousseau: The Transformation of the Divine into the Civic*, Studies in Moral, Political, and Legal Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Christopher Brooke, 'Rousseau's Political Philosophy: Stoic and Augustinian Origins', chap. 5 in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 94–123.

167 Patrick Riley, 'Rousseau's General Will', chap. 6 in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 127.

168 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 181.

169 Riley, 'Rousseau's General Will', 130.

170 Riley, 133–134.

171 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 182, 187.

172 Hampsher-Monk, 182.

173 Hampsher-Monk, 182–183.

174 Hampsher-Monk, 182.

175 Robert Wokler, 'Rousseau and His Critics on the Fanciful Liberties We Have Lost', chap. 9 in *Rousseau and Liberty*, ed. Robert Wokler (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 192.

ism was related to the discursive construction of Rousseau and his conception of virtue by the revolutionaries.¹⁷⁶

Rousseau accepted the principle of representation of individual members by magistrates in the government; because the *sovereign* is democratic, whereas a democratic *government* would entail direct democracy, which would be impossible; the execution of laws willed by the democratic sovereign through the general will requires an intermediary, an aristocracy.¹⁷⁷ The larger the state the weaker the relation between the government and the sovereign because the particular wills can be more powerful, which requires a more powerful government and thus less freedom.¹⁷⁸ Moreover, Rousseau's view of the role of government was intrusive in that some institutions, a Censor and a civil religion or any religion accepting other ones and other truths, should be in charge of public morality to ensure the morality of citizens—atheism being the worst for a republic.¹⁷⁹

Rousseau, however, was not against the project of a universal society, as he defended Saint-Pierre's project.¹⁸⁰ He believed, first, in the existence of a European society of interdependent states with a common history and culture.¹⁸¹ But this society should be organised by a 'coercive force', which can only be a union between the most powerful sovereign states in an assembly. Voltaire rejected with sarcasm this so-called 'universal' assembly, to which the emperor of China was not invited.¹⁸² Rousseau also accepted, before his 'Social Contract' that separated the world into as many societies as 'general wills', that natural law applied to all of them nonetheless because it was the 'general will' of the society of humankind:

... 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.¹⁸³

176 Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).

177 Hampsher-Monk, 'Rousseau', 188.

178 Hampsher-Monk, 190.

179 Hampsher-Monk, 191, 193–195.

180 Saint-Pierre, *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Jugement sur le projet de paix perpétuelle', in *Rousseau : Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, [1782] 1964), 591–600.

181 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Extrait du projet de paix perpétuelle de monsieur l'abbé de Saint-Pierre', in *Rousseau : Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, [1761] 1964), 563–589.

182 Voltaire, 'Rescrit de l'empereur de Chine à l'occasion du projet de paix perpétuelle', in *Voltaire : Mélanges*, ed. Jacques van den Heuvel, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Gallimard, [1761] 1961), 157–202.

183 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 'Discours sur l'économie politique', in *Rousseau : Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3 (Paris: Gallimard, [1755] 1964), 245.

As Riley notes, the idea of *generality* developed by Pascal, Malebranche, Fénelon, Bayle, and Rousseau is between *particularity* and *universality*, and in that it is distinctly French; as opposed to ‘German rationalistic universalism’ in Kant’s thought.¹⁸⁴ This Rousseauist *generality* tends towards universality by rising above the particular, but is not building on reason and is thus lesser than Kantian universal will.¹⁸⁵

The first reference to general will by Cloots is in *L’orateur du genre humain* discussing the pamphlet *Supplément au contrat social* by Gudin. Paul-Philippe Gudin de La Brenellerie (1738–1820) was an author who wrote several plays and published this pamphlet as a praise to Rousseau’s original work, with the addition of his own views.¹⁸⁶ Cloots criticises this pamphlet vehemently on various grounds, but what matters here is Cloots’s view on the general will. Cloots accuses Gudin of contradicting himself when justifying the royal veto to the acts of parliament. Regarding English bicameralism Gudin argued that the assembly had a great authority but was rightly subjected to the veto of a house of Lords, which was the product of feudal history and not of the will of the English nation—therefore contrary to liberty.¹⁸⁷ Implicitly, Cloots makes the argument that a national assembly—the chamber of parliament with elected representatives of the sovereign people—is the only legitimate representative of the general will of the people. Cloots then also argues against Gudin’s view on ‘gradation’ that built upon Rousseau’s conception in *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne*.¹⁸⁸ This book was published after Rousseau’s death, but was circulated in manuscript form already since 1773. Rousseau was more concerned with saving Poland by adapting existing social and political institutions than applying his own philosophy, and that is why the views expressed are not fully compatible with the *Social Contract*, particularly regarding the ‘gradation’ of citizens in a senate. In *Considérations*, Rousseau expounded in depth a system of gradation for citizens in order to climb to the top of their order in the republic, before entering the senate.¹⁸⁹ Cloots argues that Rousseau himself would have rejected this system had he been living during the time of the Revolution. Cloots saw clearly the contradiction in having other political institutions capable of putting a veto to the general will of the people represented by an elected assembly. Unlike Rousseau, Cloots con-

184 Riley, ‘Rousseau’s General Will’, 134.

185 Riley, 135.

186 Paul-Philippe Gudin de La Brenellerie, *Supplément au Contrat social* (Paris: Chez Maradan et Perlet, 1791).

187 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 145.

188 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Considérations sur le gouvernement de Pologne et sur sa réformation projetée* (Londres: s.n., 1782).

189 Rousseau, ch. 13.

sidered national polities as one of those corporations diluting the general will that Rousseau wrote against. As seen previously, and as the next chapter will analyse, Cloots had a specific understanding of the concept of nation, as an abstract community of free and equal men, and only recognised the single ‘nation of the human race’.

The general will guarantees the unity of national sovereignty, for Rousseau, and that means a small republic. For Cloots, the larger the republic, the larger the general will and the stronger national sovereignty: ‘Et plus nos départements seront nombreux, plus ils seront subordonnés à la loi, à la volonté générale’.¹⁹⁰ Contrary to Rousseau, Cloots believes that the larger the republic the stronger the union.¹⁹¹ Cloots’s reasoning on the necessity to enlarge a republic as much as possible is based on the historical observation that independent sovereign polities are more likely to fight with one another. In ‘Adresse aux Français, par Anacharsis Cloots, Orateur du genre humain’ on 22 May 1792, Cloots explains: ‘En effet, sans une loi commune, les moindres différends dégénèrent en hostilités longues et atroces’.¹⁹² Cloots then cites the example of Italy and Germany where sovereign entities wage war upon one another, as opposed to the national unity in France where two cities settle their disputes in court thanks to a common law for all, a common will. Therefore, Cloots asks rhetorically: ‘Voulez-vous étendre les hostilités d’Avignon et de Carpentras sur la France entière ? Rendez chaque district indépendant de la volonté générale’.¹⁹³ The major use of the concept of the general will for Cloots is to put an end to wars between nations. The law expressed by the general will is supreme because it is the expression of the sovereign, the people. In that sense it is ‘despotic’, just like any other sovereign laws, but it is a legitimate despotism because it is democratically imposed and self-imposed. The individual wills are a threat to social and political cohesion, and therefore the individual wills of nations are a threat to global cohesion; they are synonymous with wars waged against one another: ‘La paix ne sera faite sur la terre, que par l’expression unique de toutes les volontés individuelles, par le despotisme de la loi universelle’.¹⁹⁴

This poses the same issue as in Rousseau’s conception of the general will: the charges of seeding despotism pure and simple. If it is possible to argue that Rousseau would have never accepted that the blood of a single person be shed to justify liberating the whole world (see above), the same may not be said of Cloots. He wrote

¹⁹⁰ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 283.

¹⁹¹ Cloots, 283.

¹⁹² Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 347.

¹⁹³ Cloots, 347.

¹⁹⁴ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 159.

the pamphlet *La république universelle* to argue against killing foreign monarchs on the ground that it would only kill the person but not the idea, while reason and the *Déclaration* were the real weapons of choice to kill the idea of monarchy.¹⁹⁵ However, already in his *Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais* Cloots minimised acts of violence by the Parisian crowds, their killings and exhibition of severed heads on piques, as justified by centuries of oppression.¹⁹⁶ Cloots also declared himself in favour of the war against Prussia and Austria in Spring 1792, going as far as sending money to the troops; although he also sent them a copy of his book arguing against killing foreign monarchs, *La république universelle*.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps the best argument that can be put forth in favour of Cloots's general will and 'despotism' of universal law is that, contrary to Rousseau, he saw the government as minimal in a universal republic. Unlike Rousseau, here Cloots is more influenced by the physiocrats in seeing nature as a sufficient system of governance. Establishing a universal republic would be assuring that the natural order is respected, and, everyone being free, there would be no more need for a government beyond the administration of taxes worldwide, as we will see in the chapter on republicanism. A further argument against despotism in Cloots's system is that, as we have seen in the chapter on 'reason', Cloots introduced the concept of 'cosmopolitan reason' as a rational check on a particular reason, a sort of general reason checking particular reasons. Cloots's 'cosmopolitan reason' seems to be different from the *philosophes*' 'universal reason' in that it is respectful of possible dissent by other populations exercising their reason, but Cloots does not explain more on this concept. It is in line with the *communauté de droite raison* from Barbeyrac's preface on Pufendorf. It is also close to Diderot. However, most importantly, Cloots's conception of general will was, as Rousseau's, an acceptance of the will of the majority, even if he did not think it was right. This is contrary to Diderot's conception, for whom general will is always right and deduced through reason; or, it could be understood as conform to Diderot if one recognised that a general will that is wrong and contrary to reason was not the real general will but only the *common* will of the people, not conform to the real general will deduced through reason.

In *La république universelle*, Cloots accepts—because it is the general will—the compromise that has been made in keeping the monarchy and the church in the constitution of 1791. This is akin to Rousseau's pragmatic *Considérations* recycling existing institutions despite their *obsolescence* into a republican constitution. The king and the church have been maintained in the constitutional settings because

195 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 243–244.

196 Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', 47–48.

197 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 338–339.

the people still believe in them. Cloots unites both institutions as the product of the same philosophy, an ‘artificial philosophy’ as opposed to a ‘natural philosophy’—‘artificial philosophy’ that is paradoxically equated with the ‘theocratic system of metaphysics’—in other words, this is what Cloots identified as traditional natural law theory.¹⁹⁸ Kings and priests are the enemies, declares Cloots, but the people will not remain stupid for long: armed with reason and obeying the law, the people will soon see the absurdity of paying for a ‘étrange roi’ (strange because it makes no sense) and a ‘culte étranger’ (foreign because it is governed from the Vatican).¹⁹⁹ There will not be any violence between republicans and monarchists because republicans respect the law and the general will of the majority. Cloots believes that truth and reason will triumph in a state of free press and expression as everyone will have access to these opinions. Sooner or later, the people will rise to reject kings and priests.²⁰⁰ So, in this passage, Cloots adheres completely to Rousseau’s general will, including the fact that the majority may be wrong. However, it is Diderot’s general will based on reason that Cloots builds on:

Le principe de la soumission à la loi, au vœu de la majorité, nous préservera de la guerre civile ; car chacun se reposera sur la bonté de sa cause, et on attendra tout du bénéfice de la presse sans entraves. Cette réflexion est de la plus grande importance pour le crédit public et la prospérité nationale et la tranquillité des citoyens timides, qui craindraient une explosion désastreuse entre les royalistes et les républicains. Nous avons notre boussole dans une mer pacifique ; et l’amour du mieux ne nous fera jamais briser la règle qui rallie tous les individus autour de la volonté générale. Le despotisme de la loi ne provoque pas l’insurrection, il se plie tôt ou tard sous le despotisme de la raison. La France libre se lèvera un jour, pour jeter un cri éclatant et unanime : « Point de roi, point de prêtres. »²⁰¹

The ‘*despotisme de la loi*’ is created by the general will of the people as sovereign represented by elected *députés*, following Rousseau’s view. However, if it is contrary to reason, it should be respected as the will of the majority even if it is wrong, as Rousseau theorised, but it will eventually have to conform to the ‘*despotisme de la raison*’. The prevalence of reason is more Diderot’s conception of the general will than Rousseau’s, especially since Cloots sees it as a guide for moral decision. It is also most likely the ‘cosmopolitan reason’ that Cloots has in mind, that is the reason of the human race as a moral and political community.

Even if the general will is momentarily in favour of a constitutional monarchy—or ‘theocracy’, and ‘artificial philosophy’—respecting the law is primordial because

¹⁹⁸ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 281.

¹⁹⁹ Cloots, 281.

²⁰⁰ Cloots, 281.

²⁰¹ Cloots, 281.

this law will sooner or later submit to reason and a democratic republic—or *cosmocracy* (although Cloots does not use this term), and ‘natural philosophy’. Of course, that entails that the law in question enforces free speech and liberty of the press. However, later on, Cloots used the same argument of majority dominating the general will regarding the sans-culottes. This time, Cloots argued in favour of the ‘passive citizens’, who did not have the right to vote, and were called ‘sans-culottes’. In other words, they form the *real* majority, even though they cannot vote and cannot participate to the general will. In that, Cloots is faithful to Rousseau, for whom the sovereign had to be democratic, even if the government could not be. In ‘Vive les Sans-Culottes !’ published in *Annales patriotiques et littéraires* on 31 July 1792, Cloots thus argues:

La loi est l'expression de la volonté générale, vous en convenez : obéissez donc au souverain, c'est-à-dire aux Sans-Culottes ; ils prédominent en nombre et en sagesse dans les villes, les bourgs, les villages, les hameaux, les camps et les forteresses.²⁰²

Cloots adds afterwards that these sans-culottes are ‘les gens honnêtes’, more numerous, as opposed to ‘les honnêtes gens’, less numerous.²⁰³ The distinction is subtle and was common at the time. Honesty did not only reflect a moral quality, but also a social respectability; radical republicans, such as Cloots, used the expression ‘honnêtes gens’ as a derisive term that designated those of higher social rank in the *ancien régime* who could afford to be refined and educated, *honnête*.²⁰⁴ The real ‘honest’ people were those of lower social rank, *les gens honnêtes*, the sans-culottes.

In *Bases constitutionnelles*, Cloots gives a more precise view on the general will.

Toutes nos actions particulières sont soumises à l'inspection du souverain. Un homme solitaire sur le globe serait souverain, une famille solitaire serait souveraine, et cette famille, en croissant et multipliant jusqu'aux extrémités de la terre, ne perdrait pas ses droits imprescriptibles ; de sorte que le souverain est essentiellement seul, unique, indivisible : sa volonté est la suprême loi, l'inaltérable vertu, l'éternelle justice. ... Si les droits sont les mêmes, les devoirs sont les mêmes ; or les droits de l'homme sont inhérents à notre nature. ... Je sais qu'un homme ne sera jamais étranger à l'homme, et que la volonté particulière sera toujours subordonnée à la volonté générale. ... Le droit de souveraineté ne s'altère point par des exceptions locales et passagères.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 375–376.

²⁰³ Cloots, 376.

²⁰⁴ Howard G. Brown, *Ending the French Revolution: Violence, Justice, and Repression from the Terror to Napoleon* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 43–44.

²⁰⁵ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 499.

Sovereignty is part of an individual as a natural right. Every individual is sovereign, but by associating themselves they merge their particular sovereignty into a bigger one, since they all share the same right of sovereignty as the same natural right. For this position to work, one has to understand all men as equal and as the same. In this same paragraph Cloots explains his position on humankind, rejecting any sort of distinction: male and female, regardless of the colour of the skin, and regardless of any ‘advancement’ as a civilisation, all are included as a human being having the same equal natural right of sovereignty. The next chapter will develop more fully Cloots’s conception of humankind in the context of his time. Since there is no differentiation between individual human beings, and since all have the same natural right of sovereignty, on the one hand, and since, on the other, sovereignty is unique, single, and indivisible, there can only be one sovereign on earth, and that is the whole human race. The particular will of every individual on earth shall always submit to the general will of the human race.

Cloots’s conception of the general will seems therefore closer to Diderot’s in that it is based on freedom and reason, and considers from the start that individuals have the natural rights of freedom and equality. Moreover, it is the general will of the human race that is taken into consideration. In this understanding of the general will and the natural rights, it seems that Cloots considers them as laws of nature, which would explain the confusion between humankind as God and nature, which Diderot also does:

Deux hommes, ou deux peuples isolés sur la terre pourront se croire souverains ; mais au moment du contact, au premier signal des droits de l’homme, il n’y a plus qu’une volonté absolue dans le monde. Qui dit souverain dit despote ; ne soyons pas étonnés si les prétendus souverains ont ravagé les domaines du souverain légitime dont le despotisme est le résultat heureux et unique de toutes les volontés particulières. Une seule erreur a livré notre globe à une chaîne de calamités ; c’est de couronner toute autre puissance que le genre humain. Détrônons les fractions sociales ; et le tout, le despote par excellence, la loi universelle réalisera les fables de l’âge d’or.²⁰⁶

The fusion of sovereignties between two individuals or two peoples is automatic by contact. And what is more natural than social contact? As seen above, Cloots considered with the physiocrats that the state of society was the natural state. The rights of man are also natural, liberty and equality gives them the equal sovereign right over themselves through their individual will; therefore men are naturally merging their individual will into a general will, the legitimate sovereign of the human race. It is an ‘error’ not to respect nature by allowing any other corporation as sovereign, as having an independent will from the general will of the human race. Only

²⁰⁶ Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 479.

through the realisation of this general will of humankind, the sovereignty of the human race, is it possible to attain what other philosophers have called the ‘golden age’, even if Cloots rejects, as seen above, such a pre-existing period as ‘natural state’. Another argument worth noting is the despotism of the sovereign. Cloots here does not mean that the general will, the sovereign is arbitrary, but that it is unique and absolute by essence. It is therefore prone to abuses, and has been abused throughout history. The only legitimate ‘despot’, the only legitimate unique and absolute sovereign is the whole human race expressing the general will.

This use of ‘legal despotism’ is again in line with the views of the physiocrats, as described above. However, Cloots does not see any tension between the free will of men and the need for a strong state, or perhaps he thinks that he solved this tension by introducing Rousseau’s concept of general will to his physiocratic view of nature and society. Once the sovereignty of the human race has been established, once the general will of the human race is in place, there is no need for a government because respecting the natural order, natural rights, in a universal republic, will bring perpetual peace and the end to of any conflicts. As we will see in the chapter on republicanism, Cloots envisioned a minimal republic only in charge of collecting taxes and redistributing them evenly.

Cloots’s general will is a mix of Rousseau and Diderot’s. With Diderot, Cloots argues that only the whole human race can decide what is good and evil; only the human race can express the general will that is the supreme law, justice, and morality. Moreover, with Diderot, Cloots argues that all peoples are included, even so-called ‘primitive’ ones. However, the view of general will as indivisible and the rule of the majority is closer to Rousseau’s: the sovereign can only be the general will, it is unique and indivisible, and even if it is wrong, the minority must respect the majority’s will because it is stronger than particular wills.

Conclusion: Natural Republicanism

Edelstein argues that natural rights earlier perceived as deriving from God came to be transferred to nature, resacralised as the new ‘divine legislator’, even for authors such as Diderot and d’Holbach.²⁰⁷ Cloots was certainly influenced by Diderot and d’Holbach, as he cites them often and his views are similar. Cloots removed God from the equation, and, doing so, he equally came to *resacralize* nature as the source of superior law to human law and sovereignty; the laws of nature that humankind

²⁰⁷ Dan Edelstein, ‘Enlightenment Rights Talk’, *The Journal of Modern History* 86, no. 3 (September 2014): 558.

should respect in positive laws. However, Cloots also *resacralised* the ‘children of mother nature’: humankind. Cloots affirmed that the people was God and that the source of sovereignty came from the individual human being who delegated it to the whole of the human race, creating a ‘despotism of the law’ with the general will of the human race. The general will can however be wrong, contrary to the ‘despotism of reason’. That does not mean that it should not prevail in positive law, and Cloots only believes that eventually its reason will triumph. ‘Cosmopolitan reason’ as a moral guide superior in terms of truth to general will, seems reminiscent of voluntarism and the previous views of natural law where God was the superior moral authority. It is close to Barbeyrac’s reading of Pufendorf and the ‘communauté de droite raison’.

The rejection of a transition from a state of nature to society, and the use of the term ‘legal despotism’, together with the belief that following nature is the solution to end all political and social ills draws Cloots towards the Jacobin ‘natural republicanism’, as expounded by Edelstein.²⁰⁸ However, Cloots had a larger vision for this natural republicanism, which was not limited to the French republic. In the concluding chapter, I shall argue that it constitutes a ‘cosmopolitan republicanism’, but it is first necessary to expound Cloots’s view of humanity and of individuality, and to appraise his republicanism in the context of his time. These will be the objects of the next two chapters.

208 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right*.

5 Humanity

La liberté, quoi qu'en dise Montesquieu, est une plante qui s'acclimate partout.
Cloots, 1792¹

Montesquieu published his *De l'esprit des lois* in 1748, which marked a milestone in European thought about human diversity and its cause.² For Montesquieu, human diversity was related to the environment in which populations lived: climate, religion, laws, political principles, traditions, customs, and manners.³ However, to Montesquieu's eyes, this did not explain what François Bernier had identified as the problem of immobility of Asian despotism in his writings on *les États du Grand Mogol*, later collected in the 1699 Amsterdam edition as *Voyages*.⁴ This is why Montesquieu pointed to the role of climate, a long tradition of thought stemming from Hippocrates and Aristotles that contemporary authors (Jean-Baptiste Dubos, Espiard de la Borde, John Arbuthnot) had written about.⁵ Montesquieu transferred this line of thought regarding the influence of climate on human character to the general laws governing populations: cold shrinks the body's fiber and creates better blood circulation, hence stronger and more supple people who resist despotism; heat stretches the body's fibers and reduces strength and suppleness rendering people subjects to despotism.⁶ Montesquieu divides the world in three clear-cut zones according to a North-South axis: first, temperate climes with agriculture, herding, civilisation; second, cold climates with harsh nature and savage populations; third, hot climates with overly prodigious nature and equally savage, but indolent and lazy populations.⁷ The heat found in Asia is thus responsible for the lack of change in laws, manners, and customs, and the prevalent despotism in Asia, according to Montesquieu. 'The radical conclusion that could be drawn from such reasoning is that not all climates produce liberty, which is thus beyond some peoples'.⁸

1 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 249.

2 Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender, and the Limits of Progress*, Palgrave Studies in Cultural and Intellectual History (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25.

3 Charles-Louis de Secondat baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des loix, ou du Rapport que les loix doivent avoir avec la constitution de chaque gouvernement, les moeurs, le climat, la religion, le commerce, &c*, 2 vols. (Genève: Chez Barillot, & fils, 1748), I: 10.

4 François Bernier, *Histoire de la dernière révolution des Estats du Grand Mogol*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Claude Barbin, 1670); François Bernier, *Suite des Mémoires du Sieur Bernier sur l'Empire du Grand Mogol*, 2 vols. (Paris: Chez Claude Barbin, 1671).

5 Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 26.

6 Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des loix*, I: 360–366.

7 Montesquieu, I: 360–382.

8 Montesquieu, I: 436–437.

Students of Cloots have often quoted this chapter's epigraph regarding liberty and Montesquieu.⁹ However, we need to pay greater attention to the context of the discussion regarding liberty and Montesquieu's climate theory for limiting liberty to temperate zones. It seems evident that, for Cloots, in order to convince his audience and readership of the feasibility of the universal republic, humankind must be conceived, not only as a unity, but that its diversity is not a challenge to republicanism, especially regarding liberty and the capacity to adopt and understand laws. Cloots's remark on liberty as a plant that grows under any climate on earth is a direct challenge to Montesquieu's assertion that not all climates produce liberty and that, as a consequence, a republican regime protecting liberty is not possible everywhere. Throughout Cloots's work there is an understated reflection on humankind, its unity and diversity, which is in direct connection with eighteenth-century debates on that matter. The question: 'What is human nature?' was a fundamental one during the eighteenth century. This will be the object of the first section.

Humankind and humanity as opposed to 'national egoism' were themes that Rémi mentioned in his *Le cosmopolisme*. 'National egoism' referred to a state-centric chauvinism in a monarchy for Rémi.¹⁰ The revolution replaced the concept of kingdom with the nation as legitimate sovereign, with a loose definition of nation as population of free and equal individuals; a population whose rights are recognised and protected. Since for Cloots humankind is more united and based on individuals, and since all individuals can aspire to liberty and equality, there is no contradiction in considering the 'nation of the human race' as the only nation on earth. This will be the object of the second section.

The Gnadenthal Castle library catalogue mentions the presence of *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental* (1761), probably written by French philosopher Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger (1722–1759), who collaborated to the *Encyclopédie*.¹¹ Boulanger, like Bernier, tries to understand the cause for widespread despotism in Asia. Boulanger does not criticise Montesquieu's premise that there is despotism in Asia, but unlike Montesquieu, his answer is that a very ancient cataclysm led the survivors to adopt a just law inspired by divinity. Later, men usurped this divinity to govern as despots. Boulanger notes that Europeans were the first to try to escape despotism by establishing republics, but notes that they never man-

⁹ Cheneval, 'Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus', 373; Bevilacqua, 'Conceiving the Republic of Mankind', 551.

¹⁰ Rémi, *Le cosmopolisme*.

¹¹ Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger, *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental : ouvrage posthume de Mr. B.J.D.P.E.C* (s.l.: s.n., 1761); Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger, *Recherches sur l'origine du despotisme oriental*, Edition critique annotée, ed. Paul Sadrin, Centre de Recherches Jacques Petit (vol. 52) (Paris: Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, Les Belles Lettres, [1761] 1988).

aged to protect the liberty and equality that they hoped a republican regime would achieve.¹² But Boulanger was wondering how men could get rid of liberty when it is connatural to them. For Boulanger, despotism has historical and religious roots, including in republicanism. Boulanger's conclusion is that a European monarchy is the best regime because, as Montesquieu noted, it is characterised by honour and moderation, unlike republics, which require an inhuman and thereby immoderate virtue and thus have roots in despotism.¹³ Cloots most certainly disagreed with Boulanger's thesis that a republican regime was immoderate and therefore had roots in despotism, but it is perhaps in response to Boulanger that Cloots formulated the principle of universal republic, since one of Boulanger's criticisms of republics was that they were constantly at war by fear from external threats. A single universal republic would no longer have to fear external threats, according to this logic.

Part of the argument for a cosmopolitan view in Cloots is a certain conception of humanity as a united and single community. Cloots did not use the word '*humanité*' and constantly referred to '*genre humain*' ('human race') instead. When referring to humanity as the whole group of human beings, contemporary writers preferred the term '*genre humain*' over '*humanité*'.¹⁴ It is however the same meaning, even if the term differs. The word '*humanité*' also referred to two other meanings: human nature, and the feeling of kindness and compassion for the rest of mankind.¹⁵ There have been several studies on the word *humanité* and its use during the eighteenth century, which will serve in this chapter to illustrate the background of thought on *humanité* in which Cloots writes.¹⁶

12 On Boulanger see Paul Sadrin, *Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger (1722–1759) ou avant nous le déluge*, Studies on Voltaire, Vol. 240 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1986).

13 On Boulanger and Montesquieu, see Denis de Casabianca, 'Comment les régimes peuvent-ils être despotiques ? Montesquieu et Boulanger', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, no. 35, Débats et polémiques autour de *L'Esprit des lois* (1er semestre 2012): 37–50.

14 Henri Duranton, 'Humanité', in *Handbuch Politisch-Sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. Rolf Reichardt and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, vol. 19/20 (München: Oldenbourg, 2000), 19–23.

15 Duranton, 11–12.

16 Hans Erich Bödecker, 'Menschheit, Humanität, Humanismus', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhard Koselleck, vol. 3 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 1079–1083; Duranton, 'Humanité'; Eduard von Jan, 'Humanité', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 55 (1932): 1–66; Fritz Schalk, 'Humanitas Im Romanischen', in *Exempla Romanischer Wortgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1966), 255–294; Ann Thomson, 'Issues at Stake in Eighteenth-Century Racial Classification', *Cromohs - Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, no. 8 (2003): 1–20; Paul Vernière, 'L'idée d'humanité au XVIII^e siècle', *Studium Generale*, 15. Jahrgang 3 (1962): 171–179.

It has to be noted that, for Cloots, what constitutes this *genre humain* is the individual *homme*, understood not as man in terms of gender but as a human being. There is a dialectical construction between humanity and individuality in that the individual man (*homme*) forms a part of humanity, but humanity itself is also what makes an individual a man. Here Cloots is either in opposition to Rousseau, for whom the individual was first a man when part of society, or is replacing Rousseau's concept of society with humanity. This also makes sense since Cloots rejects the idea of a social contract and considers society as the natural state of humanity. Furthermore, being *homme* is a title of nobility replacing ancient titles of nobility such as baron or marquis. The quality of being human — *humain* in the first meaning of *humanité* as opposed to animals — /is what makes an individual *homme*. In Cloots's understanding, as in many other contemporaries', '*homme*' is therefore the most honorific title in the aftermath of 1789 when aristocratic titles have been rejected: 'Je veux être homme ou rien'.¹⁷

By the same token the concept of sovereignty is also involved in a dialectical construction between *homme* and *genre humain*: the individual man being free has sovereignty over the self, and upon meeting other free men they transfer their sovereignty to the group, ultimately to the human race. Being human is what gives natural rights such as liberty and equality (which will be further explained in the chapter on republicanism). In return these rights mean that no one can claim a power over someone else without his consent. Therefore, no polity can pretend to be sovereign at the exclusion of another without breaching this universal imperative. As a result, only the whole, the society constituted by every individual *homme* can hold the ultimate power that is sovereignty.

This chapter aims to identify Cloots's understanding of the human race and the individual within the context of his time. Seventeenth-century humanist thinking influenced the political thought of the eighteenth. The idea of social contract based on natural law, as seen in the previous chapter, was a central preoccupation for political thinkers, and that meant that 'man' was equally at the centre. Society must tend towards the development of the individual's happiness. Obviously, a state of constant wars is not achieving this goal and many thinkers proposed peace plans for the whole human race.¹⁸ The most famous of them, and first in the century, was Abbé Saint Pierre's *Perpetual Peace* (1713), and the last ones were Piattoli (1795) and

¹⁷ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 131.

¹⁸ Elizabeth V. Souleyman, *The Vision of World Peace in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century France* (New York, NY: Putnam's Sons, 1941).

Kant's (1795).¹⁹ Such a project also impassioned unknown individuals such as former galley condemned criminal (later declared innocent) Pierre-André Gargas (1728–1801), who addressed his plan to Benjamin Franklin, or general André Guillaume Resnier de Goué (1729–1811).²⁰

Among Cloots's possible readings and influence on his view of man and mankind, one can find Buffon and his *Histoire naturelle* in the library at Gnadenthal, as well as Pliny's *Natural History*. Of course de Pauw's works are there as well as Voltaire's complete works. Equally in the library, one finds *L'Ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population* by Mirabeau, although Cloots is critical of him. This chapter will show how Cloots possibly used these authors in his conceptions of the human race and the individual, and how he formulates his own idiosyncratic views.

Genre Humain

The eighteenth century debated extensively the question of humankind and the individual. As Thomson argues, there were many different positions that intersected in a nexus of complicated ideas and arguments.²¹ Several disciplines were involved, from Biblical studies to anthropological ones, physiognomy, travellers' accounts, geographical accounts, history, or the science of government. If one marvels at the immense diversity between populations on earth, one also ponders the reasons, and answers are found through as many methods and beliefs as the period allowed. In England, several volumes already existed on the subject.²² In France, Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756) is another example of a contribution to the historical study of humankind. Rather than writing the history of monarchs, Voltaire writes a history of the peoples, their cultures, and their societies. Voltaire wants to write a universal history of the populations, a history of mankind. Voltaire criticised nationalist views of history hitherto written: 'Ceux qui mentent ainsi au genre humain sont

19 Saint-Pierre, *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe*; Scipione Piattoli, *Épître du vieux cosmopolite Syrach à la convention nationale de France* (Sarmatie: s.n., 1795); Immanuel Kant, *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (Königsberg: bey Friedrich Nicolovius, 1795).

20 Pierre-André Gargas, *Conciliateur de toutes les nations d'Europe ou Projet de paix perpétuelle entre tous les souverains de l'Europe, et leurs voisins* (s.l.: s.n., 1782); André Guillaume Resnier de Goué, *République universelle, ou L'humanité ailée réunie sous l'empire de la Raison* (Genève: s.n., 1788).

21 Thomson, 'Issues at Stake in Eighteenth-Century Racial Classification'.

22 See Pomeau's introduction in Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII*, ed. René Pomeau, 2 vols., Classiques Garnier (Paris: Bordas, [1756] 1990), 1: xix.

encore animés souvent par la sottise de la rivalité nationale'.²³ Not only is humankind a more worthy subject of study than monarchs and aristocrats, but it must be studied from an objective, non-national, point of view. However, if humankind is considered as an entity, a unity that can and should be studied historically, it is also characterised by what seems to be an infinite diversity. Voltaire and Hume distinguish between human 'races' and were polygenists noticing some 'obvious differences'. They were nonetheless abolitionists, and their view on races did not prevent them from writing a universal history of humankind.

The study of man in particular, and in general of mankind, is a project that was highly debated during the French Enlightenment. However, these studies did not include the term 'humanité' in the understanding of human race, preferring '*genre humain*' (human race).²⁴ Monogenesis recognised different variants in the human race, while polygenesis recognised several different human 'races', opening the way to what Todorov calls 'racialism'.²⁵ What is interesting here is the separation between racist doctrines of superiority and inferiority of races and their consequences on colonialism and slavery, on the one hand, and, on the other, the 'racialist' premise according to which societies are different and that the world is divided into as many societies as there are 'races' of human beings. These visions are essential in determining if this human race can live together despite its diversity. What was the context of ideas according to which *varieties* of men determined *varieties* of societies, and how did philosophers think and organise humankind into a single one? Cloots's conception of humankind must be understood, and appreciated for its unique progressiveness, among these debates.

It must be noted here that Cloots included women in his conception of *genre humain* and *homme*. Therefore, he did not write much on women specifically, but included women in his universal thinking about the human race, as shown below ('êtres mâles et femelles'). Before the revolution, Cloots wrote already enthusiastically about the possibility of receiving an enlightened education in the *lycées* in Paris, which also included women, contrary to what was the case in previous centuries: '... les femmes, dans ce siècle-ci, sont relevées du vœu d'ignorance ...'.²⁶ Cloots also considers having an education as a thing of 'beauty'; the beauty of an educated woman, of course,²⁷ but also of 'handsome' educated men, thanks to Rousseau's educational principles developed in *Emile*, which leads to the conclusion: 'Il semble en

23 Voltaire, 'Discours historique et critique sur la tragédie de Don Pèdre', in *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, vol. 6 (s.l.: Imprimerie de la Société littéraire-typographique, 1785), 109.

24 Duranton, 'Humanité'.

25 Tzvetan Todorov, *Nous et les autres* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 133.

26 Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile*, 179.

27 Cloots, 'Anacharsis à Paris', 75, 79.

vérité que la philosophie embellit, agrandit les corps et les âmes'.²⁸ A very Platonian view of beauty expounded as an abstract idea in *Parmenides* (130b), as the value of the beauty of the soul in *Phaedrus* (250c-d), and of course the dialectical progression from the love of beautiful bodies to beautiful souls in the *Symposium* (210b-c, 211a-b). In any case, in a letter to *Le Patriote français* published on 12 March 1792, Cloots makes it clear that the domination of husbands over their wives is contrary to philosophy and to the Enlightenment. Cloots also calls on women to be the equal of men in the workplace and to work in factories to replace the lack of men: 'On parle d'améliorer le sort du beau sexe ; eh bien, donnons-lui de l'ouvrage dans les fabriques et les manufactures !'²⁹

Cloots calls upon Frenchmen to compare past enslaved France with present freed France, and the evolution of philosophy in history to observe how 'l'oubli des droits naturels, la tyrannie des maîtres sur les domestiques, des maris sur les femmes, des pères sur les enfants' were ingredients for future social revolts.³⁰ And why should women not be as free as men are? After all, Cloots notices that women—and children—are also actors in the revolution, arming themselves with what they could find to fight, or sharing the same ardor for the revolutionary cause.³¹ In his short history of the revolution, Cloots also emphasises the role played by women in the revolution, not only in terms of 'sacrifices' for the *patrie*, but with the Women's March on Versailles on 5 October 1789, when market women decided to ask the 'baker in Versailles' for bread following a steep rise to prices in the marketplace.³²

Unity and Diversity

There are various arguments along the eighteenth century regarding the unity, or not, of the human race. These arguments are based on various religious, historical, social, geographical, environmental, and biological positions. But even within one position, there can be disagreement; for instance, one can be a Christian and consider the human race in its entirety as the creature of God, or, on the contrary, consider that some populations are inferior and cannot be enlightened by God's word. Fundamentally, there are two positions to be taken regarding the unity of the human race: either monogenesis considering humankind as one and the same,

²⁸ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 302.

²⁹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 378.

³⁰ Cloots, 321.

³¹ Cloots, 352, 398.

³² Cloots, 'Résumé historique', 557–560.

or polygenesis considering different races. Since positions are so intermingled, one way to present them is to proceed by authors. The authors chosen here are presented because they are the most representative and influential in Enlightenment thought, and also because their names are mentioned by Cloots.³³ However, only in *Certitude* does Cloots actually quote and refer to the original works. Otherwise, the historian has to assume that Cloots had read the works described here, based on the catalogue of the works at the Gnadenthal Castle library, in which they appear.

Voltaire is a theist, and even if he rejects religion—therefore the Biblical stance on monogenesis—he nonetheless considers humankind as equal before God, although he considers polygenesis as explaining diversity on earth. Voltaire states equality of the human race before God: ‘... Et Dieu nous pesa tous dans la même balance’.³⁴ And even after any fall from paradise (or the opening of Pandora’s box in this poem) this original equality remains. Inequalities that were released into nature from Pandora’s box should not put an end to establishing equality among men in society; everyone should have the right to reach happiness:

On dit qu’avant la boîte de Pandore
Nous étions tous égaux : nous le sommes encore ;
Avoir les mêmes droits à la félicité,
C’est pour nous la parfaite et seule égalité.³⁵

However, despite this equality among men before God and the right to happiness, Voltaire writes his polygenist statement as such: ‘... les blancs barbus, les nègres portant laine, les jaunes portant crins, et les hommes sans barbes, ne viennent pas du même homme’.³⁶ It has to be noted that this was not intended for publication. However, specialists on Voltaire’s thought consider that it reveals his genuine thinking. In his *Essai sur les mœurs*, Voltaire made it clear for publication that he considered that there were ‘different races of men’:

Il n’est permis qu’à un aveugle de douter que les Blancs, les Nègres, les Albinos, les Hottentots, les Lapons, les Chinois, les Américains, soient des races entièrement différentes.³⁷

³³ For a general overview of the debates on slavery and racial theories, see for instance Carminella Biondi, « *Mon frère, tu es mon esclave !* » *Teorie schiaviste e dibattiti antropologico-razziali nel Settecento francese*, Studi e Testi 41 (Pisa: Editrice Libreria Goliardica, 1973).

³⁴ Voltaire, ‘Discours en vers sur l’homme’, in *Mélanges*, ed. Jacques van den Heuvel, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961 [1740–1745]), 215.

³⁵ Voltaire, 212.

³⁶ Voltaire, ‘Traité de Métaphysique’, in *Mélanges*, ed. Jacques van den Heuvel, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1961 [1734–1738]), 161.

³⁷ Voltaire, *Essai sur les mœurs*, vol. 1, 6.

As such, for Voltaire, there are inequalities in the development of these *racial* societies. Difference of race also means difference of culture and the incapacity for some races to accommodate to 'European standards' of humanity: 'Les Peuples de l'Europe ont des principes d'humanité, qui ne se trouvent point dans les autres parties du monde ...'.³⁸ For Voltaire, these races follow 'sociability' as a 'natural instinct' given by the 'author of nature' and form different societies.³⁹ Voltaire is thus opposed to Montesquieu's monogenesis and his theory of climate to explain diversity; he had started a manuscript before his death, *Commentaire sur L'Esprit des lois*, in 1777.⁴⁰ But, despite his views on inequality among human races, Voltaire was a potent voice among abolitionists.

Buffon is a monogenecist, like Montesquieu, and was highly influential in the eighteenth century with his view on humankind. The human race is opposed to animals by the faculty of possessing reason. This opposition to animals based on reason is an idea shared by many philosophers, from the polygenist Voltaire to the monogenecist and materialist d'Holbach. Buffon writes:

Il y a une distance infinie entre les facultés de l'homme et celles du plus parfait animal, preuve évidente que l'homme est d'une différente nature, que seul il fait une classe à part....⁴¹

That being said, it did not stop Buffon from comparing some populations as closer to animals than humans, in particular in his horrible description of Eskimos.⁴² Buffon was the most influential figure in the eighteenth century for a non-Biblical explanation of monogenesis. Buffon's argument in favour of monogenesis is founded on the observation that 'whites' and 'blacks' can procreate together. There are therefore no different species in the human race, but there was originally only a single one:

Tout concourt donc à prouver que le genre humain n'est pas composé d'espèces essentiellement différentes entre elles, qu'au contraire il n'y a eu originairement qu'une seule espèce d'hommes, qui s'étant multipliée et répandue sur toute la surface de la terre, a subi différents changements par l'influence du climat, par la différence de la nourriture, par celle de la ma-

³⁸ Voltaire, 'Discours préliminaire sur le Poème de Fontenoy', in *Mélanges*, ed. Jacques van den Heuvel, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, [1745] 1961), 123.

³⁹ Voltaire, 'Traité de métaphysique', 192.

⁴⁰ Myrtille Méricam-Bourdet, 'Voltaire contre Montesquieu ? L'apport des œuvres historiques dans la controverse', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, no. 35, Débats et polémiques autour de *L'Esprit des lois* (2012): 25–36.

⁴¹ Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière. Avec la description du cabinet du roi*, 36 vols. (Paris: De l'imprimerie royale, 1749), 2: 443.

⁴² Thomson, 'Issues at Stake in Eighteenth-Century Racial Classification'.

nière de vivre, par les maladies épidémiques, et aussi par le mélange varié à l'infini des individus plus ou moins ressemblants....⁴³

However, despite the monogenecist principle, Buffon identifies various hierarchies and classifications. If what the constitutive element of humankind is the faculty of reason, what constitutes the diversity of humankind is 'sociability': '... l'homme ... n'est homme que parce qu'il a su se réunir à l'homme'.⁴⁴ Sociability pushed individuals to form societies, which explains the 'varieties' of human beings found in the world. Buffon then considers that what distinguishes a 'nation' is the degree of civilisation:

... toute nation où il n'y a ni règle, ni loi, ni maître, ni société habituelle, est moins une nation qu'un assemblage tumultueux d'hommes barbares & indépendans, qui n'obéissent qu'à leurs passions particulières, & qui ne pouvant avoir un intérêt commun, sont incapables de se diriger vers un même but & de se soumettre à des usages constans, qui tous supposent une suite de desseins raisonnez & approuvez par le plus grand nombre.⁴⁵

Buffon's 'science of man' relates considerations of climate, cultures and mores, and the 'variety' of human being.⁴⁶ Climate, and other environmental matters explain diversity among the human race, and by the same token, it implies that changing a people's environment could improve its condition—argument used by abolitionists against the one that Africans were naturally inferior.⁴⁷

Buffon's conception of humankind had a great influence on Enlightenment philosophers, and Diderot merely summarised it in his article 'Humaine, espèce' in the *Encyclopédie*.⁴⁸ However, unlike Buffon, Diderot saw human nature as constantly changing, and therefore no classification was possible.⁴⁹ Part of Diderot's abolitionist argument, in *Histoire des deux Indes*, was to add moral factors to the existing external ones of climate in order to explain the inferior condition of slaves as a result of the treatment slave owners had inflicted upon them.⁵⁰ However, Diderot, as a materialist, was not only interested in Buffon's naturalist explanation of human

43 Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*, 3: 529–530.

44 Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, 'Histoire naturelle des animaux', chap. Discours sur la nature des animaux in *Œuvres*, ed. Stéphane Schmitt, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, [1753] 2007), 487.

45 Buffon, *Histoire naturelle*, 3: 491.

46 Georges-Louis Leclerc Comte de Buffon, 'Histoire naturelle de l'homme', in *Œuvres*, ed. Stéphane Schmitt, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, [1749] 2007), 270.

47 Thomson, 'Issues at Stake in Eighteenth-Century Racial Classification'.

48 Thomson.

49 Thomson.

50 Thomson.

diversity, but also in the intellectual capacities of man in the *Encyclopédie's* article 'Animal', and utilised existing research on physiognomy.⁵¹ The religious account of intelligence had been linked to the soul, which obviously was an explanation rejected by materialists like Diderot. The question of intelligence was thought to be related to skull sizes.

Diderot engaged in a dialogue with Helvétius on intelligence among groups. Helvétius considered that all humans had the same intellectual capacities, but that differences appeared due to education and the type of government.⁵² Diderot refuted the argument of equal intelligence among human beings, and invoked physical causes such as climate and social and political organisation in determining human capacities, with climate being more determinant for nations, and organisation being more determinant for individuals.⁵³ The view according to which the type of government impacted on people's intelligence was also adopted by d'Holbach.⁵⁴

The study of the human species was fuelled by geographical discoveries, and reported in the popular genre of travelogues, in which the author—explorer, globe-trotter, merchant—often moonlighted as an 'anthropologist'. An 'amateurish' genre that did not please Clouts's uncle, Cornelius de Pauw, who had the ambition of writing a more scientific analysis on the human race, starting with the Americas, and doing so without leaving the comfort of his home—a travelogue of travel books, of sort. This first work, and his subsequent works, sparked stark controversies in the Republic of Letters, as de Pauw represented the native populations of the Americas as physically and mentally inferior to Europeans.⁵⁵ There is no doubt, nonetheless, that for de Pauw the populations in the Americas are part of the human race and he uses expressions such as 'l'universalité du genre humain'.⁵⁶ Even men considered the most remote from humanity (understood as European civilisation) are still part of the human race. De Pauw writes thus on the 'sauvage chasseur':

Jamais en paix avec les hommes ou avec les animaux, son instinct est féroce & ses mœurs barbares : plus son génie s'occupe-t-il des moyens de subsister, moins réfléchit-il sur la possibilité de se policer. Il est dans le genre humain ce que sont les bêtes carnassières entre les quadrupèdes, insociable.⁵⁷

51 Thomson.

52 Thomson.

53 Thomson.

54 Thomson.

55 Henry Ward Church, 'Corneille de Pauw, and the Controversy over His *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 51, no. 1 (March 1936): 178–206.

56 Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, 49.

57 Pauw, 101.

De Pauw wrote his study on the Americans as forming part of the ‘human race’, but notes the ‘variety of the human species in America’.⁵⁸ De Pauw classifies the human species into races as a polygenist. Other ‘savages’, from the North this time, close to the Arctic circle, are characterised as such: ‘Petits, basanés, foibles, dégénérés du genre humain, ils paraissent constituer la race la plus chétive & la plus méprisable...’.⁵⁹ This description is reminiscent of Buffon’s concerning the Eskimos. Climate is however to blame for the ‘superiority’ or ‘inferiority’ that nature gave the various ‘races’ inside the human race, thereby agreeing with Buffon and Montesquieu’s explanation of human diversity, but within polygenesis instead of monogenesis.

David Hume in his ‘Essay on National Character’ refuted Montesquieu’s climate theory by noticing that a nation did not change even when moving to different climes, as Jews and Armenians, or even Europeans in their colonies, show.⁶⁰ Instead, Hume proposes his concept of sympathy, as developed in *Treatise on Human Nature*, to explain the diversity of populations: ‘the innate sociability of human beings drove them to share sentiments, passions, and inclinations, especially within the same political body, where occasion for contact multiplied’.⁶¹ This thesis presupposes uniformity of human nature, passions are at the origins of all human behaviour.⁶² But if these principles of morality are fixed, their nature is socially plastic; space and time modified their evolution.⁶³ However, Hume is a polygenist and takes his classification from Swedish botanist, physician, and zoologist Carl Linnaeus’s (1707–1778) *Systema Naturae* (1735), dividing into varieties, species, genera, orders, classes. Hume identified four main varieties of humans: American (red skin, black hair, obstinate, choleric, governed by customs), European (white skin, fair haired, blue eyes, acute, inventive, governed by law), Asiatic (yellow skin, melancholic, severe, governed by opinion), and African (black skin, curly hair, phlegmatic, indolent, governed by caprice).⁶⁴ Hume was against slavery, but considered Africans as inherently inferior; not inferior due to external conditions such as climate for Montesquieu, but inferior due to internal moral conditions that explained why Europeans had been able to exploit them.⁶⁵

58 Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, 131.

59 Pauw, 278–279.

60 Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment*, 28.

61 Sebastiani, 29.

62 Sebastiani, 30.

63 Sebastiani, 31.

64 Sebastiani, 34.

65 Sebastiani, 42.

Adam Smith was probably influenced by Hume and his thesis on sympathy on the evolution of societies, but also the ‘relationship between “historical man” and “natural man” as elaborated in Buffon’s *Histoire naturelle* and Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine* was central to the Scottish definition of history’ and to Smith.⁶⁶ Scottish philosophers were more inclined to follow Buffon’s characterisation of man with a natural social attitude than Rousseau’s, but added ‘stage theory’ as a distinctive feature.⁶⁷ Smith formulated a development of societies through ages, evolving progressively from the first age of hunters, to the second age of shepherds, to the third age of agriculture, and finally the fourth age of commerce.⁶⁸ According to Smith property and means of subsistence were the main factors of progress towards a ‘civil society’, civil being understood as ‘civilised’ and opposed to ‘savage’ and ‘barbaric’.⁶⁹ Both Hume and Smith were interested in the relationship between feelings and reason; feelings could be a source of destruction, but also of social virtue if properly guided.⁷⁰

Cloots had in his library the complete works of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot, Hume, Smith, Buffon, and de Pauw, and he mentioned d’Holbach and Helvétius frequently. How did his view on the human race equate or differ from theirs? Cloots, in *La Certitude*, often uses the expression ‘genre humain’ with the monogenesis argument. The aim of the book, as mentioned previously, is to find a universally valid religion for the human race. One of the main arguments is to argue that only a religion that is universally intelligible can be valid. What is implied in this reasoning is that the whole humankind has the same capacity for reason. However, Cloots notes that three quarters of the human race is ignorant of God’s message; not because of stupidity, but because monotheist religions require years of study in order to be able to understand God’s word.⁷¹ Therefore, Cloots refutes all the monotheist religions from Islam to Judaism and Catholicism, each claiming to be the sole religion for the human race, and each necessitating years of personal study or the authoritative translations of the word of God by such knowledgeable persons.⁷² Moreover, the accounts on the human race given by these religions, religious histories of the human race, are worthless at best if not dangerous (to human intelligence): ‘Chaque culte ramène & enchaîne l’histoire du Genre-Humain à celle de ses rêveries...’⁷³ This is

66 Sebastiani, 45.

67 Sebastiani, 46.

68 Sebastiani, 47.

69 Sebastiani, 48–49.

70 Sebastiani, 51–52.

71 Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 5.

72 Cloots, 29–33.

73 Cloots, 32.

an obvious reference to the creation myth, and its history of the human race based on the Book of Genesis and God's expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Natural religion is the only accessible one to the whole of the human race because everyone has the same reasoning capacity and needs only observe nature to understand God's message.⁷⁴

As for a non-religious argument of the origin of the human race, Cloots rejects the debate between monogenesis or polygenesis altogether. For him, what matters are the physiological human qualities, which make a human part of humankind. These are the five senses, reproduction, and the faculty of speech:

Les êtres mâles et femelles qui ont cinq sens et l'usage de la parole, avec la faculté de faire souche, ces êtres appartiennent à la même famille, n'importe la descendance d'une seule tige ou de plusieurs tiges. Je ne connais rien de primitif dans le règne animal ou végétal.⁷⁵

Cloots accepts monogenesis in fact but he rejects any external factors that would enable a classification as variety or race, such as climate or geography. Only a few internal factors matter to qualify as a human being: five senses, the faculty of speech, and the capacity for reproduction and therefore to start a family and a line of descendants. The reference to 'primitif' is a reference to the first, the original in an animal or vegetal species, as Bauzée's article 'Primitif (grammaire)' in the *Encyclopédie* defines it.⁷⁶ Cloots argues therefore that it does not matter where man comes from; he does not know who was the first man, or what was the first flower. Cloots adds what he does know: 'Je sais qu'un homme ne sera jamais étranger à l'homme...'.⁷⁷ Cloots has probably read at least all the above mentioned authors and their views on humankind, and it seems to him that none of their argument is satisfactory for the time being because science cannot show who was the first man anyway. Therefore, there can be no historical account and no stages of evolution, no elements to judge one society superior or inferior to another one. The solution Cloots proposes is simply to take how things are with a minimal definition of humankind. But it is indeed minimalist, and perhaps too much so; La Mettrie had declared in *L'homme machine* that if one could teach an ape to talk, there would be no difference between a human and an animal.⁷⁸

Another view on which Cloots slightly differed from his contemporaries is the traditional distinction between the human race and the animal race. Reason is what

74 Cloots, *Certitude des preuves*, 70.

75 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 499.

76 Nicolas Beauzée, 'Primitif', in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, vol. 13 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 369.

77 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 499.

78 Thomson, 'Issues at Stake in Eighteenth-Century Racial Classification'.

sets the human race apart, and defines its opposition to the rest of animals according to philosophers. For Cloots, reason is what sets the human race apart from animals, but it does so in a negative way as the human race lacks animal instinct as a result. Animals are therefore superior to men because they possess a natural ‘instinct’, which allows them to follow the laws of nature and live in harmony with nature without thinking about it. Man does not have this instinct and must therefore use ‘reason’ to find these laws of nature and thus live accordingly and in the most perfect harmony (See the previous chapter on nature). However, here again, Cloots is not consistent. At times he writes that the human race does have a natural instinct—for order, for instance—and that it is monarchism and clericalism that ruins this natural instinct:

Le bien l'emporte généralement ; car l'instinct de l'ordre appartient à la presque totalité des hommes ; et cet instinct contrarié, dénaturé par le despotisme ou l'aristocratie, appelle tous les vices, au lieu d'engendrer toutes les vertus. Il résulte de là une apologie complète du gouvernement républicain....⁷⁹

I examine in more detail the question of republic and virtue against monarchy and corruption in the next chapter on republicanism, but it can be mentioned here that this is the reason for Cloots to justify the revolutionary wars, not as imposing French government on others, but liberating them from their despotic government, in order to give them the choice of joining the universal republic, of which the French one is but the starting point. In this sense, Cloots is in favour of interventionism. Furthermore, this shows that Cloots shares the thesis of organisation or government as influencing individuals, but opposing despotism to republicanism, and equating monarchism with despotism, when the above mentioned philosophers were opposing civilised monarchism to savage anarchy or despotism (as it was thought to be in Asia by some). But as Cloots mentions a few lines after, he tries to reconcile everyone: atheists, deists, materialists, and spiritualists.⁸⁰ The same could be said about his attempt at proposing a minimalist definition of what constitutes a human being on which polygenists and monogenecists would agree, also despite their internal disagreements about inherent and external causes for diversity, as above mentioned. Man is neither good nor evil, it is the political organisation that determines his nature: ‘La nature toute nue n’est ni belle ni laide ; mais elle devient un Léviathan sous l’armure de l’ignorance et de l’oppression ; elle devient une divinité adorable sous l’armure de la constitution française’.⁸¹

79 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 255.

80 Cloots, 255.

81 Cloots, 257.

Cloots attempts to refute the hypothesis on national differences, whilst maintaining national diversity—‘national’ understood as it was at that time.⁸² In particular with his self-fashioning, Cloots argued at the same time for universality, but retaining roots and local particularism.⁸³ Cloots does recognise diversity and differences, as his delegation dressed in folk costumes illustrates. Cloots himself, always referred to himself as ‘Prussian’, or ‘Belgian’ at the end of his life, while always maintaining his universal persona as ‘*homme*’ and ‘*orateur du genre humain*’. However, for Cloots, all these particularities are minor compared to how the human race is united in nature, not only in biological terms, but also in terms of natural law; liberty is universal, notwithstanding Montesquieu’s application of climate theory to differentiate among legal regimes in the world.⁸⁴ Cloots expressly rejects climate theory as developed by Montesquieu in *De l’esprit des lois* implying that some populations may not be able to live with liberty. Moreover, liberty is also understood as a natural feeling, that is materially located in the hearts of individual human beings. I will develop more on liberty in the next chapter on republicanism, but it is sufficient to note here that Cloots seems to mix Rousseau’s sentimentalisation with Diderot and d’Holbach’s materialism.

Eighteenth-century conceptions of the human race combined the understanding of ‘nation’ with the understanding of ‘peoples’, forming a conception close to today’s ethno-nationalism.⁸⁵ But for Cloots, this human race forms a nation, and in this ‘*nation du genre humain*’ there is no more foreigner as a consequence. Cloots defends the figure of the foreigner, and in particular those foreigners that were attacked by philosophers above mentioned, Africans and Indians:

Rappelons-nous que chaque nation doit ses arts, ses sciences, ses lumières, sa philosophie aux étrangers. Toutes les nations peuvent dire : nous ne sommes rien par nous-mêmes, nous brouterions l’herbe sans les étrangers. Nos impertinents raisonneurs blâmeraient-ils la fameuse ambassade des Romains, qui demanda au peuple d’Athènes la communication des lois de Solon ? Ignorent-ils que les Grecs n’éclairèrent Rome qu’après avoir été à l’école des Egyptiens, et que les Indiens furent les instituteurs de l’Egypte ? Que ne devons-nous pas aux savants Arabes et aux émigrants du bas Empire ? Ce chapitre serait long, si j’avais envie d’écrire de longs cha-

⁸² See next section on nation.

⁸³ See the first chapter on self-fashioning.

⁸⁴ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 249.

⁸⁵ See, for instance, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, [1986] 1998); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*, Oxford Readers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Daniele Conversi, ed., *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2002).

pitres. Cela nous mènerait de Babylone à Salamanque, de Constantinople à Paris, de Pékin à Pétersbourg, en traversant l'Asie, l'Afrique et l'Europe.⁸⁶

Civilisations progress, perhaps, but also regress. As Cloots notes, the splendour of Ancient Rome and Athens, so admired by European philosophers, disappeared, and, more importantly, this splendour was also due to the external input of Egypt, and for Egypt, of India.

Not only Europeans should not feel superior of their civilisation, as it has roots in India and Africa and could just as well collapse like Rome and Athens, but Paris (the contemporary Athens) is not civilised simply because it is Paris. Parisians are not great because they are Parisians or French, but because they are men, for Cloots. Barbarism is not the other uncivilised, it can very well be the self-proclaimed civilised man expressing prejudice over perceived barbaric neighbours:

Les Parisiens ont fait des progrès si rapides dans la civilisation, n'étant ni parisiens, ni français, ils sont hommes. Il n'y a pas, monsieur, de plus grande marque d'ignorance et de barbarie que de supposer ses voisins ignorants et barbares, sans les avoir ni vus ni connus.⁸⁷

However, Cloots has hope, because man is a 'political animal': 'Il est dans la nature de l'homme d'aimer la société'.⁸⁸ This sentiment that is reminiscent of Hume and Smith applies also to the single society of the whole the human race, for Cloots. Cloots takes this argument used to explain diversity in the human race and returns it to argue for the unity of the human race. As a result no one is a foreigner. Men are all the same and therefore no man is a foreigner to another man: 'Je sais qu'un homme ne sera jamais étranger à l'homme...'.⁸⁹

The only foreigner then is the foreigner to the human race— animals:

La différence entre nous et les étrangers, et je ne connais pas d'autres étrangers que les autres espèces d'animaux, c'est que nous n'atteignons pas directement à la perfection, nous avons malheureusement le choix des modifications.⁹⁰

However, as mentioned previously, the distinction is minimalistic and less than clear since the ability to speak is the main distinction for the human race, according to Cloots.

⁸⁶ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 143.

⁸⁷ Cloots, 163.

⁸⁸ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 260.

⁸⁹ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 499.

⁹⁰ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 114.

Genre Humain and Humanité

Cloots did not use the expression ‘humanité’ to refer to the entity composed of human beings. Following the usage of the time Cloots employed instead the expression ‘genre humain’, ‘human race’. When Cloots uses the term ‘humanité’ it is in reference to the feeling of kindness and compassion that is due to mankind. Therefore, Cloots participates to the ‘bouleversement des valeurs spirituelles’ that the Enlightenment constituted in its redefinition of humanity, departing from Thomism and the diffidence in man’s goodness since original sin.⁹¹ However, Cloots departs from his intellectual mentors, such as Rousseau, Diderot, and Voltaire, who did participate in the laicisation of the Christian *caritas* as the renewal of the idea of ‘humanitas’.⁹² Be it Rousseau in *Emile*, Diderot in his article ‘Législateur’, or Voltaire in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*, all suggest in one way or another the need to educate man to access the noble level of humanity.

For de Pauw, on the other hand, the human race is neither good nor bad. It is simply sick of its own passions, but a sickness that cannot be cured. There is no hope of educating the human race for this reason.

Il n'est pas question ici de faire la satire ou l'éloge du genre humain, que ni le blâme, ni les louanges n'ont jamais corrigé : trop trompé par ses maîtres, trop avili par la servitude, trop corrompu par ses passions dégénérées en faiblesse, c'est un malade incurable, abandonné à son destin, ou à la providence. Il faut s'attacher aux faits, les exposer comme ils sont, ou comme on les croit être, sans haine, sans prévention, sans respect, sinon pour la vérité.⁹³

For Cloots, on the other hand, there is no need for this. If anyone should be educated it should be those who are already overeducated due to their privileged social position. Aristocrats should be educated to the the dignity of being a man. The human race is one single family, and therefore one should treat another man as ‘brother’. This is how moral is reintroduced in politics for Cloots. There is no sense in getting richer when your brother is getting poorer as a result; all men are brothers and none would wish one’s relative dead for financial gain.⁹⁴

Cloots’s view is against Smith’s ‘circles of sympathy’ influenced by Stoic *oikeiōsis*.⁹⁵ It is a direct cosmopolitan view of basing our humanity on the communality

91 Vernière, ‘L’idée d’humanité au XVIIIe siècle’, 171.

92 Vernière, 176.

93 Pauw, *Recherches philosophiques sur les Américains*, 208.

94 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 257.

95 Fonna Forman-Barzilai, *Adam Smith and the Circles of Sympathy: Cosmopolitanism and Moral Theory*, Ideas in Context 96 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

of the human race, as argued by recent cosmopolitan theorists.⁹⁶ There is no dilution of humanity with the distance of geography or culture. The human race encompasses all men, and thus the rights of man apply to all men: 'Les droits de l'homme s'étendent sur la totalité des hommes'.⁹⁷

However, this position did not prevent Cloots, as other revolutionaries, to paradoxically support *inhumane* positions. Even though Cloots was against slavery, and in favour of the universal application of the rights of man, he yielded to the fallacious argument that abolishing slavery would lead to a disaster. In 'Réponse de l'Orateur du genre humain aux citoyens de couleur et nègres libres' published on 16 June 1791 in *Le Patriote français*, Cloots argues tentatively that although he is in favour of the liberation of slaves, and considers slavery as a dishonest trade, he considers it politically damaging to free the colonies immediately for the interests of France, but Cloots promises that his

... système de la libération générale n'admet ni colonies, ni métropoles, ni différence de couleurs, ni différence de nations ; et je ne demande qu'un peu de prudence, un peu de politique pour arriver à ce but final de mes pensées. Ce plan régénérateur m'occupe dans mon cabinet, dans mes promenades, dans mes conversations ; il charme mes insomnies, il absorbe mes veilles. Et je renonce à toutes ces places, à toutes les élections dont le peuple français voudrait m'honorer ; et je ne m'attache à aucun souverain provisoire, à aucune fraction de l'humanité, pour ne m'occuper que de la révolution des deux hémisphères, de la manifestation du véritable souverain, du souverain éternel et unique, la nation du genre humain.⁹⁸

Cloots's good faith is not to doubt. Cloots did believe in his system, and did want to see his system concretised in a revolution of the whole world. The end view is a united, free, and peaceful world without slavery. However, Cloots is more prudent in the steps to take, and shows some political calculation that appears cynical and unusual to his, otherwise fervent, idealism. The abolition of slavery is the strategic goal, but the immediate tactic is accept it temporarily. Two months later, the Haitian revolution would prove him wrong. However, the real test of humanity is in the classification that Cloots and other revolutionaries made of the 'enemies of the human race'.

96 Martha Nussbaum, 'Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism', *Boston Review* 19, no. 5 (October/November 1994).

97 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 476.

98 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 194–195.

Ennemi du Genre Humain

In relation to the conception of the human race, the eighteenth century also used the concept of ‘enemy of the human race’, or in Latin *hostis humani generis*, derived from natural law and the law of nations. Grotius in particular developed in *De jure belli ac pacis* on the idea that sovereigns must have the monopoly of executive power and the ability to give punishment. The people deserving punishment were ‘Barbarians’, ‘Beasts’, and also ‘Tyrants’.⁹⁹ Vattel in his *Le Droit des gens* used the expression ‘ennemi du genre humain’ in characterising these ‘barbarians’ and ‘beasts’ that Grotius thought deserved punishment by death.¹⁰⁰ Throughout the revolution, some revolutionaries made use of the rhetoric of beasts and monstrous creatures to characterise counter-revolutionaries.¹⁰¹

Cloots and the revolutionaries voted in favour of the death of Louis XVI; a death that was not politically necessary.¹⁰² The king had already been stripped of all his powers, but it was symbolically required to be killed as ‘the Jacobins substituted for the myth of magical monarchical authority the myth of a phoenix-like republic rising from the blood of the dead king’.¹⁰³ In ‘Harangue de Cloots’ on voting the death of Louis XVI, he argues in favour of killing a man in the name of ‘humanity’ since it would be ‘inhuman’ not to:

L’humanité prononce la sentence du client des aristocrates, de l’arc-boutant des contre-révolutionnaires. Quant à moi, je me croirais le plus inique des juges, le plus inhumain des hommes, le plus vil des esclaves, si en qualité de membre de la commission des six & de la commission des douze, après avoir fait le dépouillement du porte-feuille du ci-devant Monsieur, & de l’armoire de fer du ci-devant roi, je ne prononçais pas formellement la mort du directeur de tous les conjurés que la loi punit chaque jour.¹⁰⁴

The death of the king is an act of purification for the republic. By the same token, all the ‘crawling men’ who profited from the *ancien régime*, allegedly being corrupt, must share the same fate:

99 Dan Edelstein, ‘War and Terror: The Law of Nations from Grotius to the French Revolution’, *French Historical Studies* 31, no. 2 (2008): 235.

100 Gabriella Silvestrini, ‘Justice, War and Inequality. The Unjust Aggressor and the Enemy of the Human Race in Vattel’s Theory of the Law of Nations’, *Grotiana* 31 (2010): 44–68.

101 Antoine De Baecque, *Le corps de l’histoire. Métaphore et politique (1770–1800)* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1993).

102 William Doyle, *France and the Age of Revolution: Regimes Old and New from Louis XIV to Napoleon Bonaparte* (London, New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 101–111.

103 Susan Dunn, *The Deaths of Louis XVI: Regicide and the French Political Imagination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 20.

104 Cloots, *Procès de Louis le dernier*, 8.

Il est temps enfin de purifier la République, en désignant à l'exécration du genre humain les hommes rampants, les ames vénales, qui préfèrent les largesses d'un traître couronné aux bénédictions du Souverain reconnaissant.¹⁰⁵

The rhetoric seems harsh, but it is very mild compared to the one of Marat in his newspaper *L'ami du peuple* or Hébert in *Le père Duchesne*. Louis XVI is a 'roi' and for this deserves death for his treason to the sovereign nation, but he is also a 'monsieur' who equally committed treason against the people, and so do all other monarchs, and any monarchist or aristocrat: 'Je conclus à la mort de l'ex-roi & de tous les rois qui seront amenés sur le sol de la terre libre. L'échafaud des monarques sera le tombeau des feuillants'.¹⁰⁶ The revolutionaries' argument is that the human race is the only sovereign, and that monarchs do not recognise this principle and never will, thereby going against natural law as tyrants. However, if Cloots uses the expression 'enemy' several times, only to one person does he use the expression 'enemy of the human race': William Pitt.¹⁰⁷ The reference to Pitt was related to his actions against people sympathising with the revolution in England and his repressive legislations against free speech. Cloots did not call Louis XVI an 'enemy of the human race'. However, he did call other French kings 'monsters', such as Louis XI who murdered his brother, or Louis XIV for imprisoning his.¹⁰⁸

This denunciation of crimes committed by previous kings had been made by Louis-Charles de Lavicomterie (1746–1809) and Camille Desmoulins (1760–1794).¹⁰⁹ It is very likely that Cloots is making a reference to this context. In this sense, Louis XVI was made to *pay* for the crimes against humanity committed by his forefathers. Cloots was not opposed to the death penalty, unlike Robespierre, but it is also likely that he voted for death for the same reason Robespierre and other deputies did because of the multiple threats to the revolution and the king's inability to accept constitutional monarchism. In general, Cloots calls 'monster' the 'tyrants' or anyone supporting 'despotism' such as 'aristocrats', or abstract political systems related to these.

Cloots's voice was just one of many in the revolutionary choir singing the 'regeneration of man', of the 'human race', a purification through the execution of these 'enemies of the human race', in the name of the human race, an act of real hu-

105 Cloots, 9.

106 Cloots, 10.

107 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 610, 627.

108 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 118.

109 See Camille Desmoulins, *La France libre* (Paris: Ébrard, [1789] 1834); Louis Lavicomterie de Saint-Samson, *Les crimes des rois de France, depuis Clovis jusqu'à Louis XVI*, Nouvelle édition (Paris: bureau des révolutions de Paris, [1791] 1792). Cited in Raymonde Monnier, *Républicanisme, patriotisme et Révolution française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 211.

manity where false humanity would be proof of being feeble.¹¹⁰ Louis XVI did not commit crimes against humanity, but he was guilty of treason, and plotting against the revolution, at a time when Brunswick's Manifesto made it clear that all revolutionaries would be exterminated, and his refuge from the Tuileries to the Manège of the Assembly without telling his Swiss guard to stand down resulted in a blood bath on 10 August 1792.

Régénération, Éducation

As many revolutions, the French revolution had a general project for re-establishing order and transforming society through a redefinition of man. The expression 'régénéré' is widely used to refer to this process of transformation of man into a better man.¹¹¹ 'Regeneration was an active process of nation construction, driven by political will'.¹¹² As Bell notes, 'regeneration' was a term used prior to the revolution in a theological context, but moved from the realm of God to something that humans could achieve, which they attempted to do with a messianic vocabulary.¹¹³ This messianic dimension of forming a *homo novus* with a 'before' and an 'after' has been studied by de Baecque, who notes how this regenerated man is supposed to be the future, perfection and innovation as opposed to the corrupt man of the *ancien régime*.¹¹⁴ It is also Furet and Halévi's analysis that the term 'régénéré' was used as a rejection of the past with its 'feudal oppression', 'administrative despotism', 'aristocracy', and 'monarchy', and a jump into the future with the nation.¹¹⁵ This left the question of what to do with the king, the 'before', and what to do with the nation, the 'after'. Two issues that were highly contentious and debated.

For Cloots, according to the *science of man*, as achieved by the Enlightenment, the nature of man is shown to be neither good nor evil, but rather driven by self-interest, in a Hobbesian way. In a materialist way, Cloots considers that man commits what is considered a crime in society by following his nature, and therefore punishment is a less enlightened way of treating this issue than understanding it:

110 Duranton, 'Humanité', 43–47.

111 Ozouf, *L'homme régénéré*.

112 David Avrom Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 75.

113 Bell, 76.

114 De Baecque, *Le corps de l'histoire*.

115 François Furet and Ran Halévi, eds., *Orateurs de la Révolution française*, vol. 1: Les Constituants, Bibliothèque de La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), LXXXIII.

Le progrès des Lumières nous montrera l'homme moins méchant que faible, plus entraîné vers le mal qu'ennemi du bien ; plus criminel machinalement que volontairement ; plus digne de compassion que de punition.¹¹⁶

Understanding the nature of man is the object of the *science of man*, and this science shows that, as noted above, the root of all problems, according to Cloots and many of his revolutionary contemporaries, is the absence of regard for nature, in general, and denial of natural rights, in particular. These natural rights as declared in 1789 must be enacted in order to put an end to the corruption that disregarding this eternal truth has produced, notably through monarchism. Because, as Cloots notes:

Tout languit, tout se corrompt, tout se détruit dans l'absence d'une vérité-mère. Si les princes ont pris la place des principes, c'est en rappelant les principes que nous chasserons les princes.¹¹⁷

There is a little rhetorical play on words by opposing 'princes' and 'principles', which is characteristic of Cloots's rhetoric.

What is needed therefore is a 'regeneration' of this man corrupted by monarchism. The revolution operated this 'regeneration' of this *ancien régime* man by proclaiming the liberty and equality of man as the fundamental principles of a political regime.¹¹⁸ In this sense, France is the cradle of the regenerated human race: 'C'est le genre humain régénéré que j'avais en vue, lorsque j'ai parlé du Peuple-Dieu dont la France est le berceau et le point de ralliement'.¹¹⁹

In order to operate this 'regeneration', it is necessary to establish two things: first, a republic that respects nature and natural rights; secondly, an education for this *homo novus*. This was one of the tasks that the new republic set itself, and there were many projects drafted in the 1790s, notably one by Condorcet in 1792, which was not implemented due to increasing difficulties in 1792–1793.¹²⁰ This text later inspired the principles as established by France's minister for Education Jules Ferry (1832–1893) but with a completely different project. Condorcet wanted to dispense knowledge to free individuals, whilst Ferry wanted an education at the service of the Republic.¹²¹ Instead a Jacobin education policy was passed in particular by the

116 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 257.

117 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 482.

118 See the chapter on republicanism for an analysis of Cloots's conceptions of liberty and equality.

119 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 476.

120 Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat marquis de Condorcet, *Rapport et projet de décret sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique : présentés à l'Assemblée nationale, les 20 et 21 avril 1792* (Paris: de l'Imprimerie nationale, 1792).

121 Joffre Dumazedier, ed., *La leçon de Condorcet* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994).

Bouquier law of 19 December 1793, instituting compulsory education for children aged 6–13, emphasising linguistic uniformity and republican and patriotic values.¹²² Talleyrand or the abbé Grégoire, among others, had expressed that French was the language of liberty and equality, and the result was to Frenchify the whole country around one language, thus crushing all regional *dialects* and identities.¹²³

Cloots was arrested nine days after the Bouquier law was passed. Certainly, Cloots approved linguistic unity, and had also stated that French was the language of liberty that the whole world would learn. However, this does not mean that he considered that people should not learn their native tongue. Cloots did not survive the terror of the *comité de salut public*, and it is difficult to know how much he would have approved or disapproved of this particular law, but he made public his own plan for education, as we will see below. However, it is certain that he saw the ‘regeneration’ as extending to the whole world, and that ‘national corporation’ should be abolished: ‘La France s’est régénérée en abolissant les corporations et les provinces ; le monde sera régénéré en abolissant l’esprit de corps national’.¹²⁴ Cloots also signs his article according to the new revolutionary calendar, but as marking for him the date of the regeneration of the world.¹²⁵

Cloots feared for the revolution in 1793, like the rest of the revolutionaries. He saw this regeneration of the human race in danger. In February 1793, in the ‘preliminary discourse’ of his *Résumé historique de la révolution*, Cloots published his philosophical reflexions on the revolution. Cloots writes classically how the revolution happened naturally, biologically, in a country that was politically ill due to a corrupt regime. This patient recovers, his body ‘regenerates’ itself into a healthy one after a healthy revolution. However Cloots warns the reader. History shows how this regeneration could return into a state of illness, how the patient could relapse:

Semblables aux maladies du corps humain, les maladies du corps politique produisent des révolutions intestines, dont les secousses violentes opèrent de grands changements ; mais l’expérience des siècles nous prouve que, jusqu’à nos jours, les résultats de ces changements ont constamment différé entre ces deux corps. Dans un malade à l’extrémité, ramenant l’harmonie parmi tous les ressorts qui composent la machine, souvent la crise révolutionnaire a rétabli l’équilibre et fait renaître la santé ; au contraire, si l’on parcourt les annales des révolutions de tous les peuples, on n’en trouve pas une dont ces peuples soient sortis plus heureux qu’ils

¹²² McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, 131.

¹²³ Peter McPhee, *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 347–348.

¹²⁴ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 158.

¹²⁵ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 236.

ne l'étaient avant ; loin de là ! presque toujours on voit les révolutions les réduire à un état de calamités, pire que celui dont elles les avaient tirés.¹²⁶

Cloots then states three causes for this relapse: the people have not been able to base its thinking on 'eternal reason'; the people has blindly trusted a few men, who are hypocritically profiting from the revolution; and, finally, the clumsiness and lack of foresight of the people that dooms it to relapse into slavery.¹²⁷ Cloots would not have approved of an education in the service of the republic, in which educating is understood in the Latin sense of *educatio*, from *ducere*, lead, meaning bread-ing, rearing. The republican enlightenment and regeneration he had in mind was closer to Condorcet's plan based on instruction. Condorcet considered education as instruction—from the Latin *instruo*, build, arrange—giving the individual, the citizen, the tools to think independently so that no individual or group of individuals may take hold of their mind again. Moreover, as we will see in the next chapter on republicanism, his idea of the universal republic was minimal and more of a federal type with large independence for local populations to decide for themselves what they wanted, including in matters of education policy. One could also infer Cloots's education policy from this remark in *L'orateur du genre humain*, in which he recommends the work on onanism by Swiss doctor Samuel Auguste Tissot (1728–1797).¹²⁸ This work, as Cloots explains, recommends abstaining from masturbation during puberty and adolescence in order to grow stronger and more robust. It is obviously rather ridiculous today, but Tissot was otherwise trying to build a scientific method for medicine and was widely popular, also quoted by Voltaire and Kant. In this sense, Cloots is interested in educating the population with the latest scientific works for their own individual benefit, rather than with crude patriotic propaganda for the benefit of the republic.

Before being arrested, but after having been excluded from the Jacobins, Cloots was still a member of the *Comité d'instruction publique* and managed to make a speech on 26 December 1793. The *comité* had to answer a question regarding spectacles and public education, and whether they should be left to the public or private sector.¹²⁹ Cloots starts answering by stating that there cannot be any example found in Antiquity or modernity, East or West, because this republic is unique in having a nation of equal men with universal principles. However, Cloots notes that 'aristocratic governments' need to have a monopoly on education and entertainment in order to maintain their domination on the population, in the countries 'où les

126 Cloots, 'Résumé historique', 520.

127 Cloots, 520–521.

128 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 125.

129 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 638.

gouvernements sont tout et les gouvernés rien’ — winking to Sieyès.¹³⁰ Cloots uses the word ‘instruction’ rather than ‘education’, and his vision of instruction for the people is minimalistic, in an echo to Rousseau’s view: ‘Lire, écrire, chiffrer, voilà pour l’instruction ; la joie et un violon, voilà pour les spectacles’.¹³¹ It is up to the government to provide a minimal education so that everyone can read, write, and count, and also some entertainment, the rest should be left to the private sector with the understanding that ‘le gouvernement doit simplement veiller à ce qu’on n’empoisonne ni le corps ni l’esprit, à ce que l’on débite une nourriture saine’.¹³² The rule of thumb is that something must benefit the whole nation in order to be paid for by the nation, for instance a school for engineers should be national, but a theatre should be left to the private sector under surveillance of magistrates.¹³³ More importantly, regarding this instruction, it should not amount to mere propaganda. Human rights and republican government should be accepted by everyone because everyone can freely see their benefit, not because they are imposed:

La propagande des droits de l’homme doit se présenter pure et sans tâches à l’univers étonné. Ce n’est pas en apportant à nos voisins des dieux étrangers que nous faciliterons leur conversion ; ce n’est pas en élevant autel contre autel que nous relèverons leurs fronts prosternés.¹³⁴

Cloots uses the word ‘propaganda’ here, but it does not mean propaganda in the modern sense, but diffusion or communication, in the ecclesiastical sense that the Gospel was propagated.¹³⁵ Even in France, Cloots preaches tolerance rather than imposition, regarding republican education. Cloots believes instead in nature and reason, and suggests to present a ‘*table rase*’ so that everyone may combine their own ‘*régime spirituel*’, until ‘truth triumphs’ in the end when reason leads everyone to understand that nature, rather than any god, is the only ‘supreme being’, and ‘providence’ — nature’s word on earth, as opposed to divine providence — is a society of free and equal human beings.¹³⁶

Moreover, similarly to the nature of government as we will see in the next chapter, education and entertainment should be decided by the people, from below, rather than imposed by an ‘aristocratic’ government, from the top.¹³⁷ In the

130 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 638.

131 Cloots, 639.

132 Cloots, 639.

133 Cloots, 640.

134 Cloots, 640.

135 See the article ‘Propagande’ in the *Encyclopédie*.

136 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 640.

137 Cloots, 643.

end, Cloots suggests a decree to open military, music, horse riding, naval, and medical schools, as well as public libraries, laboratories for chemistry and physics, and botanical gardens. But then again, Cloots is a physiocrat and believes that this decree would only be temporary until ‘wealthy families’ and ‘free individuals’ provide for these needs because ‘[l]’éducation doit circuler comme toute autre marchandise ...’.¹³⁸ Cloots has faith in the liberty of nature (or the market in modern terms) and that education will be provided for, locally, by tutors and families, under the scrutiny of parents and the public; even taking care of orphans.¹³⁹

Cloots mentions vaguely that already people learn to read in places where the alphabet was unknown before the revolution.¹⁴⁰ However, as Doyle notes, the educational enthusiasm of the revolutionaries was curbed by difficulties to implement these principles, and the existing educational system provided by the Church collapsed; as a result the number of pupils in the *collèges* fell from 50.000 in 1789 to 12.000 or 14.000 in 1799 in the *écoles* created, whilst the literacy fell from 37% in 1789 to 30% in 1815.¹⁴¹ The lack of time and money resulted in a failure to replace the education service and materials provided by the Church, with the example of Clermont-Ferrand having 128 pupils for a population of 20.000 in 1794.¹⁴² This was not a republican education that would ‘regenerate’ the *sans-culottes* in the population.

Nation du Genre Humain

Together with the idea of unity of the human race, Cloots suggested the concept of ‘nation of the human race’. This sounds antithetical to contemporary ears and must therefore be explained contextually with the various understandings of nation. Cheneval notes rightly that when Cloots presents the idea of ‘nation du genre humain’, it was during a context when the concept of ‘nation’ was not yet *nation-alised* and instead could serve as part of a revolutionary cosmopolitan ideal rather than a homogeneous nation-state.¹⁴³

138 Cloots, 643.

139 Cloots, 643.

140 Cloots, 643.

141 William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 399.

142 McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, 132.

143 Cheneval, ‘Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus’, 383.

Individual

Baker emphasises the apparition of both society and the individual together during the eighteenth century: 'To speak of collective human existence as *société* is to speak of it as an *association* of individuals. In this sense, the term is essentially voluntaristic'.¹⁴⁴ Individualism is a distinct feature of Western society, and, for Baker, the Enlightenment conception of society was instituted in response to epistemological, ethical, religious, and political crises: epistemologically, society became the consolation for the acceptance of the limitations to understanding; ethically, sociability and civility became the substitutes to Christian morality; religiously and politically, society emerged as a consolation against the despair of a world in which God is hidden, and became a domain with stability, an autonomous ground where authority and absolute power dissolved.¹⁴⁵

Viguiet notes that the 'individual' 'entered politics' with the change of socio-political vocabulary during the eighteenth century in France: first by a passage from religious metaphysical discourse to the civic and secular one of nature, in which the individual is opposed to the species; secondly, from natural law with natural rights bestowed on individuals.¹⁴⁶ From 1770 to 1780, the 'individual' was not yet a term designating a political concept, but a social term in Nature.¹⁴⁷ The term enters the socio-political discourse through the association between nature and society.¹⁴⁸ The individual becomes the minimal unit in political arithmetic, from being nothing in nature to something in law: from 1770 to 1785 the 'individual' is used in demographical studies by Turgot and the physiocrats; from 1789 to 1792 the individual becomes important in counting ballots, it is the political unit as human being.¹⁴⁹ 1789 also marked the correlation of liberty and equality united within the individual, with the difference that liberty is already there, whilst equality is to be built since society must preserve natural rights.¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, this

144 Keith Michael Baker, 'Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History', chap. 5 in *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, ed. Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 98.

145 Baker, 100–104.

146 Anne Viguiet, 'Individu (1770–1830) : Un processus de politisation du vocabulaire', in *Dictionnaire des usages socio-politiques (1770–1815)*, vol. 4: Désignants socio-politiques, 2, Collection « Saint-Cloud » (Paris: Klincksieck, 1989), 116–118.

147 Viguiet, 141.

148 Viguiet, 141.

149 Viguiet, 120–122.

150 Viguiet, 129.

also means that one individual can be replaced by another, since all are equal, and that it is justifiable to kill 10.000 individuals if it means saving 100.000, as the Terror showed.¹⁵¹ Propriety is a fundamental right, together with liberty and equality, in that it enables the emergence of the individual and is inalienable to the individual.¹⁵²

Cloots has made the individual the core of his political theory, and the centre of any political and moral theory. The universal republic is not an agglomeration of nations, or states, or any other collective polity, but a ‘confederation of united individuals’. To Cloots, the individual is sovereign, or, as he puts it, ‘[c]haque individu est un royaume’, and thus all source of sovereignty stems from the individual.¹⁵³ All societies are ultimately built by individuals who are the prime units from the natural world in the social world, according to Cloots. As seen in the chapter on nature, Cloots rejects a transition from nature to society, therefore natural rights and social rights are the same. Liberty and equality are the fundamental rights of the individual. As such, each individual is sovereign. But, upon meeting another sovereign individual, their sovereignty merges. This amalgamation continues until there is ultimately only the human race as legitimate sovereign. As a consequence, there cannot be any other sovereign:

Il n’y a pas plus de raison d’ériger un département en souverain, qu’un district, un canton, une municipalité, une famille, un individu. Chaque homme, si vous le voulez, est un souverain, bien entendu que sa souveraineté n’empiète pas sur la souveraineté individuelle des autres hommes.... Une fraction de la grande famille ne saurait s’emparer de la faculté souveraine, de la faculté de vouloir absolument, irrésistiblement, sans un démenti formel au genre humain.¹⁵⁴

As such the expansion of the French revolution is not comparable with past empires for Cloots; if there is an empire, it is the ‘empire of reason’. Consequently, the annexion of neighbouring Savoy is but a reunion of individuals into the confederation of men:

Nous n’aurons jamais la guerre avec la Savoie, car elle ne s’est pas unie à la France par juxtaposition ; mais ces deux contrées ont formé un amalgame, une confédération d’individus qui ne laisse plus aucune trace de la ci-devant Savoie....¹⁵⁵

151 Viguier, 131–132.

152 Viguier, 136–137.

153 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 127.

154 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 479.

155 Cloots, 498.

The *Encyclopédie* defines ‘Confédération’ as an ‘alliance’ or ‘league’ of states or princes; so a union between persons, families, or states.¹⁵⁶ In Cloots’s political thought, individuals form this union or alliance rather than states. A country is nothing else than a union of free and equal individuals who want to remain free and equal, and therefore agree on a constitution and representatives to produce laws.

If the basis of a political system is to be the individual, it is the same basis that must be taken into consideration for the world political system.

La félicité de l’espèce est aussi incompatible avec les corps nationaux, que les corps particuliers sont nuisibles à une nation ; et cela, par le grand principe, que tous les intérêts découlent de l’intérêt personnel. L’alliance des Nations, la fédération des peuples, est un lien éphémère dont se joue l’immorale politique. Il n’y a que la confédération des individus qui puisse pacifier les hommes.¹⁵⁷

Political philosophy does not distinguish between internal and external politics. For Cloots, as for the *philosophes*, the same way religion had to be universally valid by being understandable to every individual, so does politics. The individual is the basis for religious theory, and it is equally the basis for political theory.

It is therefore equally crucial to understand the nature of individuals in order to find the best constitution that will frame their liberty and maintain their equality. Human nature shows that individuals are selfish and want to expand this selfishness through conquests and enslaving others. The constitution must set limits to individuals in order to preserve society (the same way one’s liberty is defined as being limited by other individuals’ liberty). Through law all these selfish individual wills form the public interest:

Circonscrivez les individus dans de justes bornes, afin qu’ils ne nuisent point à la sphère sociale ; car la nature nous pousse en avant, notre instinct est de tout envahir, de tout asservir, de renverser tous les obstacles. Chaque individu est un royaume : chacun dit que charité bien ordonnée commence par soi-même. Les soldats heureux et les prêtres habiles ne sont devenus rois que parce que les peuples ont ignoré les secrets de la nature humaine. On ne saurait trop se presser de faire connaître ces secrets importants. La guerre naturelle des individus a cessé, dès que la loi positive a parlé ; et dès lors, les usurpations et les massacres ont fait place à la lutte et à l’émulation. Maintenez la loi, et l’égoïsme ne sera qu’un jeu utile, un véhicule nécessaire. C’est la collection de tous les égoïsmes épars qui forme l’intérêt public. Vouloir extirper

¹⁵⁶ Jacques Mallet du Pan, ‘Confédération’, in *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, vol. 3 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 847.

¹⁵⁷ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 158.

L'égoïsme, c'est vouloir arracher le cœur, c'est ôter à la république son principal ressort. Une constitution ne saurait être bonne, si elle n'est bâtie sur toute les passions humaines.¹⁵⁸

Cloots was in favour of extensive individual rights, notably the right to vote to be extended to women, blacks, and servants. This was also a position shared by Condorcet.¹⁵⁹ It is this alliance between free and equal individuals that form the nation of the human race. However, the evolution of the concept of nation must first be understood in order to understand how Cloots could envision the whole human race as constituting one.

Cloots's conception of the individual and the society formed by individuals falls within the conceptual framework set by Baker. It is a voluntaristic association, and ultimately it leads to a universal society, which replaces as 'cosmos' the previous 'théos', as seen in the previous chapter on nature: epistemologically, the limits of the understanding of nature and the universe is replaced by the consolation of living in society in accordance with nature; ethically, human nature is limited by the law in order to maintain a civil and well functioning society, whilst the achievement of peace in society will increase knowledge; religiously, nature as the social state is replacing progressively through reason the need for religion; politically, all human existence will be submitted to laws and elections so no order will be imposed from above.

Nation

Central to Cloots's universal republic is the concept of nation of the human race. In order to understand what seems to be a paradox—the concept of nation together with the concept of human race—it is important to trace the conceptual history of the nation. As Koselleck has shown, nationalism is the process of politicisation of the two concepts of people and nation, previously distinct and separate, and their unification and ideologisation.¹⁶⁰ According to Koselleck, this happened particularly during the *Sattelzeit*—the transitional period between the early modern and modern age, 1750–1870—when concepts acquired the meanings they now have.¹⁶¹ Be-

¹⁵⁸ Cloots, 127.

¹⁵⁹ Viguier, 'Individu', 121.

¹⁶⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon Zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck Otto Brunner Werner Conze, vol. 7 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992), 147–148.

¹⁶¹ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Einleitung', in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Reinhart Koselleck, Werner Conze and Otto Brunner, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), XIII–XXVII.

fore that, the concept of nation was first understood in the feudal context: nations are peoples on a particular territory, as in German *Volk*. In the seventeenth century a dictionary defined nation to be: ‘un grand peuple habitant une même étendue de terre renfermée en certaines limites ou même sous une certaine domination’.¹⁶² At the turn of the century, the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie* (1694), added a political and cultural dimension with the elements of language and common laws: ‘La nation est constituée par tous les habitants d’un même État, d’un même pays, qui vivent sous les mêmes lois et usent le même langage’.¹⁶³ The same meaning continued during the eighteenth century, as the *Dictionnaire Trévoux* shows: ‘un nom collectif, qui se dit d’un grand peuple habitant une certaine étendue de terre, renfermée en certaines limites sous une même domination’.¹⁶⁴ The 1771 edition added several elements, such as inhabitants of the same country.¹⁶⁵ The first part of the definition takes the current legal definition of a nation-state in international law, at least in its first three components: a population, a defined territory, and a government. The element of capacity to act in international relations is missing. It also notes that the original meaning of the term was ethnic: ‘familles sorties d’une même tige’.¹⁶⁶ It also notes that several people can form a nation, notably ancient Gaul in which there were several people, each forming a *civitas*. As for this *civitas*, it is understood as *cité*, which in the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* is defined as such:

CITÉ, quand il s’agit de l’antiquité, signifie un Etat, un peuple avec toute ses dépendances, une République particulière, comme sont encore plusieurs villes Suisses. *Civitas*.¹⁶⁷

The word nation is more related to the concept of political community that people constitute. A single language forms the bond of this community, but also common law. However, in this understanding there is no ‘French nation’ since France was at the time divided into several regions with different laws, tax systems, and languages.

162 Michel Delon, ‘Nation’, in *Nouvelle histoire des idées politiques*, ed. Pascal Ory (Paris: Hachette, 1987), 127.

163 Otto Dann, ‘Nation’, in *Dictionnaire européen des Lumières*, ed. Michel Delon (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), 762.

164 *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin*, vol. 4 (Trévoux: Florentin Delaulne, Hilaire Foucault, Michel Clousier, Jean-Geoffroy Nyon, Estienne Ganeau, Nicolas Gosselin, 1721), cited in Dann, ‘Nation’, 762.

165 *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé dictionnaire de Trévoux*, Sixth edition, vol. 6 (Paris: Compagnie des libraires associés, 1771), 145.

166 *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* (1771), vol. 6, 145.

167 *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin, vulgairement appelé dictionnaire de Trévoux*, Sixth edition, vol. 2 (Paris: Compagnie des libraires associés, 1771), 611.

Instead, the concept of sovereignty over the territory as exercised by the king is what unites the kingdom.

The Enlightenment, which opposed absolutist monarchism, separated the conception of monarchism from nation: 'La nation est le corps des citoyens, le peuple est l'ensemble des regnicoles'.¹⁶⁸ It is a very republican understanding of the nation that separates the king from the citizens. However, it is probably the absence of any model of republic as large as France that explains the revolutionary reticence to dispose of the king, even so after his flight to Varennes. If the king is the common element that binds together the French nation, how could this nation survive as a single political community without him? But that was not yet a concern in the eighteenth century, which focused on the issue of absolutism. With ideas stemming from natural law, the concept of nation designated a political community of free and equal individuals as the article 'Représentants' in the *Encyclopédie* defined the characteristic of despotism where there is in fact no nation: 'Dans un état despotique, le chef de la nation est tout, la nation n'est rien ; la volonté d'un seul fait la loi, la société n'est point représentée'.¹⁶⁹

In this sense, the nation only exists if its head of state, the king, is not a despot. This does not necessarily entail the end of monarchism, but implies a representative body of this 'nation', which deliberates on laws rather than a monarch legislating arbitrarily. Sieyès theorised the concept of the 'civil society nation' with the idea of the 'Third estate' as forming a complete nation. Moreover, he defined a nation by 'associates' living under a 'common law' and represented by the same legislative assembly: 'Qu'est-ce qu'une Nation ? un corps d'Associés vivant sous une loi commune, & représentés par la même législature'.¹⁷⁰ According to Fehrenbach, Sieyès's concept of nation had three elements: it is an organised and unified community, it has a sovereign national representation of equal citizens, and it is the only source of law except for a superior natural law.¹⁷¹ After the revolution, the article 3 of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* could state that 'le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la Nation. Nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressément'. The nation took power and became the sovereign. In the early years of the revolution, therefore, the nation was this *civitas*, this abstract

168 Dann, 'Nation', 763.

169 Paul Henri Thiry baron d'Holbach, 'Représentants', in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, ed. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, vol. 14 (Paris: Briasson, 1751), 143.

170 Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-Etat ?* (s.l.: s.n., 1789), 8.

171 Elisabeth Fehrenbach, 'Nation', in *Handbuch Politisch-Sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, ed. Rolf Reichardt Höfer Anette and Elisabeth Fehrenbach, vol. 7 *Honnête homme, Honnêteté, Honnêtes gens, Nation* (Berlin, Boston: Oldenbourg, 1986), 17–21.

political community of free and equal men deciding and obeying their own laws, a very republican concept that implies active citizen participation. The concept of nation did not entail an ethnic component, but this was in the background, as the Trévoux dictionary shows.

It is exactly this meaning of nation that Cloots uses in his ‘nation of the human race’. It is the abstract concept of a political group of free and equal men, commoners and workers—(*sans-culottes*, Cloots will specify in 1792–1793)—and not a conception of a particular people, *Volk*, or rather the whole of the human race under the 1789 *Declaration* as a particular people. Cloots states this explicitly:

Un peuple est aristocrate à l'égard d'un autre peuple : le genre humain est essentiellement bon, car son égoïsme despotique n'est en opposition avec aucun égoïsme étranger. La République du genre humain n'aura jamais de dispute avec personne, car il n'y a point de pont de communication entre les planètes.¹⁷²

By ‘despotic egoism’, Cloots means the self-interest that is at the base of the concept of ‘general will’. To him, the problem with a world of multiple sovereigns is that it is a world of multiple ‘general wills’ or ‘despotic egoisms’ that cannot be reconciled under another general will; but, this is possible in a particular republic in order to avoid that individual wills—self-interested ‘despotic egoisms’—triumph.

To Cloots, and to many other thinkers who shared his views, such as Volney, Condorcet, or Thomas Paine, if the various peoples of the French kingdom were able to unite under one republic, one constitution, one rule of law, one nation, there is no reason it should not be possible to regroup all the populations of the world under the same nation. Cloots has long been a partisan of the name ‘Gaul’ instead of France, because he had in mind the *thèse nobiliaire* of the Franks who took over this gallic nation or ‘*civitas*’ regrouping several free populations, as described in the *Dictionnaire Trévoux*. This will be explained in further detail in the chapter on republicanism, as well as how this nation of the human race was highly decentralised and left many policy decisions to local citizens and their local representatives, thus allowing active citizenship worldwide. The concept of nation is first and foremost a concept of republican equality and freedom under a common law. Therefore, why not have a nation of the human race to put an end to wars and all the miseries they entail? This is Cloots’s rhetorical question that can be read between the lines.

Cloots’s idea of political organisation was modelled around how France was organised between 1789 and 1793, where any form of authority had to be elected by citizens. Finally, the ‘nation of the human race’ is also a sort of *tiers état du genre humain*. This ‘nation of the human race’ is explicitly the one of the oppressed peoples

172 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 483.

(oppressed by any religious and monarchical authority, or any aristocrat). In this view of the nation, matters of identity matter less than matters of liberty, a little bit as in the Marxist theory of classes in which two proletarian from different countries would have more in common than a bourgeois and a proletarian from the same country. This is especially the case in Cloots's view of the people as 'sans-culottes' without frontiers. As Cloots writes: '... rien ne ressemble plus à un Sans-Culottes du Nord qu'un Sans-Culottes du Midi ; rien ne ressemble plus à un aristocrate de l'Orient qu'un aristocrate de l'Occident'.¹⁷³ It is also for this same reason that Cloots insisted that the French Republic be called 'German', in order to emphasise its non-nationalistic (in the sense of national identity) character, and the idea of fraternity among human beings.

However, Cloots's conception of 'nation of the human race', like the revolutionaries and their conception of 'French nation', would be challenged by the question of the king after the flight to Varennes. The absence of republican model on a large territory, and the long tradition of a king as uniting a diverse and divided country will make them doubt whether to dispose of Louis XVI, despite his obvious treason. But the nation is no longer the king, it is the body of citizens, and therefore Cloots and the revolutionaries will look for alternative solutions. This will be the object of the next chapter.

¹⁷³ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 500.

6 Republicanism

Je préfère la république européenne à la république française, et la république universelle à celle de l'Europe, parce que je suis homme parce que le meilleur m'est assez bon.
Cloots, 1793¹

Studies on Cloots's political thought refer to his system, explicitly or implicitly, as a 'cosmopolitan republicanism'.² I discuss here republicanism in Cloots's thought and in reference to the context of his time. As we have seen in the previous chapters, Cloots was educated in classical republicanism, and used several classical republican references in his revolutionary writings. For Pocock, classical republicanism is characterised by several major traits: the reference to Roman constitution as model of *respublica mixta*, seeing trade as a source of corruption, the prevalence of law, and the prevalence of positive political liberty over negative political liberty. This distinction on liberty stems from Berlin—negative liberty being attributed to individuals as the absence of obstacles, and positive liberty attributed to collective organisations as the possibility of acting upon one's life.³ Pettit later refined this conception of liberty as non-domination.⁴ With the example of Mably, Wright identified three chronological phases in the formation of classical republicanism in eighteenth-century France: the first, from the last decades of the reign of Louis XIV; the second, from the High Enlightenment to the eve of the revolution; the third, during the decade of the revolution.⁵ It is useful here to follow this chronological classification.

Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* demonstrates the extent of the education future revolutionaries received on Roman republicanism. The following quote shows the confusion Mercier felt as a pupil after finishing his education: leaving his study bench and exiting through the *collège's* gates to realise that he is indeed in Paris and not in Rome. It was equally a state of confusion to 'forge' all this republican knowledge and remember that he lives in an absolute monarchy, despite the fact that this absolute monarch paid the professors for inculcating this republican stories and ideas:

1 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 633.

2 Bevilacqua, 'Conceiving the Republic of Mankind'; Cavallar, *Imperfect Cosmopolis*, 102–108; Cheneval, 'Der Kosmopolitische Republikanismus'; Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism*, 40–71.

3 Isaiah Berlin, *Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

4 Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

5 Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France*, 201.

Il est sûr qu'on rapporte de l'étude de la langue Latine un certain goût pour les Républiques, & qu'on voudroit pouvoir ressusciter celle dont on lit la grande & vaste histoire. Il est sûr qu'entendant parler du Sénat, de la liberté, de la majesté du peuple Romain, de ses victoires, de la juste mort de César, du poignard de Caton qui ne put survivre à la destruction des loix, il en coûte pour sortir de Rome, & pour se retrouver bourgeois de la rue des Noyers.

C'est cependant dans une Monarchie que l'on entretient perpétuellement les jeunes gens de ces idées étrangères, qu'ils doivent perdre & oublier bien vite, pour leur sûreté, pour leur avancement & pour leur bonheur ; & c'est un Roi absolu, qui paye les Professeurs pour vous expliquer gravement toutes les éloquentes déclamations lancées contre le pouvoir des Rois : de force qu'un élève de l'Université, quand il se trouve à Versailles, & qu'il a un peu de bon sens, songe, malgré lui, à Tarquin, à Brutus, à tous les fiers ennemis de la Royauté. Alors sa pauvre tête ne sait plus où elle en est. Il est un sot & un esclave né, ou il lui faut du temps pour se familiariser avec un pays qui n'a ni Tribuns, ni Décemvirs, ni Sénateurs, ni Consuls.⁶

It is certain that revolutionaries were well versed in Roman republicanism, but even after the flight of the king arrested in Varennes on 21 June 1791, revolutionaries did not make the transition directly to republicanism and the king was reinstated. Cloots showed similarly the same hesitation and even tried to use Roman and Greek republican examples to advocate a 'monarchy without king' or a republic with a powerless and non-royal monarch, or elected *monarch* without heredity at the head of the executive branch.

As seen in previous chapters, Cloots received an education focusing on classical republicans. Cloots called himself 'orator' in this classical republican fashion, with the view of spreading a *scientia civilis*. In this chapter, I shall focus on Cloots's republican thought proper and I shall answer two questions: firstly, what is Cloots's republican thought; secondly, how is it situated in the context of its time?

In order to answer these questions it is first necessary to explain what is understood by republicanism. The vast ensemble of rules, principles, laws, concepts that are constitutive of or involved in the organisation of a republican system of government or a republican state constitute what is referred to as republicanism. There is no clear definition of what republicanism is, and scholars take various stances, but central to republicanism is the concept of liberty. Western historians and political theorists have grouped a number of political texts and authors under the denomination of republicanism due to their common rhetoric and ideas inspired by Roman and Greek antiquity. Such authors range from Renaissance Italy with Machiavelli,

⁶ Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, Nouvelle édition, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: s.n., 1783), 149–150.

to Englishmen such as Milton or Blackstone, Frenchmen with Montesquieu or Mably, and American founding fathers with Jefferson and Madison for the most well-known of them. The interpretation of these authors, their inclusion in the list and their significance is subject to controversy.⁷ The concept of republicanism as a tool for interpreting and understanding the history of political thought has a particular history in English historiography, and its success in the second half of the twentieth century is no academic fashion but constitutes a paradigm in a Khunian sense.⁸

There are two sorts of studies on republicanism, besides the many historiographical controversies inside each tradition.⁹ Firstly, historical works interpreting and situating republican thought, especially since the Italian Renaissance with Machiavelli. These are labelled as ‘classical republicanism’. Secondly, philosophical works relating these historical works to contemporary republican philosophy—mainly Anglo-American—or ‘neo-republicanism’. Berlin gave a definition of liberty that influenced many of the subsequent discussions on neo-republicanism during an inaugural lecture at the University of Oxford on 31 October 1958, ‘Two Concepts of Liberty’, subsequently published in 1969.¹⁰ Berlin identified two concepts of liberty: a negative liberty understood as non-interference, and a positive liberty, understood as being able to exercise self-control, self-mastery. With this dichotomy, Berlin was influential in associating liberalism, in the context of the Cold War, with the only *true* liberty—negative liberty—as opposed to the *fake* liberty—positive liberty—thus effectively framing the debates on republicanism around liberalism in this dualist sense.¹¹

Against this dualism, and perceived distortion of republicanism by a hegemonic liberalism, a ‘neo-republicanism’ rose as Pocock, Skinner, and Pettit proposed a different understanding of republicanism, anchored in a historical interpretation. Among this ‘neo-republicanism’, the historical work of Pocock represents a

7 Frank Lovett, ‘Republicanism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2016, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2016).

8 Daniel T. Rodgers, ‘Republicanism: The Career of a Concept’, *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 1 (June 1992): 11–38.

9 Lovett, ‘Republicanism’.

10 Berlin, *Liberty*.

11 Nadia Urbinati, ‘Due modelli di repubblicanesimo (e di liberalismo)’, *Filosofia e questioni pubbliche – Philosophy and Public Issues* 5, no. 1 (2000): 81–92; Nadia Urbinati, ‘Republicanism after the French Revolution: The Case of Sismonde de Sismondi’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 73, no. 1 (January 2012): 95–109.

reference of ‘civic humanism’ even if it is a dense and complex argument.¹² It provided an interpretation of classical republicanism that has been influential on historians and philosophers ever since. Pocock analysed a revival of Roman republicanism in Florentine political thought in the era of Machiavelli, and linked it to the ‘Atlantic republican tradition’ in Puritan England and revolutionary America. Skinner developed the same theme interpreting Machiavelli as the proponent of a neo-Roman conception of liberty, understood as non-domination, that influenced England, and chiefly Hobbes.¹³ The Roman conception of liberty was that of personal freedom marking the difference between slaves and free individuals as the absence of arbitrary power from anyone else. Several authors have studied along Skinner’s line of thought, forming a tradition called ‘civic republicanism’. Pettit has been particularly influential in developing a theory of liberty as non-domination, when domination over someone is understood as an arbitrary and uncontrolled power over one’s affairs.¹⁴

Concerning French republicanism, the Anglophone and the French literature on republicanism depart in their interpretation of pre-revolutionary eighteenth-century French political thought. French literature, with a few exceptions, emphasises the absence of any republican thought prior to the French Revolution, or even until the flight of the King to Varennes, which sets the milestones for republican thought.¹⁵ Anglophone literature, however, has contested this view that amounts to an inexplicable and sudden switch from monarchism to republicanism. They identify a French ‘classical republicanism’ with philosophers building on Montesquieu’s paradigmatic differentiation between three forms of government — despotic, monarchic, republican. Such philosophers are: Rousseau, Mably, Saige, and Condorcet. The disagreement stems from a different understanding of the term ‘republicanism’, that the works in English understand as a theory of liberty, either liberty as non-domination or liberty as non-interference, when French historians have focused on finding anti-monarchical movements. In this chapter, I understand republicanism more widely as a theory of liberty.

12 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, with a foreword by Richard Whatmore, Princeton Classics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, [1975] 2016). On ‘civic humanism’, see James Hankins, ed., *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

13 Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1. The Renaissance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*; Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

14 Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*.

15 See the first section for a literature review.

The first section presents ‘classical republicanism’ in eighteenth-century French political thought. The successive sections will attempt to place where Cloots stands in this intellectual context. Republicanism subsumes many themes and concepts, and it is impossible to elaborate on all of them here. I chose to focus on some of them here, which I deem more important for the overall argument of cosmopolitan republicanism: the question of monarchy and royalty, the reference to classical republicanism, and the modernisation of republicanism with the question of size.

Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France

French historians have made the case against a ‘*républicanisme des Lumières*’.¹⁶ The fact that a republic was created at all is characterised as a ‘*divine surprise*’.¹⁷ For Goulemot, several arguments plead for this position: first, the fact that there was no republican party; second, the absence of the experience of a republic; third, Voltaire’s severe condemnation of the republic in England; and, finally, the belief in a historical paradigm opposed to the formation of a republic.¹⁸ This view, according to which the term ‘*république*’ and the ideology of republicanism is not yet fully fledged before the revolution, is also shared by Dumont and Nicolet. According to Dumont, the term ‘*république*’ was used to designate any type of state, also monarchical ones, or a regime in opposition to a monarchy.¹⁹ For Nicolet, the importance of, for instance, Condorcet and Rousseau for republican theory is a construction of nineteenth-century historians and republicans. It is the need to anchor deeply the Third Republic in a philological tradition in the 1890s that led to a retelling and re-discovering of—until then minimised—‘republican authors’.²⁰ Vovelle equally denies any republicanism before the revolution, as well as any external influence on what he considers to be ‘*l’exception française*’.²¹ Maintenant equally limits republicanism before 1789 to Montesquieu’s discussion of antiquity and Rousseau’s discussion of a small republic like Geneva, noting that the *cahiers de doléances* did

16 Jean-Marie Goulemot, ‘Du républicanisme et de l’idée républicaine au XVIIIe siècle’, in *Le siècle de l’avènement républicain*, ed. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, Bibliothèque Des Histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 25.

17 Goulemot, 26.

18 Goulemot, 32–33.

19 Jean-Christian Dumont, ‘Le spectre de la république romaine’, in *Révolution et république : l’exception française*, ed. Michel Vovelle (Paris: Kimé, 1994), 14–26.

20 Claude Nicolet, *L’idée républicaine en France : Essai d’histoire critique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 80–85.

21 Michel Vovelle, ed., *Révolution et république : l’exception française* (Paris: Kimé, 1994).

not demand the abolition of monarchy, but only reforms regarding abuses.²² According to Maintenant, only a handful of revolutionaries proposed a republican form of government between 1789 and 1792: Brissot, Desmoulin, Condorcet, Anthoine, and Lavicomterie.²³

On the other hand, Spitz refutes this version that he calls a ‘caricature’ of republican thought.²⁴ According to him, this view benefited from the influence of Furet’s work.²⁵ Spitz rejects not only the idea that republicanism is a strictly post-revolutionary serendipity, but that there is a particular ‘*exception française*’ of it, thereby anchoring the study of French republicanism in the Euro-Atlantic republican tradition as described below. Against the view that ‘French republicanism’ stems from Jacobinism and a conception of positive liberty, Spitz argues that the central role of the state was to guarantee equality and liberty as non-domination.²⁶ Monnier understands equally republicanism as discussions on theories of liberty with Montesquieu, Mably, and Rousseau in particular, and is interested in investigating how these theories were expounded and received after the flight of the king in 1791.²⁷ The capture of the king in Varennes opened the space for this debate of republicanism as anti-monarchism to become a reality. However, the word ‘*république*’ itself did not yet have the meaning it later took during the nineteenth century to designate a form of representative government.²⁸ Another French historian who rejects the narrative of *divine surprise*, Gojosso describes a polysemic evolution of the concept of republic in the sixteenth and seventeenth century as, positively, ‘*chose publique*’ and, negatively, a regime opposed to monarchy, whilst focusing on Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau for the eighteenth century.²⁹ A collective of French historians called *Collectif l’Esprit des Lumières et de la Révolution* published the proceedings

22 Gérard Maintenant, ‘République (mai 1789–septembre 1792)’, in *Dictionnaire des usages socio-politiques (1770–1815)*, Collection « Saint-Cloud » (Paris: Klincksieck, 1987), 99.

23 Maintenant, 101.

24 Jean-Fabien Spitz, *Le moment républicain en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

25 Cf. François Furet and Mona Ozouf, eds., *Le siècle de l’avènement républicain*, Bibliothèque des histoires (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

26 Spitz, *Le moment républicain en France*, 40.

27 Raymonde Monnier, ‘Républicanisme et Révolution française’, *French Historical Studies* 26, no. 1 (2003): 87–118; Monnier, *Républicanisme, patriotisme et Révolution française*; Raymonde Monnier, ‘Montesquieu et le langage républicain : l’argumentaire de l’“Esprit des lois”’, *La Révolution française*, no. 5 (2013).

28 Monnier, ‘Républicanisme et Révolution française’, 89.

29 Éric Gojosso, *Le concept de république en France (XVI^{ème}–XVIII^{ème} siècle)* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d’Aix-Marseille, 1998).

of their conference adding the dimension played by natural law in France to this line of studies on Atlantic republicanism.³⁰ Another collective of French historians dedicated an issue of the journal *La Révolution française* to the influence of English republicanism on the French revolution, anchoring their research to the ones initiated with Pocock and Skinner.³¹ However, as the editors note, these studies include the connection between natural law and republicanism, which Pocock considered as opposed.³²

If this link from the French revolution to the Euro-Atlantic republican tradition is new to French historians, it has inspired anglophone historians in their research for several decades. This tradition, or ‘paradigm’ in a Khunian sense according to Pocock, started with his seminal work *The Machiavellian Moment*, which sought to understand how classical republican thought migrated from Renaissance Italy to seventeenth-century England and eighteenth-century North America.³³ A collection of essays analyses this tradition in several European countries — the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany, and Poland.³⁴ In the French case, Spitz argues that d’Holbach had his own ‘modern’ conception of liberty, different from non-interference or independence, but as achieving happiness without prejudice, in a general criticism of selfish patriotic virtue of classical republicanism that ought, instead, to be defined in contrast to self-interest.³⁵ Wright tentatively sketches a ‘pre-history’ of French republicanism, with Boulainvilliers invoking the liberty of the ancients in the *thèse nobiliaire* against absolutism, Montesquieu, who gave republicanism great publicity, Mably, who draws attention on the constitution of the ancients, and Rousseau, who provides a theory of sovereignty based on the general will.³⁶ Shklar argues that Montesquieu was, in a way, the Machiavelli of eighteenth-

30 Marc Belissa, Yannick Bosc and Florence Gauthier, eds., *Républicanismes et droit naturel. Des humanistes aux révolutions des droits de l’homme et du citoyen*, L’esprit des Lumières et de la Révolution (Paris: Kimé, 2009).

31 François Quastana and Pierre Serna, eds., *La Révolution française*, no. 5: Le républicanisme anglais dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution (2013).

32 François Quastana and Pierre Serna, ‘Le républicanisme anglais dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution : Mesure d’une présence’, *La Révolution française*, no. 5 (2013).

33 Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*.

34 Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

35 Jean-Fabien Spitz, ‘From Civism to Civility: D’Holbach’s Critique of Republican Virtue’, chap. 6 in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 2, *The Values of Republicanism in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 107–122.

36 Johnson Kent Wright, ‘The Idea of a Republican Constitution in Old Régime France’, chap. 14 in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 1.

century French political thought in that he framed the way republicanism was to be debated throughout the century (obviously a very different republicanism).³⁷

Venturi argues that the translation into French of Shaftesbury's *Principes de la philosophie morale* in 1745 by Diderot started the discussions on republicanism.³⁸ Venturi finds his proof of 'existence of a republican ferment in France between 1745 and 1754' in 'the diaries of one of the most lucid and independent witnesses of that age, the marquis d'Argenson'.³⁹ In 1758, Deleyre published in the *Journal encyclopédique* his '*Pensées d'un républicain sur les mœurs de ce siècle*', which constituted a veritable republican manifesto. It stated that the revolt against tyrants was legitimate because kings were necessarily asocial beings.⁴⁰ Venturi paved the way for future studies on the English influence in French political thought during this period. Hammersley suggests that English republican works and ideas were more important than ancient or American examples and texts.⁴¹ Hammersley also establishes a different classification of republicanism, between 'ancient republicanism', and 'early-modern republicanism'. According to Hammersley, English republican texts provided answers to the fundamental question for early modern republicans: how republican institutions and practices (securing liberty) could be made workable in the context of a large nation state?⁴² In particular, the English political theorist James Harrington (1611–1677) and his ideas of democracy developed in *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656) had an influence on the Cordeliers Club.⁴³

Wright identified Mably as a 'classical republican' for declaring that sovereign power belonged to the people, who bestowed it to the magistrates and could always

Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 289–306.

37 Judith N. Shklar, 'Montesquieu and the New Republicanism', chap. 13 in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli, Ideas in Context 18 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 265–280.

38 Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 71.

39 Venturi, 73.

40 Venturi, 80–81.

41 Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

42 Hammersley, 6.

43 Rachel Hammersley, 'Harringtonian Republicanism, Democracy and the French Revolution', *La Révolution française*, no. 5 (2013); Myriam-Isabelle Ducrocq, *La République de Harrington dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution*, Oxford University Studies in The Enlightenment (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2023).

revoke it, and for admiring the Ancient Republics of Athens and Sparta.⁴⁴ The surveillance of the governing bodies by its people constitutes the central element of what Baker calls ‘classical republicanism’.⁴⁵ As a ‘language of opposition’ rather than a ‘belief’, Baker defines classical republicanism as such:

As a discourse of political will, rather than as a mere preference for the republican form of government, classical republicanism found recurrent expression in prerevolutionary France, not in the form of bookish nostalgia or cultural fantasy but as a language of opposition to the claims of absolute monarchy, to the governmental practices of a modernizing administrative state, and to the corrupting seductions of an expanding commercial economy.⁴⁶

Indeed, the opposition between ancients and moderns was one of the essential dyads of the Enlightenment, as philosophers had a deep historical consciousness of the modernity of their time.⁴⁷ Viroli has situated Rousseau as a representative of classical and modern republicanism because of the influence of Cicero and Machiavelli. In particular, Viroli argues that the republican constitution in Rousseau is similar to the *vivere libero* and the *repubblica ordinata bene* in Machiavelli.⁴⁸ In a similar fashion, Spitz has analysed Rousseau’s conception of individual liberty as ‘republican liberty’.⁴⁹

Whatmore considers that it is wrong to talk of a revival of classical republicanism because it was inconceivable to recreate ancient republicanism at the level of a large modern state.⁵⁰ Instead, Whatmore suggests distinguishing between small state republicanism (discussions in the United Provinces, the Swiss Cantons, and Rousseau’s discussions of Corsica and Poland) on the one hand, and large state republicanism, on the other.⁵¹ Large state republicanism is a looser category that re-

44 Wright, *A Classical Republican in Eighteenth-Century France*, 76.

45 Keith Michael Baker, ‘Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France’, *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (March 2001): 33.

46 Baker, 36.

47 Keith Michael Baker, ‘Enlightenment Idioms, Old Regime Discourses, and Revolutionary Improvisation’, chap. 5 in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, ed. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 176–179.

48 Morizio Viroli, *La théorie de la société bien ordonnée chez Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, European University Institute - Series C 11 (Berlin; New York, NY: De Gruyter, 1988); Morizio Viroli, ‘La théorie du contrat social et le concept de république chez Jean-Jacques Rousseau’, *Archiv für Rechts- und Sozialphilosophie / Archives for Philosophy of Law and Social Philosophy* 73, no. 2 (1987): 195–215.

49 Jean-Fabien Spitz, *La liberté politique : Essai de généalogie conceptuelle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995).

50 Richard Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution: An Intellectual History of Jean-Baptiste Say’s Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

51 Whatmore, 23.

groups different texts around the common theme of complaining against the backdrop of classical republicanism about the loss of virtue and patriotism, and the corrupting nature of luxury.⁵² In particular, Whatmore identifies Mably, Helvétius, and d'Holbach in this large state republicanism, although they never advocated any revolutionary overturn of monarchy for a republic, but rather wrote lessons for monarchs.⁵³ In the period immediately preceding the revolution, 1776–1789, Whatmore characterises a specific large state republicanism in France, different from English republicanism, based on a consideration of physiocracy as a political thought and not only as an economic theory: '... there was ... a distinctive kind of republicanism before the Revolution, bitterly opposed to the British constitution and entailing the sovereignty of philosophers, merchants, and farmers'.⁵⁴ Prominent names among this 'neo-physiocracy' are Turgot, Dupont, Condorcet, Quesnay, Sieyès, Røederer, Mirabeau, Say, and Clavière.⁵⁵

Albertone argues that this position, together with Israel's study on the Dutch republic and Urbinati's on Condorcet,⁵⁶ shows the existence of a 'democratic republicanism', distinct from 'classical republicanism'.⁵⁷ For Albertone, this 'democratic republicanism' is characterised by: a focus on the concept of 'civil society'; a focus on economy that leads to an egalitarianism opposed to the privileges of the *ancien régime*; and a focus on the individual rather than the state.⁵⁸

Finally, Edelstein writes a 'secret history' of 'natural republicanism' between 1699 and 1791, characterised by mixing views of nature — especially a 'golden age' — and natural rights with 'imaginary republics' in Fénelon, Montaigne, Montesquieu, and classical republicans Mably and Rousseau.⁵⁹ But it is especially with the physiocrats that Edelstein sees a significant contribution that influenced the Jacobins in amalgamating the state of nature with the state of society, and in which natural rights alone are responsible for civil legislation.⁶⁰

52 Whatmore, 23.

53 Whatmore, 24–28.

54 Whatmore, 78.

55 Whatmore, 61–84.

56 Jonathan I. Israel, 'The Intellectual Origins of Modern Democratic Republicanism (1660–1720)', *European Journal of Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (January 2004): 7–36; Nadia Urbinati, 'Condorcet's Democratic Theory of Representative Government', *European Journal of Political Theory* 3, no. 1 (January 2004): 53–75.

57 Manuela Albertone, 'Democratic Republicanism. Historical Reflections on the Idea of Republic in the 18th Century', *History of European Ideas* 33, no. 1 (March 2007): 108–130.

58 Albertone, 117.

59 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right*, 45–86.

60 Edelstein, 101–124.

These various understandings of republicanism are directly relevant to the study of Cloots's vision of a republic encompassing the whole globe. Was his republicanism inspired by English works? Was he a classical republican, an early-modern republican, a modern republican, a democratic republican? What was his position before the revolution? It is again difficult to ascertain his influences because of his namedropping some authors, and not naming others. Shaftesbury, Harrington, Deleyre, are not mentioned in Cloots's writings, but d'Holbach, Montesquieu, Helvétius, Mably, Rousseau, Locke, Cicero, and Machiavelli are frequently referred to.

Cloots and Republicanism Before the Revolution

Before the revolution, Cloots is very much in line with the ideas of the Enlightenment, favouring Enlightened monarchism. Just like he was a theist before becoming an atheist, Cloots was in favour of enlightened monarchism before becoming a republican. In *Les vœux d'un gallophile* (1786), Cloots makes the case for the 'Philosopher King'. Nonetheless, he also makes the case for educating the people. Government and administration is a complex science that requires a well-read people.⁶¹ Cloots is therefore, as many *philosophes* of the time, both in favour of a government of a few elite led by a philosopher king, but governing a well-educated people capable of understanding their policies.⁶²

In particular, Cloots admires and praises Frederick the Great. He presents him to other monarchs as an example to follow, because he has managed to double the population under the direction of Hertzberg: 'Ce grand ministre d'un grand roi n'y fait pas moins admirer son érudition & sa logique, que dans les Ouvrages sortis de sa plume...'.⁶³ Or again in *Lettres sur les juifs*, Cloots takes as a time of reference '*le siècle d'Alexandre jusqu'au siècle de Frédéric*'. In the footnote, Cloots explains what he means:

Mon roi est philosophe et nous vivons dans un Siecle Philosophe. L'Histoire ne montre que six époques honorables à l'esprit humain : les siècles d'*Alexandre*, d'*Auguste*, d'*Aaron-al-Raschid*, de *Medicis*, de *Louis le grand*, de *Frédéric le grand*. ... *Frédéric* a lui-même puissamment contribué aux progrès des lumières, par sa plume, son influence & ses libéralités. Il a opéré une heureuse révolution dans le monde par son Code & sa Tactique, par sa Prose, ses Vers & ses Victoires, par son Génie & son Sceptre, par son Héroïsme universel.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile*, 23.

⁶² Hamish M. Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: MacMillan, 1990).

⁶³ Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile*, 10.

⁶⁴ Cloots, *Lettre sur les juifs*, 2–3.

Cloots's support for the education of the people so that they understand the policies of their rulers is noteworthy; what sort of participation does it entail? Even if Cloots does not write it explicitly, a well-educated people can no longer be considered an idle group, easy to manipulate, but a counter-power with the potential to revolt when liberties or other fundamental principles are disregarded. Cloots not only expressed that the people should be educated, but that it should understand the policies of its government. In any case, the people has no obligation to obey those it does not see fit for the task. Cloots writes:

Le peuple n'est tenu de suivre que ceux qu'il juge avoir mission de le conduire ; or si les preuves de cette mission ne sont pas à sa portée, il ne peut rien juger dans cette matière, & il est le maître de prendre tel parti que sa conscience lui suggère ; car il n'en est pas de la religion comme du gouvernement civil : l'une est l'objet de la persuasion, l'autre est l'objet des convenances.^{65, 66}

Cloots uses the same argument for civil government as the argument he used against religion: anyone should be able to understand the 'mission' of the government, otherwise there is no possibility to evaluate this mission, just like everyone should be able to understand the message of God. Ultimately, his argument boils down to ensuring that people are free from domination: free from domination of a church having a monopoly on interpreting the word of God, and free from domination of a despotic regime having a monopoly on interpreting the missions of government. Therefore Cloots seems to suggest, in this parallel, that there is a *theism*, so to speak, for civil government, just as there is a religious theism: the *true* religion should be accessible to everyone, or it is not God's words; by the same token, the true principle of government must equally be accessible to all, or it is not valid. Moreover, one could stretch his argument to a logical conclusion: there is only one true type of government, which can be discovered by looking at nature. Just as there is only one true God for all, and all religions are wrong, there is one true government for all, and all other political governments are wrong. This argument, Cloots does not formulate quite yet, but it is already there in gestation.

However, if Cloots agrees on opposing absolute monarchy and on having an educated people, he disagrees on the 'the corrupting seductions of an expanding commercial economy', as Baker puts it. On the contrary, Cloots sees a correlation between luxury and the advancement of science in the example of the Dutch Republic, and for that reason he downplays the '*frivolités*' that luxury entails as minor side effects. Cloots mentions the Dutch republic in *Vœux d'un gallophile* at several

⁶⁵ *Convenance* here means that there is a link and conformity between the people and the government. See *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4th Edition (1762).

⁶⁶ Cloots, *Vœux d'un gallophile*, 103.

occasions as a positive example of luxury. He congratulates France for having established economic ties with Holland and being an allied to this ‘opulent republic’.⁶⁷ In a letter to the abbé Brizard written in Amsterdam in 1786, Cloots praises the Dutch republic for its wealth, and even its luxury, which seems to contradict the argument of those who wrote against luxury such as Rousseau, or Helvétius.⁶⁸ Cloots walks on the harbour and describes the burgeoning commercial activities, and the international trade that makes Amsterdam, and Holland, so wealthy. But what Cloots praises in this wealth, above all else, is that it is well distributed among the different levels of society: peasants and bourgeois are well-off and better-off than their forefathers, whilst manual workers and day labourers have the means to live decently. This stimulates Cloots to consider luxury closely: it may seem frivolous at first glance, but it also leads to a greater interest in sciences and arts among the population, who is no longer solely focused on one’s own business and home. In fact, Cloots observes that the same can be said about Paris where luxury has brought frivolity in the form of an extravagant amount of wigmakers, but has also brought a great advance in science, art, and philosophy.⁶⁹ In this description, Cloots is closer to Montesquieu’s view of luxury, or Melon’s criticism of Rousseau’s.⁷⁰

Cloots gives an indirect definition of what the characteristics of a republic are when describing the *Musée*, of which he is a member, as a ‘republic’. In his speech made at the *Musée* on 20 December 1781, Cloots explains:

Ce musée, oui Messieurs, est une république ; car il jouit du privilège d’exister sans protection aulique ; car la tolérance y appelle jusqu’aux livrées de l’intolérance ; car le bénitier, le prépuce & le turban n’y sont comptés pour rien ; car le musée tient à tout l’univers & par ses ouvrages & par ses correspondances : l’univers sera donc instruit d’abord du résultat de nos opérations, des conquêtes de la vérité, de l’humiliation de l’erreur.⁷¹

One can see in this way of characterising the *Musée* as a republic a sort of definition of the main attributes of a republic: negative liberty as non-domination; tolerance; positive liberty with freedom of expression and religion; philanthropic purpose in spreading knowledge and truth. The first characteristic that Cloots at-

67 Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*, 46.

68 Cloots, 253–254.

69 Cloots, 255–256.

70 See Jeremy Jennings, ‘The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68, no. 1 (January 2007): 79–105. See also for other publications on luxury Audrey Provost, ‘Le luxe publié au dix-huitième siècle : questions de formes’, *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques*, no. 8 (2011).

71 Cloots, *Vœux d’un gallophile*, 83.

tributes to a republic is the ‘privilege of existing without the protection of a prince’s court’, so, in other words, an independence from external power, or ‘non-domination’. It is interesting also to note the choice of words here. ‘*Privilège*’ comes from Latin *privilegium*, from ‘private’ and ‘law’, designating someone or a group being set aside from someone else’s law. Here it is the law from ‘the prince’s court’, *aulicus*, ‘princely’. The second characteristic is tolerance in a wide sense, as tolerating even intolerant opinions. The third characteristic is liberty, as freedom of speech (without which the *Musée* would not be able to spread knowledge to the universe) and freedom of religion. Finally, Cloots seems to equate a republic with the spread of knowledge and instruction to the whole humankind. Perhaps, that is a consequence of the understanding of republic by the ‘republic of letters’. This view of what a republic is, seems very close to his subsequent revolutionary view of the ‘universal republic’. However, the *res publica* in question, the *truth*, is *discovered* and disseminated through the institution of philosophers as many ministers of this republic, whose goal it is to get rid of the worst atrocities and injustices committed in the name of religion. Through philosophy, *enlightenment*, Cloots hopes that the *Musée* will contribute to put an end to the darkness that religion casts on humanity and its history. This is the *public good* that the *Musée* shall engage in.

Although the Dutch Republic is considered as an example by Cloots, some of the authors that are considered important in the political thought of the Dutch *respublica mixta*, such as Spinoza or Pufendorf, did not seem to play a major influence on Cloots’s political thought.⁷² Cloots only mentioned Pufendorf through Barbeyrac’s preface to his translation, as seen in the chapter on natural law. Although, one should note that Bodin’s conception of sovereignty as indivisible and unique, which permeated the German and Dutch discourses of *respublica mixta* according to Bödecker, did have an influence on Cloots as well as the rest of the Jacobins. It may be that Cloots admired France and French philosophy much more than anything else, and more than the Dutch republican model. Cloots followed the general ideas of the French *philosophes*, even though he blended different positions, such as non-domination, free choice of government for the people, and free trade and the accu-

72 On Dutch and German republican thought, see Martin van Gelderen, ‘Aristotelians, Monarchomachs and Republicans: Sovereignty and *respublica mixta* in Dutch and German Political Thought, 1580–1650’, chap. 10 in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 1, *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 195–217; Hans Erich Bödecker, ‘Debating the *respublica mixta*: German and Dutch Political Discourses around 1700’, chap. 11 in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, vol. 1, *Republicanism and Constitutionalism in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 219–246.

mulation of wealth. It may also be that Cloots still identified himself as Prussian at that time, rather than Dutch or ‘Batave’, as he would sometimes call himself after the revolution. After all, he had been educated at the *Académie militaire de Berlin* in order to become a high-ranking official in the growing Prussian bureaucratic state.⁷³

Cloots and Republicanism During the Revolution

Monnier notes that, with the exception of Brissot who understood republicanism as a form of government, most revolutionaries—such as Paine, Rutledge, Bonneville, Robespierre, and Desmoulin—understood republicanism as the theory of free state or *commonwealth*.⁷⁴ The question of the organisation of powers and democratic procedures were only one aspect.⁷⁵ The central problem for the concept of republicanism during the revolution was how to conciliate free will and obedience to the law, which took the form of classical opposition between freedom and slavery, or freedom and tyranny.⁷⁶ The flight of the king radicalised the anti-tyrannical rhetoric in the republican language.⁷⁷ Whatmore has identified Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832) as a figure of republicanism, who developed his political economy in a republican fashion, marrying commerce with virtue in a mix of themes taken by *philosophes* on various subjects. According to Whatmore, this position was shared by several revolutionaries, such as Sieyès, Røederer, Paine, and Brissot, who all convinced Condorcet to join it in 1791.⁷⁸

It is first in the antiquity, and Greece before Rome and Cicero, that the concepts of liberty and equality were formulated. These concepts were taken up and developed by the revolutionaries—particularly, when it comes to the rhetoric liberty/tyranny.⁷⁹ The adjective *libre* appeared first in Greek, *eleutheros*, and was used for Greek freedom as opposed to barbarian tyranny, or being enslaved by a foreign power.⁸⁰ *Liberté, eleutheria*, appeared later when foreign tyrannies disap-

73 On the growth of bureaucracy in the state, see for instance Christopher Storrs, ed., *The Fiscal Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

74 Monnier, ‘Républicanisme et Révolution française’, 104–105.

75 Monnier, 106.

76 Monnier, 107.

77 Monnier, 109–118.

78 Whatmore, *Republicanism and the French Revolution*, xii.

79 Claude Mossé, *L’antiquité dans la Révolution française, L’aventure humaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989), 13.

80 Mossé, 14.

peared.⁸¹ Liberty was used as a term opposed to being subjected to the power of one person, not royalty, but monarchy—the power of one person—considered as tyranny.⁸² The Roman *libertas*, however, is considered as menaced by royalty rather than monarchy.⁸³ Liberty was defined as opposed to slavery, as the capacity of being a citizen both civically and militarily, and the image of the land-owner turned soldier to defend the homeland was a widespread idealistic trope.⁸⁴

Cloots had already an anti-tyrannical rhetoric and was already anti-monarchist before the Varennes crisis. Moreover, a quick look at all his *Écrits révolutionnaires* shows an impressive use of the word *liberté*, found on almost every page. Often, the word liberty is opposed to slavery, which is also found on almost every page. Cloots is born a ‘slave’ in Gnadenthal.⁸⁵ Cloots was thinking about liberty when the French people was still ‘enslaved’ before the revolution.⁸⁶ ‘L’Europe esclave’ as opposed to ‘la France libre’ after the revolution.⁸⁷ Tyranny and tyrants are also expressions often used both for absolute monarchs and for members of the church: ‘... nos tyrans spirituels et temporels...’.⁸⁸ There are many examples of antiquity in Cloots’s writings. Figures and events from Rome and Athens are frequently evoked to illustrate current affairs during the revolution. These Attic and Roman references become even more frequent when the question of the king comes to the fore after the Varennes crisis, and they turn into comparisons with current affairs or serve to show they cannot apply to modern times.

Anti-Monarchism

Cloots is not immediately against the king and monarchism. Revolutionaries in general had an intellectual qualm about republicanism, even Robespierre.⁸⁹ In ‘motion d’un membre du club des Jacobins, Société des Amis de la Constitution’, 18 March 1790, Cloots declares that it is good for patriotism that the king is back in Paris, and that it should minimise the possibility of uprising in the capital—the king having

81 Mossé, 14.

82 Mossé, 17–18.

83 Mossé, 22.

84 Mossé, 23.

85 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 112.

86 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 137.

87 Cloots, 77.

88 Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 166.

89 Peter McPhee, *Robespierre: A Revolutionary Life* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2012), 123.

moved back to Paris from Versailles after the Women's March on Versailles on 5 October 1789.⁹⁰ However, in order to protect the *Assemblée nationale*, Cloots suggests to vote an amendment into the constitution that would take away the title of commander in chief from the king. Cloots fears the possibility that the king's army may be turned against the revolution within an alliance with other kings.⁹¹ Cloots gives the example of the Republic of Genoa and the republic of Venice, where the doge is held hostage during his mandate by the citizens. In any case, Cloots argues that the liberty of movement of the king should be restricted. And to people arguing that it would be stripping the king of his liberty, Cloots answers that no person exercising a public mandate, not even the king, is free; as a matter of fact, the liberty of the king would mean the end of the liberty of the people.⁹² This limitation is not only for the present, but for the future, as the possibility of a charismatic warrior-king would turn the revolution back to absolutism:

Comme il s'agit de créer des lois pour tous les siècles et toutes les générations, notre constitution sera aussi fragile que vicieuse, si nous avons à redouter les vertus de nos rois. En effet, un monarque bienfaisant, actif, populaire, préparerait un trône absolu à lui-même ou à son héritier, si ce roi joint les vertus guerrières aux vertus civiles. Comment une nation légère, une multitude irréfléchie tiendrait-elle contre les prestiges charmants d'un monarque jeune, beau, éloquent, martial, généreux et victorieux ? ... Ce nouveau soleil éclipserait le pouvoir législatif, dont les membres clairvoyants et incorruptibles élèveraient vainement une voix républicaine dans cet enivrement universel, et le ridicule ne serait pas le moindre fléau qui saperait les fondements de la liberté.⁹³

Cloots equates here the executive power with the king, so, since the legislative power, representing the people, is the guarantee for liberty, the executive power is more a threat to liberty, or at best, an issue that has no philosophical solution yet.

In *Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais*, Cloots speaks of a 'peuple-roi' when relating his embassy at the first celebration of Bastille day.⁹⁴ Cloots calls himself 'ambassadeur des souverains opprimés', who are the people living under a monarchical regime, as opposed to the 'souverain triomphant', the French 'people-king'. Cloots tells them that they are born 'slaves', but that they only have to want liberty to be freed, leaving some ambiguity as to what that would entail precisely. The same image is taken again in *Anacharsis à Paris*: 'Nous verrons arriver la grande époque où

⁹⁰ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 12.

⁹¹ Cloots, 13.

⁹² Cloots, 15.

⁹³ Cloots, 16.

⁹⁴ Cloots, 'Adresse d'un Prussien à un Anglais', 56.

... « les souverains, détrônés par les rois », reprendront leur couronne et leur toute-puissance'.⁹⁵ The expression quoted, Cloots notes, is from the poet Le Brun. The message is clear: the real sovereign is the people, whom the king once overthrew from the throne.

In another article, 'Ne regrettons pas les vingt-cinq ou trente millions...' (allusion to the total population in France) published in *Chronique de Paris* on 1 September 1790, Cloots chimes in with the campaign to dehumanise the king as a person after having limited his powers and his liberty. Cloots calls the people the true sovereign king and he suggests the use of the term 'crown' for the king instead, as the discussion is about an 'abstract being', the 'throne', not the person of the king himself.⁹⁶ The discussion focused on the cost of the 'crown' to the people, a discussion taken up again later together with the cost of the church in *Anacharsis à Paris*. In this pamphlet, written on 6 October 1790, Cloots wrote again in favour of a king as head of state, but with even more limited powers.

Il ne s'agit plus de dissimuler, répondons franchement aux mécontents, avouons hautement que le roi n'est pas libre, parce qu'il est à son poste, parce que « la liberté du prince est l'esclavage du peuple », et que la liberté du peuple est l'esclavage du prince.⁹⁷

Cloots uses the rhetoric freedom/slavery, and inverts the freedom of the prince and the slavery of the people: when the people are free the prince is not free to do whatever he wishes, and when the prince is free the people are not free to do whatever they wish. Cloots is still a theist religiously and politically: 'Dieu est immuable, il nous faut un roi immuable'.⁹⁸ The king is at the moment a necessity for representing the state, but if a king wished to travel he would be free to abdicate his throne. However, there is still the issue of public money spent on 'God' and the king in this system. Cloots presents a sceptical view regarding the maintenance of the king and the church:

On nous a légué un Dieu qui coûte cent millions, et un roi qui en coûte trente. J'applaudis à l'adoption du prince considéré comme instrument nécessaire, mais vous conviendrez avec moi que le ciel serait plus satisfait, si, concentrant son culte dans nos cœurs ou dans des clubs, nous faisons en sorte d'être riches pour prendre des mesures avec l'Angleterre, afin d'effectuer la manumission de nos colons esclaves.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Cloots, 'Anacharsis à Paris', 79.

⁹⁶ Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 61.

⁹⁷ Cloots, 'Anacharsis à Paris', 81.

⁹⁸ Cloots, 81.

⁹⁹ Cloots, 84.

'Manumission' is the act of freeing a slave by a slave owner, and Cloots suggests that the now freed French people gives the now 'enslaved' king back his liberty; in other words, that the people gets rid of him. Cloots makes a reference to England, which is here meant to be the 'Glorious revolution' of 1688, implying that Frenchmen do as Englishmen did and establish the sovereignty of Parliament instead of absolute monarchy. England was used as a reference in debates about republicanism during the French revolution, for republicans as a model to follow, for monarchists as something to avoid.¹⁰⁰ However, for Cloots, this is a mere suggestion, and the king is still the king even if the title changed from 'roi de France' to 'roi des Français', a change of title that will continue to fuel the battle between partisans of a constitutional monarchy and partisans of a republican regime in the nineteenth century.¹⁰¹

In 'Roi des Français à tous les Rois de la terre', published in *Chronique de Paris* on 2 March 1791, Cloots impersonates the king writing to all the kings of the world, urging them to follow *his* example by letting their people be free and join the 'regeneration' that the revolution started in France for the whole of the 'human race'.¹⁰²

On the so-called Day of Daggers, 28 February 1791, a confrontation took place between the national guard and a group of nobles armed with daggers who wanted to organise the king's escape. Cloots wrote a derisive account of the events in *Le Courrier des 83 départements* on 9 March 1791, calling them 'Signori Poignardini' as some sort of villains from the Florentine republic. But Cloots assures that the king is in fact safer with the national guard than with those 'Signori', and gives the example of the assassination of Henry IV in front of his courtisans, or of Romulus, who was not killed by the people, but whose blood quenched the thirst of the nobles.¹⁰³

Later on this same month of March 1791, before the flight to Varennes, 20–21 June, Cloots publishes *L'orateur du genre humain, ou dépêche du prussien Cloots au prussien Hertzberg*, a pamphlet that marks a decisive turn against Frederick the Great, Hertzberg, and 'absolutism', Enlightened or not. This time, the king's manumission by the free people is not a mere suggestion any more. Cloots declares himself republican, as opposed to absolutism, and urges France to strip the king of all power, and of all ministers in favour of a representative assembly of the people:

100 Ann Thomson, 'La référence à l'Angleterre dans le débat autour de la république', in *Révolution et république : L'exception française*, ed. Michel Vovelle, Actes du colloque de Paris I, Sorbonne 21–26 September 1992 (Paris: Kimé, 1994), 133–144.

101 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 90.

102 Cloots, 97–98.

103 Cloots, 99–100.

Honneur et gloire à l'Assemblée nationale ! malheur et honte aux prôneurs des tyrans ! c'était une erreur, avant la révolution, de préférer un gouvernement absolu à un gouvernement républicain, une représentation vicieuse à une représentation populaire : mais c'est un forfait odieux, aujourd'hui que nous avons le premier modèle d'un grand peuple véritablement libre, où un roi ambulant devenu prince immuable occupe une place éminente, chère aux amis de la liberté, inaccessible aux démagogues, et funeste aux séditieux.¹⁰⁴

The king, however, should be kept. Cloots takes the example of ancient Athens, which, he argues, did not get rid of royalty but of the tyranny of royalty, keeping a sort of puppet king in place. The argument is twofold. First, there is a need for a transition from a state of absolutist tyranny to a state of republican liberty. That requires maintaining a royal head of state. Second, maintaining this royal head of state preserves the republic from others claiming the place, such as powerful ministers of the king. Cloots writes:

On nous répète que l'Attique abrogea la dignité royale, en se rendant libre. Erreur. Les Athéniens ne firent qu'abolir la tyrannie royale ; ils sentirent l'importance de conserver le titre de roi, *basileus*, à un des gardiens, des conservateurs de la loi, et sa femme s'appelait reine, *basilissa*. Ce roi siégeait pompeusement sur un trône dans le portique royal. Si une nation peu étendue, si le plus ingénieux des peuples, si le plus démocrate des gouvernements a eu recours à cet artifice, comment une grande nation qui sort tout entière d'un long esclavage, et qui ne sortira que successivement d'une profonde ignorance, comment pourrait-elle se passer d'un roi légal, ou se garantir d'un ambitieux qui voudrait être illégalement roi ?¹⁰⁵

This also includes other institutions in charge in the absolutist state such as the *Parlements*, which Cloots considers as the magistrates applying the law of the despot, and not, as they argue, a counter-power such as the Areopagus of ancient Athens. Cloots makes a distinction between small and big states for applying republicanism by arguing that, if it did not work for a small state, it would not work for a larger one. Cloots then adds:

Je hais moins les rois que les ministres qui affectent un tendre amour pour leurs maîtres absolus. Voici le secret de l'Église et des cabinets : les royaumes libres sont des républiques, tout despotisme est aristocratique, et toute aristocratie est tyrannie.¹⁰⁶

Cloots calls for a universal republic, but still with the king as its head of state. When Cloots was not yet anti-monarchist, he considered the liberty of the people as the reason for the executive power, which the king exercised. In order to make it even

¹⁰⁴ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 115.

¹⁰⁵ Cloots, 140–141.

¹⁰⁶ Cloots, 141.

clearer that the king is only at the service of the free people, Cloots calls him a ‘magistrate’: ‘... la liberté, qui décerne la magistrature unique ...’.¹⁰⁷ According to the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 4th Edition (1762) and Jean-François Féraud’s *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (1787–1788), the definition of ‘Magistrat’ is ‘Officier établi pour rendre la justice ou pour maintenir la police’; it is an officer in charge of a function under a higher power (normally the king). Here the higher power is the free people. However, Cloots probably does not mean that the king shall render justice or maintain order with a police force. As argued above, it is a king without power or function other than ceremonial that Cloots considers here.

The flight of the king on 20–21 June 1791 provoked a shockwave among the French population. It was reported that on the king’s way back, the people refused to take off their hat to salute him in Paris, and were even more aggressive when he crossed the suburbs to avoid working-class neighbourhoods.¹⁰⁸ The next day, Cloots delivers a speech at the Jacobins Club, proclaiming that ‘Nous ne sommes véritablement libres que depuis hier 21 juin’.¹⁰⁹ Cloots followed the general disappointment in the population with the king’s behaviour and uses this momentum to suggest taking away the name, while keeping him as head of the executive. Cloots then suggests changing the name of the king to ‘chief of executive power’ without altering the constitution and to abolish the name of French monarchy for a French Republic:

Il s’agit actuellement de guérir radicalement la nation de l’idolâtrie royale ; et sans rien changer à notre sublime constitution, je propose simplement de nommer chaque chose par son nom, et d’abolir le titre odieux de roi, en laissant au premier magistrat les fonctions et le nom de chef du pouvoir exécutif. Le mot de monarchie française est une dérision : on dit la république de Pologne, et pourquoi ne dirions-nous pas la république de France ? Il est important, messieurs, de fixer les idées du peuple par la justesse des mots, car c’est souvent avec les mots qu’on obtient les choses ; et certainement le roi fugitif échouera plutôt contre une république, que contre un royaume.¹¹⁰

Cloots wonders what the attitude of the king will be and does not believe that he will ever agree to a republican regime; even worse, Cloots fears that the king may feign to accept it in order to plot a coup with the aristocrats, the ‘enemies of the human race’.¹¹¹ What follows is a vehement attack on monarchy and the king, which should be replaced by the law, but Cloots is still not getting rid of him, and he suggests the name of a monarchical republic rather than republican monarchy:

¹⁰⁷ Cloots, ‘L’orateur du genre humain’, 160.

¹⁰⁸ Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 83–85.

¹⁰⁹ Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 266.

¹¹⁰ Cloots, 267.

¹¹¹ Cloots, 277.

Ma république-monarchique est bâtie sur les notions du bon sens, sur le maintien de la liberté ; au lieu que la monarchie-république actuelle est un monstre auquel nous ne saurions trop nous préparer à couper les vivres.¹¹²

Cloots hopes that the people will one day finally reject not only the church but the king as well. In the meanwhile, it is important to respect the law in order to avoid an open civil war between monarchists and republicans.¹¹³

Next, Cloots puts forward the argument of the high cost of a king and a court; the millions necessary to maintain the ‘majesty of the king’ would better serve the ‘majesty of the people’ by investing it into improving agriculture and fishing.¹¹⁴ What Cloots qualifies as ‘hors-d’œuvre royal’ — *hors-d’œuvre* meaning ‘des choses dont un ouvrage peut se passer’, according to the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française*, 5th Edition (1798) — is characterised as necessarily interested by its function in corruption, troubles, and ‘exalter le fanatisme des ignorants contre l’autorité légale’.¹¹⁵ Cloots argues here against those who want, yet again, to give the benefit of the doubt to the king who argued — falsely, as history shows — that he fled only because his advisers urged him to do so as they felt that Paris was unsafe for him and his family, and that he never meant to escape the country to reach foreign armies but to be safe close to the border.¹¹⁶ The solution is then to eliminate royalty, but not monarchy; or, rather, to have a republican monarchy:

La constitution républicaine des Français, combinée avec son gouvernement monarchique, sera le chef-d’œuvre de l’esprit humain, lorsque nos monarques ne seront plus ni rois, ni héritaires.¹¹⁷

At this point, Cloots seems to be closer to the Roman *libertas* rather than the Greek *eleutheria*. But Cloots concludes by suggesting maintaining the *status quo ante* for the time being and to let ideas be freely expressed through the press:

Quoi qu’il en soit, ne changeons rien à l’organisation actuelle par des moyens violents et illégaux ; laissons mûrir les esprits dans les serres chaudes de la typographie.¹¹⁸

And if everyone should bring something to the table, ‘Conseillons au roi des Français de favoriser la propagation de nos principes constitutionnels dans le

112 Cloots, 280.

113 Cloots, 281.

114 Cloots, 284.

115 Cloots, 284.

116 Tackett, *When the King Took Flight*, 102.

117 Cloots, ‘La République universelle’, 284.

118 Cloots, 285.

reste de l'Europe'; royalty should not be on the menu, but served as *hors-d'œuvre*: 'Le véritable moyen de rendre la royauté supportable, c'est de prouver à tout le monde qu'elle est un hors-d'œuvre'.¹¹⁹ What Cloots suggests is that the French king convinces all other kings to do as Cloots hopes he will: re-establish liberty to the people by abdicating. Monarchs, writes Cloots, benefits from the 'ignorance' of the people in equating monarchy with royalty, heredity, and feudality.¹²⁰ As mentioned before, Cloots knows his classics, and he knows that Roman republicanism was opposed to royalty, and that Greek republicanism was opposed to any real power to a monarch, a single person governing. What Cloots suggests is a monarch without powers and without heredity, and since liberty should spread only without menace from neighbours, neighbour populations should also rationally adhere to this plan, this French model of constitution, and elect a 'European king': 'Un roi des Européens ne causera aucune alarme aux vrais amis de la constitution'.¹²¹

Waiting for the debates to ripen in the minds of the people, Cloots makes the distinction between a constitutional king and 'unconstitutional king'.¹²² Implicit to the term of 'unconstitutional king' is the idea that the king was not chosen by the people, the true sovereign, to represent it as head of the executive. Cloots reiterates Boulainvilliers's thesis, without naming him, on the origins of French nobility with the Franks.¹²³ According to Boulainvilliers, the Franks invaded Gaul after the fall of the Roman empire and came from Germany, while the Gauls represented the third estate, and they established a king as *primus inter pares*.¹²⁴ Cloots equates the end of Frankish nobility with the revolution, changing Boulainvilliers's *thèse nobiliaire* that argued for nobility as a counter power to the king. Nobility is against equality and liberty as declared by natural law, and if it was up to Cloots, the name of France would be changed to Gaul, or even German as seen previously, but not a reference to the Franks, and he even contests its original meaning:

L'empire des Francs s'est écroulé avec la Bastille, et la nation aurait repris son ancien nom avec son ancienne liberté, si elle avait su que le mot franc est synonymie du mot allemand *vranck*,

119 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 285.

120 Cloots, 285.

121 Cloots, 285.

122 Cloots, 290.

123 Henri de Boulainvilliers, *Essais sur la noblesse de France, contenant une dissertation sur son origine & son abaissement* (Amsterdam: s.n., 1732).

124 See Nicolet's analysis in Claude Nicolet, *La fabrique d'une nation : La France entre Rome et les Germains* (Paris: Perrin, 2003), 68–89.

féroce. Mais les vaincus le rendirent synonyme du mot libre, par les privilèges attachés au nom des vainqueurs, des *vrancks*.¹²⁵

Actually, the etymology of the word 'Frank' is uncertain beyond its German origin, meaning at times 'the fierce ones' or 'the free ones'.¹²⁶ Cloots's conclusion is unequivocal in any case: 'Il résulte de là une apologie complète du gouvernement républicain'.¹²⁷ A republican government, if possible universal, and because for the time being it is unavoidable, with a monarch albeit without royalty and power.

In *Annales patriotiques et littéraires*, 23 July 1792, Cloots rehashes his call for the French nation to get rid of royalty, which no longer makes sense with the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme*: 'Otez la royauté de l'acte constitutionnel...'.¹²⁸

In a follow-up article, Cloots hammered home the same point in 'Monarchie sans roi' published in *Annales patriotiques et littéraires* on 27 July 1792.¹²⁹ Cloots proposes a monarch at the head of the executive power, separated from the legislative power, elected for five years like in Washington. This way the monarch's veto would be under the control of the nation. Cloots then praises the system of a republic where the people is the only sovereign because this 'grandeur nationale' has the virtue of reducing the stature of an individual politician, and the larger the people the greater the nation and the harder it becomes for a single politician to amass too much power.

The war had been declared by the Assembly on 20 April 1792. This polarised the positions between republicans and monarchists (or more rightly between absolute monarchists and constitutional monarchists tending towards republicanism) as Austria and Prussia were perceived as aggressors and wanting to crush the revolution and re-instate monarchy—or so was the hope of counter-revolutionaries. The defeats of the French armies created not only anxiety and fear among the revolutionaries and the Parisian population, but also added to the anger present against the royal family, seen as complicit to the defeats. On 10 July, the Assembly declared 'la patrie en danger' and asked for support and sacrifice. The commander-in-chief of the Prussian armies, the Duke of Brunswick, issued a threatening ultimatum, promising revenge, execution, and destruction. This prompted the Parisian population to organise itself into a Commune and send 20,000 *sans-culottes* to join the national guard. Cloots thus celebrated the *sans-culottes* in 'Vive les Sans-Culottes!', published

125 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 294.

126 See chapter 1 'The Early Franks' in Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008).

127 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 255.

128 Cloots, *Écrits révolutionnaires*, 365.

129 Cloots, 370–373.

on 31 July 1792 in *Annales patriotiques et littéraires*.¹³⁰ In this article, Cloots praises Jérôme Pétion de Villeneuve (1756–1794), then mayor of Paris, whose bust should be placed between Phocion and Aristides, whilst the one of Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834), should be thrust on the ground. Pétion had displayed republican sympathies by being accused by the king of facilitating a crowd of Parisians to invade the Tuileries palace on 20 June, and was subsequently suspended. But the Parisians celebrated him and asked for his return on 14 July. He was reinstated on 3 August.

Lafayette, on the other hand, was a known royalist, and Cloots writes how he knew him at *collège du Pléssis-Sorbonne*, where he already displayed the prejudice of an aristocrat persuaded of being of higher birth and superior blood. One has to note that this was a common belief among nobles, and it is a possibility that Cloots could have been mocked by Lafayette for his family being recently ennobled. Nobles, if they received an education at the *collège* like many of the revolutionaries of the Third-Estate, did not continue their education at university, but went to a military school where the emphasis was not on classical republican authors. There was thus a difference in the education of the nobles from the commoners. Cloots did go to the Berlin *Académie des nobles*, but he hated it, and chose afterwards to isolate himself in his studies for five years. To mock Lafayette and continue with the classical republican example, Cloots calls him ‘Gilles-César’, playing with his first name Gilbert, and Jules César, in French.¹³¹ That is a more high-brow play of words on names than what was otherwise common practice during the revolution; for instance, Pétion was called ‘Pet-hion’ (Donkey fart) by his pronarchist detractors.¹³² Cloots notes that liberty and equality were foreign concepts to Lafayette, who was therefore not at the service of the revolution, but of the king.

In ‘Adresse aux Français’ in the same newspaper, published on 6 August, Cloots continues to praise the *sans-culottes* as the real sovereign people, and call them to replace the executive power:

Français ! Nous sommes calomniés et trahis par la cour. Suppléons à l’inertie du roi par notre propre activité ; que l’Assemblée nationale, que chaque municipalité, chaque individu agisse par lui-même comme si le ministère royal était suspendu, et nous vaincrons tous les obstacles. Notre zèle, notre union, notre loyauté, notre législature tiendront lieu de pouvoir exécutif.¹³³

¹³⁰ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 374–376.

¹³¹ Cloots, 374.

¹³² McPhee, *Liberty or Death*, 156.

¹³³ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 378.

The Parisian *sans-culottes* joined by the *fédérés* from the province attacked the Tuileries palace on 10 August, forcing the king to take refuge in the Assembly, defended by Swiss guards, 600 of whom perished in the attack. This marked a 'second revolution', effectively deposing the king.¹³⁴ He expressed regret at his ineligibility for nomination to the Convention in a letter to his friend Rousiès on 20 August, but consoling himself that he occupied another function as orator of the human race, Cloots was nonetheless granted French citizenship, bought some lands and a farm, and was elected to the Convention. After the discovery of inculpatory papers in the *armoire de fer* (iron cabinet) in the Tuileries, the trial of the king was hastened and started on 11 December 1792. In a speech to the Convention on 2 January 1793, Cloots urges to hasten the trial and calls on the examples of England and especially Rome to decide on the execution of the king: 'non pas au poignard des assassins, mais à la hache des licteurs'.¹³⁵ A licitor was a Roman bodyguard who protected the magistrates, and the *fasces* with the blade of an ax was their symbol, re-cycled in the revolutionary imagery, most famously in Le Barbier's painting of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme* in the musée Carnavalet.¹³⁶ Cloots perceives executing the king as a republican duty and a duty in the name of humankind: '... les droits de l'homme sacrifiés aux droits d'une couronne sacrilège...'.¹³⁷

The king is in Cloots's eyes an enemy of the human race, even if he does not use the term in this speech. The king must be executed for the crimes committed by him and all the other French kings before him. He is not a god and the people should not hesitate to sacrifice him at a time when he represents instability for France. There are dangers and uncertainties that accompany the lack of decision, when England and Spain are menacing outside, and inside the revolutionaries are tempted by dividing the country into a federation. The country is tense and on the verge of multiple divisions, which is not only against the unity of the republic, but the unity of Cloots's universal republic. To Cloots, Paris must be strong and lead the way for all the other French cities fearing economic competition among each other, and for all other countries.¹³⁸ This is the reason why Cloots, and other deputies such as Robespierre, changed their mind regarding death penalty and opted for it against the king. Cloots concludes then this speech calling for unity and indivisibility with the instrumental role of the king's death: 'Je conclus à la mort de l'ex-roi et de tous les rois

134 McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, 89–108.

135 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 454.

136 For studies on symbolism in the French revolution see Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne au combat. L'imagerie et la symbolique républicaine de 1789 à 1880* (Paris: Flammarion, 1979). See also Ozouf, *La fête révolutionnaire 1789–1799*.

137 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 454.

138 Cloots, 452.

qui seront amenés sur le sol de la terre libre'.¹³⁹ Cloots voted for his death without conditional terms, together with 360 other deputies. Of course, not all deputies at the Convention were in favour of the king's death, and parts of the French population was opposed to it; even in Paris where a deputy was assassinated by a royalist. Girondins tried to organise an appeal to the people regarding the king's punishment, but as Napoléon later remarked, if they had wanted to save the king they would have asked for his extradition.¹⁴⁰ Not everyone was in favour of the death of the king, but the Girondins' scheme of appealing to the people led to so much potential insecurity that it was like asking for a vote for or against the revolution, and it failed.¹⁴¹ Of the 721 deputies present for the vote, 361 was the single majority, and 361 voted for death without conditions, 319 for imprisonment, and the rest for death with various conditions.¹⁴² Louis XVI was guillotined on 21 January 1793.

Size and Federalism

Subsequent to the flight of the king, the question of a republic without king had become topical, and together with this question the fear that such a system would lead to a partition of such a republic into a federative system. Some considered that it was safer to stay with a unifying monarchical regime rather than risk splitting the nation into federative powers. France was, after all, the most populous country in Western Europe with 28 million people—by comparison, Britain had a population of 7.3 million.¹⁴³ Also, despite the rationalisation of the country into 83 *départements*, the revolution had just started to unify a country with many cultures, languages, and traditions. As Woloch's study of 'the new regime' shows, even though the Assembly in Paris hoped to have local authorities as delegates to apply its laws, those retained a lot of power especially because they were locally elected and the populations regarded them as the surrogates of the state.¹⁴⁴ In order to avoid a federative solution, one needs to convince others that such a large territory and population, and as diverse as France in the 1780s was, could indeed be a single republic. The reality of local power, even without a federal solution, was that '[w]hile asserting

139 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 455.

140 David Peter Jordan, *The King's Trial: Louis XVI vs. the French Revolution*, Twenty-fifth Anniversary Edition (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, [1979] 2004), 158.

141 Jordan, 160.

142 Jordan, 190–191.

143 McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799*, 4; McPhee, *The French Revolution*, ch. 1.

144 Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789–1820s* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1994), 21–94.

the primacy of national law, the Assembly still left a large grey area for the competing imperatives of centralization and local autonomy'.¹⁴⁵

Cloots simply brushed off the pre-revolutionary and early-revolutionary debates on the impossibility of a republic on such a large territory as France in his *L'orateur du genre humain*. The reason for this is the rapid and dramatic change that the revolution carried with it. What seemed impossible a few years ago is now a reality, so why not pushing the revolutionary logic to its conclusion?

Des adages nous détournent de la conquête de notre bien : la souveraineté imprescriptible. Une nation corrompue, disait-on, est incapable de secouer le joug. Une terre de vingt-sept mille lieues carrées ne saurait exister libre. Ces lieux communs sont plus nuisibles que les contagions pestilentielles. Il a fallu les hasards de l'occasion, les prodiges du courage, les lumières de la philosophie, pour constater que la corruption n'est souvent qu'un mot vague au moral comme au physique, et que l'étendue territoriale est plutôt favorable que préjudiciable à l'organisation républicaine. Il était permis de fluctuer sur ces matières avant 1789 ; mais aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus errer, c'est blasphémer, c'est étayer sciemment les dictatures usurpées.¹⁴⁶

It is therefore no longer far-fetched to imagine further political developments. Later in the text, Cloots calls for a universal republic, based on the *Déclaration*:

Une tête d'homme, trouvée sous les fondements du Capitole, fut, pour les Romains, le signal de leur grandeur future : les droits de l'homme, trouvés sous les fondements de la constitution française, seront pour les humains, le signal de la république universelle.¹⁴⁷

Edelstein notes the 'sacralisation' of the 1789 *Déclaration* by the Jacobins in their 'natural republicanism'; the *Déclaration* is the founding document of natural law, and is also the only needed document for a constitution for the republic, it is a 'natural constitution' that renders any other constitution redundant.¹⁴⁸ Cloots shares this 'natural republicanism' of the Jacobins with the foundational aspect of the *Déclaration*. But this universal republic is still led by the French king. Cloots calls on him and his heir to look at the future and embrace a 'universal republic' with representatives from all over the world at the national assembly in Paris.¹⁴⁹

In *La république universelle*, written after the king took flight, Cloots repeats the neologism '*loyaume*' (from *loi*, law, and *royaume*, kingdom), which could be translated as 'lawdom', created by François-Urbain Domergue (1745–1810), in order to

145 Woloch, 38.

146 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 115.

147 Cloots, 160.

148 Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right*, 187–197.

149 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 160.

argue against the monarchist claim that monarchy is a better form of government than a republic because the latter would create anarchy and disunion. Domergue gave this definition of '*loyaume*': 'Nous nommons *royaume* un pays régi souverainement par un roi ; le pays où la loi seule commande, je le nommerai *loyaume*'.¹⁵⁰ So it is a country where the law is the governing power as opposed to the realm of the king, with a little play of words. Cloots argues that the fear of disunion and anarchy is precisely what makes the '*loyaume*' so strong. The bigger the population and territory, the bigger the fear of disunion, and therefore the stronger the republic:

La force nationale augmente en raison de la multiplication des citoyens, et la force individuelle diminue, sous le régime de la liberté, en raison de l'accroissement de la masse commune. Par conséquent, plus la république sera vaste et peuplée, et moins on aura besoin d'un roi, si toutefois ce besoin ait jamais été réel nulle part.¹⁵¹

As Cloots argues, one needs only look at the American example to understand that the size of a country and of a population is an advantage rather than an inconvenience for a republic. However, Cloots criticises the American choice of a federation over a single union. An argument he elaborates on in another article. It is 'la loi unique', which will rule once the universal republic is established.¹⁵² Therefore this 'single law' forms a universal *loyaume* where no one is a foreigner, and no one wages war for a family or a familial territory. The concept of civil war was, of course, unknown at the time.

The example of classical republicanism is rejected because of the modernism of the French Enlightenment that founded human nature. The difference between classical and modern republicanism, for Cloots, is that the later is founded on equality and all human beings are citizens, not just a few. In classical republicanism, being a citizen was the same as being an aristocrat in a monarchy—a title and a privilege for a few:

Un César trouvait dans Rome tous les matériaux de la tyrannie, parce que Rome conquérante régnait en tyran sur la terre conquise ; parce que Rome n'était pas homogène ; parce que la république romaine se concentrait aristocratiquement dans les murs de Rome. Un citoyen romain était un homme privilégié : et la foule des externes s'attachait naturellement à la fortune d'un Jules, d'un Auguste, d'un Tibère. ... Les Romains et les Grecs, avec leur système hétérogène et tyrannique, devaient périr en s'agrandissant ; les Français, avec leur nivellement admirable, s'assureront une durée éternelle, en s'agrandissant. Les Français ont fondé l'empire

150 Winfried Busse and Françoise Dognac, *François-Urbain Domergue : Le grammairien patriote (1745–1810)*, Lingua et Traditio: Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Sprachwissenschaft, Band 10 (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1992), 99.

151 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 283.

152 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 482.

de la nature humaine : la république des hommes s'étendra et prospérera partout où il y aura des hommes.¹⁵³

In other words, the empire of human nature is universal as opposed to the Roman empire founded on Roman nature. The question of identity is rejected in the French version of the republic because it is based on the 'science of man', obeying to the laws of human nature universally true and valid for everyone everywhere. As seen in the chapter on humanity, this does not mean that Cloots does not recognise differences as part of human nature, but, to him, the most important and unifying law of human nature is the universal desire for freedom: 'la liberté ... est une plante qui s'acclimate partout'.¹⁵⁴ The universal restoration of liberty through a republican regime will put an end to all wars, 'l'âge de la paix remplacera l'âge de la guerre'.¹⁵⁵ And Cloots adds, tongue in cheek, that even the rivalry between two famous elite universities would disappear: 'Les heureuses rivalités d'Oxford et de Cambridge s'épurèrent et s'étendront partout avec la liberté et l'union du genre humain'.¹⁵⁶

It is also thanks to the principle of representation that a large republic is possible, even as large as the whole globe with the whole human race: 'L'assemblée des comices à Rome était composée de 400 000 votants, et l'univers n'exigerait que 10 000 députés pour sa représentation !'¹⁵⁷ However, this is quite an elevated amount of representatives. Probably Cloots considered that if each country the size of France had 83 departments, and considered that the National Assembly had 645 deputies, there would be around 10.000 deputies for the world. Later Cloots lowered the number to '1500 or 2000'.¹⁵⁸

What also makes a large republic possible, even a universal one, is that unlike a kingdom, it is not ruled top-down, but bottom-up:

Quand l'action d'un gouvernement part du sommet, l'étendue du territoire est nuisible, c'est le cas des royaumes ; mais un gouvernement qui tire son énergie de la base, plus vous élargirez cette base, et plus le gouvernement sera vigoureux ; c'est le cas de la République universelle. Les droits de l'homme partent de la racine, et par conséquent la plus petite municipalité fait partie du gouvernement populaire.¹⁵⁹

However, Cloots is not very clear — but he also claimed he would not be, as he is only laying down general principles — about the actual details of this sort of grass-

153 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 286.

154 Cloots, 249.

155 Cloots, 286.

156 Cloots, 286.

157 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 160.

158 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 487.

159 Cloots, 490.

root democracy. Cloots's general philosophical point is that a republican government—although it really is *governance* that Cloots writes about, since his view of the executive branch is minimalistic—based on the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* is necessarily organised by its constitutive unit, the individual, whose liberty and sovereignty is delegated to the republic. In the organisation of a kingdom, the king decides from the top without any regards for the individual, whose rights are not recognised, according to Cloots. Cloots's view of '*gouvernement*' is closer to today's *governance* in that individuals are governing themselves at the level that seems best fit. Cloots writes for instance: 'Notre République ne sera jamais trop vaste, car le gouvernement s'étendra avec elle'.¹⁶⁰ Cloots sees local government and decentralisation as central elements of the universal republic.

Modern wars are another reason why so much more money is wasted than in Ancient Greece. And here Cloots's argument seems to be in want of reviving pre-1763 European hopes of seeing a republic of states due to the increasing control of the state of wars, which became so costly and efficient through public credit and standing armies.¹⁶¹ Cloots writes clearly about the difference between the *anciens* and *modernes*: 'C'est que la guerre modernes est plus dispendieuse que celle des anciens'.¹⁶² Unity is what brings peace, as Cloots notes, and two cities under one law do not wage war against one another, but two sovereign cities do. Before the issue of federalism and its specific context came to the fore in 1793, Cloots had already expressed his philosophical view for unity; it was not only based on the observation of unity in nature, but also on the historical example of corporations in France, and how they prevented necessary reforms. The idea of a separation into different bodies, or polities, is the scourge of humankind, for Cloots:

Les préjugés jettent de si profondes racines, que personne ne s'était pas même avisé de demander : « Pourquoi y a-t-il plus d'une nation ? » J'ai eu la hardiesse de présenter et de résoudre le problème, en accusant l'ignorance barbare de nos pères. La nature abhorre ce morcellement dont nous sommes punis avec rigueur ; elle semble n'avoir donné à l'homme l'esprit de prosélytisme que pour rompre les barrières qui nous séparent.¹⁶³

There is thus an idea that humankind is a unified body, and should form one single polity. There are two main ideas to explain this argument. One is that ignorance and barbarism have collided against living in harmony on a single planet. Ignorance according to the 1762 dictionary of French academy defines a lack of know-

¹⁶⁰ Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 490.

¹⁶¹ See Pocock's argument in Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, ch. 15.

¹⁶² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 286.

¹⁶³ Cloots, 306.

ledge, while barbarism is defined as cruelty and inhumanity, or as lack of politeness. Cruelty and inhumanity and a lack of knowledge result in divisions into rival corporations. The word corporation actually does not appear in the 1762 dictionary of the French academy, but appears in Jean-François Féraud's *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (1787–1788):

CORPORATION, s. f. Mot emprunté des Anglais, pour signifier les Communautés municipales. « Ces Villages, dit M. Moreau, formoient eux-mêmes des *corporations*. » Les Seigneurs, dans les Traités même avec quelques Villes, supposent des *corporations* encore existantes. *Id.* — L'*Acad.* ne met pas ce mot ; le *Rich. Port.* ne s'en sert qu'en parlant des Anglais.¹⁶⁴

Corps provinciaux and *corps nationaux* are equated with corporations — name taken from English to designate town communities. Anacharsis Cloots tries to show how local national communities still remain, whereas the French revolution managed to gather all these 'provinces' under one 'nation'. However, this is still not enough. We all live on one single planet. Whereas ignorance leads to division into rival corporations, knowledge dictates unity of humankind on earth. As a result, Cloots predicts the end of wars since a single political community does not make war within itself. Disputes are only breaking out in the form of civil procedures. As such Italians, divided as they are, make war among themselves, while the French only have procedures: 'Nous n'aurions jamais aucun démêlé sanglant avec Londres et La Haye, si la France s'étendait aussi loin au nord de Paris qu'au midi de Paris'.¹⁶⁵ This sentence could sound imperialist, but it is not meant this way. 'France' is not meant here to be a 'French' entity but the universal republic, which Cloots offered to change the name (see below). At other times, Cloots tries to find a new name for what he perceives as the country of regenerated people, free and equal, the beacon for universal freedom and peace, and the only true political system. Or as Cloots calls it, a 'philanthropic system'; philanthropy understood as love for humankind.¹⁶⁶

In an article entitled 'L'auteur de la *République universelle* à l'auteur du *Courrier des départements*, salut' published on 8 October 1792 in *Le Courrier des départements*, Cloots answers Antoine Joseph Gorsas (1752–1793). Gorsas was a publicist who was elected at the Convention and first sat with the *montagnards* before changing to the *Girondins*. *Le Courrier des 83 départements* was his newspaper. Cloots states, in the context of debates in 1792 in favour of a federative system as argued

¹⁶⁴ Jean-François Féraud, *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*, vol. 1, A–D (Marseille: Chez Jean Mossy, 1787), 587.

¹⁶⁵ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 245.

¹⁶⁶ Cloots, 247.

by the Gironde, that Rousseau was wrong and would change his mind if he had lived today:

Quant aux erreurs de Mably, de Montesquieu, et de Rousseau, vraisemblablement ces grands hommes se rétracteraient s'ils vivaient aujourd'hui. Je ne demande que du bon sens pour décider entre l'empire des individus unis qui plient nécessairement sous la loi, et l'empire des corporations unies, qui résistent arbitrairement à la loi.¹⁶⁷

The mistakes in questions are the way these authors considered a plurality of sovereign entities rather than a unity: Mably and the plurality of sovereign peoples; Montesquieu and the different spirits of law forming different societies; Rousseau and the necessity of having a myriad of small republics. However, Cloots also agrees and builds on them. Cloots shares Mably's criticism of all natural law theorists as if they were the same, and the necessity to protect the natural state in society with positive laws. Cloots shares Montesquieu's view of the universality and consistency of laws governing nature and human beings. Cloots shares Rousseau's criticism of natural law theories used to trick the sovereign peoples into a fake social contract, and his conception of general will (as seen in the chapter on nature and natural law). In this article, Cloots refers to the newly published translation of *The Federalist Papers* by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay.¹⁶⁸ Without naming it, Cloots quotes a passage from one of the chapters that is supposed to support his own view against federalism and in favour of a single sovereign. Cloots quotes a French translation from paper 20, written by Madison. A relevant part of the quotation, here in the original version, is:

Experience is the oracle of truth; and where its responses are unequivocal, they ought to be conclusive and sacred. The important truth, which it unequivocally pronounces in the present case, is that a sovereignty over sovereigns, a government over governments, a legislation for communities, as contradistinguished from individuals, as it is a solecism in theory, so in practice it is subversive of the order and ends of civil polity, by substituting *violence* in place of *law*, or the destructive *coertion* of the *sword* in place of the mild and salutary *coertion* of the *magistracy*.¹⁶⁹

It is confusing today to read Cloots and this text because what Cloots calls 'federalism' is actually what we, today, call confederalism when talking about French departments, and what Cloots equally called 'federalism' when talking about foreign

167 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 410.

168 Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution, as Agreed upon by the Federal Convention, September 17, 1787*, 2 vols. (New York: J. and A. McLean, 1788).

169 Hamilton, Madison and Jay, 125–126.

countries joining the French republic is just an international system with sovereign entities. By contrast, what Cloots actually proposes as a universal republic respecting the principles of unity and indivisibility is more what we today indeed would call federalism. The historical context is crucial to understanding this, as I develop below. In another speech, ‘Anacharsis Cloots aux assemblées du Hainaut, du Brabant, de la Flandre, etc.’, on 23 November 1792, Cloots writes:

... je vous conjure ... de vous procurer un ouvrage nouvellement traduit de l’anglais, intitulé, je ne sais trop pourquoi : *Le Fédéraliste*. Cet excellent livre est le bréviaire des unitaires, et tout homme qui se dira publiciste, et qui n’aura pas goûté la partie élémentaire de ce livre, faites-le descendre de la tribune ; c’est un sot ou un coquin.¹⁷⁰

As Palmer notes, federalism in France meant ‘the opposite of what it meant in the United States at the same time’.¹⁷¹ Cloots’s incomprehension with the title of the book is simply linked to the revolutionary vocabulary and the context of the time: the federalists are opposed to the principle of unity and indivisibility of the French republic, and want to organise a confederation of sovereign republics based on *ancien régime* regions; or so is the claim of Cloots and the Mountain. In reality, the Gironde was just as committed to the unity and indivisibility of the republic, but they had a vision of its organisation more oriented towards decentralisation, and they had no nostalgia about the provinces of the old regime.¹⁷² ‘Federalism’ had become another accusative epithet of being a counter-revolutionary during the French revolution, which not only had nothing to do with actual federalism, but was also misconstrued and false. Since republicanism had only been thought for small republics, there was a fear of complete disintegration of the republic in 1792–1793, now that monarchy was abolished. The bloody civil war in Vendée was omnipresent in the minds of the revolutionaries, as well as threats from Bordeaux, Caen, Marseilles, Toulon, and Lyon to go their separate ways. However, rather than federalism, the Girondins defended more autonomy for the departments, a sort of ‘departmentalism’; by contrast, the Jacobins had a more centralising vision of government, ‘Paris-centric’, which was exactly what some departments were fighting against as they feared Parisian radicalisation.¹⁷³ Notwithstanding,

170 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 433.

171 Palmer, *Twelve Who Ruled*, 23.

172 Jacqueline Chaumié, ‘Girondins’, chap. 1 in *Girondins et Montagnards. Colloque En Sorbonne (14 Décembre 1975)*, ed. Albert Soboul, Bibliothèque d’Histoire Révolutionnaire (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, [1980] 2012), 43–44.

173 Albert Soboul, ‘Introduction’, in *Girondins et Montagnards. Colloque en Sorbonne (14 Décembre 1975)*, ed. Albert Soboul, Bibliothèque d’Histoire Révolutionnaire (Paris: Société des études robespierristes, [1980] 2012), 15. See also on federalism in the departments: Henri Wallon, *La révolution du 31 mai et le fédéralisme en 1793*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1886).

Cloots considered *Le Fédéraliste* as providing a political theory against the ‘*fédéralistes*’. But his view of government, was paradoxically less centralising than his fellow *Montagnards*.

Interestingly, in *Ni Marat, ni Roland*, Cloots tells the story of one of his encounters with Jean Marie Roland (1737–1793)—minister of the interior until the king’s execution and one of the leading Girondists—during which he suggested the reading of an English book, which principles, he claims, were to be found in the last American convention.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately, it is unclear which book and what author he is referring to. It seems doubtful that it was a book from a well-known author such as John Locke, since Cloots claims Roland did not know the book. Roland contributed to the *Encyclopédie*, and as an economist he must have known about Locke. Some possibilities are Harrington’s *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, or John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s *Cato’s Letters*. However, it is also possible that ‘ce livre anglais’ was a reference to the language and not the country of the book; it could thus be *The Federalist Papers*, of which Cloots talked about previously, which had recently been translated into French. In the same speech, Cloots tells another anecdotic evening encounter with Pétion, Dumouriez, Brissot, and Paine. According to Cloots, Brissot argued against his universal republic because France was already too big, to which Paine interjected that, unlike a monarchy that can be too large to be governed, a republic based on human rights could cover the whole world.¹⁷⁵ Cloots concluded that Brissot wanted several isolated republics and was thus worse than a *fédéraliste*, he was an ‘*isoliste*’.

Does Cloots want unity for the universal republic as an all-controlling state? I think it would be a mistake to understand it as such. Yes, Cloots is against what he calls ‘corporations’ of any kind, including ‘national corporations’, but he is also against despotism understood as the negation of human rights such as liberty and equality, and popular participation in government. The concept of ‘sovereignty of the human race’ is meant as a philosophical way of imposing peace and legal settlement in conflicts arising between different populations:

Frères et amis, retenez, méditez la maxime de l’Orateur du genre humain : « Deux familles se battraient pour un mur mitoyen, si une force majeure, une loi commune ne civilisait pas leur procès. »¹⁷⁶

What matters is the submission of all under a common law, and a law can only be common if it is decided by all, which points to a republic with elected representat-

174 Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 428.

175 Cloots, 430.

176 Cloots, 434.

ives for the one thousand departments of the world, according to Cloots. It is best to understand Cloots's 'system' of universal republic as an extension of how France was organised before 1793 rather than after 1793 when democracy and liberty were paradoxically reduced, and ultimately ended in the Terror. The question is how much Cloots can be held responsible and representative for that as a member of the Convention. It is the Convention after all that reconducted monthly the *Comité de Salut Public*, the *de facto* executive branch *in lieu* of the king, and voted for its extraordinary executive powers.

However, this was not the case at the time Cloots wrote. Cloots considered the principles of the French republic as universal. His optimism of the French Enlightenment and the revolution is very apparent in that Cloots justifies how being French or being part of France actually means less being French but being oneself and being independent:

Appartenir à la France, c'est appartenir à soi-même ; se gouverner à la française, c'est avoir une municipalité de son choix, une assemblée représentative de son choix, une administration de son choix.¹⁷⁷

The fundamental principle of the French republic is after all to respect individual liberty and equality, and thus to give the possibility to elect any official with authoritative power. During this time, there was actually an explosion of elections, as Woloch notes, since article 3 of the *Declaration* states that 'no body and no individual may exercise authority that does not emanate from the nation expressly'. As a result, enfranchised citizens were called to elect any position of authority: mayors, municipal officers, municipal councils, sometimes national guard officers, and justices of the peace. Citizens also participated in large cities to assemblies of the neighbourhood sections, designating section officials and committees, 'convened in *primary assemblies* to choose electors to fill a host of other elective positions', and even the bishops and priests had to be selected by electors.¹⁷⁸ This French government was therefore a highly grassroots-based and participative one, even if abstentions were high particularly for less local elections. This was what Cloots had in mind with his '*se gouverner à la française*', and why he thought that it was not only unproblematic for a large republic, but even its strength—the larger, the stronger. Moreover, all these representatives are supposed to be working within a rigorous legal framework that would prevent any individual of becoming too important, or

177 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 493.

178 Woloch, *The New Regime*, 60–63.

more important that the function occupied. But even so, the principle of an open and free exchange of ideas should put in check this individual in front of the sovereign—the electors.¹⁷⁹

With the execution of the king and the new republic without monarchy, Cloots begins to refer more intensively to the principles of unity and indivisibility, together with the theme of universality. Cloots starts to add the ‘year of liberty’ (meaning the year the Assembly proclaimed itself national) and the ‘year of equality’ (meaning the year the king was removed from power) to his writings. Then he states the birth year of the republic. Cloots also starts at this moment to accentuate the place, Paris, as ‘*cosmopole*’ or ‘*chef-lieu du globe*’. Cloots’s view is that Paris is not only the capital city of the French republic, but of the coming universal republic. This is a period of profound unrest with wars at the borders and enemies already on French soil, almost a civil war within the borders, still a financial crisis inherited from the *ancien régime*, and no executive branch. In order to palliate the absence of executive, the *Comité de Salut Public* was instated on 9 April 1793 with nine members; extended to twelve after Robespierre’s election on 27 July.

However, the political context of 1793 is not of significance for Cloots’s general view, except that he utters his last book, *Bases constitutionnelles*, with the vocabulary of anti-federalism and the mention of struggles between *Girondins* and *Montagnards*. But the principle of unity of the human race and sovereignty of the human race based on the universal principles of liberty and equality had already been mentioned in his previous writings. *Bases constitutionnelles* was published at the occasion of the debates on a new constitution, but Cloots had already written most of it before, as he mentions on 23 November 1792 in a letter ‘aux assemblées primaires du Hainaut, du Brabant, de la Flandre, etc.’.¹⁸⁰ In *Bases constitutionnelles*, Cloots does mention these countries towards the end of his speech and how and why he would integrate them in the republic.¹⁸¹ Moreover, this published speech as pamphlet is not a proposition for a constitution, but a proposition for a decree that the Convention should take in order to incorporate automatically any country who would recognise the principle of the sovereignty of the human race.

179 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 486–487.

180 ‘Je n’entrerais pas ici dans le fond de la question, car je monterai incessamment à la tribune de la Convention nationale, sans l’intermédiaire d’aucun comité quelconque, pour appuyer la demande judicieuse des habitants de Nice, de la Savoie, de Porrentruy, de Siple, de Mayence, de Sarrebruck, et d’autres pays environnants. Mon travail vous parviendra : mais en attendant, ne précipitez rien’. In Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 432.

181 Cloots, ‘Bases constitutionnelles’, 500.

Bases constitutionnelles presents Cloots's suggestions to the constitutional debates, and a summary of his political thinking within the context of 1793 and the question of federalism. The same principle of a single universal republic as explained before:

Les corps provinciaux et les corps nationaux sont les plus grands fléaux du genre humain. Quelle ignorance, quelle barbarie de nous parquer en différentes corporations rivales, pendant que nous avons l'avantage d'habiter une des moindres planètes de la sphere céleste ! Nous multiplions nos jalousies, nos querelles, en divisant l'intérêt commun, la force commune. Un corps ne se fait pas la guerre à lui-même, et le genre humain vivra en paix, lorsqu'il ne formera qu'un seul corps, la nation unique.¹⁸²

Cloots's republicanism is based on the principle of liberty, a liberty understood as non-domination. This liberty as non-domination is the source of the sovereignty of the human race and the universal republic of the united individuals. The reasoning, philosophically, is simple: nature is universal, and from nature comes natural rights, which are equally universal. Liberty is a natural right, universal to all individual human beings. Because of this very fact, an individual cannot be free on her own, meeting another free individual human being leads to the necessary domination of one over another. As a result, two individuals form a group in which they decide to delegate their sovereignty to protect their liberty over someone else's domination. This group is thus sovereign, but upon meeting another group, equally sovereign according to the same natural principle, they have to combine in order to preserve the liberty of all. This is in the interest of peace and harmony for humankind. From this it results that, since only the human race inhabits the earth, only the human race can be sovereign in order to protect liberty for every individual on earth. Cloots does not trust that even independent republics would not seek domination over one another, as history has shown with the Italian republics.

Federalism—understood as a confederation of sovereign states—is a system to avoid because it is contrary to nature and against reason, according to Cloots. However, this does not mean that the system should be imposed on free populations; kings should be fought, but populations should be convinced. A free people will think about the principle and see the advantages that it brings—peace and independence.¹⁸³ Moreover, this universal republic based on the sovereignty of the human race leaves local populations free to decide how to spend public money, once taxes have been collected and redistributed worldwide:

182 Cloots, 'La République universelle', 245.

183 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 477.

Il n'y a pas d'autorité plus tutélaire que celle du genre humain ; il donne la plus grande latitude à chaque section de l'Empire : tous les individus, sous son gouvernement, jouiront d'une égale portion de liberté. ... Qu'importe à la société, pourvu que l'impôt rentre, et que les députés arrivent en raison de la répartition universelle ; chacun fera le déboursé de ses fantaisies particulières. La différence des costumes, des cultures et des cultes ne troublera point l'harmonie sociale. Pas d'autre règle à cet égard que la convenance topographique.¹⁸⁴

Cloots makes it clear that it is not a centralised government that he has in mind, even if he sees Paris as the centre of everything. Local populations have got freedom to choose over matters that impact their lives in matters of politics, education, justice, industry and agriculture. Moreover, Cloots argues that this will enable greater solidarity when a region in the world is devastated by a natural disaster or plagued by famine.¹⁸⁵

The executive branch will ultimately become redundant once the universal republic is established.¹⁸⁶ In this universal republic, according to Cloots there will be no more use for an executive branch since there will be no need for foreign affairs, an army, a fleet, or stock market speculation in a universal republic.¹⁸⁷ Only the ministry of Interior and the ministry of Justice will still be needed, under the control of the deputies, whose other only job will be 'la surveillance générale' and liaising with the 'arrondissements administratifs'.¹⁸⁸ The ministry of Interior, however, will no longer have to deal with obstacles due to wars, supplying the armies, dealing with obstacles to importations and exportations, debt, loan, or the stagnation of employment, since all barriers to trade and exchange will disappear.¹⁸⁹ For Cloots all economic ills stemmed from wars and international instability. By the same token, justice will hardly be needed as there will be 'le calme de l'harmonie universelle'.¹⁹⁰

But until then, Cloots laid out the plans for the organisation of the current executive committee. What Cloots calls the 'executive duty' — in order to emphasise that power resides in the sovereign human race — should consist of a committee of seven ministers nominated among members of the 'legislative duty'. At the time Cloots was writing, there were six ministers for the Convention: foreign affairs, war, justice, interior, finance, navy and colonies. Cloots suggests adding a seventh minister, who

184 Cloots, 'Bases constitutionnelles', 478.

185 Cloots, 488.

186 Cloots, 489.

187 Cloots, 487.

188 Cloots, 487.

189 Cloots, 487.

190 Cloots, 489.

would be in charge of ‘arts, sciences, agriculture, manufactures, and trade’.¹⁹¹ This composition of ministers stemming from the assembly aims at avoiding that the executive branch be elected directly, which would beget conflicts as it would create a *de facto* a second chamber even worse than bicameral proposals.¹⁹² This is thus a revision of his earlier proposal to elect a European king in *République universelle*.

It is therefore a very reduced kind of state that Cloots proposes. The universal republic will not even possess anything, as property will solely be private and not public. Here Cloots has infinite faith in the workings of economics without the need for any external intervention, except regulations for avoiding theft and other unfair competition. It is however unclear if this is plain wishful thinking considering the contemporary food shortages and economic difficulties, but Cloots states optimistically: ‘La paix perpétuelle maintiendra un niveau perpétuel entre la consommation et les consommateurs, entre l’ouvrage et les ouvriers’.¹⁹³ Again, this is a thought very similar to that of the *physiocrates*, as described in the chapter on natural law. By the same token, and with a sort of reverse argument, Cloots rejects another opinion in France about forming ‘sister republics’ or buffer republics at the borders of the French republic. Cloots observes that republics are more prone to trade than kingdoms, and since trade is the major source of disagreement among individuals, it would be best to have only one republic rather than several republics who could potentially go to war for economic reasons.¹⁹⁴

Liberty, Virtue, Patriotism

Throughout Cloots’s writings, liberty appears in the singular as ‘la liberté’. However, there are several understandings of liberty behind this single label ‘la liberté’, as seen above. Cloots’s understanding of liberty is the absence of domination over the individual’s life, as well as the absence of the threat of domination over the individual’s life. Moreover, liberty is often expressed as a feeling. This is the reason why Cloots considers liberty sufficient to form a community as humankind. The strong feeling of recovered liberty that the end of the monarchy provided should be sufficient to bond a nation together, in his view.

There are several examples of liberty expressed as a *sentiment naturel* (natural feeling) throughout Cloots’s revolutionary writings: ‘Comme si le ciel et la terre et

¹⁹¹ Cloots, 485.

¹⁹² Cloots, 485.

¹⁹³ Cloots, 489.

¹⁹⁴ Cloots, 483.

le cœur humain n'étaient pas empreints des emblèmes de la liberté'.¹⁹⁵ Being a materialist, Cloots obviously does not believe that the soul is the source of this natural feeling towards liberty. It is to be found in the heart as an organ, just like the lungs enables one to breathe, the heart enables to love liberty: 'Tant que l'homme aura des poumons il respirera l'air, et tant qu'il aura un cœur, il aimera la liberté'.¹⁹⁶ And since it is a feeling, more than a rational and abstract thought, it leads equally to emotional actions: 'L'amour de la liberté a son bandeau, et ses fureurs'.¹⁹⁷ This is also why Cloots *excuses* several acts of violence, and even atrocities, committed by Parisian crowds, as seen previously. But the most important motor of this feeling is that it drives individuals, and populations to revolt against slavery or any other attack on liberty: 'L'enthousiasme de la liberté l'emporterait sur le fanatisme de l'esclavage'.¹⁹⁸ Had Cloots lived longer, perhaps he would have developed this idea into a philosophy of history. This cannot be known, but it is certain that liberty, for Cloots, has, as a natural feeling, the value of a law of nature in the 'science of man'.

It must therefore be taken into consideration when deciding on human institutions in a constitution since it forms the basis of virtue and thereby morality. It is certain, however, that Cloots theorised liberty as a moving factor in history because, in a Machiavellian way, it makes citizens better and more effective soldiers when they passionately defend their liberty:

La liberté se fonde sur la force des citoyens ; le despotisme se fonde sur la faiblesse des sujets. Assemblez-vous, éclairez-vous, armez-vous : voilà le cri d'un gouvernement libre ; dispersez-vous, n'ayez ni lumières, ni armes ; voilà le cri d'un gouvernement arbitraire. Avec ces données, il est facile de prévoir la chute prochaine des tyrans. Qu'est-ce qu'un citoyen français ? C'est un homme libre, plus un fusil. Qu'est-ce qu'un habitant de l'Autriche ? C'est un homme dégradé et désarmé. Comme le fusil est un ingrédient essentiel pour la recette de la liberté, tâchons de le rendre aussi formidable que possible.¹⁹⁹

Republican patriotism, based on the feeling of liberty, is therefore stronger than royal patriotism, and that is why French soldiers ought to be victorious against Austrian soldiers. Liberty is what unites the 'citizens' of a republic, and universal liberty is what unites the citizens of the world: 'La liberté unit les citoyens du monde ; et les despotes se disputent la dépouille de Darius'.²⁰⁰ Darius (c. 550–486

¹⁹⁵ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 105.

¹⁹⁶ Cloots, 110.

¹⁹⁷ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 199.

¹⁹⁸ Cloots, 229.

¹⁹⁹ Cloots, 181.

²⁰⁰ Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 153.

BCE) was king of the Persian Achaemenid Empire and he is probably mentioned here by Cloots because he invaded Greece before a Greek revolt, supported by Greek city-states, defeated his armies at the Battle of Marathon in 490 BCE. Cloots perceives this episode as the victory of republican Athens and the city-states over the Persian kingdom.

With this understanding of liberty it can be said that it is spontaneous and universal to all men. Questions of the colour of the skin do not matter: 'Mon système de la libération générale n'admet ni colonies, ni métropoles, ni différence de couleurs, ni différence de nations'.²⁰¹ Nor do questions of climate and geography, as seen previously: 'la liberté, quoi qu'en dise Montesquieu, est une plante qui s'acclimate partout'.²⁰² Furthermore, given Cloots's conception of humankind as truly universal, it can be said that liberty is a feeling shared by every single human being on earth. This is how and why it enables one to constitute a moral and sentimental community, the community of the human race. Moreover, since liberty is also the source of sovereignty, this entails that sovereignty is also felt, and if liberty is the sole source for a moral community of mankind, sovereignty is also something to be felt by mankind.

Ne laissons pas échapper un principe que je voudrais graver dans le cœur de tous les citoyens de l'univers ; c'est que les différents peuples ne sont que des fractions du souverain unique, des portions morcelées, languissantes, imparfaites, de la nation du genre humain.²⁰³

The principle of the sovereignty of the human race, and thus of the nation of the human race, is not an abstract idea to be pondered by philosophers; it is a feeling to be 'carved in the hearts of the citizens of the universe'. This way, in a universal republic, everyone being free, there would be no reason to fight anymore, since previous reasons leading to wars were kings' capricious and insatiable will to conquer, or economic rivalries between competing republics. Patriotism, as the love of liberty, the love of laws, the love of the republic, is universal, and there is no one to fight wars against.

In considering liberty as a natural feeling, Cloots is close to Rousseau in *Discours sur l'inégalité* and *Émile*, Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, and Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* on moral sentimentalism explaining the capacity of man, and therefore of humankind, to recognise good and evil. However, if liberty is a natural feeling and leads to a natural moral, it does not for Cloots entail that man is naturally good:

²⁰¹ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 194.

²⁰² Cloots, 'La République universelle', 249.

²⁰³ Cloots, *Ecrits révolutionnaires*, 187.

L'homme n'est ni bon ni méchant : il est ce qu'il doit être dans les circonstances qui le meuvent. Un confesseur expérimenté disait à ses pénitents : Dites-moi votre état, votre profession, et je vous dirai vos péchés. La connaissance du cœur humain est d'une importance majeure dans une république, et la liberté court moins de risques en croyant les hommes méchants que de leur attribuer une bonté chimérique. N'ayons pas la manie de vouloir être meilleurs que la nature : je suis bon comme elle et mauvais comme elle.²⁰⁴

It is best to take as a starting point that man is hypothetically evil rather than good in order to decide how to establish a constitution, the legal framework which organises social, political, and economic life. Good and evil are equally present in nature and in man, it is therefore preferable to observe this consideration from nature rather than as an abstract notion of humankind as inherently good, in order to draft a constitution.

But when it comes to a constitution for a universal republic, it becomes then necessary to make a difference between universal virtue and local virtue. 'O tempora o mores', seems to say Cloots with Cicero, when he writes that virtue and vice should be defined as what is beneficial or detrimental to society as decided by its members. There is no mention of Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) in Cloots's work, but it sounds very close to his utilitarian principles developed in *A Fragment on Government* (1776). With this definition, Cloots argues, it is possible to distinguish between 'universal virtues' and 'local virtues'.²⁰⁵ Cloots recognises that laws and ideas differ from one society to another based on diversity of needs explained by history, culture, or geography. Therefore, these discussions are left out of the constitution of the universal republic to local self-determination. What matters most, perhaps, as a universal virtue is the freedom of expression and opinion: '... comme si la république pouvait exister six mois, sans l'indépendance des écrivains...'.²⁰⁶ But the freedom left to local self-determination considering virtues and vices is quite large, since Cloots considers that Chinese laws allowing infanticide, or Plato's advice on pederasty will be left to local determination.²⁰⁷ What matters in Cloots's system is that laws protect the social sphere from natural individual instincts to conquer, destroy, and dominate.²⁰⁸ So, what will determine these laws according to this system is their social utility as considered by its members; as Cloots puts it, the better a law the more powerful.²⁰⁹ Self-interest, self-love, lead to common interest and the love of the *patrie*, meaning the country where liberty is protected, the republic: 'la

204 Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 169.

205 Cloots, 123.

206 Cloots, 125.

207 Cloots, 123.

208 Cloots, 127.

209 Cloots, 129.

liberté civile est une force coercive qui enchaîne tous les despotismes individuels sous le despotisme de la loi'.²¹⁰ One thing is certain, liberty in a republic is more likely to lead human nature towards virtue, while slavery in a monarchy is more likely to lead to vice, which Cloots compares to Dante's depiction of Hell: 'Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate'.²¹¹

As to equality, for it is also the laws of the republic that must take into account natural inequalities in order to protect the weakest against the strongest, and to reward individuals according to talent and virtue (as previously defined as civism, what benefits society). Natural law provides equality in rights by birth, but the law of nature provides inequality by birth. It is therefore the task of a republic to make sure that the equality of rights is maintained so that natural inequalities do not negate them.²¹²

Conclusion

Cloots's thought is part of the language of republicanism with the following characteristics: reference to Roman constitution, liberty as non-domination, prevalence of law. What is missing from the language of republicanism in Cloots's thought is the reference to trade and corruption, when Cloots considers trade as a positive part of a republic, and luxury even being source of many good side effects such as a higher interest in arts and sciences, provided that wealth is equally redistributed and that no one is left in poverty. Some elements of classical republicanism is present in Cloots's early writings, as well as Machiavellian themes of republicanism, but Cloots is fully aware of the dated nature of classical republicanism. Modern republicanism is based on natural law, the Enlightenment, and the science of man: all are citizens in this modern republic due to their liberty and equality at birth. Moreover, Cloots does not consider positive liberty. There is in Cloots a clear influence of English republican authors, such as Locke, Hume, and the authors of *The Federalist Papers*. To these characteristics, one could add other ones in Cloots's republicanism such as: the rejection of theology and monarchical ideology. Cloots's republicanism is an alternative in political thought (although first with a discussion of the role of monarchy and royalty in a republic) based on the importance of social science for the functioning of of the republic and the cosmopolitan education of citizens in general.

²¹⁰ Cloots, 127.

²¹¹ Cloots, 'La République universelle', 256.

²¹² Cloots, 'L'orateur du genre humain', 138.

Cloots's republicanism is a republic that takes into consideration the 'science of man', the observation of human nature, in order to insure that the equality in rights is respected among individuals when natural inequality may lead to the domination of one individual over another weaker individual. Regarding the prevalence of law, it is above all the law of nature that primes for Cloots in that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* is the first law and constitution of the universal republic. And in that, and also because Cloots rejects the state of nature unless it is the same as the social state, Cloots's republicanism can be said to be akin to 'natural republicanism'. Cloots rejects the idea of a social contract; he writes about a 'primitive contract', by which he means the agreement made when a free human being meets another free human being and they need to decide of laws to maintain their independence (i.e. their liberty without domination by the other). But what is different in Cloots is that this natural republicanism is considered universal, that it is based on 'cosmopolitan reason' and the concept of 'sovereignty of the human race', and that it replaces a theocratic system of political and social science with a *cosmocratic* one.

7 Cosmopolitan Republicanism

La révolution française n'a pas eu de territoire propre ; ... elle a formé, au-dessus de toutes les nationalités particulières une patrie intellectuelle commune....
Tocqueville, 1856¹

Cloots, as argued in the previous chapters, developed a classical republican rhetoric and fashioned himself as an 'orator' of a single and united human race. His mission was to discover the laws of the 'science of man' in politics based on the observation of nature. This led him to proclaim the 'universal republic' of the 'sovereign nation of the human race'. Cloots's 'system' can be considered within the framework of what Edelstein has identified as 'natural republicanism' among the Jacobins. Natural republicanism is characterized by the absence of a transition from a natural state to a social state, or the view that the social state is the natural state itself. Consequently, it dispenses with the notion of a social contract and relies on a minimalistic constitution, as nature serves as the sole guide with its laws, beginning with the rights of man. However, Cloots's perspective encompasses more than just natural republicanism; it encompasses the concept of a universal republic rather than solely a natural republic.

The universalism of the French Revolution and the French Republic was not unique to Cloots. Palmer highlights the widespread ideological affinity towards the French Republic throughout Europe. He cites Fichte, who in 1799 declared it 'evident' that 'only the French Republic can be considered by the just man as his true country'.² What Palmer aims to demonstrate is the appeal of 'democracy' in Europe and America, with 'democracy' understood as an ideal of equality or a rejection of ancient forms of social hierarchy.³

Cloots's system, as extensively explored and contextualized in the preceding chapters, can be classified as a form of *cosmopolitan republicanism*. Other scholars who have studied Cloots's ideas have explicitly or implicitly referred to his thought as 'cosmopolitan republicanism'. They have highlighted numerous essential elements within Cloots's system, which have been elucidated in the present study. However, these scholars have not provided a precise definition of what 'cosmopol-

1 Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la Révolution*, ed. J.-P. Mayer, Folio/Histoire (Paris: Gallimard, [1856] 1967), 68.

2 Robert Roswell Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, with a foreword by David Armitage, Princeton Classics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014 [1959, 1964]), 7.

3 Palmer, 6.

itan' signifies in the context of Cloots's thought, eighteenth-century French political thought, and among the revolutionaries.

In the introduction, I proposed considering Remi's concept of '*cosmopolisme*' as a starting point for understanding late eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism. Remi identified humanity as the foundation of social interactions, emphasizing the importance of expressing oneself in the language of nature. Humanity was also associated with the Enlightenment project, particularly the work of the *Encyclopédie*, which focused on reason and the production of knowledge about humankind. Remi also acknowledged the presence of republican ideals in the discourse, drawing connections to Fénelon and republican virtues. Throughout the previous chapters, I explored themes such as reason, science, nature, humanity, and republicanism to illustrate Cloots's political thought, following an examination of his rhetoric and self-fashioning as the 'orator of the human race'.

Sentiment and reason were integral aspects of classical rhetoric, as a skilled orator was expected to persuade an audience of philosophical truths by appealing to their emotions. This played a significant role in the education of the revolutionaries, who put into practice their childhood ideals of republicanism within the National Assembly. In terms of reason, both the revolutionaries and Cloots adopted the conception of science as presented in the *Encyclopédie*, with the aim of developing a 'science of man' within a Newtonian paradigm. This science was envisioned as universal and grounded in the observation of nature, specifically the nature of human beings. However, Cloots introduced a limitation to this universal reason in light of possible disputes, which he reasonably argued. He employed the term 'cosmopolitan reason' to convey this notion. According to Cloots, certain virtues were universal, while others were specific to particular contexts, and the determination of what was beneficial or detrimental to society, referred to as civic virtue, was left to local decision-making.

Universal principles for humankind include liberty and equality in rights from birth, applicable to every individual of the human race regardless of cultural background, skin color, gender, geographical location, or any other determining factor. These principles of unity within the human race and the recognition of the individual as its fundamental unit are derived from the 'science of man' as expounded in the *Encyclopédie*. Liberty and equality are not only rational concepts but also deeply felt emotions that resonate within the hearts of all human beings. They serve as the basis for a communal bond, as every individual universally desires to be free and equal and seeks a political system that can safeguard and preserve their liberty and equality. Since individual liberty is an individual's sovereign power over herself or himself, a society of free individuals is one where they all are sovereign. According to this logic, for Cloots, unless some group of individuals decide to live in complete autarky from the rest of the world's population and without any contact, there is

only one sovereign—the entire human race. Since Bodin and Rousseau, sovereignty is understood as the power to make laws in contradistinction to government, which administers these laws.⁴ With the language of natural rights, parliamentary sovereignty gained a solid argument as the way to give individuals their sovereign power in a representative assembly. Cloots sets forth the concept of ‘sovereignty of the human race’, which is the logical conclusion to a ‘universal’ understanding of natural and civil rights. Republicanism is deemed the only rational system, unless proven otherwise by ‘cosmopolitan reason’, that can ensure the protection of liberty and equality. Thus, the establishment of a ‘universal republic’ becomes the means to guarantee liberty and equality for individuals across the globe by establishing an institution to the ‘sovereignty of the human race’.

Cloots’s cosmopolitan republicanism conceives sovereignty as singular and indivisible. It is rooted in the belief that individual human beings, inherently free and equal by natural law, come together and entrust their freedom and equality to a higher authority responsible for safeguarding and preserving this state of liberty and equality. However, this perspective does not rely on contract theory, as it regards the social state as the inherent and natural state of humanity. A republic, in this framework, is the sole means by which individuals can organize their government in a participatory manner and have agency in shaping the laws that govern their lives. Thus, since sovereignty resides solely within the human race, the republic is envisioned as the republic of the human race or the republic of united individuals.

However, this universal republic embraces a highly decentralized structure and comprises solely a capital city (in Cloots’s case, Paris) where representatives from all the rationally divided regions of the world convene to enact legislation deemed universal and oversee its implementation. The executive branch (or government) is minimized, and matters deemed local in nature are delegated to elected representatives at the local level for decision-making. One could easily imagine Cloots’s vision as an extension of what was happening during the revolution when all offices with an authority were subject to election in its local district.

According to Cloots, republicanism was a viable solution for a large nation, even extending to the entirety of humanity, due to the advancements of modern science in understanding human nature. He viewed the French Revolution as a rebirth of political and social organization, a republican Renaissance following the ‘Middle Ages’ of monarchism. The revival of ancient Roman and Greek republican ideals intersected with modern notions of the science of man, such as the general will, reason, and natural law, all of which were redefined in this context. By combining

4 Hammersley, *Republicanism*, 6–7.

modern science with a nostalgic vision of the golden age of antiquity, republicanism could be reinterpreted through universal and rational principles.

This notion of ‘Modern Antiquity’ paved the way for cosmopolitan republicanism. The science of man revealed the universal law of liberty and equality among individuals, emphasized the unity of the human species, challenged the concept of borders, and advocated for the unification of the entire human race under a single sovereign. It was only through a common law established by the general will that humanity could transcend wars and achieve prosperity. Cloots believed that a stronger republic would emerge when the general will prevailed, as it would prevent the accumulation of excessive power by particular wills. The issue that Cloots omits to address is the temporary state of things—even if we admit that a universal republic where a parliament debating the general will of the human race is possible. Is a small part of the world’s population self-declared ‘universal republic’ supposed to make laws and pretend it is a true general will of the sovereign human race, while waiting for the whole human race to join? Cloots thought so, and thought it was the fate of the French republic before it would be joined by the rest of the world.

In summary, Cloots embraced republicanism as a practical solution for large nations, including the global community, by leveraging the insights of modern science. He saw the French Revolution as a revival of republican ideals and merged them with contemporary understandings of human nature, resulting in a cosmopolitan republicanism that aimed to unite humanity under the principles of liberty, equality, and a shared universal law. Cloots believed that all populations would agree and want to join this universal republic. The only reason why this would not happen is if populations are led by tyrants keeping them in a state of ignorance. Here Cloots was conflicted about what action to take. At first, his faith in reason to triumph led him to plead for pacifism. Then, the threat of revolutionary wars convinced him it was better to save the republic by fighting to ‘deliver’ at least buffer countries from monarchical tyranny, and form a stronger republic.

Cosmopolitan republicanism, as exemplified by Cloots in the French Revolution, has not received comprehensive scholarly attention. However, considering the distinction between universal and local principles and the decentralized and grass-roots nature of the government, it is more accurate to characterize Cloots’s republicanism as cosmopolitan rather than simply universal. Throughout his works, Cloots demonstrated a philosophical commitment to developing a universally applicable social science that would establish universal principles while allowing for local determination of particular principles.

Contrary to the arguments put forth by Habermas and his followers, reason was not exclusively conceived as universal and inflexibly foundational for cosmopolitan thinking. Cloots’s case illustrates an understanding of the necessity to engage with diverse rational perspectives and foster communication among global populations.

He referred to this as ‘cosmopolitan reason’, which bears resemblance to Habermas’s concept of ‘Kommunikative Rationalität’.⁵

The significance of cosmopolitan republicanism extends beyond its relevance to scholars of republicanism and the French Revolution. It offers insights into the epistemology of social sciences and political theory in a globalized world, providing a framework for understanding how universal principles can coexist with local variations. By studying cosmopolitan republicanism, we gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of governance and the challenges of fostering communication and cooperation among diverse populations.

It is important to acknowledge that while this study focused on Clouts, there were other notable figures in the French Revolution who shared similar views on cosmopolitan republicanism and warrant further investigation. Among them, Thomas Paine, Volney, Condorcet, Kant, Wollstonecraft, and de Gouges stand out as key figures whose political ideas align with the framework of cosmopolitan republicanism, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of its various manifestations.

Volney, for instance, has been examined for his broader perspectives on empire and his critique of European claims of superiority.⁶ Similarly, Condorcet’s ideas on the global spread of republicanism have been explored in scholarly works.⁷ Paine, whose thought is more familiar to Anglophone scholars, has been studied in the context of international relations theory as well as for his constitutional thinking within the historical backdrop of the time.⁸ It is also essential to include early feminist writers who fought for the consequences of universal natural rights applied to society as rights of both male and female citizens. Olympe de Gouges (1748–793) has received extensive scholarly attention from the point of view of feminism, but

5 Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie Des Kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1981).

6 Antoine Lilti, ‘« Et la civilisation deviendra générale » : L’Europe de Volney ou l’orientalisme à l’épreuve de la Révolution’, *La Révolution française. Cahiers de l’Institut d’histoire de la Révolution française*, no. 4: Dire et faire l’Europe à la fin du XVIIIème siècle (June 2011); Alexander Cook, ‘“The Great Society of the Human Species”: Volney and the Global Politics of Revolutionary France’, *Intellectual History Review* 23, no. 3 (2013): 309–328.

7 Yves Bénot, ‘Condorcet et la république universelle’, in *Condorcet : Homme des Lumières et de la Révolution*, ed. Anne-Marie Chouillet and Pierre Crépel (Fontenay Saint-Cloud: ENS éditions, 1997), 251–262; Anne-Marie Chouillet and Pierre Crépel, eds., *Condorcet : Homme des Lumières et de la Révolution* (Fontenay Saint-Cloud: ENS éditions, 1997).

8 Robert Lamb, ‘The Liberal Cosmopolitanism of Thomas Paine’, *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 3 (July 2014): 636–648; Thomas C. Walker, ‘The Forgotten Prophet: Tom Paine’s Cosmopolitanism and International Relations’, *International Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 1 (March 2000): 51–72; Richard Whatmore, ‘Thomas Paine’, chap. 19 in *Constitutions and the Classics: Patterns of Constitutional Thought from Fortescue to Bentham*, ed. Denis Galligan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 414–437.

her political thought could also be investigated under the angle of cosmopolitan republicanism. For instance, her idea of building a society of ‘perfect harmony’ based on a social contract with equal rights between genders, and her idea of ‘global family’, as well as her defence of abolitionism.⁹ By the same token, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) participated to the French revolution and, similarly to Paine and Cloots, wrote her answer to Burke’s pamphlet against the revolution. She not only defended the rights of women, but also condemned slavery.¹⁰

A thorough examination of cosmopolitan republicanism during the French Revolution should incorporate Kant’s contributions, as he drew inspiration from the movement while formulating his own ideas. This is particularly evident in his seminal work on perpetual peace.¹¹ In addition, it is important to consider the works of lesser-known authors like Pierre-André Gargas (1728–1801), whose publication was supported by Benjamin Franklin, and André Guillaume Resnier de Goué (1729–1811).¹² By studying these diverse thinkers, we can develop a thorough view of their contributions to cosmopolitan republicanism during the French Revolution.

Furthermore, to get the full picture of cosmopolitan republicanism in the age of Atlantic revolutions, it is crucial to extend the scope of investigation to other revolutionary movements. The American, Haitian, and Spanish American revolutions provide rich sources for such an inquiry. In the context of the American Revolution, Benjamin Franklin, who served as an ambassador in France, constitutes an obvious and important link to the French Revolution, and scholars have studied his cosmopolitan vision.¹³ Cillerai studied Franklin together with Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), Elizabeth Graeme Fergusson (1737–1801), Philip Mazzei (1730–1816), and Oludah Equiano (1745–1797).¹⁴ Jefferson’s cosmopolitanism has been studied elsewhere as well.¹⁵ Alexander Hamilton (1755/57–1804) should also be included. Incor-

9 Olympe de Gouges, *Écrits politiques*, ed. Olivier Blanc, vol. 1: 1788–1791 (Paris: Côté-femmes éditions, 1993); Olympe de Gouges, *Écrits politiques*, ed. Olivier Blanc, vol. 2: 1792–1793 (Paris: Côté-femmes éditions, 1993).

10 Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler, 7 vols. (London: Routledge, 1990).

11 Reidar Maliks, *Kant’s Politics in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

12 Gargas, *Projet de paix perpétuelle*; Resnier de Goué, *République universelle*.

13 Thomas J. Schlereth, *The Cosmopolitan Ideal in Enlightenment Thought, Its Form and Function in the Ideas of Franklin, Hume, and Voltaire, 1694–1790* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).

14 Chiara Cillerai, *Voices of Cosmopolitanism in Early American Writing and Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

15 Hannah Spahn, ‘Thomas Jefferson, Cosmopolitanism, and the Enlightenment’, in *A Companion to Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Francis D. Cogliano (Chichester; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 364–379.

porating minority voices, Levecq has studied the thought of three black men who travelled in the Atlantic world and developed republican ideas: Jacobus Capitein (ca. 1717–1747), Jean-Baptiste Belley (ca. 1746–1805), and John Marrant (1755–1791).¹⁶ Other notable thinkers such as Richard Price (1723–1791), John Adams (1735–1826), Joel Barlow (1754–1812) should also be considered for their contributions to the discourse on cosmopolitan republicanism during this period.¹⁷

The study should encompass the Haitian Revolution, as exploring the political thought of Toussaint L'Ouverture would provide valuable insights into the intersection of cosmopolitan republicanism and anti-colonial struggles. Moreover, the Spanish American revolutions, characterized by independence movements across Latin America, also exhibited elements of cosmopolitan republicanism. Simon has already made the argument for including the political thought of the 'Creole revolution' into studies of the Atlantic revolutions.¹⁸ Examining the political thought of figures such as Francisco de Miranda (1750–1816), Simón Bolívar (1783–1830), and Antonio Nariño (1765–1823) is essential to understanding the presence and influence of cosmopolitan republican ideals within these movements.

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of cosmopolitan republicanism within these diverse revolutionary contexts, we can gain a deeper understanding of the alternative paths that could have shaped contemporary nation-states. This knowledge can inform contemporary theories of cosmopolitan republicanism and contribute to our reflections on the future of political organization and governance.

¹⁶ Christine Levecq, *Black Cosmopolitans: Race, Religion, and Republicanism in an Age of Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Rémy Duthille, 'Richard Price on Patriotism and Universal Benevolence', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, no. 28 (2012): 24–41; John C. Havard, *Hispanicism and Early US Literature: Spain, Mexico, Cuba, and the Origins of US National Identity* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2018).

¹⁸ Joshua Simon, *The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought*, Problems of International Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

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