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*Usbek to Rhedi in Venice*

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I have never heard anyone speak of public law [1] without first trying to examine closely the origin of societies, which appears ridiculous to me. If men formed none, if they separated and fled each other, we would have to ask why, and examine why they stay apart. But they are born all linked to each other ; a son is born in his father's house and there remains : such is society, and the cause of society.

Public law is better known in Europe than in Asia ; yet it can be said that the passions of princes, the patience of peoples, and the flattery of authors have corrupted all its principles.

This law, such as it is today, is a science that teaches princes to what extent they can violate justice without harming their own interests. What a purpose, Rhedi, trying to make iniquity into a system so as to toughen their conscience, giving its rules, forming its principles, and drawing its consequences !

The unlimited authority of our sublime sultans, which has no rule but itself, does not produce more monsters than this unworthy art that seeks to make justice bend, however inflexible it is.

One would say, Rhedi, that there are two very different justices : one that decides individual matters, and prevails in civil law ; and another which decides the disputes that arise between peoples, which dominates public law, as if public law was not itself a civil law, not to be sure that of a particular country, but of the world.

I shall explain to you in another letter my thought thereupon.

*Paris this 1st day of the moon of Zilhagé 1716*

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[1] The term *droit public* is a synonym of *droit des gens* or international law, as the letter's last paragraph reminds us ; the only issue here is therefore between a conquering people and a conquered one.