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Intellectual Encounters and Social Change:
Henri La Fontaine and the Reformist Contexts
of the Belle Epoque[*]

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and Christophe Verbruggen*

Henri La Fontaine is primarily remembered for his pacifist activism, his Nobel Peace Prize (1913) and his collaboration with the bibliographer Paul Otlet. Yet he was also representative of broader developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: in terms of his different interests and activisms, La Fontaine was emblematic of reformist currents in fin-de-siècle Europe. With his overlapping commitments in the fields of politics, jurisprudence, sociology, pacifism, feminism, freemasonry and the arts, he typified the *nebuleuse reformatrice* – a term that the sociologist Christian Topolov has coined to describe French reformist networks.[1] Within this 'nebula', progressive liberals, reformist socialists and Christian democrats pursued their shared ambition to contribute to human and social progress.[2] Their motives were an ambiguous mixture of social optimism and underlying cultural pessimism. The *Belle Epoque* was characterised by such tensions: technological achievements, scientific discoveries and cultural exchanges coincided with intense social and political antagonisms at the local, national and international level.[3]

The period between the 1880s and the outbreak of the Great War also saw the emergence of a new category in the public sphere: the figure of the intellectual. La Fontaine was a Belgian example of this type, yet the birth of the intellectual was a pan-European and transnational phenomenon.[4] Many historians recognise the French

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[1] Christian TOPALOV (ed.), *Laboratoires du nouveau siècle: la nébuleuse réformatrice et ses réseaux en France, 1880–1914* (Paris: E.H.E.S.S, 1999).

[2] Marc ANGENOT, 'L'invention de l'Humanité et le sujet du Progrès', in Pierre Ouellet (ed.), *Le soi et l'autre : l'énonciation de l'identité dans les contextes interculturels* (Québec City: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2003), pp. 363–80.

[3] For the Belgian Belle Epoque: Gita DENECKERE, *1900: België op het breukvlak van twee eeuwen* (Tielt: Lannoo, 2006) and Christophe VERBRUGGEN, *Schrijverschap tijdens de Belgische belle époque. Een sociaal-culturele geschiedenis* (Gent-Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2007).

[4] Christophe CHARLE, *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle: essai d'histoire comparé* (Paris: L'Univers historique, 1996). The Belgian particularities are discussed in Marnix BEYEN and Paul ARON, 'L'histoire des intellectuelles en Belgique: spécificités locales et actualité de la recherche', in Michel LEYMAIRE and Jean-

'Manifesto of the Intellectuals' of 1898 – the widely-known petition that was published during the Dreyfus affair – as the birth certificate of the intellectual.[5] The affair itself was no more than the catalyst in an ongoing process, yet it developed into a *lieux de mémoire* for intellectual involvement in politics, conserved by organisations such as the *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* in France.[6] The self-awareness of intellectuals dovetailed with a social commitment that stressed the dignity of the new professions; it also created opportunities to affirm one's status vis-à-vis those who moved the levers of political, cultural, and economic power. Contemporaries held the intellectual worker responsible for the global *machine sociale* as well as for cultural progress.[7]

At the turn of the century, a growing number of Belgians shared this sense of responsibility. Intellectuals such as La Fontaine moved in sociological circles and taught at the New University (*Université Nouvelle*) in Brussels – the settings which are the focus of this essay. In many instances, the involvement in national networks and institutions went hand in hand with an internationalist commitment: after all, the *Belle Époque* also saw the extension of transnational contacts through economic links, new political movements as well as developments in transport and communication.

Contemporary observers noted this process and viewed it as evidence of an ongoing movement towards greater global integration. The rising number of new international bodies during these years illustrates the extent to which the decades before 1914 were a period in which internationalism manifested itself at many levels and in different guises.[8] La Fontaine and his close associate Otlet formed part of wider effort to document the perceived drive towards

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François SIRINELLI (eds), *L'Histoire des intellectuels aujourd'hui* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2003), pp. 409–24. For an overview, see Eva SCHANDEVYL, 'Intellectuele geschiedenis in België: lange tijd een magere oogst', in Guy Vanthemsche et al. (eds), *De Tuin van het heden: Dertig jaar wetenschappelijk onderzoek over de hedendaagse Belgische samenleving* (Brussels: VUB Press, 2007), pp. 299–319.

[5] 'Le manifeste des intellectuels', *L'Aurore*, 14 January 1898. One day prior, *L'Aurore* had published Émile Zola's famous 'J'accuse'.

[6] On the Dreyfus affair in Belgium, see Jean Stengers, 'Belgique et l'Affaire Dreyfus', *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, 6 (1005), pp. 69–105. Henri La Fontaine's role in the league's Belgian branch deserves further research. Its features are discussed in VERBRUGGEN, *Schrijverschap tijdens de Belgische belle époque*, pp. 157–61.

[7] This was the way in which the French author Julien Luchaire outlined the principles of intellectual cooperation during the interwar years. Before the Great War, he headed the French School in Florence; in 1926 became the director of the League of Nations' Institute of Intellectual Cooperation: Julien LUCHAIRE, 'Principes de la coopération intellectuelle internationale', *Recueil des cours,* 9 (1925), pp. 316–17.

[8] Martin GEYER and Johannes PAULMANN, *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001).

internationalism. Although the outbreak of the First World War seemed to contradict the optimism expressed by many activists, the conflict also drew attention to the need for closer cooperation: as the American historian William MacDonald suggested in 1923, the conflict had asked intellectuals to take 'the world as [their] parish'.[9] The historian Gisèle Sapiro has described this process as the 'internationalisation of the intellectual field'.[10]

La Fontaine's internationalism was driven by intertwined ideas and convictions that are sometimes difficult to disentangle. This essau focuses on his sociological contacts, as Brussels sociology united several strands of La Fontaine's wider internationalist commitment: a belief in the benefits of scholarly exchange, an interest in social reform and the improvement of social relations, as well as a wider concern for international order.[11] The flourishing of sociology in Brussels was one example of an upturn that encompassed various parts of Belgium's cultural and intellectual life, including academia, literature, music and the arts – all of which were subject to influences from abroad.[12] Connected with the burning desire to make things new, the transnational social and artistic credo was one of the signatures of modernism.[13] Early on, La Fontaine had been associated with the lawyer, politician and author Edmond Picard, a driving force behind the creative vigour of fin-de-siècle Brussels. Furthermore, like Picard, he became involved in the Belgian Workers' Party in the 1890s as part of a process which saw a new generation of politicians – including Emile Vandervelde and Jules Destrée – come to the fore in Belgian socialism. They shared many political, cultural and social experiences that informed La Fontaine's public engagement, with sociology, law and freemasonry as key elements.

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[9] William MACDONALD, *The Intellectual Worker and His Work* (London: Cape, 1923), pp. 304–5. See also Daniel LAQUA, 'Transnational Intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations, and the Problem of Order', *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), pp. 223–47.

[10] Gisèle SAPIRO, 'L'internationalisation des champs intellectuels dans l'entre-deux-guerres: facteurs professionnels et politiques' in Gisèle Sapiro (ed.), *L'espace intellectuel en Europe: de la formation des Etats-nations à la mondialisation. XIXe-XXIe siècle* (Paris: La Découverte, 2009), pp. 111–46.

[11] Kaat WILS, and Anne RASMUSSEN, 'Brussels Sociology in a Transnational Perspective', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 90 (2012), pp. 65–88; Anne RASMUSSEN 'L'internationalisme belge au miroir de la France (1890–1914)', in Marc Quaghebuer et Nicole Savy (eds), *France-Belgique (1848–1914): Affinités-Ambiguïtés* (Brussels: Labor, 1997), pp. 105–22.

[12] Nathalie AUBERT, Pierre-Philippe FRAITURE and Patrick MCGUINESS (eds), *From Art Nouveau to Surrealism: Belgian Modernity in the Making* (London: Legenda, 2008).

[13] Peter GAY, *Modernism, the Lure of Heresy: From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), p. 48. For La Fontaine and the modernist context, see Lewis PYENSON and Christophe VERBRUGGEN, 'The Ego and the International: The Modernist Circle of George Sarton', *Isis*, 100 (2009), pp. 60–78.

La Fontaine and Brussels Sociology

The Brussels-based Society of Social and Political Studies (*Société d'Études Sociales et Politiques*, SESP) and Institute of Social Sciences (*Institut de Sciences Sociales*, ISS) provided early contexts for La Fontaine's public involvement as an intellectual. The SESP was created in 1890; its founder was Auguste Couvreur, a liberal politician, journalist and freemason who eventually acceded to the vice-presidency of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives. His significance for the organisation was illustrated by its demise soon after his death in 1894. Although most of its leading members were liberals and freemasons, the SESP proclaimed its political neutrality.[14] It provided space for divergent social and political views, presenting itself as the vehicle for open discussions on the social question. Its membership did, to some extent, back up these professions of diversity, as it ranged from progressives to *doctrinaire* liberals and protagonists of political Catholicism. The association's secretaries included Victor Brants, professor of political economy at the Catholic University of Leuven, and the Catholic politician A. Van Camp, director of higher education at the Ministry of Interior Affairs and Public Education. The executive committee was headed by the engineer, businessman and liberal senator Georges Montefiore Levi. Meanwhile, the list of vice-presidents featured Pierre Tempels, founder of the secularist *Ligue de l'Enseignement*; Gustave Rolin-Jacequemyns, a driving force behind the Institute of International Law in Ghent; and the then mayor of Brussels, Charles Buls.

La Fontaine served as a secretary of the SESP. His work within the organisation preceded his rise in socialist politics as reflected in his accession to the Senate in 1895. In 1893, he still stressed the desirability of political neutrality: 'To unite in one vast party all men of good intentions who aim to improve the lot of those who, both materially and morally, suffer under the present economic imbalance – this is the desire that inspires and motivates us.'[15] He acknowledged the existence of ideological differences but considered them of lesser importance:

> Certainly, the long-term ideals ... may differ: some regard socialism as a new religion, others consider the creation of a universal Catholic hierarchy, others hope to emancipate the human mind from any confessional discipline, and yet others envisage a science that determines the laws of the moral world as accurately as those of the physical world. These divergences disappear as far as the facts are concerned: in this respect, the aspirations and proposed measures are similar.[16]

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[14] August COUVREUR, 'Société des Études Sociales et Politiques – son origine, son but', *Revue Sociale et Politique*, 1 (1891), p. 2.

[15] Henri LA FONTAINE, 'Le Grand Parti Démocratique', *La Justice,* 8 June 1893.

[16] Ibid.

Such comments resembled Couvreur's views on the unity of purpose that underpinned his association.[17] At the same time, La Fontaine captured the SESP's political dimension: while ostensibly an institution for the social sciences, it was tied to a reformist agenda in which the allusion to 'scientific' principles featured prominently.

The social and political considerations that underpinned the work of the SESP informed the creation of the ISS in 1894. Its founder, the Belgian industrialist and philanthropist Ernest Solvay, conceived the new organisation as a sociological laboratory. It also drew upon links with the School of Political and Social Sciences (*Ecole des Sciences Politiques et Sociales*), which Solvay had set up in 1890 as a series of complementary courses at the Free University of Brussels.[18] Solvay invited three SESP members to serve as directors of the new institution: Guillaume De Greef, Hector Denis and Emile Vandervelde. All three taught at the Free University and straddled the boundaries of social science and politics. The former two are primarily remembered as sociologists, yet also joined the Belgian Workers' Party during the 1890s. Conversely, Vandervelde is primarily known as *le patron* of Belgian socialism, yet he also held a doctorate in social sciences. La Fontaine's trajectory resembled that of the ISS directors: in spite of his comfortable social background, ultimately joined the Belgian Workers' Party.

As intellectuals who shaped the politics of the Belgian left, De Greef, Denis and Vandervelde developed their own response to Solvay's liberal programme of 'productivism'. Productivism implied the balanced and efficient consumption and use of energy (including human energy) in society, resulting in a maximum of efficiency in industrial production.[19] The three ISS directors, however, ventured beyond productivism and used the institute to discuss social problems more broadly. This divergence ultimately led Solvay to end his association with them. In 1902, he transformed the institution into the Solvay Institute of Sociology (*Institut de Sociologie Solvay*) whose leadership he entrusted to the sociologist and engineer Emile Waxweiler. Solvay provided a building for the new institution on a hillside in the Parc Léopold in Brussels, not far from the Institute of Physiology that he had built earlier.

During the eight years that preceded this rupture, the select club of the ISS gathered at the Hôtel Ravenstein on a weekly basis.

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[17] Paul ERRERA, 'Auguste Couvreur', *Revue Sociale et Politique*, 4 February 1894, pp. 81-102.

[18] Jean-François CROMBOIS, 'Bibliographie, sociologie et coopération internationale. De l'Institut International de Bibliographie à l'Institut de Sociology Solvay', in Andrée DESPY-MEYER (ed.), *Cent Ans de l'Office International de Bibliographie* (Mons: Éditions Mundaneum, 1995), pp. 215–38.

[19] Raf DE BONT, 'Energie op de weegschaal: Vermoeidheidsstudie, psychotechniek en biometrie in België (1900–1945', *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis*, 32 (2004), pp. 23–71. Cf. WILS and RASMUSSEN, 'Brussels Sociology in a Transnational Perspective', pp. 76–7.

This building also hosted the International Office of Bibliography which La Fontaine and Otlet had created out of the SESP's bibliographical section. Such individual and institutional intersections suggest that La Fontaine's bibliographic internationalism and his involvement in Brussels sociology were interconnected: the collection of bibliographic information was part of a wider reformist endeavour. Moreover, to La Fontaine, such efforts were inherently transnational. The universalism of his aspirations became particularly evident in the early twentieth century, as La Fontaine and Otlet launched several ambitious projects: the Central Office and Union of International Associations (1907/1910), an international museum (1910), the *Palais Mondial* as host venue for both the museum and a range of associations (1919), and the campaign for a 'world capital', the *Cité Mondiale*.[20]

Prior to these initiatives, La Fontaine and Otlet attended the ISS meetings alongside Solvay and his three directors. Other prominent guests at the Hôtel Ravenstein included the socialist politician Emile Vinck, the lawyer Léon Hennebicq, and the journalist and socialist Louis de Brouckère.[21] The links that were forged on these occasions extended beyond the institute: while representing the Belgian Workers' Party in parliament, de Brouckère co-authored works on social relations with Vandervelde.[22] Much later, in the 1930s, he even succeeded Vandervelde as president of the Labour and Socialist International, the international alliance of socialist and social democratic parties. The political and intellectual connections that manifested themselves in the intellectual encounters of the 1890s survived for several decades.

La Fontaine and the Age of Collectivism

La Fontaine was strongly influenced by the sociological and political ideas that pervaded the SESP and the ISS. The political ideology of socialist collectivism, which featured in the debates of both organisations, proved particularly significant in this context. In 1893, Albert Schaeffle, an organicist sociologist from Germany, took up Couvreur's invitation to write a critical essay on collectivism for the

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[20] W. Boyd RAYWARD, *The Universe of Information: The Work of Paul Otlet for Documentation and International Organisation* (Moscow: FID, 1975); Wouter VAN ACKER, 'Universalism as Utopia: A Historical Study of the Schemes and Schemas of Paul Otlet (1868–1944)' (PhD thesis, Ghent, 2011); Wouter VAN ACKER, 'Een geografie van de informatienetwerken in de stedelijke beweging: het informatiemodel van Paul Otlet (1868–1944) voor de Union Internationale des Villes', *Stadsgeschiedenis*, 3 (2008), pp. 122–42.

[21] Weekly reports of its meetings in 1894 are available in Mundaneum, HLF 121: 'Institut des Sciences Sociales 1894–1895', folder 'P.V. des réunions 1894'.

[22] See e.g. Emile Vandervelde, Louis de Brouckère and L. Vandersmissen, *La Grève générale belge (avril 1913)* (Paris: Alcan, 1914). On their shared positivist heritage, see Kaat WILS, *De omweg van de wetenschap: het positivisme en de Belgische en Nederlandse intellectuele cultuur, 1845–1914* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 314 et passim.

SESP's *Revue Sociale et Politique*.[23] In a review of Schaeffle's article, Guillaume De Greef criticised the collectivist analysis of capitalism for its deductivism, its constructivism and its idealism. Instead, he outlined a positivist socialism that focused on the necessities of gradual, piecemeal reforms of the current system.[24] Seizing on this debate, La Fontaine developed his own interpretation of collectivism in the newspaper *La Justice*, and published an expanded version of these articles as *Le Collectivisme: Tome I* and *Tome II* in 1897.[25] According to La Fontaine, collectivism approached society as if it was 'a vast public limited company of which citizen would be a stakeholder'. Yet this organisation would have particular features:

> In this society all shareholders will have equal rights and benefits. Any inequality will only derive from the inequality of their effort to add to the common heritage, unless this inequality of efforts originates in causes beyond their control: physical defects, congenital weakness, intellectual inferiority, limited ability, old age or disease.[26]

La Fontaine's understanding of collectivism was influenced by his readings of Schaeffle and Marx, but also by the philosopher of rationalist socialism, Baron de Colins; by the Belgian Proudhonian and socialist leader César De Paepe; by the French socialists Benoît Malon and Jules Guesde; and by the Austro-Hungarian writer and inventor of the utopian vision of 'Freiland', Theodor Hertzka.[27] Moreover, La Fontaine acknowledged the influence of the ISS. His comments on 'inequality of efforts' as a potential source of inequality shared some elements of Solvay's productivism.

La Fontaine's starting point was the view that society would inevitably evolve towards a collectivist state and succeed the capitalist state which itself had followed the feudal age. His analysis and opposition to individualism were in line with the evolutionist, holistic and deterministic principles of the sociological theory of organicism that dominated the ISS. In order to implement his 'collectivist project', La Fontaine proposed a coalition between manual workers and individuals of his own social background: he noted that 'the manual and intellectual workers need each other too much',

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[23] Albert SCHAEFFLE, '*Collectivisme*' *Revue Sociale et Politique*, 3 (1893), pp. 289–329.

[24] Guillaume DE GREEF, 'Le Collectivisme' [article series], *L'Indépendance Belge*, 28 October to 16 November 1893.

[25] Guénaël VANDE VYVER, 'Un militant pour une société idéale', in *Henri La Fontaine. Tracé[s] d'une vie* (Mons: Mundaneum, 2002), p.48.

[26] Henri LA FONTAINE, *Le Collectivisme. Tome I* (Namur: Louis Roman, 1897), pp. 30–1.

[27] Archives Mundaneum (Mons), HLF 051 – Folder C7: 'Le Collectivisme. Notes manuscrites + dossier coupures presses'.

envisaging mutual aid and their emergence as a unified class.[28] In this respect, he followed the reasoning of the anarchist geographer Eliseé Reclus who advised his students to abandon their privileges and to combine their study at university with manual labour.[29]

La Fontaine and the *Université Nouvelle*

As a member of the ISS, La Fontaine experienced the controversy that culminated in the foundation of the New University (*Université Nouvelle*) in 1894. The immediate cause of this step was a decision by the Free University of Brussels to cancel a series of lectures by Reclus. In doing so, the institution's academic board responded to a bomb attack at the French Chamber of Deputies in December 1893 – part of a wave of anarchist terrorism in this period. In rejecting Reclus, leading figures at the university expressed their concern about the geographer's political background. Hector Denis disagreed: he had invited his friend to give these lectures and therefore resigned as rector of the institution. As a result of this conflict, several professors – notably Guillaume De Greef and Edmond Picard – left the Free University and set up the New University as a dissident institution.[30] Yet beyond the direct political trigger, the rift reflected broader conceptual differences: the liberal leadership of the Free University was critical of positivism and 'scientific socialism', which Denis and others viewed as concepts that might reconcile different socialist or progressive currents.

De Greef served as rector of the New University. He established an internationally oriented university programme with the social sciences at the core. One of the fundamental educational principles of the new institution was its aim to combine academic specialisation with a synthetic and encyclopaedist sociological perspective. The New University did not only offer regular courses: it also had an extension, the Institute for Advanced Studies (*Institut des Hautes Etudes*), which opened its doors to the international circuit of lectures on social reform. Along with most ISS members, La Fontaine joined the teaching staff of the new institution and praised the institute's programme. As professor at the New University, he gave an annual course on international law. He emphasised that in both practical and theoretical terms, 'a synthetic overview' of the intellectual field was necessary if social action was to be carried out effectively. Such views on the connection between knowledge, education and social reform clearly resonated with La Fontaine's

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[28] Henri LA FONTAINE, 'Nos socialistes', *La Justice*, 10 February 1895, no. 6, p. 1. Quoted in Guénaël Vande Vijver, 'La société selon Henri La Fontaine', accessible online via http://www.ihoes.be/PDF/Societe_Henri_Lafontaine.pdf.

[29] Henri FUSS, 'Allons au peuple', *L'Utopie*, 15 novembre 1904, p.1.

[30] Andrée DESPY-MEYER, 'Un laboratoire d'idées: l'Université nouvelle de Bruxelles (1894–1919)', in Ginette Kurgan-van Hentenryk (ed.), *Laboratoires et réseaux de diffusion des idées en Belgique (XIXe–XXe siècles)* (Brussels: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1994), pp. 51–4.

epistemological ambitions as co-founder of the International Office of Bibliography.

The circle surrounding the New University reflected wider patterns of sociability that contributed to the identity formation of Belgian intellectuals. It was also an environment in which male and female scholars and activists cooperated, providing a setting for feminism and its sociological underpinning.[31] The linkages between social reform, internationalism and feminism were already evident prior to the foundation of the New University. After its establishment, the university's Institute for Advanced Studies organised courses on the 'woman question'. Many of them were delivered by feminist activists from the Belgian League of Women's Rights, an organisation in which La Fontaine himself had been involved. As with many other aspects of its educational activities, there was a clear transnational dimension, as the Parisian *Collège Libre des Sciences Sociales* – in some respects the French counterpart of the Institute for Advanced Studies – also provided speakers on areas of feminist concern. Out of these entanglements of feminism and progressive social sciences emerged an embryonic version of what one would nowadays call 'women's studies'.

The manifold ambitions of the New University thus illustrate the manifold nature of reform efforts of the *Belle Époque*, encompassing sociology, social reform, feminism and internationalism. The institution also served as a node in a network established by the Austrian sociologist and pacifist Rudolf Broda. In 1907, Broda established a 'virtual' laboratory of social thought consisting of interrelated French, German and British journals that promoted internationalism and provided a forum for exchange on social policies and experiences.[32] La Fontaine actively supported this venture, which shared many features with his own internationalist and reformist agenda.

La Fontaine's Internationalism

How does La Fontaine's involvement in sociology connect with the more famous aspect of his activism, namely his internationalism – and, as a variety thereof – his pacifism? Towards the start of this chapter, we discussed La Fontaine's involvement in the SESP. This organisation built upon the earlier work of the International Social Science Association (*Association internationale pour le Progrès des Sciences Sociales*) – an organisation that exemplified the intertwined quest for

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[31] Julie CARLIER, 'Moving Beyond Boundaries: An Entangled History of Feminism in Belgium, 1890–1914' (PhD thesis, Ghent, 2009).

[32] Christophe VERBRUGGEN and Julie CARLIER, 'Transnational Laboratories of Social Thought: The Advocacy Network(s) of the *Institut International pour la Diffusion des Expériences Sociales* and *Les Documents du Progrès* (1907–1916), in Boyd Rayward (ed.), *Information Beyond Borders: International Cultural and Intellectual Exchange in the Belle Époque* (New York: Ashgate, 2013) [in press].

social and international peace.[33] This organisation disintegrated in 1867. Seeing that La Fontaine had only been born in 1854, the lifetime of the International Social Science Association preceded his adulthood. However, Auguste Couvreur – with whom La Fontaine later cooperated in the SESP – had been a leading figure in the organisation. The liberal politician thus provided a personal link between this earlier internationalist episode and the sociological settings discussed in this essay.

The collaboration between La Fontaine and Couvreur started before the SEPS's foundation and was closely connected to pacifist activities and ideas. In 1880, the British activist Hodgson Pratt founded the International Arbitration and Peace Association. This organisation promoted issues that became staples of pacifist campaigning: demands for the expansion of international law and for the introduction of effective arbitration mechanisms. Having launched his efforts in London, Pratt sought to extend the scope of his association beyond Britain – albeit with varying success. In Belgium, he established contacts with activists who in 1881 helped him organise an international congress in Brussels.[34] In 1882, La Fontaine joined the Masonic lodge *Les Amis Philanthropes*, of which Couvreur was already a member. The two Belgians subsequently worked towards the establishment of a national section for Pratt's organisation. In 1889, their endeavours resulted in the foundation of the Belgian Arbitration and Peace Society (*Société belge de l'Arbitrage et de la Paix*). La Fontaine served as its secretary-general and subsequently emerged as a leading figure in the international peace movement. In 1907, he became president of the International Peace Bureau – the body that brought together peace activists from different countries and organised the Universal Peace Congresses as major international gatherings.[35]

Thus, the period of La Fontaine's rising profile in international pacifism coincided with his involvement in Brussels sociology, the New University and the intellectuals of the Belgian Workers' Party. To him, these activities were interrelated. While some socialists remained critical of 'bourgeois pacifism', he viewed peace as

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[33] Christian Müller, 'Designing the Model European – liberal and republican concepts of citizenship in Europe in the 1860s: the Association Internationale pour le Progrès des Sciences Sociales', *History of European Ideas*, 37 (2011), pp. 223–31. On the broader developments, see Christian Müller and Jasmien Van Daele, 'Peaks of Internationalism in Social Engineering: A Transnational History of Social Reform Associations and Belgian Agency, 1860–1925', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 90 (2012), pp. 89–111.

[34] Sandi Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 54.

[35] Nadine LUBELSKI-BERNARD, 'Le partisan de la paix' in *Henri La Fontaine. Tracé[s] d'une vie*, pp. 72–87; Nadine LUBELSKI-BERNARD, 'Les Mouvements et les idéologies pacifistes en Belgique 1830–1914' (PhD thesis, Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1977).

'one of the best means to ensure the triumph of socialism'.[36] To him, peaceful relations between different states were a necessity for 'serious labour legislation' because in wartime 'the countries that are the first to establish it [such legislation] would be the first to be crushed'. He also expressed his concern about the army as a force that would suppress socialists.

Such arguments suggest that it can be counterproductive to subdivide internationalism into different socialist, pacifist or scientific varieties: to many of its protagonists, internationalism was conceived as part of a broader reformist endeavour.[37] The case of the New University is a good example: the institution had its roots in sociological circles and was run by scholars who had a pronounced interest in social reform, socialism and women's rights. At the same time, it had international ambitions and, as one of its professors, La Fontaine lectured on a key issue for pacifists, namely the development of international law.

If viewed from this angle, the intellectual settings in which La Fontaine was involved draw attention to the national and international settings for debates on reform. However, his case also shows how internationalism sometimes transcended ideological divides – allowing for cooperation with liberals and Christian democrats within organisations such as the SESP and the ISS. La Fontaine himself was a person who represented and fostered such connections.

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[36] Texte manuscrit [1890], HLF150-3, Mundaneum, Mons.
[37] Daniel LAQUA, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013) [in press].