



The Closed Commercial State: Perpetual Peace and Commercial Society from Rousseau to Fichte

Isaac Nakhimovsky

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This book presents an important new account of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's *Closed Commercial State*, a major early nineteenth-century development of Rousseau and Kant's political thought. Isaac Nakhimovsky shows how Fichte reformulated Rousseau's constitutional politics and radicalized the economic implications of Kant's social contract theory with his defense of the right to work. Nakhimovsky argues that Fichte's sequel to Rousseau and Kant's writings on perpetual peace represents a pivotal moment in the intellectual history of the pacification of the West. Fichte claimed that Europe could not transform itself into a peaceful federation of constitutional republics unless economic life could be disentangled from the competitive dynamics of relations between states, and he asserted that this disentanglement required transitioning to a planned and largely self-sufficient national economy, made possible by a radical monetary policy. Fichte's ideas have resurfaced with nearly every crisis of globalization from the Napoleonic wars to the present, and his book remains a uniquely systematic and complete discussion of what John Maynard Keynes later termed "national self-sufficiency." Fichte's provocative contribution to the social contract tradition reminds us, Nakhimovsky concludes, that the combination of a liberal theory of the state with an open economy and international system is a much more contingent and precarious outcome than many recent theorists have tended to assume.

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