

The background of the cover is a complex, light-colored architectural floor plan or technical drawing on a dark blue background. It features various geometric shapes, lines, and patterns, including a large circular area with a hexagonal grid, a curved staircase, and several rectangular rooms and corridors.

Political Economies of Capitalism, 1600–1850

POLITICAL REASON AND THE LANGUAGE OF CHANGE

**REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT IN EARLY
MODERN EUROPE**

Edited by
Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala,
Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe



Political Reason and the Language of Change

This collection of essays re-examines ideas of change and movements for change in early modern Europe without presuming that “progressive” change was the outcome of “reforms”.

“Reform” today implies rational, incremental change to public institutions and procedures. “Improvement” has a more general application, emphasising the positive outcome to which “reform” is oriented. But the language of reform is today used of historical personalities and movements that did not themselves use the term, and who in many cases were not necessarily seeking the progressive change that we would understand today. The activities of “reform” were embedded in contemporary politics, and while “improvement” was part of a contemporary vocabulary, its real presence has been obscured by the range of natural languages in which it was expressed. Contributors to this volume seek to establish what was meant by contemporary usage. Bringing together scholars of Russia, Southern, Western, Central and Northern Europe, this collection sheds new light on both common and divergent features of a political process too often treated as a uniform movement towards modernity.

This volume is a useful resource for students and scholars interested in Enlightenment studies, intellectual history, and conceptual history in early modern Europe.

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Political Reason and the Language of Change

Reform and Improvement in Early
Modern Europe

Edited by

**Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala,
Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe**

First published 2023
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Luna-Fabritius, Adriana, editor. | Nokkala, Ere, 1978– editor. | Seppel, Marten, 1979– editor. | Tribe, Keith, editor.

Title: Political reason and the language of change : reform and improvement in early modern Europe / edited by Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala, Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge, 2023. |

Series: Political economies of capitalism, 1600–1850 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022011275 (print) | LCCN 2022011276 (ebook) |

Subjects: LCSH: Enlightenment—Europe. | Social problems—Europe. | Civic improvement—Europe. | Europe—Social conditions—18th century. | Europe—Politics and government—18th century. | Europe—Intellectual life—18th century.

Classification: LCC D286 .P595 2023 (print) | LCC D286 (ebook) |

DDC 940.2/53—dc23/eng/20220614

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022011275>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022011276>

ISBN: 978-1-032-07389-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-07390-3 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-20667-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003206675

Typeset in Times New Roman
by codeMantra

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Acknowledgements

The research and editorial work for this volume was made possible through gracious funding by Academy of Finland Project “Cameralism as a European Political Science. A Reassessment” (2018–2022) and Estonian Research Council Project (PRG318) “Breaking the Ground for Reorganisation. Politico- economic Reason and Advocacy for Change in the Early Modern Baltic Region” (2019–2023). At Routledge, we thank senior publisher Robert Langham and editorial assistant Emily Irvine for their help in navigating the publication process. We wish to thank series editors, John Shovlin (New York University), Philip J. Stern (Duke University) and Carl Wennerlind (Barnard College), for accepting this volume to be published in the series “Political Economies of Capitalism, 1650–1850”.



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1 Introduction

Reform and Improvement in Early Modern Europe

*Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala,
Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe*

Setting the Agenda

Over the course of two or three centuries the states and societies of early modern Europe experienced change on multiple dimensions: political, social, economic, literary, demographic, technological and last but not least, religious. Entire historiographies dedicated to understanding this process have come and gone, seeking to knit headlong change on many fronts into a coherent historical narrative of progress, but also of decay and decline. Here, rather than presenting yet another narrative of change, we are concerned with the manner in which contemporaries understood the political changes occurring around them: with what kind of language did they write about changes to government and society, and what are the implications of the way in which they conceptualised their world? We focus primarily on two leading ideas: of “improvement” and of “reform”. While “revolution” is a related concept, its use prior to the final decade of the eighteenth century was disconnected from the practical efforts to change economy or society that are our principal focus here. Nor was it a regular part of Enlightenment vocabulary in any modern sense.¹

Paul Slack defines improvement as “gradual, piecemeal, but cumulative betterment”,² an idea that he considers particularly English. Here we join those who emphasise the significance of the concept, but suggest that it is in no way exclusively English. The actual presence of the idea of “improvement” in early modern Europe has attracted relatively slight attention until quite recently, reference to the idea surviving only perhaps in relation to agricultural improvements.³ Our aim here is to redirect attention towards the conceptual tools used to formulate and execute projects major and minor, taking our cue from conceptual history, which is premised on the idea that conceptual changes were themselves important signs of, and factors in, political innovation and early modern developments.⁴ “Improvement” and “reform” are linked ideas, but we need to be careful that we understand their contemporary use and connection.

Current historical literature speaks quite generally, if casually, of military, fiscal, administrative, judicial, agrarian and other state “reforms” in early

modern Europe.⁵ However, given that our contemporary sense of “reform” as progressive, forward-looking change to polity and public administration developed only in the course of the nineteenth century, it is anachronistic to apply this sense to actions and arguments advanced during the early modern period, or indeed redescribe diverse initiatives as “reforms”. By so doing we render past actions intelligible in our own terms, but attribute to historical actors conceptions and motivations that they would not necessarily have shared. As Reinhart Koselleck has emphasised, we need to understand the conceptual frameworks used by historical actors, for these frameworks themselves became an active factor in shaping the assumptions and expectations of actors in contemporary events and situations, guiding the decisions they made and the resulting course of events.⁶

In present-day usage, “reform” implies rational, deliberate, considered structural change, primarily to public institutions and procedures but also encompassing the personal sphere. A “reformed character” is someone who has put bad habits behind them, so implying movement into a future that departs from previous practice. Here, we can see that the modern sense of “reform” has a temporal directionality and objective that sets it apart from the more open sense of “improvement”, moving away from a past state by moving forward into a new one. This modern sense of “reform” is distinct from earlier usage that implied the restoration of a prior condition – moving forward perhaps, but by going backwards.⁷ Thus while we might primarily think today of reform in terms of electoral reform, land reform, school reform or tax reform – as rectifying some existing negative condition – “improvement” has a more general application, as piecemeal, incremental and progressive change, to homes, persons and manners, for example. Nonetheless, it can be linked to “reform” through its emphasis on the same kind of positive outcome to which “reform” is more systematically oriented.

Historically, both ideas are more complex than they at first appear, and our understanding of the politics and language of early modern Europe requires that we recognise this complexity. Placing both ideas in the perspective of political thought provides an axis by means of which the interconnection of reform and improvement can be articulated. Or one can perhaps put it the other way around: “reform” and “improvement”, and the language associated with them, have a role in forming political and economic thoughts. This volume studies the tension between “reforms” and “improvements” that profoundly challenged prevailing fiscal, social, political and economic circumstances, together with those changes that only aimed at enhancements to prevailing conditions. The tension between these different kinds of reorganisation and “improvement” had a crucial impact on early modern economic and political thought.

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards “improvement” emerged as a leading concept used by those promoting the advancement of the capabilities of individuals as well as of the resources of whole societies and states.⁸ While improvement and reform have not generally been considered

standard constitutional concepts, nor necessarily concepts of classical state theory, they become part of a political language if we take into account the contemporary process of politicisation,⁹ where events and situations might be altered by our actions. Koselleck emphasised the substantive location of linguistic usage – its *Standortsbezogenheit*¹⁰ – and that with the diversification of the social world the social location of those addressed, and of language users, was subject to systematic change. He called this process “politicisation”, involving not only the generation of new terms for new conditions, but also action oriented by these ideas: addressing and mobilising new social and political groups. This results in a complex learning process, in knowledge transfer and the creation of new objectives.¹¹

Several chapters in this collection emphasise that the cameral sciences of Central Europe and the political economy of Western Europe were discourses oriented to change that mediated this process, expressed in terms of improvement. However, rather than treat them as the forerunners of modern economic thought, we emphasise that these were oeconomic discourses, hence focussed on the organisation and reorganisation of states, and fostering a regime of improvement conceptualised in terms of a contemporary vocabulary. But the economic language of today has little connection with that language: it developed on our side of the divide that Koselleck dubbed the *Sattelzeit*, the period of conceptual transition that took place from the mid-eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. The political economy of the nineteenth century displaced and replaced the political oeconomic of the eighteenth century; there is no inherent continuity between the two.¹²

The meaning of “improvement” has however remained relatively stable since the seventeenth century, and our emphasis upon the term is intended to draw attention to the frequency and significance of its historical use, and the varied uses to which the term was put. “Reform” by contrast is less straightforward, not least because contemporary usage often ran counter to modern understanding: closer to the more negative sense of restoration, of changes intended to restore a real or imagined former condition. Moreover, modern historians have also been unusually profligate in the application of the language of “reform” to actors and projects that might not in fact have made use of the term at all, but talked in rather different ways about “change”.

The work of Franco Venturi in particular has linked the Enlightenment to “reform”, such that all change is conceived as constitutive of the “age of reform”. He also depicted the process of Enlightenment as a movement that oscillates between reform and utopia, between an enlightened elite seeking to further civil society and those who came to represent a counter-Enlightenment, the opponents of “reform”. Subsequent writers have opted for hybrids such as “enlightened reform”,¹³ or “reform absolutism”,¹⁴ reviving the older organising concept of Absolutist rule to characterise the European seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and upgrading it into a property of the Enlightenment. In the case of the Habsburg lands, this idea was used to highlight the centralisation of administration in the hands of lawyers

drawn from the minor nobility who sought to constrain the power of the established nobility.

A recent collection of essays has explicitly taken Venturi's approach as a template for the European Enlightenment, focussed on the language of reform. The contributors examine the semantics, strategies, rhetoric and reflections of reform in the eighteenth century; they acknowledge the presence of the concept of improvement in the eighteenth century, but treat it only as a contemporary synonym for reform.¹⁵ This in turn is interpreted very broadly and applied to a variety of changes not necessarily at the time conceived as "reforms", but simply as reorganisations, thus lending these diverse activities a particular unifying ideology. By contrast, our collection of essays re-examines ideas of change and movements for change in early modern Europe without presuming that "progressive" change was the outcome of "reforms".

Conversely, while "improvement" was part of a contemporary vocabulary, its real presence has been obscured by the natural languages in which it was expressed. However, although "reform" was a root term encountered across European states in different languages, contributors to this volume seek to establish what was meant by such usage. As already suggested, in the eighteenth century "reform" could mean either a movement back to earlier conditions, or a movement forward to new conditions. This collection of essays critically assesses both common and divergent features in a political process too often treated as a uniform movement towards modernity. The contributions address ideas articulated in Russia, Sweden, Prussia, France, Portugal, Habsburg Lombardy, Habsburg and Bourbon Naples and Bourbon Spain that, before 1800, proposed change of some kind, all of which are usually dubbed "reforms" in the historical literature, whether contemporaries actually used the "language of reform" or not.

The Language of Change

Undoubtedly the winds of change¹⁶ blew right across early modern Europe. The expansion and consolidation of states and steady cultural diversification were linked to reorganisation and innovation.¹⁷ The current tradition of history writing tends to describe all such larger changes as the outcome of "reforms". It is some time ago that Derek Beales directed attention to the fact that modern historians use the word "reform" rather differently than earlier sources.¹⁸ During the last three decades of the eighteenth century "reform" did become a central political concept in England, but as often as not arguments for parliamentary reform presupposed a return to supposedly ancient liberties, not the creation of new ones. What today might look like "progressive" ideas were often founded recursively, not oriented to the future but to an imagined or rhetorically modified past. The creation of new liberties was more the feature of France in the final decade of the century, but this process was everywhere called a revolution, eventually a counter-concept to reform. And as Anna Plassart has shown, subsequent

emphasis upon dispute between Edmund Burke and Tom Paine on the significance of the French Revolution has obscured the broad and cross-cutting influence of Scottish historical writers, such as John Millar, William Robertson and James Mackintosh.¹⁹ Tim Blanning and Peter Wende suggested some time ago that the historiography of “revolution” has overshadowed its shifting relationship to “reform”,²⁰ and this seems to remain true.²¹

The term “improvement” can be found widely in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sources, together with equivalents such as *amélioration*, *miglioramenti*, *mejorias* and *Verbesserung*. The evolution and diffusion of this concept was much more uncomplicated than the emergence and adoption of the concept of reform in the modern sense. “Improvement” became a fashionable term in early modernity, unlike “reform”, which only became widely used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Whenever the terms reform/reformation were used in eighteenth-century German literature it usually denoted improvement. Correspondingly, talk of an “age of reform” in connection either with the Enlightenment or with Britain before the second third of the nineteenth century is either premature, or directly misleading. Derek Beales maintained that for England before the middle of the nineteenth century the “age of improvement”, as Asa Briggs entitled his book,²² would be much more closer to contemporary thinking and language than the label “age of reform”, as claimed by Llewellyn Woodward in 1938.²³ The same seems to be true in regard to the period of “enlightened absolutism”. For instance, Friedrich II of Prussia used both “reform” and “improvement” in his Political Testaments of 1752 and 1768, writing in French. He clearly expressed his desire to improve and enrich the country and the condition of its people, both noblemen and peasants.²⁴ But almost to the same extent as he used the noun and the verb *amélioration/laméliorer*, he wrote of his reforming plans – to reform (*réformer*) laws, the existing order, tariffs, troops, manners, courts of justice and schools.²⁵ When he demanded “reform”, he clearly meant a correction, a necessary change; although in one case in his Testament of 1752, he explicitly defined reform as a return to original, prior institutional order (*il faut par conséquent y apporter de temps en temps la réforme où elle est nécessaire, et ramener toutes les choses au but de leur institution*).²⁶

However, if one considers Prussian or Habsburg legislation of the eighteenth century no such thing as an act of “reform” can be found. While prior to the eighteenth century the noun or verb “reform” occasionally appeared in laws, instructions and orders, often expressing a need for change,²⁷ this does not correspond to the meaning widespread in modern history writing. German legislative language during the eighteenth century was much more likely to use the term *Verbesserung* (“improvement”) than “reform”, in the sense of betterment, reorganisation or innovation.²⁸ For instance, Joachim Georg Darjes uses the noun and verb “Reformation” and “reformiren” as synonymous with “Verbesserung” when he argues for improving the sciences and teaching methods in his essay on reforming in 1748.²⁹ For Darjes, reforming meant first of all a change, as he put it: “everyone understands that reforming

is nothing other than changing something into what is already to be found in it" (*ein jeder gestehen wird, reformiren nichts anders, als eine Sache in dem, was bereits bey ihr zu finden, verändern*).³⁰ The aim of a reasoned or wise reform for him was to remove faults, to extinguish imperfection and to foster the perfection of a thing.³¹ Darjes did not speak of state or governmental reforms; reform was a matter for everyone who had an interest and was active in the field concerned. Even those who were not successful with the "reforms" of science deserved praise as improvers.³² He concluded: "I will never believe that I wasted time that I used for my or your betterment."³³

This redirection of attention to the language of change implies that we question the treatment of the European Enlightenment as an "age of reform" (*Zeitalter der Reform*).³⁴ There is of course no doubt that Enlightenment ideas were driven by the pursuit of change and improvement, or as John Robertson put it, "betterment in this world", an invitation to "live the Enlightenment", that suggests a new way of thinking about nature and culture, and between the historical context and possible responses to those challenges, as Vincenzo Ferrone has also suggested.³⁵ According to Jonathan Israel, it does not matter whether Enlighteners between 1680 and 1800 were radical or moderate; they all "sought general amelioration".³⁶ Enlightenment was therefore not only "radical", "conservative" or "secular", they were also "improving". However, Rudolf Vierhaus has emphasised that although the Enlightenment provided new motives for the reform policy of German governments and heightened awareness of the need for change, the origins of the drive for change were not directly related to the Enlightenment, but can be located much earlier.³⁷ In Sweden, for example, a discourse of improvement that emphasised the importance of economically useful natural knowledge had already become influential in the seventeenth century.³⁸ The following chapters show that improvement became a goal for intellectuals, and partly also for practitioners, much earlier than the onset of the movement for Enlightenment. For example, at the end of the sixteenth century Botero instructed the prince to improve agriculture and to pay attention to productivity: "Therefore the prince ought to favour and promote agriculture and show that he takes account of those who understand how to improve and make fertile their lands and whose farms are extremely well cultivated."³⁹ He even suggested soil improvement: "...to drain swamps, to uproot and prepare for cultivation useless or excessively wooded areas, and to aid and support those who undertake similar works."⁴⁰ By the eighteenth century, movement for agrarian improvement was common across (Western) Europe, reaching even the peripheral regions of Northern Europe, from Scotland to Sweden.⁴¹

Similarly, the eighteenth-century cameral sciences were oriented to change: whether as complete reorganisation or as incremental improvement. Eighteenth-century German cameralists and writers on oeconomic matters were all advocates of improvement, and Marcus Sandl has described cameralists as scholars devoted to the principle of change.⁴² As Ere Nokkala argues in his chapter below, with improvement as a desired aim, we can

view the role of projectors in a new and more positive light. Unlike reforms, improvements do not presuppose a powerful state administration that can design and execute change; they require only specialised knowledge and an initial impetus. Improvements might be state actions, but are by no means necessarily so; they take the form of a continuous process beginning from a present condition or circumstance, not from any particular conception of a desired future state. Correspondingly, reform can in this way be distinguished from the new, future-oriented sense of “revolution” in terms of the practical, non-utopian way in which the perspective of a reform’s future is engaged. While “reform” reviews the present in the light of a possible future, “improvement” is present-centred, considering what exists and finding ways in which whatever function is performed can be incrementally changed for the better. A reform could be executed quickly, while improvement might take time.⁴³ Improvement could be an event, but it was an event in an ongoing, gradual course of betterment – something that is improved can be further improved.

A reform on the other hand marks an abrupt change, a reorganisation that turns one condition into another, desired form. At the end of the eighteenth century, many in Europe regarded precipitate change, not to mention a revolution, as definitely harmful and destructive, but accepted the need for gradual improvements carried out by government.⁴⁴ Of course, both reforms and improvements can be planned, proposed and discussed; and above all they needed expertise, book learning or practical knowledge. Improvements required new knowledge and learning, owned, borrowed or copied, but reforms were the fruits of the work of devoted statesmen or officials.

The Enlightenment and Political Economy

In his review of the historiography of Enlightenments, John Robertson expressly limited his perspective to the period from 1740 to 1790, initiated by a “new focus on betterment in this world”, moving on from arguments about Christian faith to the nature of progress in human society.⁴⁵ The conditions for material betterment in this world were, he argued, assembled in increasingly systematic writing on economic affairs, a political economy

whose goals were the wealth of nations (in the plural) and the improvement of the condition of all society’s members. Understood in these terms, political economy was the key to what the Enlightenment explicitly thought of as the ‘progress of society’.⁴⁶

As noted above, the prevailing eighteenth-century idea that the end of good domestic government was the happiness of a population, the material welfare of a ruler’s subjects, was reflected in the emergence of systematic reasoning on the means by which order and welfare might be created and maintained. The number of texts oriented to this end steadily increased through the century, most notably in France where the collocation *économie*

politique came into use for some of this literature in mid-century, picked up by James Steuart and Adam Smith and anglicised as “political oeconomy”. Book IV of Smith’s *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was entitled “Of Systems of Political Oeconomy”, a review and critique of two systems: of the mercantile system (“the modern system”) and the agricultural system (what by 1776 had become known as Physiocracy). Smith himself advocated no specific “political oeconomy”,⁴⁷ rather a “system of natural liberty”. As the title of his book indicates, his argument was that “natural liberty” would further the “wealth of nations”, his own version of the existing discourse oriented to order and welfare.

It is however doubtful whether political economy can, from the early nineteenth century onwards, be unambiguously identified with this idea of betterment, of improvement. Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* then became the canonical basis for something very different: the elaboration of a nineteenth-century “political economy” today understood as a limited set of principles governing the relationship between classes of economic agent and the laws by which their activity was transformed into different sources of income – of wages, rents, profits and interest. As emphasised by David Ricardo in the “Preface” to his *Principles of Political Economy* (1817), “To determine the laws which regulate this distribution, is the principal problem in Political Economy.”⁴⁸ Even at the time this was a very particular conception, enjoying limited support; and a much looser, popular, sense also prevailed that was more continuous with the eighteenth-century focus upon wealth and happiness.⁴⁹ In the United States in particular, a protectionist variant gained predominance by the mid-nineteenth century, arguing that national wealth could best be promoted through the regulation of external trade. This “American Political Economy” has been studiously ignored by historians of economics ever since because of its apparent lack of connection with the more acceptably “modern” political economy of free trade.⁵⁰

In the later nineteenth century political economy began a transition from public to academic knowledge, creating in the twentieth century the modern discipline of economics. As a corollary, a narrative of the genesis of modern economics was created in the course of the twentieth century that sought in past writing the origins of modern ideas, converting past arguments into modern arguments and, where this was not feasible, simply ignoring the very extensive historical literature about wealth and economic policy that did not fit the approved retrospective history. A dual historical occultation took place: first, in the early nineteenth century, prevailing arguments about wealth and happiness were mostly displaced by a new discourse organised around theoretical principles; second, those who had fostered this new theoretical discourse were subsequently canonised by twentieth-century economists. Hence, *Wealth of Nations* was for most of the twentieth century read in much the same way that David Ricardo, Jean-Baptiste Say and Robert Malthus had read it: as a rather jumbled exposition of economic categories that required refinement to fit into the new political economy, but a totem

with whose aid they could gain recognition for their ideas. This troubled historiography helps account for the way in which historians today have such great difficulty making sense of the political and economic language of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. That some French writers adopted the name “*économistes*” simply adds to the confusion.

Robertson’s direct association of Enlightenment discourse with political economy therefore requires qualification. If we understand by this that the roots of a modern discourse of political economy can be found in the mid-eighteenth century we will be seriously misled. If, on the other hand, we understand this association of Enlightenment and political economy as relating to a practical concern, as measures and policies for betterment and improvement, then we might be better able to reconstruct what “political oeconomy” meant in the later eighteenth century. As Luigi Alonzi has documented,

...around the mid-eighteenth century the meaning of the noun *oeconomy* referred to rational order, functional structure, efficient administration, the regular arrangement of things. There was still no room for an interpretation of this concept in nineteenth-century terms; there was not yet any connection between the idea of *oeconomy* as order and discourses upon State and commerce, with their associated reflections on value, money and prices.⁵¹

By the 1760s the term “*économie politique*” had entered circulation in France, linked to the internal administration of the state⁵²; there was a hesitant dual use in both France and in Italy of *économie publique* and *économie politique*, of *economia civile and scienza economica*, as synonyms.⁵³ Terms such as “oeconomic order”, “oeconomic rule” or “oeconomic administration” were in mid-century simply tautologous.⁵⁴ “Animal oeconomy”, about which François Quesnay wrote in 1747, referred to the “structure and the motion of the parts”.⁵⁵

Police and Policy

Seen in this perspective, even the limited corpus of writings that twentieth-century historiography had identified as the approved source of modern economic science does not appear so distant from the German *Kameralwissenschaften* that have never been successfully recruited to this emergent narrative of the history of economics, at best registered through exclusion, as *Merkantilismus*. The specific connection in these apparently distinct national literatures is the role that *Polizei* plays in German language discourse,⁵⁶ *police* in French writing⁵⁷ and *police/policy* in English.⁵⁸ *Polizei/police/policy* provided a switchboard through which plans for reform and improvement might be elaborated, as did also the related newly emerging discourse of *économie politique*/political oeconomy. We can see how this

works by considering the textbook that Joseph von Sonnenfels began to draft following his appointment to the new Viennese chair for *Polizei- und Kameralwissenschaften* in 1763.

At this time, the project of a systematic codification of civil law in the Austrian monarchy was already in progress, and the compilation of penal laws had also been initiated. Sonnenfels was initially unaware that work on a political code was just about to start too. As Knemeyer makes clear, by the 1760s this long-established framework was shifting:

If the extent of the concept “*Polizei*” at the beginning of the eighteenth century is considered (and at the same time disregarding nuances and the diverse construals of the term) the slogan “establishment and maintenance of order” can be used, albeit crudely, to characterise the meaning of the term up to that date. “Good order” here referred both to protection from danger and to concern with matters of welfare. Since these two concerns lie at the heart of domestic administration, a conceptual equivalence emerged between “*Polizei*” and “domestic administration”. This all-embracing conception which had been valid for over three hundred years underwent, however, at the beginning and then principally during the century a shift and restriction in meaning which presages the foundations of the present-day concept.⁵⁹

As Ivo Cerman indicates, reconciling local administrative regulations linked to security and welfare across the entire Austrian Monarchy was an endless, looping process, and Sonnenfels’ new textbook was supposed to provide the conceptual framework that could possibly reconcile these diverse ordinances. His text was in three parts – on *Polizei*, on commerce and on state finances – the first part published in 1765 covering only *Polizei*. It was this first volume that would provide the handbook for his work on the Codex, while the material in the other two volumes, on commerce and state finances, provided the rationale for it.

In 1765 Sonnenfels begins his exposition by defining the relationship between the state and its members – as was usual at the time, the state was defined as “a society of citizens who have joined together to achieve a particular higher good through their united powers.”⁶⁰ As such, the citizens formed a single moral personality pursuing a defined end, the common good of society: the pursuit of “public welfare” in a condition of civic peace. Public welfare combined the security and comfort of life, the “secure enjoyment of a comfortable life.”

§13. The *comfort* (*Bequemlichkeit*) of life consists in the *ease with which each can be secured by their own hard work*. The more diverse the means of subsistence, the easier that hard work can be rewarded. The general comfort of life is therefore acquired through the *multiplication of the means of subsistence* (*Vervielfältigung der Nahrungswege*).⁶¹

It was possible to compile the principles according to which such welfare could be achieved, divided into those concerned with external security (*Politik*), and those with domestic security (*Polizeiwissenschaft*) (§17). Commercial science (*Handlungswissenschaft*) taught the manner in which means of subsistence might be multiplied through the advantageous development of that which the earth and hard work produced – and a footnote here clarified that “householding” was one part of commercial science.⁶² Financial science, the subject of the third volume, would show how state revenues could be raised most advantageously, and here again there was a clarificatory footnote:

Polizey, commerce and finance are also included in the word science of the state, or they are called the *oeconomic sciences*. The latter two are also especially called the *cameral sciences*, after the chambers of the rulers in which the relevant matters are usually administered.⁶³

Moving on to elaborate these basic definitions, Sonnenfels emphasised that the growth of population rendered the state more secure against external threats, and the larger a population was, the greater the prospect of domestic prosperity, for

The more people, the more needs, and thus the more diverse the *domestic* means of subsistence. The more hands, the more numerous the products of *agriculture* and *hard work*, the material of external exchange, hence the basis of commercial science.⁶⁴

And so equally the more people there were, the greater was the contribution to public costs, reducing the share borne by each individual while not reducing public revenues – hence, Sonnenfels argued, the basic principle of financial science.

Having established the framework that would govern the three parts of his text, Sonnenfels then turned directly to *Polizei*, “a science to found and manage the domestic security of the state.”⁶⁵ Emphasis is placed on security and order, but the focus on population leads eventually into the specification of measures to prevent suicides, duels and abortion. Illegitimate pregnancies were not to be punished, but those about to give birth were to be conveyed to places where they could deliver their child incognito and then “return to the bosom of virtue”, having left their child in an orphanage.⁶⁶ Sonnenfels ploughs on relentlessly, listing measures necessary to secure good order, a healthy population and the “multiplication of means of subsistence”. There are always areas of social activity that threaten to escape the specifications of *Polizei*.

While as Knemeyer suggests there is in the course of the eighteenth century a shift from the direct promotion of good order and happiness to the identification of possible obstacles to its realisation and the specification of appropriate remedial action, this too proves to be an unending task that is

continuous with the established idea that good order is a deliberate administrative creation, not the outcome of any Smithian “natural liberty”. Hence the burgeoning literature of oeconomic order seeks to specify the policy that has to be followed, what kind of changes might be needed to establish or re-establish good order. Hence also the centrality of improvement, since this was incremental and present-centred.

Stated in this way, there is a clear connection with contemporary French oeconomic literature too often reduced to the work of Quesnay and “The Physiocrats”. Loïc Charles and Christine Théré have forcefully argued that it was only in the later 1760s that there was any consistent characterisation of “Physiocracy”, and its linkage to the figure of François Quesnay.⁶⁷ Indeed, it could be argued that the apparent unity of a “Physiocratic movement” was a construction of its critics, and that, for example, the ambiguous placement of Anne Robert Jacques Turgot with respect to this movement – as either a reformer, or a theorist, but not both – is evidence of this.⁶⁸ In any case, as Keith Tribe suggests below in his review of French usage, neither “reform” nor “improvement” were consistently associated with the writings of either the circle around Vincent de Gournay, or with those who broadly associated themselves with what became known as the Physiocratic movement. Turgot is an important figure here since he was both a practical public administrator and the author of a significant treatise on wealth, whereas a “Physiocrat” was more or less by definition a “writer”. Underlying Physiocratic arguments was a rationalist vision of the kind of *politique* that would be needed to bring about change in *oeconomie*, something that might well fit with Enlightenment thinking, but which lacked the essentially practical element of “reform” or “improvement”.

Genovesi and Civil Oeconomy

Sonnenfels is significant because the textbook he wrote was for his Vienna lectures; and Vienna was the centre of a dispersed Austrian Monarchy (the “Habsburg Empire”) linking Central Europe, Northern Italy and the Low Countries, through which his writings subsequently diffused in many editions and condensations. In the same year that Sonnenfels published the first volume of his *Sätze* Antonio Genovesi published the first of two volumes of his own Naples lectures on commerce. This work also had ramifications beyond its immediate location: for Naples was linked to the Spanish monarchy, and Spain was at this time much more than Iberia: it was still a global empire, dominating what would become today’s California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, Central America and much of Southern America, and the Philippines. Genovesi’s text echoed through the Spanish and Portuguese Empires rather like Sonnenfels did through the Habsburg lands.

And this brings us back to Venturi, whose dissertation on Diderot and work on Jean Jaurès had treated them as models’ reformers oscillating between reform and utopia;⁶⁹ and who went on to identify Genovesi’s *Lezione*

di economia civile as a textbook for administrative reform much like Sonnenfels. Many of those who have subsequently adopted Venturi's approach to the Enlightenment and reform have taken this characterisation of Genovesi as read, without however it seems examining the *Lezioni* very closely. For Italian scholars in particular the text has taken on a canonical status, although as Adriana Luna-Fabritius demonstrates, explicit support in the text for Venturi's linkage of Enlightenment to reform is limited. Venturi's *Settecento riformatore*⁷⁰ treats Genovesi as an originator of new thinking, and this has led Italian historians to treat Genovesi's text as the foundation for what comes after, rather than the culmination of what had come before. In Britain there was a clear shift from the policy and casuistry of *Wealth of Nations* to the structured principles of political economy as expounded by Malthus, Ricardo, James and John Stuart Mill; in France, Jean-Baptiste Say simply initiated argument by principles rather than cases; in the German territories, the new *Nationalökonomie* simply displaced the older *Kameralwissenschaften* in university lecture rooms. In Naples and Spain, Genovesi's *Lezioni* became a leading source for practical arguments regarding university teaching, as a substitute for moral philosophy; and even though it was censored by the Spanish Inquisition,⁷¹ it was drawn upon during constitutional argument in Cadiz and in Spanish America.⁷² But by the early nineteenth century Genovesi's text was already very much part of the previous century, and not a source for modern argument. If Genovesi had once represented a "new science", then this was the "new science" of his predecessors, of Vico's generation. As we can see with John Robertson's account of the Neapolitan Enlightenment, Genovesi's "political economy" has been treated as a master discourse of modernisation. But as Luna-Fabritius argues, Genovesi rarely used the concept of reform; instead, he used the concept of improvement as piecemeal, incremental change. By clearly distinguishing reform from improvement in this way we can become clearer about both the rhetoric and practice of change during the Enlightenment.

The emphasis of this volume on improvement is not new, but in many ways the importance of improvement as a social, political and economic key concept has been neglected. Indeed, as early as 1984 Hans Erich Bödeker had outlined a project that would focus upon the positive sense of improvement as a key concept for an emerging enlightened public. While this outline never developed beyond a proposition, many of the points raised then continue to have resonance today. As Bödeker argued, while there had been broad discussion of the social and political implications of reform programmes, the actual practice and execution of reform had been relatively neglected.⁷³ Rather than stake all on reform, and an implied gamble on the restoration of older practices or the introduction of untried ones, "improvement" represented a pragmatic way forward that sought the amelioration of present conditions rather than their replacement with untried procedures. Improvement was not necessarily tied to institutional structural changes, for not every minor correction was necessarily "reform". Bödeker

also questioned the common approach of dividing between “reforms from above” and “reforms from below”, since this duality polarised Enlightenment and Absolutist rule in a manner that was demonstrably misleading in the German context. As a solution he called for a series of case studies: systematic investigations of the motivations, of the intensity and of the implementation of enlightened social practices. Only in such case studies could the different conditions under which improvement was formulated be properly understood. He pointed out that the economic crisis following the Seven Years’ War, the food shortages of the early 1770s, as also the sense of backwardness, were impulses for improvement.⁷⁴

This volume developed from a workshop in Helsinki during November 2019 that brought together two parallel research projects: “Cameratism as a European Political Science: A Reassessment” (Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Ere Nokkala, and Kari Saastamoinen, University of Helsinki), and “Breaking the Ground for Reorganisation. Politico-economic Reason and Advocacy for Change in the Early Modern Baltic Region” (Marten Seppel, Keith Tribe, Tartu University). Although some additional contributors have subsequently broadened the scope of this volume, the framework from which it developed was not originally conceived as a comprehensive approach to the nature of reform and improvement in an Enlightenment context, but rather one that sought to link Northern, Central and Southern Europe in a new way.

Part I provides a conceptual history of the two terms that are central for all chapters: “reform”, and “improvement”. As already suggested above, these were in the eighteenth century connected, but in no respect substantively or conceptually homologous. Developing on points made by Eike Wolgast in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* entry on “Reform, Reformation”, Keith Tribe shows in Chapter 2 the very particular usage of these terms in the course of the eighteenth century, and that this usage was in no respect unambiguously linked to any Enlightenment conceptions of “progress”. Marten Seppel then demonstrates how prevalent in the German language the idea of *Verbesserung* was as a term denoting betterment, improvement, using in addition anonymous sources to counter any sense that those who promoted “betterment” had any personal stake in so doing. The implications of this approach are explored in Chapter 7 by Ere Nokkala, who argues that the characterisation of eighteenth-century “projectors” as unrealistic and self-aggrandising individuals requires modification, that “projects” often involved a genuine commitment to improvement of the kind advocated by anonymous advocates. Chapter 4 expands on the concept of “reform”, Alexandre Mendes Cunha focussing primarily on Portuguese and Spanish usage with particular reference to Brazil, emphasising the more conservative connotation of “reform” by examining a range of sources. This idea is taken up in Chapter 5 by Sergey Polskoy, who re-emphasises this sense in the case of Catherine the Great of Russia, who has often been associated with an Enlightenment idea of progressive change through her relationship with Diderot in particular. Part I is then concluded by Adriana Luna-Fabritius who

tackles the centrality that Franco Venturi attributed to change as “reform” in the Italian Enlightenment, opening out Venturi’s intellectual development from the 1930s onwards and thereby explaining why it was that he came to attach such great importance to the work of Antonio Genovesi in Naples.

Part II brings together a number of case studies that elaborate the collection’s main themes. As already mentioned, Ere Nokkala in Chapter 7 examines in part the work of projectors, but more generally makes the case that late cameralist discourse should be read as advocacy for change – although not for reform. On the other hand, Ivo Cerman in Chapter 8 makes use of rediscovered documents relating to work on the Austrian Political Codex to show how the work of Joseph von Sonnenfels, holder of the Vienna chair for *Polizey* and *Cameralwissenschaft* from 1763, was involved in efforts to standardise the work of *Polizei* throughout the Austrian Monarchy, emphasising a linkage between *Kameralwissenschaft* and reform that Nokkala places in question. The focus remains on Habsburg lands with the contribution by Alexandra Ortolja-Baird, who examines the book market of Habsburg Lombardy, and in particular the implications of the translation of Sonnenfels’ work into Italian.

The final four chapters shift attention away from Central Europe. First of all, Edward Jones-Corredera considers Spanish diplomatic activity and the work of reform, examining career paths throughout the Empire and elaborating on his recent study of the “diplomatic Enlightenment”.⁷⁵ Then two chapters turn the attention north to Sweden, but with very different agendas. Måns Jansson and Göran Rydén examine the practicalities of Swedish iron-making and its improvement, an issue of central importance to Sweden in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following this, Lars Magnusson presents a discussion of Swedish “national economy”, a nineteenth-century discourse of reform and improvement that was continuous with many eighteenth-century ideas of national wealth and happiness, but which historians had in the twentieth century been inclined to neglect since it lacked the theoretical appeal that they believed was central to political economy. Finally, Kari Saastamoinen provides an epilogue that links the introductory arguments about reform and improvement to both the language of modern Finland, and that of Pufendorf in the seventeenth century – and showing that as important as what Pufendorf wrote in Latin was, how his work was then translated into German, French and English is also part of this story.

Notes

- 1 Reinhart Koselleck, “Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution”, in his *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 46–49.
- 2 Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement. Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1, similarly vii, 257.

- 3 Although here again, historical argument in Britain has aligned around the timing of a supposed “Agricultural Revolution” (by analogy with an “Industrial Revolution” that was itself first so named by analogy with the “French Revolution”). On closer inspection, the changes in question turn out to be incremental improvements – see Robert C. Allen, “Tracking the Agricultural Revolution in England”, *Economic History Review* 52 (1999): 209.
- 4 Terence Ball, James Farr, Russell L. Hanson, eds., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2 especially.
- 5 Keith Tribe has demonstrated, for example, that the “Prussian Reforms” of the early nineteenth century were first labelled as such in the 1870s, in the wake of German unification and as part of its narrative. In the same way, the idea that the German university system was modelled on a reformed University of Berlin founded in 1810 dates from around 1900; and the ideals then attributed to the “Humboldtian University” could more readily be exemplified by the University of Göttingen, founded in 1737. See his “Revision, Re-organization, and Reform. Prussia, 1790–1820”, in Béla Kapossy, Isaac Nakhimovsky, Sophus A. Reinert, Richard Whatmore, eds., *Markets, Morals, Politics. Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 136–60; and his *Constructing Economic Science. The Invention of a Discipline, 1850–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 21.
- 6 In his “Einleitung” to the first volume of *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Koselleck defined the project’s guiding question as “the investigation of the dissolution of old world and the emergence of the new in terms of the history of its conceptual comprehension.” – Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1972), XIV.
- 7 The entry for “Reform” in the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* opens with the statement that “reformare” was used in Antiquity to denote the “need to change present corrupted circumstances towards the restoration of previous circumstances”. The term translated here with “restoration” is *Wiederherstellung*, lit. “re-placing”, “re-introducing” or “re-producing”. Only in the course of the eighteenth century did a historicisation of this idea occur, with *Reformator* becoming “the social subject of political change”: Clemens Zimmermann, “Reform”, in Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Vol. 8 (Basel: Schwabe & Co., 1992), col. 409. See in this context also Christian Wilhelm von Dohm’s distinction of *Förmer*, *Reformatoren* advocating gradual change or improvement, and *Störmer*, those who were advocating rapid change, or reforms – “Förmer und Störmer oder die Reformatoren. Ein Nachtstück”, *Deutsches Museum* 1 (1776): 85–94.
- 8 Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth: The Origins of the Modern Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016); Paul Warde, “The Idea of Improvement, c. 1520–1700”, in Richard W. Hoyle, ed., *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 127–48.
- 9 Hans Erich Bödeker, Ulrich Herrmann, “Aufklärung als Politisierung – Politisierung der Aufklärung”, in Hans Erich Bödeker, Ulrich Herrmann, eds., *Aufklärung als Politisierung – Politisierung der Aufklärung* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1987), 5; Hans Erich Bödeker, “Prozesse und Strukturen politischer Bewußtseinsbildung der deutschen Aufklärung”, in Bödeker, Herrmann, eds., *Aufklärung als Politisierung*, 17, 26–27.
- 10 Koselleck, “Einleitung”, XVIII.
- 11 See Helge Jordheim, “Communication, Politicization, Enlightenment: Vertrag on the Move”, in Jonas Gerlings, Ere Nokkala, Martin van Gelderen, eds., *Enlightenment as Process: Essays in Honour of Hans Erich Bödeker* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, forthcoming).

- 12 See Luigi Alonzi, “The Term ‘Political Oeconomy’, in Adam Smith”, *Intellectual History Review* 31 (2021): 321–39 for the origins of the term “political oeconomy”; and Keith Tribe, “Framing the *Wealth of Nations*”, *History of Political Economy* (forthcoming) for the argument that the political economy of the early nineteenth century was discontinuous with what is usually assumed to be its forerunner and foundation.
- 13 Gabriel Paquette, “Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and its Atlantic Colonies in the Long Eighteenth Century”, in Gabriel Paquette, ed., *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and its Atlantic Colonies, c. 1750–1830* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 11–12.
- 14 Günter Birtsch, “Aufgeklärter Absolutismus oder Reformabsolutismus?”, *Aufklärung* 9/1 (1996): 101–109; Günter Birtsch, “Reformabsolutismus und Gesetzesstaat. Rechtsauffassung und Justizpolitik Friedrichs des Grossen”, in Günter Birtsch, Dietmar Willoweit, eds., *Reformabsolutismus und ständische Gesellschaft. Zweihundert Jahre Preussisches Allgemeines Landrecht* (Berlin, 1998), 47.
- 15 Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century. When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change* (New York: London: Routledge, 2020), 2.
- 16 In English political language, the phrase “winds of change” is associated with a speech made by Harold Macmillan, the British Prime Minister, to the South African Parliament on 3 February 1960, saying that “the wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact”. But he had already delivered the same speech in Accra on 10 January, where it had gone largely unreported – a clear example of *where* something is said being very relevant to understanding *what* its political significance is thought to be.
- 17 For example, Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic, and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States, 1500–1660* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002); Rudolf Vierhaus, “Aufklärung und Reformzeit. Kontinuitäten und Neuansätze in der deutschen Politik des späten 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhunderts”, in Rudolf Vierhaus, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert. Politische Verfassung, soziales Gefüge, geistige Bewegungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 249–61.
- 18 Derek Beales, “The Idea of Reform in British Politics, 1829–1850”, in T. C. W. Blanning, Peter Wende, eds., *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850*, Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999), 159–74, here especially 160, 173.
- 19 Anna Plassart, *The Scottish Enlightenment and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.
- 20 T. C. W. Blanning, Peter Wende, “Introduction”, in T. C. W. Blanning, Peter Wende, eds., *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850*, Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999), 1.
- 21 Noteworthy exceptions are Christof Dipper, “Réforme”, in Rolf Reichardt, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, eds., *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, Vol. 19–20 (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2000), 3–25; Thomas Maissen, “Bringing a Despotic Agenda Into the Public Sphere - Concluding Remarks on Languages of Reform”, in Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century. When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 405–24.
- 22 Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement, 1783–1867* (London: Longmans Green, 1959).
- 23 Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform: 1815–1870* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), cited in Beales, “The Idea of Reform”, 162.
- 24 *Die Politischen Testamente Friedrichs des Grossen*, ed. Gustav Berthold Volz (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1920), 4–5, 10, 17, 26, 35, 132.

25 *Ibid.*, 2, 5, 99, 103, 111, 129, 132, 137.

26 *Ibid.*, 2.

27 For example, in the instruction for the Hofkammer of 1698: “...die für nöthig befindliche änderungen und riformen”: Hansdieter Körbl, *Die Hofkammer und ihr ungetreuer Präsident. Eine Finanzbehörde zur Zeit Leopolds I* (Wien; München: Böhlau; Oldenbourg, 2009), 438.

28 For example, unlike the word “Verbesserung”, the noun or verb “reform” never appears in the titles of the Prussian legislation between 1751 and 1800: *Repertorium novi corporis constitutionum Prussico-Brandenburgensium praecipue marchicarum, I. Chronologicum. II. Reale. oder doppeltes Register, über die neue Sammlung der Königlich Preußischen und Churfürstlich Brandenburgischen, besonders in der Chur- und Mark-Brandenburg ergangenen und publicirten Ordnungen, Edicte, Mandate, Rescripte, welche in 50 Jahrgängen von 1751. bis 1800 mit Allergnädigster Königl. Bewilligung durch Höchst-Dero Academie der Wissenschaften zum Druck befördert worden* (Berlin: August Brink, 1803).

29 Joachim Georg Darjes, “Vorrede vom Reformiren der Wissenschaften und Anwenden der Philosophie auf andere Theile der Gelahrheit”, in Gottlieb Stolle, *Kurtzgefaßte Lehre der Allgemeinen Klugheit* (Jena: Güth, 1748), 3–59. For this essay and Darjes’ other plans on science and higher education, see Ulrike Löttsch, *Joachim Georg Darjes (1714–1791). Der Kameralist als Schul- und Gesellschaftsreformer* (Wien: Böhlau, 2016), especially, 195–202.

30 Darjes, “Vorrede”, 7.

31 “Die Absicht einer vernünftigen Reformation ist die Unvollkommenheit bey einer Sache zu zerstören, und durch diese Zerstörung der Sache Vollkommenheit zu befördern”: Darjes, “Vorrede”, 27.

32 *Ibid.*, 54.

33 *Ibid.*, 58.

34 So e.g. Siegfried Jüttner, Jochen Schlobach, “Einleitung”, in Siegfried Jüttner, Jochen Schlobach, eds., *Europäische Aufklärung(en). Einheit und nationale Vielfalt* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992), IX; see also Pascal Firges, Johan Lange, Thomas Maissen, Sebastian Meurer, Susan Richter, Gregor Stiebert, Lina Weber, Urte Weeber, Christine Zabel, “Introduction: Languages of Reform and the European Enlightenment”, in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform*, 1–26. See especially p. 6 where the authors argue that “After all, is not the Enlightenment the quintessential age of reform?”

35 John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8, 28–31; Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment. History of an Idea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 12–26.

36 Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment. Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750–1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 7.

37 Rudolf Vierhaus, “Aufklärung und Reformzeit”, 253–54.

38 Carl Wennerlind, “The Magnificent Spruce: Anders Kempe and Anarcho-Cameralism in Sweden”, *History of Political Economy* 53 (2021): 427; Carl Wennerlind, “The Political Economy of Sweden’s Age of Greatness: Johan Risingh and the Hartlib Circle”, in Philipp R. Rössner, ed., *Economic Growth and the Origins of Modern Political Economy. Economic Reasons of State, 1500–2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 169–70, 177; Carl Wennerlind, “Theatrum Oeconomicum: Anders Berch and the Dramatization of the Swedish Improvement Discourse”, in Robert Fredona, Sophus Reinert, eds., *New Perspectives on the History of Political Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 104–106.

39 “Deue dunque il Principe favorire, e promuovere l’agri coltura, e mostrar di far conto della gente, che s’intéde di migliorare, e fecódate i terreni; è di quelli, i cui poderi sono eccellètemète coltivati”: Giovanni Botero, *Della ragione di stato, libri dieci* (Venetia, 1598), 207.

- 40 Botero, *The Reason of State*, ed. and trans. Robert Bireley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 135.
- 41 See R. H. Campbell, “The Scottish Improvers and the Course of Agrarian Change in the Eighteenth Century”, in Louis M. Cullen, Thomas Christopher Smout, eds., *Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic and Social History, 1600–1900* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1977), 204–15.
- 42 Marcus Sandl, “Development as Possibility: Risk and Chance in the Cameralist Discourse”, in Philipp R. Rössner, ed., *Economic Growth and the Origins of Modern Political Economy. Economic Reasons of State, 1500–2000* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 139–55.
- 43 The understanding that a “reformation” (but not in the sense of a state reform but as a reorganisation and an improvement of one’s manorial economy) means quick (*schnelle*) changes can be found already e.g. in “Briefe, den Reformiergeist, und das Schriftstellerwesen in Deutschland betreffend”, *Schwäbisches Magazin zur Beförderung der Aufklärung* 2 (1787): 119, 128–29.
- 44 So e.g. Theodor Schmalz, *Encyclopädie der Cameralwissenschaften. Zum Gebrauch academischer Vorlesungen* (Königsberg, 1797), 164. See also Heinz Mohnhaupt, “Spielarten “revolutionärer” Entwicklung und ihrer werdenden Begrifflichkeit seit dem Zeitalter der Aufklärung”, in Heinz Mohnhaupt, ed., *Revolution, Reform, Restauration. Formen der Veränderung von Recht und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1988), 1–36.
- 45 Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment*, 8.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 47 Smith himself stated that among the work upon which he drew the “agricultural system” was at the time the “nearest approximation to the truth that has yet been published upon the subject of political oeconomy” – *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. R. H. Campbell, A. S. Skinner, W. B. Todd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), IV.ix.38.
- 48 David Ricardo, *On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation*, ed. Piero Sraffa, with M. H. Dobb, Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo 1 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 5.
- 49 As shown by Lars Magnusson’s chapter in this collection.
- 50 See Christopher W. Calvo, *The Emergence of Capitalism in Early America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2020), Ch. 6.
- 51 Luigi Alonzi, ‘Economy’ in *European History. Words, Contexts and Change over Time* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 98.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 122.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 125.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 95. See François Quesnay, “Essai physique sur l’œconomie animale” (extract), in *Œuvres économiques complètes et autres textes* t. 1 (Paris: Institut National d’Études Démographiques, 2005), 5–60.
- 56 See Franz-Ludwig Knemeyer, “Polizei”, *Economy and Society* 9 (1980): 172–96 for a translation of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* entry on this term.
- 57 Claude-Jacques Herbert, *Essai sur la police générale des grains, sur les Prix et & sur les Effets de l’Agriculture* (Berlin, 1755).
- 58 Adam Smith’s Glasgow “Lectures on Justice, Police, Revenue, and Arms”, in R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, P. G. Stein, eds., *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 5.
- 59 Knemeyer, “Polizei”, 182.
- 60 Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Sätze aus der Polizey, Handlungs- und Finanz-Wissenschaft* (Vienna: 1765), §2, 10.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 63 *Ibid.*

- 64 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 65 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 66 *Ibid.*, 136–37.
- 67 Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, “The Physiocratic Movement: A Revision”, in Steven L. Kaplan, Sophus Reinert, eds., *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe* (London: Anthem Press, 2019), 43. For an enumeration of the sheer diversity of institutions and persons linked to the “movement”, see their discussion on p. 45.
- 68 Richard van den Berg was commissioned to write a chapter for this volume, and he planned to contribute on “Turgot: Reformer of the *Ancien Régime* State?”, but was unfortunately prevented by illness from doing so.
- 69 Franco Venturi, *Le Origini dell’Enciclopedia* (Florence: Edizioni U (Biblioteca oltremontana), 1946), 10.
- 70 Franco Venturi, “Alle origini dell’illuminismo napoletano: Dal carteggio di Bartolomeo Intieri”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 21 (1959): 416–56; *Settecento riformatore* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969–1990), 5 vols, and *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
- 71 Jesús Astigarraga, Javier Usoz, “The Enlightenment in Translation: Antonio Genovesi’s Political Economy in Spain, 1778–1800”, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28 (2013): 24–45; and Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “Camerarism in Spain. *Polizewissenschaft* and the Bourbon Reforms”, in Ere Nokkala and Nicholas B. Miller, eds., *Camerarism and the Enlightenment. Happiness, Governance and Reform in a Transnational Perspective* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 245–66.
- 72 Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “El modelo constitucional Napolitano en Hispanoamérica”, in Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Pablo Mijangos, Rafael Rojas, eds., *De Cádiz al siglo XXI. Doscientos años de tradición constitucional en Hispanoamérica* (México: Taurus, 2012), 23–152.
- 73 Hans Erich Bödeker, “Gesellschaftliche ‘Verbesserungen’ in Nordwestdeutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert”, *Nachrichten der Lessing-Akademie* 4 (1984): 6–10.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 8–9.
- 75 Edward Jones-Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment: Spain, Europe, and the Age of Speculation* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

Part I

**Rethinking Key Concepts of
Political Economy**

Reform and Improvement



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2 Reform

Elements for a Conceptual History¹

Keith Tribe

In the power struggles within and between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century monarchies and empires, those persons advocating what are thought to be “progressive” or “modernising” political change are today still commonly described as “reformers”, the architects of programmes that might have either “failed” or “succeeded”. “Reform” is a building block of the historiography of progress: that “progressive” individuals have, since the seventeenth century, worked to “improve” institutions, their efforts frequently being rebuffed or meeting with failure, but like waves upon a sea-shore, a constantly returning motion that built the modern world. In this seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Whig historiography, “reformers” can be distinguished from “projectors”. The hallmark of the latter is an unrealistic enthusiasm for change that sought to recruit powerful persons and substantial resources to schemes that quickly proved unrealisable. The hallmark of the former is the formulation of concrete plans for the improvement of government, economy and society: from the single agricultural tax of the Physiocrats to free trade and the abolition of serfdom and slavery.

The long European eighteenth century is in this way cast as a meandering and obstructed pathway from the ancien régime to modernity, latterly an “age of reform” that first fully emerges in Britain during the 1830s. As Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns have pointed out, this is how many English historians delimit the initiation of this “age of reform”.² Nonetheless, the image of a pathway from the eighteenth century helps us establish a broader European chronology, where furthermore the relatively small number of those who actually did speak of “reform” in the 1830s can be represented as building upon an existing tradition, as the realisation of former aspirations and hopes. In the European context, then, this “age of reform” has its roots in the Enlightenment, feeding on and realising Enlightenment political and cultural reason. Moving along this pathway, eighteenth-century Enlightenment rationalism morphs through reform into liberalism: the Enlightenment cultural project becomes a political project identified with modernity. Progress along this route is now faster, then perhaps delayed, now temporarily reversed; but the existence of such a pathway allows us to link liberalism to rationalism, and so link eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

into a common story fractured by the French Revolution, but sustained by the American Revolution.

While it is widely accepted today that to talk of “liberalism” in an eighteenth-century context is anachronistic, our modern sense of “reform” – of progressive, future-oriented, ordered change to political institutions and administrations – is still freely applied to initiatives and programmes in eighteenth-century Europe.³ Derek Beales has shown that the connection I suggest above, of “reform” to “liberal”, first came about in the 1830s, and not before: when for example in 1836 the Reform Club was founded in London, it was the realisation of a previous attempt to found a Liberal Club.⁴ Beales has also demonstrated that during this early Victorian “age of reform” contemporaries rarely used the term “reform”, but instead “‘improvement’, ‘amelioration’, ‘melioration’, ‘amendment’, ‘modification’, ‘correction’, ‘innovation’, ‘promotion’, ‘reformation’, ‘renovation’, ‘restoration’, ‘remedy’, ‘regulation’, ‘relaxation’, ‘relief’, ‘redress’, re-edification’, ‘regeneration’, ‘reconstruction’, reorganization’, ‘restructuring’”.⁵ The principle that we should pay strict attention to the language that contemporaries use is now generally accepted by historians, although long-established in legal process. If however we are all now reticent when there is talk of the Enlightenment “roots of liberalism”, it is high time that such reticence is extended to the habit of equating all argument for change with “reform”.

In this chapter, I suggest that the language of “reform” was not in fact generally used in early modern Europe in respect of social, political or economic change; and that where it demonstrably was, the term was often employed to mean something different from what it came to mean by the 1840s. Correspondingly, we need to separate out those eighteenth-century events associated with “reform” from the nineteenth-century language in which they have become embedded; and once this separation has been made, ask what these later eighteenth-century “reformers” sought to realise with their actions and their language.⁶

In my contribution to the *Hont Festschrift*, I sketched this line of argument in relation to the “Prussian Reforms”, pointing out that the set of events in question first became collectively known as such long afterwards. It was Treitschke who in 1879 named these events the “era of Reform”; an element in a historiography created retrospectively in the early years of German Unification concerning the rise of nineteenth-century Liberalism and the 1848 Revolutions.⁷ I demonstrated that leading “Prussian reformers” did not conceive their activities in terms of a reform programme, nor did they employ the language of “reform” – “reorganisation” was a more common term used in respect of the various measures introduced. And if there was indeed no unifying thread of this kind to their disparate activities, then we need to discard the idea that the “Prussian Reforms” represent the early flowering of “German Liberalism” whose “failure” prefigured the “failure” of “German Liberalism” in 1848. Equally, any retrospective sense of a relationship between the “Prussian Reforms” and the “French Revolution”, as a

reforming response to revolutionary change, is the product of a later conceptual framework and so likewise nullified as anachronistic.

Reinhard Koselleck's Habilitation dissertation was first published under the title *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution*⁸ in 1967. The *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* entries for "Reform, Reformation" and "Revolution" did not however appear until the publication of Bd. 5 in 1984, the first being about 50 pages and the second almost 140, a small monograph.⁹ Although Koselleck was not the sole author of the entry on Revolution,¹⁰ he contributed the introduction and the main section on early modernity to the French Revolution and beyond. He argued here that the French Revolution, while conceived by its contemporaries as a unique event – *einmalig sowie einzigartig*¹¹ – also opened an unknown future of permanent transformation. It became a processual concept which, while formally unitary, was open to quite variant definition. His discussion of this opens up some important semantic oppositions, whose articulation belongs to a definite chronology which must be observed if we are not to be led astray by subsequent commentary and interpretation. He noted for example that revolution, reform and evolution could be used synonymously, or at different times could be contrasted one with another. The object of "revolution" also changed, not being explicitly directed at "the state" until 1917, for the good reason that the concept of "state" had itself evolved into its modern form through the nineteenth century.¹² For our purposes here we can say that the modern conception of "reform" as future-oriented change underpinned by administrative reorganisation and legislation arose out of nineteenth-century events in Britain, notably the "Civil Service Reforms" of the 1850s. But even the "Great Reform Act" was not the actual title of the 1832 Act of Parliament; it was officially known, and geographically circumscribed, as "An Act to amend the representation of the people in England and Wales".

Koselleck's *Preußenbuch*, "Prussia between Reform and Revolution" does not directly expose these distinctions, since it was drafted long before he developed his thoughts on "Revolution" beyond those exposed in his 1954 doctoral dissertation, "Kritik und Krise". Close attention to the chronology adopted in the book does however reveal that the temporal design of the book is flawed. The title itself is ambiguous, possibly deliberately so. Most obviously, it refers to Prussia between 1806 and 1848, from the explicit onset of the "Reforms" to the 1848 Revolution. As he states in the "Einleitung":

Prussian officialdom consciously opted for Adam Smith and against Napoleon, so that the one could be used to expel the other. They took up the challenge of the industrial revolution so as to avoid a "French Revolution", so that they might arrive at the same goal. They unleashed a societal movement management of which they slowly lost control, ultimately losing it altogether once the social question moved up into a constitutional question. It is one and the same movement which, initially led by the reforming state, then taken up by the new society, was

finally directed against the old state of the Prussian Code. Very roughly, the Revolution shaped the entire Reform of 1807 to 1820, but beyond that it failed.¹³

Clearly on display here is Koselleck's fondness for paradox and dialectical argument, but each sentence begs many questions that remain unresolved. The linkage to Adam Smith is tenuous – in fact, never seriously established by any writer.¹⁴ While the “industrial revolution” might today be better understood in the light of contemporary French conceptions of “industry”, Koselleck in the 1960s had in mind the very traditional conception of developments in steampower and factory production associated with a “wave of gadgets”, beginning in the later eighteenth century. The relation of the “social question” to the reorganisation of society – the sense in which the “constitutional question” is meant – remains an important, but as yet unwritten, history.¹⁵ The Prussian Code had a distinctly patchy early history; Koselleck himself argues that its significance lies not in its origin, but in its provision of an armature around which the development of socio-legal relations could be spun in the course of the nineteenth century. Finally, the idea that the 1848 Revolution realised the aims of the Prussian Reforms, but no more, on the one hand imputes coherent “aims” to the Reforms that are difficult to establish, and on the other shares in the idea that Revolutions either “succeed” or “fail” in the way that particular state policies could reasonably be judged – by a comparison of outcomes with intentions. While the intentions of administrators and politicians might in principle be ascertainable, what the “aims” of an event might be is a moot point: individuals participating in any event of whatever scale will have contradictory, heterogeneous intentions and aspirations that might well momentarily coincide, but then just as surely diverge; and above all it is only subsequent narratives that construct “classes” or “social groups” and impute unitary “interests” to them.

There is another, more conceptual, reading of the book's title – that in the early nineteenth century, Prussia was trapped between the options of Reform and of Revolution, and remained so trapped from 1790 to 1848:

My presentation corresponds rather to the differing levels upon which historical movement occurred. It deals with the dual sense of reform and revolution, as chronology and as event, rendering lasting structures visible. My presentation does not therefore follow the thread of a linear time. Theoretically, it deals with the various strata of historical time whose differential duration, speed and acceleration unleashed the differentiation of that epoch, and so in this way characterised their unity.¹⁶

This is a far more plausible thesis, although difficult to execute convincingly over several hundred pages. Such an enterprise would require a clear specification of “Reform” and of “Revolution”, something which is nowhere

undertaken in the book. While this does remain its principal and lasting attraction, we are eventually forced to the conclusion that the book is unable to provide what it seems to offer. The chronological and thematic frame for the book overwhelms the development of a well-structured argument consistently supported by original research; the conceptual argument is not developed beyond basic points about the dissolution of the *Ständegesellschaft*, a society based upon social rank, and the creation of a society structured by class and occupation.

Koselleck would of course develop and elaborate his ideas in later essays, and primarily in his contribution to *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (GG) on “Revolution”. However, the GG entry on “Reform, Reformation” (Bd. 5 pp. 313–60) was written by Eike Wolgast, a Heidelberg historian of theology specialising in the Reformation. This is both a strength and a weakness: Wolgast deals convincingly with textual sources up to and including sixteenth-century Germany, but is less authoritative in charting the way in which French and English usage of the later eighteenth century was adopted in Germany. “Reform” itself is only dealt with directly in the last twenty pages, terminating in a few remarks about post-1945 Germany. I will here present the main points of Wolgast’s account up to the end of the eighteenth century, amplifying some of the passing references that he makes. I will deal primarily with German, French and English sources, as Wolgast does. How Russian, Swedish, Italian and Spanish usage fits with this is of course very important, but for the moment is here left unexplored. And as will become evident, the ramifications of even this restricted perspective can only be sketched out here; I can do little more in this chapter than provide a preliminary to much more extensive investigation.

The derivatives of the Latin “reformare”, “reformatio” were employed in Europe for mostly theological senses well into the seventeenth century, and in Germany until the later eighteenth century. Wolgast quotes Ovid’s usage to emphasise a Latin meaning that looked back, not forward – as a transformation into a previous form, not into one that does not yet exist.¹⁷ By the first century AD this idea had entered moral and political language as a sense of current decline, and the need for a return to previous, better times. In material terms this could be synonymous with “restitution”, used by Ulpian in the sense of the transfer of property to those who had held it previously. Wolgast does however note that this action of restitution was not linked to any sense of “improvement”; it could well imply a deterioration.

The prime sense of “reformare” and its cognates was for more than a thousand years theological. The term does not occur in the Latin Old Testament; but it does appear in the Latin New Testament. For example, in the King James Authorised Version Romans 12.2 is translated as:

And be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Tyndale has:

...and fassion nott youreselves lyke unto this worlde: But be ye chaugned in youre shape, by the renyunge of your wittes, that ye may fele what thyng that good, that acceptable, and perfaicte will of god is.

While Luther has:

Vnd stellet euch nicht dieser Welt gleich/sondern verendert euch durch vernewerung ewers sinnes/ Auff das jr prüfen möget/ welchs da sey der gute/ der wolgefellige/ vnd der volkomene Gottes wille.

All of which in the Latin Vulgate version was:

et nolite conformari huic saeculo sed reformamini in novitate sensus vestri ut probetis quae sit voluntas Dei bona et placens et perfecta.

Here “conforming” is countered to “reforming”, a challenge to men and women that they should seek to raise themselves into that likeness of God to which they should as human beings aspire. This sense of *reformare* could also take on an eschatological sense, linked to the idea of *renovatio*, renewal. In the usage of the Greek church fathers: a spiritual return to the original condition of paradise, and the restoration of the likeness to God lost with original sin.¹⁸ Later this idea was extended by St. Augustine: the transformation of man by Christ was no longer a *renovatio in pristinum*, but a *renovatio in melius*. As Wolgast summarises:

From the middle of the second century AD the concept of “reformatio” had in both profane and religious spheres a settled dual meaning; it signified a) the return to an earlier condition that provided an exemplary norm for a corrupted present; b) change without reference to any model in the past, in the theological salvational tradition a change in the direction of the idea of the kingdom of God.¹⁹

These senses first entered the political sphere in the twelfth century, relating to the need to change a situation of neglect and decline, a sense extending to church and state:

The actual standard to which the idea of *reformatio* in reform tracts was oriented varied according to knowledge and horizon of experience; but common to all of them is an alignment with the old, that has over time and through the depravity of men intentionally or unintentionally gone into decline. For the Church the norm is to return to an early Christian life; for the Reich, the restoration of prior imperial rule.²⁰

Indeed, what is routinely referred to as the “Imperial Reform” of 1495, the Diet of Worms creating a *Reichskammergericht* that outlawed perpetual armed feuding and imposed a legal mechanism for dispute resolution, was more unintentional outcome of the Diet than a conception imposed upon unruly local rulers by Emperor Maximilian. In early 1495 these rulers had demanded the derogation of imperial government to themselves. Maximilian called the Diet in large part to assemble the forces with which he could then move against Italian states, and in this way assert his authority; but those who presented themselves in mid-March 1495 arrived militarily unprepared. Lengthy negotiations eventually created a peaceful internal settlement that corresponded neither to the initial aspirations of the local rulers, nor set the Holy Roman Empire on a path to the formation of an early modern state.²¹ Maximilian entered the history books as a “reformer”, but his aim had initially been to use a military expedition to shut down internal dissent, not create a framework for the centralisation of imperial power.

Even when “reformers” were contemporaneously named as such, this did not denote their interest in the progressive change of institutions and procedures. In 1498, by order of the Habsburg court, travelling officials called *Reformierer* were appointed to review the register of fiefs, and through this increase imperial revenue. Their activity was called *Reformation*.²²

But what we now call the Reformation was not commonly recognised as such, as the name for an era, until the later eighteenth century at the earliest. During the sixteenth century German everyday usage of *Reformation* implied improvement, renewal, the adaptation of institutions or statutes to changed circumstances; the reference to older norms fell increasingly into disuse. Theological usage diverged from this: the term came to signify the restoration of the old church and the values of the early Christian community. Luther himself seldom used the term. In the centenary year of 1617 “the Reformation” was for the most part limited to Luther’s action, to a completed event, not to an ongoing process. By the eighteenth century, Lutherans considered the Reformation to have been a historically necessary but unique event, God’s intervention in the course of history to save and restore pure doctrine, the subsequent task being to preserve this. By contrast, Pietists, and then Enlightenment writers, treated the Reformation as a task and an ongoing event, a prelude to the realisation of new ideals. Then with Ranke’s *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (published from 1839) the Reformation finally became an era in the modern sense. The “Counter-reformation” was likewise a historical concept that entered circulation well after the events to which it referred. Wolgast dates the first German usage to Pütter in 1776, in his *Unterschied der evangelischen Reformation und der katholischen Gegenreformation*; until then Pütter had written of “catholic reforms”.²³

At this point Wolgast’s presentation becomes patchy, but he does provide threads that can be explored. He notes that the German substantive

“Reform” is a loan-word adopted from French in the course of the eighteenth century, being long treated as a linguistic importation. In itself, as a verb *réformer* was an early seventeenth-century neologism, and up to the mid-eighteenth century at least its use was primarily religious; so that, as Wolgast points out, its usage corresponded to the usual German sense of *Reformation* since the fifteenth century.²⁴ Montesquieu, writing of a prince seeking to introduce “major changes in his nation” counselled that he should “reform by laws that which was established by laws, and change through manners that which was established by manners; and it is bad policy to change by laws that which must be changed by manners.”²⁵ The nouns *réforme* and *réformation* were used synonymously to characterise the events of the sixteenth century, as in the *Encyclopédie*:

RÉFORMATION, RÉFORME, (Synon.) La *réformation* est l'action de *réformer*; la *réforme* en est l'effet.

Dans le tems de la *réformation* on travaille à mettre en regle, & l'on cherche les moyens de remédier aux abus. Dans le tems de la *réforme*, on est réglé, & les abus sont corrigés.

Il arrive quelquefois que la *réforme* d'une chose dure moins que le tems qu'on a mis à sa *réformation*. Synon. françois.²⁶

This entry is then followed by a more expansive definition of “reformation” that emphasises its primarily theological character:

Réformation, s. f. (Théolog.) l'acte de réformer ou de corriger une erreur ou un abus introduit dans la religion, la discipline, &c. ...

Réformation est aussi le nom que les Prétendus réformés ou Protestans donnent aux nouveautés qu'ils ont introduites dans la religion, & le prétexte par lequel ils colorent leur séparation d'avec l'Eglise romaine.

La prétendue réformation fut commencée par l'électeur de Saxe, à la sollicitation de Luther, environ le milieu du xvj. siecle. Voyez Luthéranisme.

Which is continuous with comments in the first volume:

En France, un Catholique qui abandonne sa religion pour embrasser la religion prétendue réformée, peut être puni par l'amende honorable, le bannissement perpétuel hors du royaume, & la confiscation de ses biens....

(“Apostasie”, t. 1 p. 535)

Or:

Ce qui distingue principalement les Arminiens des autres réformés; c'est que persuadés que Calvin, Bexc, Zanchius, &c. qu'on regardoit comme les colonnes du calvinisme, avoient établi des dogmes trop sévères [as

discussed at the Synod of Dordrecht 1618–1619, the Synod being] composé outre les théologiens d’Hollande, de députés de toutes les églises réformées, excepté des François, qui en furent empêchés par des raisons d’état.

(“Arminianisme”, t. 1 p. 696)

Following a brief history of the English Reformation, the entry for “réforme” begins:

RÉFORME, s. f. (Théolog.) rétablissement d’une première discipline qui a été négligée, ou correction des abus qui s’y sont introduits.²⁷

Which is in line with much earlier Latin usage. Also mentioned here is the military sense of reforming units through “reduction”.

Christof Dipper has argued that Montesquieu’s restricted sense, that laws could only reform laws, not manners, was quickly displaced by a totalising usage in which *réforme* became a “central concept of the Enlightenment – in France and in Europe generally”, a conceptual anticipation of the later usage of “revolution” but without its sense of an open future.²⁸ His own instances – Brissot, Condillac, Condorcet – rather support the interpretation that “reform” quickly became synonymous with the totalising sense of “revolution” that first overlaid, then replaced it; and that, eventually, “revolution” eclipsed “reform” entirely as a historical concept and it became equivalent to any and every change, “progressive” or “regressive” – a counterconcept to “revolution” empty of any ideological force.²⁹

German dictionaries described *réforme* as a loan-word (*Fremdwort*) that was synonymous with *Veränderung*, *Besserung* – hence “change” and “recovery” – and we can see below that German dictionary definitions in the mid-eighteenth century did indeed match these French terms.

There are no matches for *Reform* in Zincke’s *Allgemein Oeconomisches Lexicon* (1764), nor for that matter in Grimm, where there is only *Reformation* as a head-word. Likewise if we consult Zedler we find that *Reform* has no entry as such. Instead, we have:

REFORMANDI JUS – “siehe **Recht zu reformiren**”.

REFORMARE – siehe **Reformiren**.

REFORMATA THERIACA, Daquin. sieht *Theriaca Reformata*, Daquin.

Reformaten, Reformosi, “a Roman Catholic monastic order”.

REFORMATI, siehe **Reformaten**.

... [four further monastic orders]

REFORMATIO, siehe **Reformation**.

Reformation, *Refomatio*, “means generally in law any law or statute, either newly confirmed or altered in some points, or thereby one and the other in *Policey- oder Justiz-Sachen* changed and improved (*geändert und verbessert worden*).”

Reformation “is also the name given to renewed *Policey-Ordnungen* in some imperial cities, like Frankfurt and Nuremburg”.

Reformation, most purely refers to that salutary action of the blessed Dr. Martin Luther, since he, with the encouragement and support of God, cleansed the Christian religion from some errors and abuses that had arisen. For at the beginning of the sixteenth century the Christian church did not look at its best.³⁰

Then there is an entry in the French form:

REFORME, is much the same as **Reduction**, see **Reduciren**, and likewise **Reformiren**.

REFORMER, see **Reformiren**.

Reformiren, Lat. *reformare*, Fr. *reformer*, really means change, renew, improve (*ändern, erneuern, verbessern*), place in better condition, put right, rearrange... Also introduce another religion, compel people to adopt another religion... The same is also a military term: to reform a company, a regiment means to dismiss the officers and redistribute the common soldiers of the company or regiment.³¹

Following the thread to *Reduciren*, we find

A newspaper word, meaning to reduce, draw in. To reduce a regiment by half, that is diminish it. Reduce a court or state, to make a reduction or *Reforme* [in Roman typeface, so a registration that it is a *Fremdwort*] means: to cut down the household: reduce the coinage, which means: devalue it.³²

And finally, for the sub-entry “Reformiste” we have “see religion (reformed).”³³

Wolgast briefly considers the eighteenth-century political usage of *Reform* before dealing with it as a counterconcept to *Revolution*, taking him into the nineteenth century. He cites one passage from von Rohr regarding the way in which a state should undertake a *Reforme*, and the textual context here again repays attention. Rohr first of all emphasises that it is the task of the ruler to keep his subjects in check through appropriate and reasonable means, “so that they cannot undertake anything against the *statum publicum*, or reform [reformiren]³⁴ the republic in any other manner.”³⁵ But rather than elaborate what these measures might be, he notes that an illness cannot be dealt with if its cause is unknown, and the “causes of civic ills are uncountable, and it is the task of state prudence to investigate them”. The inner evil so prejudicial to the common weal lies either in the excessive authority of the few, or in the excessive freedom of the people. The first can if left unchecked threaten the entire republic with ruin; the second can lead to factionalism, which can be encouraged by preachers. But while the right to reform the republic lies with the ruler, it is generally entrusted to those charged with administering his lands:

Es ist die Reforme [roman] so vorzunehmen, daß der Staat und die Verfassung des gemeinen Wesens, in so weit sie gut sind, unverletzt dadurch erhalten werden, und nicht grössere Ubel etwan hieraus entstehen.

He adds that in a corrupted state the ruler should not seek to constantly improve its condition, but rather ensure that things get no worse. Reform should not be introduced suddenly, but gradually, directing a people away from the bad and towards the good without their being aware of it.³⁶ As a corollary then, we could say that in the political sphere reform was action initiated by a ruler, and executed by his administrators, a remedy for identifiable problems conducted without disturbance to the existing order.

As we have seen, French usage to the mid-eighteenth century was primarily theological in nature; and up to this point English usage also followed the general pattern already established, in which the sense of restoring order (re-form) predominated where the usage was not theological.³⁷ But the decisive shift to our modern concept begins not with the French language, but with English, a usage eventually adopted by the German language.

A rough but very striking approximation of this conceptual chronology can be found in the catalogue of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB). Searching on titles using “Reform”³⁸ for the period 1700–1810 yields 538 hits, of which

443 are in English
47 in Latin
26 in German
1 in French.

Refining this chronologically and disregarding language, we get the following:

1700–1724	29 hits
1725–1755	39 hits
1756–1789	134 hits
1789–1810	296 hits

This periodisation is provided by the BSB search engine. If we then order the 443 English titles by ascending year, we find that item 74 was published in 1780; indicating that of 538 hits in any language, 370 were in English and published in or after 1780, some 70% of the raw total. Rather than a gradual increase in titles, including “reform” from mid-century as suggested by the BSB classification, we can register a boom that starts in 1780 and is dominated by the English language.

The lexeme “reform” has had, as the OED documents, a long history in the English language. The first instance from the sample of the BSB catalogue is William Burnaby’s play “The Reform’d Wife”, a play from 1700 that was most likely a response to Vanbrugh’s “The Provoked Wife” of 1697, a tale of brutality and adultery, of an unhappy marriage between Sir John Brute and

his wife, Lady Brute. There is also *Preaching reduced to practice. Being an essay to reform the reformed* (1701), and also Thomas Watt's popular *Grammar made easie: containing Despauter's Grammar reform'd, and render'd plain, ... Together with a new method of teaching Latin, by ten English particles. To which is added, a critical syntax* (1708). If we turn to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*, we can find usage reaching back through Dryden to Shakespeare, defining the verb as "To change from worse to better", while the noun "Reformer" is defined as both "One who makes a change for the better; an amender" and, significantly, "Those who changed religion from popish corruptions and innovations". We can also find the lexeme "reform" in a citation under the head-word "To Retrieve", exemplifying its first sense of "To recover; to restore": "By this conduct we may *retrieve* the publick credit of religion, reform the example of the age ...".³⁹ "Reform" is therefore an action, or qualifies person or thing; it is not an event, there being in Johnson no noun denoting "a reform" so that, correspondingly, it was not itself qualified grammatically – as economic or political reform.

This finds confirmation in the early activities of Edmund Burke. During his legal studies in the later 1740s at Trinity College Dublin, he had edited and contributed to *The Reformer*, a review primarily concerned with criticism of the Dublin stage, employing theatre criticism as a means for cultural criticism, crusading for an Irish identity for Irish culture.⁴⁰ Later Burke would use "reformation" when talking of political change – in November 1789 writing in correspondence that in France they had made "a Revolution, but not a Reformation."⁴¹ In the BSB sample of English-language titles, one of the earliest political usages is also by Burke, his *Speech of Edmund Burke, Esq. member of Parliament for the city of Bristol: on presenting to the House of Commons (on the 11th of February, 1780) a plan for the better security of the independence of Parliament, and the oeconomical reformation of the civil and other establishments* (1780).

Wolgast registers the English context but not its statistical importance – in 1782 William Pitt the Younger was still using "reform" in the older political sense of "restoration", moving a motion for reform in Parliament on the grounds that what was needed was "a moderate reform of the errors which had intruded themselves into the constitution." Removing defects was, he went on, not "innovation, but recovery of constitution."⁴² And this sense is reinforced in the title of a pamphlet published almost 30 years later in what had become a complex argument about representation in the wake of the American War, the French Revolution, and the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: John Symmons' *Reform without Innovation*. The opening premise conforms entirely to the sense of "reform" that we have encountered above:

The public mind being at this moment greatly agitated, on account of certain abuses, generally understood to have taken place in the administration of certain departments of the state, it has been thence concluded, that a considerable portion, not to say the whole, of the evils

complained of, has arisen from a defective representation of the democracy in the lower House of Parliament; and a general outcry has been consequently raised, in almost every part of the kingdom, for such a reform in that representative body, as shall bring it as nearly as possible to, what is termed, the true and genuine Spirit of the British Constitution.⁴³

Also important in the evolution of English usage is the tendency of historians to overlook this overlap between “reform” and “restoration”, reserving the former for what they perceive to be progressive causes, and the latter for reactionary. In this quotation from Symmons it is clear that the political abuses that he wishes to “reform” share their rhetorical space with the clerical abuses that became the focus of (what later became referred to as) the “Reformation”. And from this perspective it is all too easy to ignore the fact that the initial positive reception of the French Revolution by English “radicals” was driven in part by its anti-clerical aspect; so that the French Revolution was in part endorsed because of its continuation of the theological sense of “reform”, as an anti-Catholic movement. We might also note that the phrase “Wilkes and Liberty” was coined in May 1763 when John Wilkes, as publisher of the *North Briton*, was freed from custody following arrest for sedition related to his hostility to the terms of the Treaty of Paris ending the Seven Years’ War – which he considered far too generous to the French. It was Parliamentary privilege that led to his release, and his subsequent career as a proponent of Parliamentary reform supported by the London mob was likewise an uneven combination of political and personal advantage not easily assimilated to later ideas of “radicalism” or “reform”.

In an essay originally published in 1991 on “The Fragmented Ideology of Reform” Mark Philp begins by listing the factors that have been invoked “to explain why reformers in the 1790s failed to obtain their objectives”. He takes particular issue with Harry Dickinson’s approach, quoting him as follows:

The reform movement was hopelessly divided on what changes ought to be made and none of the competing elements could rally adequate support in or out of Parliament. The evidence shows how the radicals were divided among themselves, how most of them failed to take their ideas to their logical conclusions and how all of them failed to devise any effective means of implementing their policies.⁴⁴

Philp disagrees with this statement because he does not consider that differences “among reformers” contributed significantly to their failure “to achieve parliamentary reform”. But the idea that “reformers fail to achieve reform” involves two questionable ideas: that we have independent knowledge of what any proposed “reform” would look like; and that its realisation was a matter of the will of a group of individuals identified by later historians as “reformers”. There is a prevailing assumption in the literature on the political history of later eighteenth-century England that how “parliamentary

reform” was conceived at the time, and what form it actually takes, requires no extended consideration in itself, since “we know” that “reform” is “progressive”, hence homologous with what is eventually realised.

As we have seen, there does exist an extensive, but very repetitive, English literature raising the issue of Parliamentary and governmental “reform” in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and Edmund Burke is of course a prime representative of this. His *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was translated into German in 1793, and some of his earlier writings were also available. Wolgast draws attention to the somewhat hesitant adoption in Germany of “reform” from English usage, cross-contaminated in the course of the 1790s with responses to the French Revolution.⁴⁵ English usage was distinguished by its having flourished and been applied to Parliamentary institutions well before 1789; indeed, Britain was one of the few powers with an established Parliamentary body that could both be the target of “reform” agendas, and the means through which new legislation could bring about and legitimate “change”. As Bernard Bailyn demonstrated a long time ago, from the 1760s the arguments made by English critics of Parliament and government were echoed and amplified in the American colonies, where pamphleteers saw John Wilkes as their own outrider:

...not only was he believed to be a national leader of opposition to such a government, but he had entered the public arena first as a victim and then as the successful antagonist of general warrants, which, in the form of writs of assistance, the colonists too had fought in heroic episodes known throughout the land. He had, moreover, defended the sanctity of private property against confiscation by the government. His cause was their cause.⁴⁶

But within all of this English-language discourse of reform there was embedded a sense of “restoration”, expressed in respect of a “Norman Yoke” that had been imposed upon free communities, such that the political history of England up to 1688 was a continuous struggle to throw off this yoke.

This sentiment was captured in Burke’s argument that the Revolution of 1688

...was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty. ... We wished at the period of the Revolution, and do now wish, to derive all we possess as *an inheritance from our forefathers*. Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to inoculate any cyon alien to the nature of the original plant. All the reformations we have hitherto made, have proceeded upon the principle of reference to antiquity...

He went on to note that “Our oldest reformation is that of Magna Carta.”⁴⁷ As Pocock emphasised,⁴⁸ the Revolution of 1688 was justified in terms of an

ancient constitution that guaranteed its liberties, and it was these ancient liberties that radicals in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries sought to uphold. Here, any distinction between “reform” and “restoration” becomes moot.

Burke’s *Reflections* had first been published in 1790, and the first German translation appeared in 1791. Friedrich Gentz, an early supporter of the French Revolution and correspondent of Christian Garve, read the translation in the spring of that year with great scepticism, admiring Burke’s rhetorical flair but dismayed by the flatness of the German version. He quickly resolved to make his own translation, starting in late 1791, adapting the work, adding extensive footnotes, appending five essays, and writing an introduction.⁴⁹ However, by the time that his version was at the booksellers it was January 1793, the month that King Louis was guillotined; and Gentz’s original enthusiasm for the Revolution had soured. The translation reflected this; he now saw Burke as prescient, but more literary than philosophical. His own work as a translator therefore sought to present the *Reflections* as a “complete theory of the antirevolutionary system”, for “the defenders of the Old must resort to *Reason*.”⁵⁰ And so where in the citations from Burke above we read of “reformation”, in Gentz these words are translated with “Reform(en)”.⁵¹ By separating “reform” from “reformation” in this way Gentz was not altering Burke’s sense, but he was seeking to move the defence of a former condition into the realm of reason, and away from reaction.

We can also find a contemporary but negative account of “reformation” in the sixth edition of Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, revised and published in 1790, shortly before his death. Among the changes that he made to this edition was the addition of a substantial “Part VI”, dealing with each of the cardinal virtues in turn. In a section discussing “love of country” he discusses the role of political factions and the nature of public spirit. There is a tendency, suggests Smith, for a “spirit of system” to become mingled with a public spirit founded upon a love of humanity, but which in seeking to deal with distress and inconveniences can inflame this spirit of system to “the madness of fanaticism”.

The leaders of the discontented party seldom fail to hold out some plausible plan of reformation which, they pretend, will not only remove the inconveniences and relieve the distresses immediately complained of, but will prevent, in all time coming, any return of the like inconveniences and distresses. They often propose, on this account, to new-model the constitution, and to alter, in some of its most essential parts, that system of government under which the subjects of a great empire have enjoyed, perhaps, peace, security, and even glory, during the course of several centuries together. The great body of the party are commonly intoxicated with the imaginary beauty of this ideal system, of which they have no experience, but which has been represented to them in all the most dazzling colour in which the eloquence of their leaders could paint it. Those leaders themselves, though they originally may have meant nothing but

their own aggrandisement, become many of them in time the dupes of their own sophistry, and are as eager for this great reformation as the weakest and foolishlest of their followers. Even though the leaders should have preserved their own heads, as indeed they commonly do, free from this fanaticism, yet they dare not always disappoint the expectation of their followers; but are often obliged, though contrary to their principle and their conscience, to act as if they were under the common delusion.⁵²

This sense of reformation or reform as restoration, of something that had become corrupted or lost, is clearly distinct to the usage that gained ground in the mid-nineteenth century, where the emphasis was upon innovation, upon recasting the existing order to serve new purposes. Derek Beales draws attention to an article in *Blackwood's Magazine* for 1831 by John Herman Merivale entitled "Correction, Melioration, Reformation, Revolution", noting that "reform" figures more than "reformation" but is not clearly distinguished from it. Merivale uses "correct" in respect of remedying some defects; to "meliorate" or improve "to render some existing material more useful".

To reform implies belief in the existence of 'defects too deep-seated, too radically inherent, to be removed, without the previous destruction of that something to which they are attached', or that things 'are so essentially bad as to be incapable of any improvement'.⁵³

For Merivale, "reform" was the greatest change possible short of "revolution", which for him was "total change in the fundamental laws and institutions of a nation." It still carried, as Beales emphasises, "the notion of a return to a pristine or better past",⁵⁴ a "restitution". The modern sense, oriented to the future, looking to the past only to identify what had to be changed, not to locate that which had to be restored, took root only slowly even in the Britain of the 1830s and the 1840s.

Indeed, even in the 1850s the British "Civil Service Reforms" were not generally referred to as such, the term belonging to twentieth-century historical commentary, not to the contemporary literature. The central report authored by Northcote and Trevelyan was entitled "Report on the Organisation of the Permanent Civil Service", and was not so much directed at administrative organisation as at the selection of public servants of all kinds. Nonetheless, the "Report" does bear the hallmarks of a modernising, reforming spirit, arguing that while admission to the Civil Service was keenly sought, it was "for the unambitious, or the indolent and incapable, that it is chiefly desired."⁵⁵ The chief problems identified were an early age of admission, the role of patronage in securing a place and that once appointed to a department the official was promoted according to seniority, not merit:

The general principle, then, which we advocate is, that the public service should be carried on by the admission into its lower ranks of a carefully

selected body of young men, who should be employed from the first upon work suited to their capacities and their education, and should be made constantly to feel that their promotion and future prospects depend entirely on the industry and ability with which they discharge their duties, that with average abilities and reasonable application they may look forward confidently to a certain provision for their lives, that with superior powers they may rationally hope to attain to the highest prizes in the Service, while if they prove decidedly incompetent, or incurably indolent, they must expect to be removed from it.⁵⁶

Accordingly a distinction was to be made between intellectual and mechanical tasks, open competition introduced for all entrants, and closed competition internally for the filling of vacancies. All of which seems uncontroversial if the premise is accepted that the 40,000 or so public servants were unfit for their tasks, and that “meritocratic” principles ought to govern appointment and promotion.⁵⁷

However, these principles foundered upon the lack of available training in relevant subjects for examination. Northcote and Trevelyan’s belief that a knowledge of Latin and Greek was the best test of previous schooling is telling; it was more or less the only test of previous schooling that could be applied, beyond a very limited knowledge of mathematics. The Report called for “...a knowledge of the principles of commerce, taxation and political economy in the Treasury, Board of Trade etc., of modern languages and modern history, under which last may be included international law, in the Foreign Office.”⁵⁸ No school, college or university in Britain offered any such syllabus; while it also transpired that the great bulk of entrants to the Civil Service were postmen, tidewaiters, customs officials and the like for whom the ability to read and command of the four rules of arithmetic were the most that could be expected, or indeed was needed. While 500 permanent clerkships became vacant in 1857, only 82 of them were in fact filled through competition; 357 certificates were awarded in that year, without competition, to 243 tidewaiters and weighers in Customs, and 357 letter carriers in the Post Office.⁵⁹ Even Stafford Northcote could see the problem of imposing rigorous examinations on candidates for routine jobs that involved “...copying, folding, and sealing up despatches, and registering official documents, for an indefinite length of time...”.⁶⁰ The ability to write a clear hand was something that the Commissioners emphasised; but they conceded that the standard had to be kept low given the abilities of candidates few of whom, they reported, were capable of composing an ordinary letter.⁶¹

The almost comical lack of connection between reformist aspiration and the practicalities of schooling and employment that the Civil Service “reforms” encountered does however draw attention to the manner in which “reform” can be mobilised more as rhetorical device than practical activity. While the agenda of “social reform” that developed in mid-nineteenth-century Britain included economic, political and legal elements that, for example,

extended the franchise and secured the property of married women, the development of social democratic politics in the later part of the century led to a divergence between “revolutionary” and “reformist” paths. By 1899 Rosa Luxemburg could pose the question in a pamphlet: *Social Reform or Revolution?* While the agenda of social reform was specific and substantive, its very substance could now be criticised in the name of a future “revolution” that would transcend reformism’s limited quotidian nature. This appeal to “revolution” was utopian and self-legitimizing, “reform” becoming the label for any measure that, through the successful amelioration of present conditions, was held to forestall the realisation of revolutionary aspirations. Reform became a negative *Kampfbegriff*, the condensation of rhetorical struggle.

With the expansion of government activity into health, education and welfare during the latter half of the twentieth century “reform” also acquired a modern political sense in which substantive reforms became merely a vehicle for the consolidation of power by “reformers” who were thereby able to gain political advantage from the fragmentation of institutions and the networks of political adversaries. Here “reform” functions as a Trojan Horse in the ongoing consolidation of political power, “reforms” altering the function of institutions rather than enhancing their effectiveness. This became especially marked from the 1980s onwards when the privatisation of state assets and the marketisation of public administration could be presented as “reforms”. Rhetorically, those who opposed “reformers” became “those who opposed reform”; so that, paradoxically, the conservatives and libertarians who presented themselves as “reformers” could depict those actually interested in the substance and social impact of “reform” as the primary obstruction to reform. And so there is in the foregoing an argument that goes beyond a pedantic insistence on the language that historical actors do and do not use: that the advocacy of “reform” to reorganise the present can still make use of a fictive past in the service of contemporary political interests. Our vigilance regarding the use of language to promote or subvert order cannot be merely a historical concern.

Notes

- 1 The research for this chapter was supported by the Estonian Research Council grant PRG 318.
- 2 See the way in which Joanna Innes and Arthur Burns deal with this “age of reform” in their “Introduction” to Innes, Burns, eds., *Rethinking the Age of Reform. Britain 1780–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1.
- 3 As evidenced by the publication of a joint project dedicated to demonstrating the prevalence of “reform” in the eighteenth century: “After all, is not the Enlightenment the quintessential *age of reform?*” – Pascal Firges, Johan Lange, Thomas Maissen, Sebastian Meurer, Susan Richter, Gregor Stiebert, Lina Weber, Urte Weeber, Christine Zabel, “Introduction: Languages of Reform and the European Enlightenment”, in Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century. When Europe Lost its Fear of Change* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020), 6. Following this it is suggested

- that Diderot sought to do more than pronounce the “rational truth”, that “reform” “needed to be imposed onto the ignorant and the reluctant” – this is the “language of reform” the collection sets out to delineate.
- 4 The Reform Club was intended as a place where the “whigs, liberals, radicals and Irish MPS who made up Melbourne’s following” could meet – a political grouping that would soon become the Liberal Party – Derek Beales, “The Idea of Reform in British Politics, 1829–1850”, in T. C. W. Blanning, Peter Wende, eds., *Reform in Great Britain and Germany, 1750–1850*, Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999): 169.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, 162.
 - 6 My account diverges therefore from Gisela Schlüter, “The Concept of Reform in Polyglot European Enlightenment”, in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform*, 29–61; her chapter overlaps with some of the points made below, but does not seek to disentangle eighteenth- from later nineteenth-century usage.
 - 7 Keith Tribe, “Revision, Reorganization, and Reform. Prussia, 1790–1820”, in Béla Kapossy, Isaac Nakhimovsky, Sophus A. Reinert, Richard Whatmore, eds., *Markets, Morals, Politics. Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 136–60, at 136, 142, 148–49.
 - 8 Reinhart Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1967); 2nd rev. ed. 1975.
 - 9 Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Bd. 5 (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1984): Eike Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 313–60; “Revolution, Rebellion, Aufbruch, Bürgerkrieg”, 653–788.
 - 10 Christian Meier wrote Section I on Antiquity (656–70), and Jörg Fisch that on the Middle Ages (670–85).
 - 11 Reinhart Koselleck, in “Revolution IV.4”, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 5, 749.
 - 12 The most obvious linkage being made in Lenin’s *The State and Revolution*, written in August and September 1917. For more detailed discussion of the counter-concepts, see my essay “Revision, Reorganization, and Reform”, 149–53. For an outline of the historiography of the “modern state”, see Andreas Anter, *Max Weber’s Theory of the Modern State. Origins, Structure and Significance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), Ch. 3.
 - 13 Koselleck, *Preußen*, 2nd ed., 14.
 - 14 The linkage of the “Reformers” to Adam Smith has been most plausibly argued via the teaching of Kraus in Königsberg during the 1790s, conveniently setting Smith alongside Kant. In 1794–1795 for example Christian Jakob Kraus’ lecture course on the “Encyclopedia of the Cameral Sciences” was supposedly based entirely on Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, but his posthumously published *Staatswirtschaft* (five volumes from 1808 to 1811) suggest more a turgid summary of Smith in the light of the familiar *Staatswissenschaften* rather than the kind of insight into Smith that we can read in Christian Garve’s translation of *Wealth of Nations*. Furthermore, the direct evidence of notebooks kept by von Schön from 1788 to 1795 (a later key figure among the “Reformers”) suggests that Kraus presented to his students an eclectic and undigested mix of the usual cameralistic writings, in which references to Smith sit side-by-side with comments on Steuart, Sonnenfels and Justi - Erich Kühn, “Der Staatswirtschaftslehrer Christian Jakob Kraus und seine Beziehungen zu Adam Smith”, diss. (Bern, 1902), 81–82.
 - 15 Of central importance here is Eckart Pankoke’s *Sociale Bewegung – Sociale Frage – Sociale Politik* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1970), a book whose Preface thanks Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Rudolf Vierhaus and Reinhart Koselleck, and which was published in the same series – “Industrielle Welt” – of the Heidelberg Arbeitskreis für moderne Sozialgeschichte, in which Koselleck’s *Preußenbuch* appeared.

- 16 Koselleck, *Preußen*, 14.
- 17 Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 313.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 315.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 316.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 321.
- 21 Markus Thiel, “Der Reichstag zu Worms im Jahre 1495 und die Schaffung des Reichskammergerichts. Kompromiß eines kriegsbedrängten Kaisers oder friedensbringende Rechtssetzung?” *Der Staat* 41 (2002): 557, 559, 563.
- 22 Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 324.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 334.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 340.
- 25 Montesquieu, *De l’Esprit des lois*. Bk. 19 Ch. 14 – (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1973), t. 1 335–36.
- 26 Diderot, d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* 13 (1765): 980.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 891.
- 28 Christof Dipper, “Réforme”, in Rolf Reichardt, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink eds. *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 2000), 120–21.
- 29 Dipper locates this latter phase in the second half of the nineteenth century; but argues that the brief life of “reform” as representing “the self-realisation of Reason” (*Ibid.*, 9) was already over by the very early days of the Revolution – *Ibid.*, 13–14.
- 30 Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* 30 (1741): col. 1676.
- 31 *Ibid.*, col. 1694. See also Wilhelm von Schröder, *Fürstliche Schatz- und Rent-Cammer* (Leipzig, 1686), 222: “die alten Regimenter kurz um reformiren und abgedancket”, in the sense of reforming a military unit. And in von Hörnigk, *Oesterreich Uber alles wann es nur will* (1684), Vol. 21: “Und diese seynd es aus der Kauffmannschaft die gegen diejenige schreyen/ welche auf eine Reformation des bißherigen unordentlichen Gewerbs treiben...” My thanks to Marten Seppel for these examples.
- 32 *Ibid.*, col. 1645.
- 33 *Ibid.*, col. 1691.
- 34 In German texts printed with a Gothic typeface, recent loan-words were printed in Roman, as here with the root “reform”.
- 35 Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Staats-Klugheit* (Leipzig, 1718), 548.
- 36 “Es ist auch eine Reforme nicht jähling und auf einmahl, sondern nach und nach vorzunehmen, damit die Gemüther unvermerckter Weise von dem ersten ab- und zu den andern angewöhnet und angeführet werden.” *Ibid.*, 549, 550.
- 37 The OED cites many medieval and early modern passages under the entries for “reform” as noun, verb and adjective, and has a separate heading for “re-form”; although the distinction here from the citations already listed under “reform” is not at all clear – the latter are mostly in the sense of “reshaping”, of restoring a previous form.
- 38 The search function automatically includes all words beginning with “reform” irrespective of capitalisation, hence also includes “reformation”.
- 39 Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* II (London: Strahan, 1755) The British Library webpage for the *Dictionary* notes that if Johnson did not like a quotation, he was likely to abbreviate or rewrite it to his own taste; but for my purposes here any such revision merely attaches meaning to Johnson, rather than the source.
- 40 T. O. McLoughlin, “The Context of Edmund Burke’s ‘The Reformer’”, *Eighteenth-century Ireland* 2 (1987): 42. McLoughlin notes in an earlier footnote that “Burke saw himself as a reformer throughout his career”, but then goes on to

quote in support a Parliamentary speech in 1790 in which Burke declared that “He was no enemy to reformation”, making clear how careful we should be in this area – 38 fn. 11.

- 41 Cited in Paul Langford, “Burke, Edmund” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (accessed 6 January 2022).
- 42 Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, 342 quoting William Cobbett, ed., *The Parliamentary History of England from the earliest period to the year 1803*, Vol. 22 (London, 1814), 1416.
- 43 John Symmons, *Reform without Innovation* (London: William Savage, 1810), 3.
- 44 Harry T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth Century Britain* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1977), 271; cited in Mark Philp, *Reforming Ideas in Britain. Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 11–12.
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- 50 Friedrich Gentz, “Einleitung” to Edmund Burke, *Betrachtungen über die Französische Revolution*, trans. Friedrich Gentz (Berlin: J. G. Hoof Verlag, 2017), 12.
- 51 Burke, *Betrachtungen*, 72.
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- 59 Horace Mann, “On the best Mode of practically Working the Plan of Competition for Civil Appointments”, *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science 1858* (London: John W. Parker and Sons, 1859), 200.
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3 The Evolution of the Concept *Verbesserung* and the Anonymous German Discourse of Improvement¹

Marten Seppel

The idea of improvement became increasingly common in English printed literature from the beginning of the seventeenth century; by the 1690s it had already become a core element of English culture.² Peter Borsay has suggested that, while it is hard to find cultural values that might unite Britain in the eighteenth century, the pursuit of “improvement” is a leading candidate. He considers this to be entirely a British phenomenon: “it came to operate in its purest form in eighteenth-century Britain.”³ Paul Slack goes so far as to claim in his book *The Invention of Improvement* that this idea was unique to Britain; nowhere else in Europe could there be found a concept like the English idea of “improvement” (although equivalents could be found for “betterment”): “Only the English, moreover, invented a word of their own for material progress, and that gave improvement a distinct identity and particular rhetorical resonance. Improvement was one of the things which made the English different from everyone else.”⁴ According to him, only in seventeenth-century England was one specific idea applied to all kinds of innovation; “improvement became a fundamental part of the national culture” that paved the way to the British exceptionalism of the eighteenth century.⁵

The point of departure of the present essay is the contention that improving ideas could also be found in early modern Germany, denoting gradual change in administration, economy, society, technology, and agriculture. This was diffused by the German notion of *Verbesserung*; and this idea is best approached in terms of conceptual history.⁶ The aim of the following is not only to provide a chronological overview of the usage of *Verbesserung* in German literature, but also to argue that in the German territories too an “improving” way of thought was widespread from at least the closing decades of the seventeenth century, with some early forerunners. Germany may have lagged behind England somewhat; nonetheless in the German territories the concept of *Verbesserung* is already present in sixteenth-century literary and administrative language, denoting reorganisation and better management.

Improvement was not only a matter of government and legislation⁷; proposals were also addressed to a wider public, diffusing thoughts of

improvement. Improvements to the management of economic activity, technology, and agriculture did not require governmental direction, but instead knowledge and instruction on how practices might be improved. Such ideas were often advanced in anonymous publications, the author remaining unknown and hence detached from any sense of established interest or authority. The history of economic thought has long focused attention upon individual authors and significant names, but neglected the importance of very extensive journal contributions that were published anonymously. Journals became a central medium in eighteenth-century Germany, which was described as “the epoch of the journal” or “the century of the journal”.⁸ Journals became the best channel for the dissemination of new ideas, contributing to the common good. However, anonymity remained an important feature of early modern European print culture.⁹ Eighteenth-century German economic journals were full of all kinds of advice, of proposals and opinions, that were not attributed to any author, and this was quite usual for the time. Among those economic writers who published their works anonymously or pseudonymously was also Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi.¹⁰ Many published their first works anonymously because their initial purpose was simply to share their convictions, but if this won praise they would often reveal their authorship. Michel Foucault has emphasised that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century scientific discourse did not require an authorial warrant; what mattered was “membership in a systematic ensemble.”¹¹

Publishing economic proposals anonymously implies that the goal (an improvement) was more important than establishing one’s name or career. The suggested improvements did not need the author’s name (Foucault’s “author function”) to be heard, discussed, or put into practice. Andre Wakefield has argued that “many prominent cameralist texts - if not most of them” were composed simply to advance the author’s career. “Canonical cameralist authors, from Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff and Johann Joachim Becher to Johann von Justi, secured specific positions through the force of their writings”.¹² There could, of course, be cameralist careerists, but to claim that all cameralist literature was written only with the intention to procure personal advantage and attract a prince’s attention is a proposition that remains unsubstantiated. It has no purchase when the texts concerned were written anonymously though the latter did not always mean a lack of ambition on the part of the author.¹³ There were, undoubtedly, many authors who were genuinely modest, humble, and free from vanity. However, rather than speculating about the real or hypocritical intentions of authors, and in the absence of any other evidence, studying the evolution and diffusion of the concept and idea of *Verbesserung* within early modern German economic literature is a worthwhile endeavour, whether or not the texts in question were published anonymously. This literature does indeed suggest that improving idealists¹⁴ existed, and Justi clearly shared many of their aspirations.

The Emergence of the Concept *Verbesserung*

In High German the term *Verbesserung* appeared at least as early as the fifteenth century. One of its earliest meanings was “correction”, especially judicially as in the sense of “house of correction” in English. During the early modern period it also appeared in other contexts when there was a wish to correct things that were languishing, defective, or dysfunctional.¹⁵ There was also another word in German that was employed in parallel, and often almost synonymously with *Verbesserung* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century printed books – *Besserung* (“betterment”). The latter notion has virtually disappeared from modern German except in the expression “gute Besserung” – “get well soon”. The word *Besserung* was still relatively popular in the titles of books and pamphlets in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but was at the time mostly connected with religious and moral spheres, teaching the way in which people’s lives, souls, hearts, self-awareness, manners, sins, and true beliefs might be improved. Sometimes, however, *Besserung* also meant an economic improvement, an advancement, and an increase of revenues or better management.¹⁶

The early meanings of the notions of “reform”, “revolution”, and even “Policey” were all associated with the aim of restoring things to the way they once had been. Both notions, *Verbesserung* and *Besserung*, conveyed this logic in some cases. However, the concept *Verbesserung* does not belong to the family of traditional historical concepts, since it has a relatively narrow breadth of meaning, with little ambiguity.¹⁷ Even more importantly, the meaning of the concept *Verbesserung* did not change very much during the early modern centuries and during the so-called transition period (*Sattelzeit*). It is this that makes it so different from the concept of “reform”.¹⁸ In texts from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the central meaning of the notion *Verbesserung* was already related to future-oriented endeavours, expressing an elevation, the act of doing something better, to make things (or methods, systems, technology) better, or advance their quality.¹⁹ *Verbesserung* was often used also as a synonym for an anticipated increase (*Vermehrung*).²⁰ Hence, and similarly to the notion of “improvement” in the English language, one of the early meanings of the notion of *Verbesserung* concerned the enhancement of incomes and profitability.²¹ This remained one of the meanings of *Verbesserung* through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²²

Early modern fiscal counsellors in Germany linked the notion of improvement with the state’s political and economic endeavours. In the mid-sixteenth century, Melchior von Osse composed a political testament for Elector August of Saxony, mainly advising on administrative and police matters. He uses the notion *Besserung* on occasion, at least in one case rather generally to mean the goal of enhancing prosperity.²³ The same concept also occurs in the title of the second part of Osse’s book, where he calls for the restoration of order and bringing change and betterment to the people.²⁴ Osse’s treatise

remained in manuscript until 1717, when it was published in full by Christian Thomasius in Halle.²⁵

Another early cameral adviser, Georg Obrecht from Strasbourg, entitled the second of his five political discourses *Von Verbesserung Land vnnnd Leut* (published in 1617, originally in 1606).²⁶ Thus, Obrecht was the first among early cameral literature to use the notion in a book title. The same expression *Verbesserung Land und Leuth* occurred later in the title of the book by Johann Heinrich Boeckler in 1669,²⁷ as well as in *Vier Proben, wie ein Regent Land und Leute verbessern* (1708) by Johann George Leib. Obrecht advised how the ruler's household might be improved (*Verbesserung derselben [Haußhaltung]*):²⁸ empty and uncultivated land had to be improved and taken into use.²⁹ Obrecht definitely did not have in mind the preservation of the existing condition of the country; his goal was its improvement through superior police (*wie ein albereit angestellte Policye in etlichen Stücken möge verbessert*). He also stressed the need for the improved administration of the country, through for example making the right appointments.³⁰ And finally Obrecht was very interested in state income. When it came to the improvement of state revenues *Verbesserung* was for him synonymous with the growth of revenues.³¹ During the same century authorship of another work was attributed to Obrecht, dealing with the improvement of revenues. This was published under the pseudonym Theophilus Ellychnius in 1623, but was actually written by Gottlieb Dachtler.³²

In the seventeenth century an interest in increasing a prince's revenues was often linked with the need to improve the oeconomy in the country (*Verbesserung der Oeconomie*).³³ Later, the same premise characterised the cameralistic approach, which saw a very close connection between the growth of a state's revenues and improvements in oeconomy.³⁴ In 1686 Wilhelm von Schröder proffered advice on how to improve both incomes and the oeconomy of the land.³⁵ There is also a shorter piece on manufactures by Schröder that is aimed at the "... increase and improvement of manufactures".³⁶

In terms of number of editions the most popular work from the first half of the seventeenth century including the word *Verbesserung* in the title was undoubtedly a multi-volume work on chemistry and the "improvement of metal" by Thomas Kessler.³⁷ The primary trend in the seventeenth century was that works with the notion *Verbesserung* in the title frequently belonged to the sphere of science and education: promising the improvement of the present knowledge or practice in astronomy, medicine, linguistics, poetry, arts, music, or the education of children. Another significant field where the word *Verbesserung* was often employed in the seventeenth century was that of religion, the church, and theology. Then came the themes of oeconomy – treatises on the improvement of mining, household, fertility, ovens, and mills, together with the spheres of state and administration, such as state finances, coinage, fortifications, military affairs, and justice.³⁸ The relatively widespread use of the word *Verbesserung* in the titles of printed works is striking. Nonetheless, the abstract aim of improvement was still not widely discussed in seventeenth-century texts.

Cameralists' Interest in Improvements

Osse and Obrecht in particular used the notion of improvement in connection with all of the three spheres that in the eighteenth century became the pillars of the German cameralistic sciences: these are *cameralia*, *oeconomia*, and *policey*.³⁹ After Osse and Obrecht, Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff uses the words *Verbesserung* and *Besserung* in his principal work *Teutscher-Fürstentstaat* (1656).⁴⁰ He notes that the prince should listen to the Estates on the questions that were not directly their responsibility, including their advice on “good order and improvement in the land”.⁴¹ Thus, it was the task of the ruler to “establish and improve police order” (*die Auffrichtung und Besserung einer Lands- oder Policey Ordnung*).⁴² Seckendorff also mentions the “improvement” of schools and the “betterment” of the lives of the poor.⁴³

Another canonical author of the seventeenth century who has been associated with the early cameral literature, Johann Joachim Becher, is strikingly parsimonious with his use of the notion “*Verbesserung*” (or its related verb) in his principal work from 1668, *Politischer Discurs*.⁴⁴ He had however worked for the “improvement of the town Mannheim and increase of its population” in 1664.⁴⁵ Becher also sought to further the “improvement of metals” (*Verbesserung der Metallen*) in his later works on alchemy.⁴⁶

Justus Christoph Dithmar, who was appointed to the first cameralistic chair at the University of Frankfurt-on-the-Oder in 1727, declared that one of the central goals of the cameral sciences was the “general improvement” of the revenues of the *Landes-Fürst*: how princely incomes can be raised, improved (*verbessert*), and maintained should be something that was taught in universities.⁴⁷ More than once in his 1731 cameralistic textbook, Dithmar defined his treatment of manorial economy, cattle breeding, agriculture, gardening, and wool-quality in terms of improving management (*zu verbessern*).⁴⁸ Improvements increase agricultural production, and consequently income, and so should receive all possible encouragement. The aim of promoting improvement in the spheres of land and town oeconomy was also one of the aims of Dithmar’s journal *Die Oeconomische Fama*. Only ten issues of the journal were published between 1729 and 1733 (reprinted in 1743–1744), but agriculture received particular attention (eight contributions in total) in the belief that “agriculture can be improved daily”.⁴⁹ Other articles mainly concerned handicraft (11 contributions) and other oeconomic and police matters (5). For instance, in its seventh number in 1732, there was discussion of how water quality could be improved (*verbeßern*) and pollution from the dyeing industry avoided.⁵⁰ The whole tenth issue was devoted to education. The influence of the journal was ultimately rather limited; its readers were primarily scholars in the field, and not the wider public.⁵¹

Almost thirty years later, Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, the central figure of the German cameral sciences, while speaking of the need to improve the agriculture in 1760 expressed his satisfaction that in the “Enlightenment age” nobody could be criticised for making suggestions relating

to improvement and change. “In our enlightened times one must no longer fear being made a heretic if one doubts that each and every institution of our dear ancestors is so perfectly good and excellent that there is no need of the slightest change or improvement.”⁵² Two years earlier, in 1758, Justi had written in the preface to the second edition of his *Staatswirtschaft* that the ridiculous prejudice against change had been overcome, and that even in France “suggestions and proposals for necessary improvements are made” in public writings.⁵³ In any case, for Justi improvement was a clear goal and he often used the term *Verbesserung*, although never in the titles of his works.⁵⁴ He also warned that improvements involved costs – if one wants income from “improving something” (*Verbesserung einer Sache*), it would require investment, and the initial costs may be higher than the instant gains.⁵⁵ However, although the concept of *Verbesserung* was consciously used by Justi and other cameralists of the time, it cannot on the other hand be said that they would have given this term a central place in their teaching, or deliberately acknowledged it.

Anonymous Advocacy for Improvement

The drive for improvement can clearly be seen in the first German cameralist and oeconomic journals published in the first half of the eighteenth century. A decade after *Oeconomische Fama*, cameralist Georg Heinrich Zincke began publication of the *Leipziger Sammlungen* (1742–1767).⁵⁶ In the foreword to the third volume of the *Leipziger Sammlungen*, Zincke thanked God that the journal had already made it possible “to initiate or improve some good institutions”.⁵⁷ The keyword *Verbesserung* (that also included the usage of the word *Besserung*) can also be separately found in the journal’s aggregate index.⁵⁸

Both journals – *Oeconomische Fama* and the *Leipziger Sammlungen* – published most of their articles anonymously, plus pseudonyms and the use of initials that was a common practice in academic journals.⁵⁹ Sometimes anonymous contributions are just marked as *Der Autor* or *Eines Anonymi Schrift*.⁶⁰ There were certainly some articles that were only formally anonymous – the author’s name was not attached to the text but it was still apparent to everyone who the author was. The use of initials was not necessarily a sign of anonymity, but simply a brief designation of authorship in print.⁶¹ Nevertheless, very many of these unsigned articles remained fully anonymous, and contemporary bibliographies and catalogues could not identify their actual authorship. At the same time, it is clear that the publisher or the editor-in-chief of the journal often knew the identity of those behind the contributions they received. When in 1757 Georg Heinrich Zincke introduced some “patriotic proposals” submitted by a nobleman from Upper Saxony he noted: “We are not allowed to disclose the name of this gentle and noble lover of human society, as he calls himself.”⁶² Contributors could have a personal motive to stay unknown. For example, in 1748 a pamphlet

on the improvement of grain cultivation was published in Berlin signed only with the initials “J.F.N”. In the preface the author explained that he wanted to hide his name, rank, and origin, but admitted that the publisher knew his identity and therefore the author hoped that readers would still trust both him and his proposals.⁶³ This kind of excuse for anonymity is however surprising, since an unsigned title page was nothing uncommon or provocative in the eighteenth century, and anonymous books and articles were published *en masse* alongside attributed works. In the following year two reviews of J.F.N’s pamphlet were published in the *Leipziger Sammlungen*, one very critical and also written under cover of anonymity,⁶⁴ J. F. N. decided to reveal his full name so that he might reply to his critics. Johann Friedrich Neumann then justified his work by stating that the sole aim of his book had been to propose “how to realise the improvement of agriculture on a large scale.”⁶⁵

Compared with anonymous journal articles the share of published books with concealed authorship was obviously much smaller, but still common during the eighteenth century. Anonymity could be deliberate, but could also be simply following a general practice – it was for example a matter of style to omit the author’s name on a title page but then state it clearly at the end of the preface. According to the search results from the German national bibliography for the eighteenth century (VD18), 13 per cent of the imprints published between 1701 and 1800 with the word *Verbesserung* in the title are catalogued with an unidentified author’s name. In addition, 19 per cent of texts dealing with improvement carry no author name on the title page, although their actual authorship is known. These include five books that appeared under pseudonyms. Hence, roughly a third of the eighteenth-century titles on improvement (excluding periodicals) was published without naming their author. Although anonymous publishing slowly diminished decade by decade from the 1760s, the trend is not very clear – at the end of the century the share of anonymous imprints with the word improvement in the title was practically the same as in the first quarter of the century: 16 per cent of titles were published unattributed in the 1710s, against 22 per cent in the 1790s.⁶⁶

What was the purpose of writing an economic treatise anonymously? It does not seem that fear of prosecution could be the main reason. Censorship problems were part of publishing in the eighteenth century,⁶⁷ but this does not explain the widespread practice of circulating unattributed writings. As far as improvement proposals are concerned, such prudence was usually not needed because they rarely contained satirical or dubious philosophical reasoning, or a critique of the contemporary political, social, and moral order. As a rule, practical suggestions for improvement did not demand radical reorganisation, but sought better solutions for everyone.⁶⁸ Besides, the first cameralistic journals like *Oeconomische Fama* and *Leipziger Sammlungen* avoided publishing any severe comments on rulers or their decrees.⁶⁹ In general, the essence of all cameralist literature was consultative, seeking to give good advice, not criticise or attack the existing order.⁷⁰ There must therefore

be other considerations that explain why many cameralist and improving authors wished to remain anonymous. They could not restrain themselves from writing suggestions for improvement, but they could still fear reactions to their writings, or did not wish to stand out in their community. Thus the cover of anonymity protected authors not only from the authorities, but also from critical readers.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, anonymity was a widespread practice and a cultural convention in eighteenth-century periodicals. Shorter contributions were typically anonymous by default. Thus, it seems that publishing an article with or without the author's name was not always only the conscious choice and intentional tactic of an author, but depended on the context, the editor, the style of the journal, and the common practice of the time.⁷¹ The fact that attributed publications had not yet become the norm does not however imply a lack of interest in authorship; this could have also been the private wish of anonymous authors.⁷²

In any case, anonymously published works on improvement did not draw attention to individual authors, their position or authority, but instead to proposals and ideas aiming at the common good and general well-being. In 1764 Voltaire wrote to Étienne Noël Damilaville that in the case of philosophical or scientific contributions, anonymity was very much expected: "Useful works should not belong to anyone. [...] What does the author of a book matter as long as he does good to good souls?"⁷³ Hence, proposals for improvement had to stand up for themselves, and not require the authority of their authors. Many anonymous authors seem to have been practitioners who wished to share their experiences in order to advance the general cause of improvement.⁷⁴ The improvements suggested were often reviewed or criticised by others, but strikingly, practical and empirical arguments prevailed over those that were the outcome of a purely conservative attitude or ignorance.⁷⁵ In 1785, Joachim Christian Bergen, a Prussian official and an experienced practitioner in farming himself, complained that recent years had brought so many recommendations on improvements that a farmer would be pressed to tell the difference between the good and the bad, or judge which teachings on improvement were sound.⁷⁶ Undoubtedly, very many useless improvements were recommended, but even merely theoretical treatments were a step forward in promoting the idea of improvement and popularise the concept.

The Term *Verbesserung* Becomes Widespread

By the eighteenth century the term *Verbesserung* had become a popular keyword in German politico-economic literature. The number of book titles with the word *Verbesserung* doubled from 1700 to the 1740s, and then more than doubled again from 1781 to 1800.⁷⁷ A similar trend can be traced when one browses through the article titles in eighteenth-century German journals, where the popularity of using the word "Verbesserung" seems to peak

in the 1770s.⁷⁸ Of course, there were many more contributions that discussed improvements, but which did not carry the word in the title. Not only did the word *Verbesserung* become increasingly popular; the general idea of improvement also became more common. As Rudolf Vierhaus pointed out, it was *communis opinio* in eighteenth-century Germany, at least among the educated, that political and social conditions were in need of considerable improvement.⁷⁹ Julius Bernhard von Rohr had already argued in 1716 that it was the duty of every prince to secure the happiness and prosperity of his subjects and of the land. For this one must work on improvements of every kind: "Finally, a prince who cares for the welfare of his country must consider all the forms of work in which his subjects engaged, studying how they might be improved and hindrances removed."⁸⁰

By the mid-eighteenth century, the scope of improvements was extensive, engaging ever more objectives and themes connected with the notion of *Verbesserung*. For example, in 1747, Johann Michael von Loen spoke of the need for state improvement (*Verbesserung eines Staats*) and linked it with soldiers (*Verbesserung des Soldaten-Stands*), justice (*Verbesserung der Justiz*), churches (*Kirchen-Wesen... zu verbessern*), roads (*Verbesserung der Wege*), childcare (*Verbesserung der Kinder-Zucht*), and universities (*Verbesserung der hohen Schulen*).⁸¹ In his *Patriotic Fantasies* (1774–86) Justus Möser made concrete proposals for improving the institutions of poor relief, breweries, and newspapers (taking American newspapers as a model).⁸² Already in 1741 Johann Peter Süßmilch was convinced that, thanks to the improvement of surgery (*Verbesserung der Chirurgie*), people were living longer, to the advantage of the prince.⁸³ A growing number of works appeared on improving the German language.⁸⁴ Other sciences also engaged in the improvement cause; in 1765 Christian Heinrich Wilke argued for the importance of practical mathematics and geometry in facilitating state improvement (*Staatsverbesserung*).⁸⁵ Education and schooling was a sphere that attracted increasing attention from improvers: "We take the improvement of the school system for one of the most important and certain means to improve the depraved world in general, but especially policey".⁸⁶ Proposals included the reorganisation of handicraft training,⁸⁷ and English examples were cited for the care and education of poor and orphaned children.⁸⁸ In 1768, Johann David Michaelis dreamed of a *Verbesserung* for all universities.⁸⁹ Last but not least, the founding text of the German gymnastics movement (*Turnbewegung*) *Gymnastics for Youth* (1793) by Johann Christoph Friedrich GuthsMuths was aimed at the "necessary improvement of physical education".⁹⁰

One sphere that stood out particularly in the agenda of improvement was oeconomy (*Oeconomie*) and agriculture.⁹¹ Many academics and writers concurred with Johann Daniel Titius in 1755: "The author of the present work is a man who has laboured for many years to improve the general oeconomy of his fatherland for the sake of the welfare of his fellow citizens".⁹² As in England,⁹³ German agricultural advancement was one the main objectives

of those who wrote about improvement during the entire eighteenth century, making consistent use of *Verbesserung* (*Ackerbauverbesserungswesen*)⁹⁴ in their arguments.⁹⁵ In 1785, Joachim Christian Bergen declared that “In all states and countries, even in those of incarcerated reason, the improvement of agriculture, which in a narrower sense includes only livestock and arable farming, has become an essential object of rulers and their cameralists.”⁹⁶ Justi seems to have used *Verbesserung* most often when applying his improving agenda to agriculture;⁹⁷ in 1757 Justi undertook to write a separate treatise on agricultural improvement (*einen besondern Tractat von Verbesserung der Landwirthschaft*).⁹⁸ Oeconomy and agriculture also extended to forestry. The title of Johann Gottlieb Beckmann’s collected works on forestry was “Contributions to the Improvement of Forest Science”.⁹⁹ Naturally the aim of oeconomic literature was not only to speculate about possible improvements to agriculture or forestry, but to put good advice into practice.¹⁰⁰

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the number of journals in Germany that declared the advancement of improvements to be their aim increased.¹⁰¹ This was echoed in the titles of the journals. The Celle Agricultural Society published a journal entitled *Nachrichten von Verbesserung der Landwirthschaft und des Gewerbes* (1765–1778); the journal of the Imperial Royal Patriotic-Economic Society of Bohemia was first called *Beiträge zur Verbesserung der Landwirthschaft im Königreich Böhmen* (1795–1797) and then *Abhandlungen, die Verbesserung der Landwirthschaft betreffend* (1797–1808). In the early nineteenth century an oeconomic journal was published in Stadtamhof that aimed to disseminate all kinds of practical instructions and innovations (e.g. how to “improve” the making of bread, wine, yarn, soap, or the quality of the air in a room).¹⁰² Of course improvement ideas were not published only in those journals that announced themselves as promoters of improvement, but were widely found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century periodicals.

Improvement proposals in German political and economic literature can be divided into two – suggestions for governmental action and instructions for individual practitioners. A *Verbesserung* could be enforced by law;¹⁰³ but on the other hand, the movement for improvement was by no means only addressed to government. Unlike reforms that implied a government action from above, improvements in agriculture and other *oconomia* spheres could be effected by any practical person. The preaching of moral and practical improvement was exactly the aim of the German popular enlightenment movement that was part of the so-called Economic Enlightenment, or more specifically in German the *gemeinnützig-ökonomische Aufklärung*, as Holger Böning puts it.¹⁰⁴ The entire agricultural improvement literature was written for a reading public,¹⁰⁵ though its major readership was limited to those who were already interested in oeconomic issues. Ignorance, prejudice, and obstinacy among farmers were seen as the main obstacles to the improvements advocated. Joachim Christian Bergen, later much praised by Albrecht Daniel Thaer, pointed out in 1785 that the success of

improvements in agriculture did not only depend on the elite or on individuals; “practical improvements” in agriculture had to be generally introduced since the oeconomy and agriculture of a country or a province could only be considered “improved” when many farmers accepted and implemented new practices.¹⁰⁶ In Germany (as also elsewhere), the idea of improvement was in the eighteenth century closely linked with the spread and activity of economic and patriotic societies.¹⁰⁷ These societies often organised prize essay competitions (*Preisfrage*) on questions on improvements, submissions being made anonymously.¹⁰⁸

Although by the mid-eighteenth century *Verbesserung* had become a widely used keyword in German politico-economic literature, the term was not still common where social issues were involved.¹⁰⁹ Only in the second half of the eighteenth century did demands for social improvement become increasingly frequent. The basis for *Verbesserung* in agriculture was to be the abolition of corvée and serfdom.¹¹⁰ Besides the improvement of the situation of serfs and peasants, demands emerged for the *bürgerliche Verbesserung* in the status of other groups without rights: Jews, Roma (Gypsies), and women. In 1781 Christian Wilhelm Dohm famously demanded the improvement of the social situation of the Jews without rights. For Dohm, civic improvement (*Bürgerliche Verbesserung*) meant raising the status of Jews within the community.¹¹¹ In 1793, Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel published a book entitled *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Weiber*, clearly based on the ideas of Dohm, whom he also cites. Hippel points out that women too were in a vulnerable legal position, since they had to live in subjection. Like Dohm, Hippel argued that if women were given rights their abilities would be of great benefit to society.¹¹²

Conclusion

From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries onwards, German political and economic counsellors pursued improvement in the name of *Verbesserung*, a concept fundamentally directed to change. It is difficult to detect any fundamental differences between the connotations of *Verbesserung* and of the English “improvement”. Improvement increasingly became a way of thinking in both Germany and England during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It could be argued that seventeenth-century German improving culture was not as fully developed as it was at the time in England. Some improving ideas in early modern German territories were also influenced by the practices of an English culture of improvement, and were often directly acknowledged as such. Nonetheless, the way in which the term *Verbesserung* was quickly diffused and accepted in early modern Germany cannot be attributed to direct English influence.

In Germany use of the concept developed from the 1690s and peaked in the period 1750–1850. The idea of *Verbesserung* gradually became part of many discourses (cameralist teaching, popular and economic enlightenment),

coalescing as an improvement discourse sharing similar aims and a common language, even though a distinctive improvement literature as a separate genre did not emerge. Cameralists energetically promoted change and improvement in order to achieve good order, increase revenues, together with general happiness and well-being. Practical improvements were discussed as part and parcel of their central themes and concerns. The fact that cameralist scholarship aspired to teach how a prince's revenues might be increased, and domainal economy improved, made this in essence the advocacy of improvement.¹¹³

Alongside the familiar names who discussed the need for improvement there were numerous anonymous contributors who pursued the same goal. Anonymity was an important way of promoting improvement. An expanding group of enthusiasts advocated improving solutions alongside the work of experts; while there were also numerous enthusiasts and practitioners who never put pen to paper. Given the extent to which improvements in oeconomy, agriculture, industry, trade, administration, domestic finance, public health, and technology were promoted, there is ample reason to speak in terms of a general search for improving solutions in the German territories at least from the end of the seventeenth century. Earlier literature has labelled this phenomenon a culture of improvement,¹¹⁴ or of innovation,¹¹⁵ or referred to an ideology of improvement.¹¹⁶ The proliferation of improving endeavours indicates the acceptance of a wish to organise and manage everything better, although there was of course a great deal of inconsistency and fragmentation in the improvements proposed by different authors. There was however a rising chorus in favour of improvements, and this presumably influenced government policies and everyday practices in one or another way. Improvement proposals that were widely publicised in the form of books and journal articles concerned both the town and the countryside. However, during the early modern period we know comparatively little about the extent to which this “improving way of thinking” became common among the peasantry and ordinary villagers, the majority of the population. The adherence of the peasantry to the traditional was remarked on and complained about by many contemporaries.¹¹⁷ It does seem that improving ideas were prevalent mostly among the intelligentsia and did not become part of a genuine mass phenomenon before the nineteenth century.

Notes

- 1 This work was supported by an Estonian Research Council grant (PRG318). I would like to thank Keith Tribe, Verena Lehmbruck, and Jürgen Beyer for their very helpful comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of the paper.
- 2 Paul Warde, “The Idea of Improvement, c. 1520–1700”, in Richard W. Hoyle, ed., *Custom, Improvement and the Landscape in Early Modern Britain* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 128. Hence, the “age of improvement” in England can be backdated by at least a century from Asa Briggs's own periodisation: Asa Briggs, *England in the Age of Improvement 1783–1867*, 2nd ed. (London: The Folio Society, 1999), 1.

- 3 Peter Borsay, “The Culture of Improvement”, in Paul Langford, ed., *The Eighteenth Century 1688–1815* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 183.
- 4 Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement. Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), vii, for the terminology pp. 4–6.
- 5 Slack, *The Invention of Improvement*, quote p. 1, for the exceptionalism pp. 252–54, 257.
- 6 There is no entry for “Verbesserung” in the canonical *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*: Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Bd. 1–7 (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1972–1992); nor in Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, Gottfried Gabriel, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Bd. 11 (Basel: Schwabe & Co, 2001).
- 7 Recently, Susan Richter has studied the concept of “Verbesserung” as a legal term, but considers Justi’s improving ideas purely as reform legislation proposals to the sovereign: Susan Richter, “Reform as Verbesserung: Argumentative Patterns and the Role of Models in German Cameralism”, in Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century. When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change* (New York; London: Routledge, 2020), 153–80.
- 8 Paul Raabe, “Die Zeitschrift als Medium der Aufklärung”, *Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung* 1 (1974): 99–136; Hans Erich Bödeker, “Journals and Public Opinion. The Politicization of the German Enlightenment in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century”, in Eckhart Hellmuth, ed., *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 424, 427; Helga Brandes, “The Literary Marketplace and the Journal, Medium of the Enlightenment”, in Barbara Becker-Cantarino, ed., *German Literature of the Eighteenth Century. The Enlightenment and Sensibility* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 79–81.
- 9 Marcy L. North, *The Anonymous Renaissance. Cultures of Discretion in Tudor–Stuart England* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 2–9.
- 10 [J. H. G. Justi], *Wohlgemeynete Vorschläge eines die jetzigen unglücklichen Zeiten beseufzenden Menschenfreundes auf was vor Bedingungen die jetzo in Krieg befangenen Mächte zu einem dauerhaftigen, und ihrem allerseitigen Interesse gemässen Frieden gelangen könnten: zur Aufmunterung ganz Deutschlands* (Friedensnah, 1759); [J.H.G. Justi], *Anaragoras von Occident, Physicalische und Politische Betrachtungen über die Erzeugung des Menschen und Bevölkerung der Länder* (Smirna, 1769), 57 (on “Verbesserung der Sitten”); Erik S. Reinert, “Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi – the Life and Times of an Economist Adventurer”, in Jürgen Georg Backhaus, ed., *The Beginnings of Political Economy. Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi* (New York: Springer, 2009), 39.
- 11 Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”, in his *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* 2, ed. by James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1998), 212–13.
- 12 Andre Wakefield, *The Disordered Police State: German Cameralism as Science and Practice* (Chicago, IL; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 6; see also p. 141.
- 13 See North, *The Anonymous Renaissance*, 99.
- 14 Of course, this categorisation as careerist or idealist can be lent more nuance, as with Friedrich Meinecke’s distinction between realists and moralist, see Werner Stark, “Editor’s Introduction”, in Friedrich Meinecke, *Machiavellism. The Doctrine of Raison D’Etat and Its Place in Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), xxxi.
- 15 “Verbesserung”, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, Online-Version: <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemid=V00461> (accessed 16 February 2021). See also Richter, “Reform”, 155.

- 16 For example, [Anon.], *Gemeine Stymmen Von der Muentze* (Leipzig: Bapst, 1548), Aij, Dij; Horst Schlechte, *Die Staatsreform in Kursachsen 1762–1763* (Berlin: Rütten&Loening, 1958), 45, 178, 186–88, 197, 207.
- 17 See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 84–85.
- 18 For the change of the meaning of “reform” during the Sattelzeit, see Eike Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 5, 313–60; Peter Wende, “1848: Reform or Revolution in Germany and Great Britain”, in T. C. W. Blanning, Peter Wende, eds., *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850*, Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999), 150; and Keith Tribe’s chapter in this volume.
- 19 For example, “Instrumenta [...] was zuuorn erfunden, bessern, oder auch etwas neues an Tag bringen”: Petrus Albinus, *Meißnische BergkChronica: Darinnen fürnemlich von den Bergkwercken des Landes zu Meissen gehandelt wirdt* (Dreszden, 1590), 3.
- 20 For example, “Mehrung vnd verbesserung der Priuilegien/ Ordnungen vnd Statuten der Vniuersitet zu Jhena, 24. Jan. 1569”, in *Freyheiten, Ordenungen, vnd Statuten, der läblichen Vniuersitet Jhena* (Jhena: Rebart, 1569), unpaginated.
- 21 Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 160–61; Borsay, “The culture of improvement”, 184; Warde, “The Idea”, 128.
- 22 For example, “Vermehrung und Verbesserung der Einkünffte”: Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Compendieuse Haußhaltungs-Bibliothek. Darinnen nicht allein die neuesten und besten Autores, die sowohl von der Haußhaltung überhaupt, [...] (Leipzig: Martini, 1716), 54; [Christoph Heinrich Amthor], Project Der Oeconomie In Form Einer Wissenschaftt; Nebst einem Unmaßgeblichen Bedencken, Wie diese Wissenschaftt in der Theoria und Praxi mit mehrern Fleiß und Nutz getrieben werden könne*, 2nd ed. (Franckfurt, Leipzig, 1717), 21. Also Justi continues to use “Verbesserung der Einkünfte” as a synonym to “Vermehrung der Einkünfte”: Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Staatswirthschaft oder Systematische Abhandlung aller Oeconomischen und Cameral-Wissenschaften, die zur Regierung eines Landes erfordert werden* Bd. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1755), 66, 592, 569.
- 23 “Denn wo gute Müntz ist, da ist viel Handels, wo viel Händel und Leute seyn, da hat man den Vertreib aller Früchte und Waare, und geniessen des also nicht allein die Haußwirthe und Händeler, sondern alle Handwerksleute, und kommen dardurch die Lande ingemein, in Bessering und Aufnehmen, [...]”: *D. Melchiors von Osse Testament gegen Hertzog Augusto, Churfürsten von Sachsen, 1556* (Halle, 1717), 206; For Osse and this quote see also Albion W. Small, *The Cameralists: The Pioneers of German Social Polity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909), 28–29.
- 24 *D. Melchiors von Osse Testament*, 197.
- 25 According to Humpert’s bibliography, three years before his edition of Osse’s manuscript Christian Thomasius wrote a separate essay entitled on Osse conceptualising his teaching as improvement of the judicial and police matters: “Thomasius, Christian: Anmerkungen über D. Ossens Tractat von Verbesserung des Justitz- und Policey-Wesens, Halle 1714”: *Magdalene Humpert, Bibliographie der Kameralwissenschaften* (Köln: Schroeder, 1937), 2 (no. 11). However, there does not seem to have been a separate publication by Thomasius, and these “Anmerkungen” were just his notes to Osse’s text. I thank Ere Nokkala and Martin Kühnel for this helpful explanation.
- 26 Georg Obrecht, “Politisch Bedencken vnd Discurs: Von Verbesserung Land vnnd Leut, Anrichtung guter Policey, Vnd fürnemlich von nutzlicher Erledigung grosser Außgaben, vnd billicher Vermehrung eines jeden Regenten vnd Oberherren Jährlichen Gefällen vnd Einkommen”, in Georg Obrecht, *Fünff Unterschiedliche Secreta Politica Von Anstellung, Erhaltung vnd Vermehrung*

- guter Policey, vnd von billicher, rechtmässiger vnd nothwendiger Erhöhung, eines jeden Regenten Jährlichen Gefällen vnd Einkommen (Straßburg, 1617); Small, *The Cameralists*, 44, 46.
- 27 [Johann Heinrich Boeckler], *Collegium politicæ posthumum. Oder/ Polit. Discoursel Von Verbesserung Land und Leuth; Anrichtung guter Policey; Erledigung grosser Ausgaaben; und Eines jeden Regenten jährlichen Gefäll und Einkommen* (Straßburg: Wendeln, 1669).
- 28 Obrecht, “Politisch Bedencken”, 34–35.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 95, 144.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 45–46.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 9, 10, 34, 55, 65, 130.
- 32 Theophilus Ellychnius, *Bedencken. Welchermassen ein Standt, sein gefell vnd Einkommen verbessern mög* (Straßburg: Zeßner, 1623). For its authorship, see Peter Dahlmann, *Schauplatz der Masquirten und Demasquirten Gelehrten bey ihren verdeckten und nunmehr entdeckten Schrifften* (Leipzig: Gleditsch und Weidmann, 1710), 148; Humpert, *Bibliographie*, 30.
- 33 For an interesting table of income solutions for a prince by way of improvements: Det Kongelige Bibliotek (Copenhagen), Hj. 73 2°, Nr. 46 (*Unvorgreifliches Bedencken welcher Gestalt ein Landes Fürst so mit grossen Außgaben beladen sich derselben entlasten, auch sein Einkommen mercklich verbessern könne*, 1682). I thank Jürgen Beyer for bringing my attention to this placard of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp.
- 34 For example, [Anon.], “Vernünftige Gedanken und Anmerkungen eines Cameralistens, von den Meliorationen der fürstl. Aemter”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 12 (1756): 930–66; Benjamin Gottfried Reyher, *Gedanken von einer allgemeinen Verbesserung der ganzen Land-Wirthschafft überhaupt, und der Herrschafftlichen Revenüen Eines Jeglichen Landes- und anderen Herren insonderheit* (Augsburg Frankfurth und Leipzig, 1766). For the concept “oeconomy” in English see Lissa Roberts, “Practicing Oeconomy during the Second Half of the Long Eighteenth Century: An Introduction”, *History and Technology* 30 (2014): 133–48.
- 35 Wilhelm von Schröder, *Fürstliche Schatz- und Rent-Cammer [...]* (Leipzig: Gerdesius, 1686), 14 (“die Vermehrung und die Verbesserung der Einkommen”), 121, 309 (“*Verbesserung des Landes*”).
- 36 [Wilhelm v. Schröder.] “Extract meines abgeforderten gutachtens von N.N. wegen ingrossirung der commercien und vermehrung und verbesserung der manufacturen”, in Hans J. Hatschek, *Das Manufakturhaus auf dem Tabor in Wien. Ein Beitrag zur österreichischen Wirthschaftsgeschichte des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1886), 87–89. The topic of improvement of manufactures and subsistence continued, of course, in the eighteenth century, e.g.: [Anon.], *Zeugniß Politischökonomischer Wahrheiten. Oder kurze Untersuchung der Frage: Ob die Manufacturen und Wollenspinnerey einem Lande, das sonst wichtige Fehler in der Land-Oekonomie hat, vorzüglich anzurathen seyen? Nebst einer Anzeige der Verbesserung im Ganzen* (Ulm: Bartholomäus, 1764).
- 37 Thomas Kessler, *Das vierdt Hundert Schöner außßerlesener Chymischer Proceß, theils zur jnnerlichen, theils äusserlichen Artzney hochnutzlich, Darunder vast der halbe Theil auff verbesserung der Metall gerichtet*, 3rd ed. (Straßburg: Sartorius, 1632); Thomas Kessler, *Fünffhundert außßerlesene Chymische Proceß, und Stücklein, theils zur innerlichen, theils zur Wund- und eusserlichen Artzney, theils aber auch zur Versetzung und Verbesserung der mindern Metall dienstlich* (Nürnberg: Endter, 1641–1645).
- 38 I arrived at this listing while flicking through the book titles with the word “Verbesserung” in *Das Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 17. Jahrhunderts* (VD 17): <http://www.vd17.de/> (accessed 07 January 2021).

- 39 For the cameral sciences, see Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse, 1750–1840*, 2nd ed. (Newbury Berks: Threshold Press, 2017), 1–165.
- 40 Seckendorff frequently uses the term “Verbesserung” in his second major work, already in the title: Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff, *Christen-Stat: In Drey Bücher abgetheilet. Im Ersten wird von dem Christenthum an sich selbst, und dessen Behauptung, wider die Atheisten und dergleichen Leute; Im Andern von der Verbesserung des Weltlichen, und Im Dritten des Geistlichen Standes, nach dem Zweck des Christenthums gehandelt* (Leipzig: Gleditsch, 1685).
- 41 Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff, *Teutscher Fürsten-Stat, [...]* (Franckfurth am Main: Götze, 1656), 28.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 91, 150.
- 44 Johann Joachim Becher, *Politischer Discurs Von den eigentlichen Ursachen deß Auf- und Abnehmens der Städt, Länder und Rupublicken, in specie, Wie ein Land Volckreich und Nahrhaft zu machen, und in eine rechte Societatem civilem zu bringen* (Franckfurt: Zunner, 1668). When Georg Heinrich Zincke published Becher’s book with his additions and commentaries in 1759, he frequently emphasised his goal of *Verbesserung*: D. J. J. Bechers politischer Discurs von den eigentlichen Ursachen des Auf- und Abnehmens der Städte und Länder. D. Georg Heinrich Zincken hat diese Anleitung zur Stadt-Wirtschaft und Policy der deutschen Staaten, mit Neuen Hauptstücken und Anmerkungen für jetzige Umstände und Zeiten vermehrt, erläutert und brauchbarer gemacht (Frankfurt; Leipzig: Zelle, 1759), *passim*.
- 45 These proposals were added to the second and third editions of Becher’s *Politischer Discurs* (resp. 1673 and 1688), 440; see Ferdinand August Steinhüser, *Johann Joachim Becher und die Einzelwirtschaft. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Einzelwirtschaftslehre und des Kameralismus* (Nürnberg: Kriese, 1931), 164.
- 46 Johann Joachim Becher, *Chymischer Glücks-Hafen, Oder Grosse Chymische Concordantz und Collection Von funffzehnen hundert Chymischen Processen* (Franckfurt: Schiele, 1682), 88, 93, 108; Johann Joachim Becher, *Psychosophia Oder Seelen-Weißheit*, 2nd ed. (Hamburg: Liebezeit, 1705), 135, 165; see also Pamela H. Smith, *The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 47 Justus Christoph Dithmar, *Einleitung in die Oeconomische Policei- und Cameral-Wissenschaften* (Franckfurth an der Oder: Friedel, 1745), 6; Keith Tribe, “Cameralism and the Science of Government”, *The Journal of Modern History* 56 (1984): 264.
- 48 Dithmar, *Einleitung*, 14, 33, 37, 43, 161, 162.
- 49 B. von B., “Project Einer neuen Oeconomie, Wie dem verderbten Bauren-Stande wiederum mit Witz und Vermögen auf eine ordentliche und leichte Art aufzuhelffen sey?”, *Die Oeconomische Fama* 10 (1733): 55. See also Laurentius Arrhenius, “Neue Arth und Weise den Acker-Bau zu verbeßern”, *Die Oeconomische Fama* 7 (1732): 53–94; [Anon.], “Von der Art und Weise Potatoes oder Erd-Birn zu pflanzen so wohl nach Anleitung des hievon aus Engel- und Irland gehabten Unterrichts als auch eigener drey-jährigen Erfahrung in Schweden”, *Die Oeconomische Fama* 8 (1732): 1–12.
- 50 Sincerus Cordatus, “Vorschlag, wie das Wasser bey Anlegung der Färbereyen zu untersuchen, und zu verbeßern”, *Die Oeconomische Fama* 7 (1732): 41–53. For an outline of the journal, see Holger Böning, Reinhart Siegert, *Volksaufklärung. Biobibliographisches Handbuch zur Popularisierung aufklärerischen Denkens im deutschen Sprachraum von den Anfängen bis 1850*, Vol. 1 (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1990), XXV, col. 49–51.

- 51 Hansjürgen Koschwitz, “Die periodische Wirtschaftspublizistik im Zeitalter des Kameralismus. Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklung der Wirtschaftsfachzeitschrift im 18. Jahrhundert”, diss. (Göttingen, 1968), 31–33, 45.
- 52 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Oeconomische Schriften über die wichtigsten Gegenstände der Stadt- und Landwirthschaft* 1 (Berlin; Leipzig: Real-Schule, 1760), 270.
- 53 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Staatwirthschaft oder Systematische Abhandlung aller Oekonomischen und Cameral-Wissenschaften, die zur Regierung eines Landes erfordert werden in zween Theilen ausgefertiget*, Vol. 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1758), VI.
- 54 See also Richter, “Reform”, 154–59.
- 55 Justi, *Staatwirthschaft* 2, 455. In another of his other writings Justi asks again: “Allein, wo kann man Verbesserungen ohne Kosten machen?": Justi, *Oeconomische Schriften*, 294.
- 56 Hansjürgen Koschwitz, “Die Anfänge der periodischen Wirtschaftspublizistik im Zeitalter des Kameralismus”, *Publizistik* 12 (1967): 234; Christian Kohfeldt, “Justus Christoph Dithmar: *Die Oeconomische Fama*. Der erste Versuch eine ökonomische Zeitschrift zu etablieren”, in Marcus Poppow, ed., *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens. Strategien innovativer Ressourcennutzung in Zeitschriften und Sozietäten des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 49, 53.
- 57 [Georg Heinrich Zincke], “Vorrede, worinne von Stadt- und Bürger-Rechte, und Stadt-Policey-Gesetzen und Anstalten gehandelt wird”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 3 (1746): X; see also Böning, Siegert, *Volksaufklärung*, XXV–XXVI.
- 58 *General-Register über die ersten zwölf Bände der Leipziger Sammlungen von wirtschaftlichen, Policey-Cammer- und Finanz-Sachen, oder vollständiges und zuverlässiges Verzeichniß der darinne enthaltenen vornehmsten Sachen und Schriften* (Leipzig, 1761), 1312; “Generalregister über die vier letzten Bände der Leipziger Sammlungen”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 16 (1767): 77.
- 59 See Thomas Habel, “Deutschsprachige Gelehrte Journale und Zeitungen”, in Ulrich Rasche, ed., *Quellen zur frühneuzeitlichen Universitätsgeschichte. Typen, Bestände, Forschungsperspektiven* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011), 379–80.
- 60 For example, “Inhalt”, *Die Oeconomische Fama* 3 (1730).
- 61 For the typography of anonymity, see: North, *The Anonymous Renaissance*, 61–77.
- 62 “Auszüge und Anmerckungen einiger neuen Schrifften in Cameral-Sachen, sonderlich vom Adel und Gelehrten, von Land-Getreide-Magazinen und der Ausfuhr desselben, wie auch denen italienischen Getreide-Trocken-Oefen”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 12 (1757): 426–27.
- 63 J.F.N., *Erfahrungs-mäßiger Beweiß von dem itzigen ungemein schlechten Korn-Bau, von dessen möglichen Verbesserung, und was dazu erfordert werde* (Berlin, 1748), [iii].
- 64 “Nachricht von dem Tractat: Erfahrungs-mäßiger Beweis von dem itzigen ungemein schlechten Kornbau, von dessen möglicher Verbesserung und was dazu erfordert werde, verfertigt von J. F. N. Berlin bey A. Haude und J. C. Spener 1748”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 6 (1749): 60; A.C.S., “Anmerckungen bey dem ohnlängst von einem Anonymo herausgegebenen Tractat betitelt. Erfahrungs-mässiger Beweis von dem itzigen ungemein schlechten Kornbau, von dessen möglichen Verbesserung, und was dazu erfordert werde, Berlin 1748 bey A. Haude und J. C. Spener in 4 to 6 Bogen”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 6 (1749): 72–96, 99–102.
- 65 “Johann Friedrich Neumanns Beantwortung der in dem 61 und 62sten Theile der Leipziger Sammlungen bekannt gemachten Anmerckungen über seinen edirten Beweis von dem itzigen ungemein schlechten Kornbau, von dessen nützlichen Verbesserung, und was dazu erfordert werde”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 6 (1749–1750): 832.

- 66 *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachraum erschienenen Drucke des 18. Jahrhunderts* (known by its abbreviation, VD18): <https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=1.65> (accessed 07 January 2021). There are in total 744 hits for the word *Verbesserung* searched by title. The search result includes republications and different editions but not ordinances, periodicals, and those imprints where the term refers to improved editions.
- 67 For the practices of censorship, see Agatha Kobuch, *Zensur und Aufklärung in Kursachsen. Ideologische Strömungen und politische Meinungen zur Zeit der sächsisch-polnischen Union (1697–1763)* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1988).
- 68 For a less conflict-prone characterisation of ideas of *Verbesserung*, together with convincing supporting quotes from Zedler, see Thomas Maissen, “Bringing a Despotic Agenda Into the Public Sphere – Concluding Remarks on Languages of Reform”, in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform*, 413.
- 69 Koschwitz, *Die periodische Wirtschaftspublizistik*, 38; Kohfeldt, “Justus Christoph Dithmar”, 55; Verena Lehmbeck, *Der denkende Landwirt. Agrarwissen und Aufklärung in Deutschland 1750–1820* (Wien, Köln, Weimar: Böhlau, 2020), 60.
- 70 See also Richard E. Wagner, “The Cameralists: Fertile Sources for a New Science of Public Finance”, in Jürgen Georg Backhaus, ed., *Handbook of the History of Economic Thought. Insights on the Founders of Modern Economics* (New York: Springer, 2012), 127. For a political reading of cameralist writings on constitutional order see Ere Nokkala’s chapter in this volume.
- 71 Cf. Mark Vareschi, *Everywhere and Nowhere. Anonymity and Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2018), 145–61; Kate E. Tunstall, “‘You’re Either Anonymous or You’re Not!’: Variations on Anonymity in Modern and Early Modern Culture”, *MLN* 126 (2011): 671–88.
- 72 For example, for the case of Justi’s anonymous work on Brühl, see Kobuch, *Zensur*, 228. See also Dahlmann, *Schauplatz*; Michael Holzmann, Hanns Bohatta, eds., *Deutsches Anonymen-Lexikon 1501–1850*, Bde. 1–4 (Weimar: Gesellschaft der Bibliophilen, 1902–1907); North, *The Anonymous Renaissance*, 99.
- 73 Nicholas Cronk, “Voltaire and the Posture of Anonymity”, *MLN* 126 (2011): 777.
- 74 For example [Anon.], “Erfahrungen über die Verbeßerung eines Landguths. Historische Beschreibung, wie die Bauern durch Fleiß und Arbeit zu Wohlstande gekommen”, *Auswahl ökonomischer Abhandlungen welche die freye ökonomische Gesellschaft in St. Petersburg in teutscher Sprache erhalten hat* 1 (1790): 261–89. For the social background of the authors of economic enlightenment see Lehmbeck, *Der denkende Landwirt*, 58–63, 91.
- 75 For example, A.C.S., “Anmerckungen”, 72–96, 99–102; Lehmbeck, *Der denkende Landwirt*, 152–55, 180–87.
- 76 Joachim Christian Bergen, *Anleitung für die Landwirthe zur Verbesserung der Viehzucht* (Wien: Edler von Trattner, 1785), 25. Lehmbeck rightly points out that criticism of the feasibility of economic suggestions for improvement was already quite common, at least from the middle of the eighteenth century: Lehmbeck, *Der denkende Landwirt*, 83.
- 77 VD18.
- 78 Database of Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen “Gelehrte Journale und Zeitungen als Netzwerke des Wissens im Zeitalter der Aufklärung”: <http://www.gelehrte-journale.de/startseite> (accessed 20 October 2021).
- 79 Rudolf Vierhaus, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert. Politische Verfassung, soziales Gefüge, geistige Bewegungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 252.

- 80 Rohr, *Compendieuse Haußhaltungs-Bibliothek*, 50. Rohr argued for the political objective of improving the land, revenues, judicial system, oeconomy, and subsistence even more boldly in his principal work: Julius Bernhard von Rohr, *Einleitung zur Staats-Klugheit, Oder: Vorstellung Wie Christliche und Weise Regenten zur Beförderung ihrer eigenen und ihres Lndes Glückseligkeit Ihre Unterthanen zu beherrschen pflegen* (Leipzig: Martini, 1718). See also Keith Tribe's chapter in this volume and Maissen, "Bringing", 408.
- 81 Johann Michael von Loen, *Entwurf einer Staats-Kunst, Worinn die natürlichste Mittel entdecket werden, ein Land mächtig, reich, und glücklich zu machen* (Frankfurt; Leipzig: Fleischer, 1750), 71, 123, 133, 182, 186, 193, 201; see also Johann Michael von Loen, *Freie Gedanken zur Verbesserung der Menschlichen Gesellschaft*, 3rd ed. (Frankfurt Leipzig: Fleischer, 1752), 156: "die so nöthige Verbesserung des Staats ohne Anstand vorzunehmen".
- 82 Justus Möser, *Patriotische Phantasien* 1, ed. J. W. J. v. Voigt, geb. Möser (Berlin, 1775), 74–79, 176–81.
- 83 Johann Peter Süßmilch, *Die göttliche Ordnung in den Veränderungen des menschlichen Geschlechts, [...]* (Berlin, 1741), 278.
- 84 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "Unvorgreifliche Gedancken, betreffend die Ausübung und Verbesserung der Teutschen Sprache", in Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Collectanea etymologica, [...]*,2, cvm præfatione Jo. Georgii Eccardi (Hanoveræ: Foerster, 1717), 255–314; E. C. Reichard, "Anmerkungen über die deutsche Sprache", *Braunschweigische Anzeigen* 1 (1745): col. 1–9.
- 85 Christian Heinrich Wilcke, *Die Verbesserung des Staats aus mathematischen und öconomischen Gründen, oder vollständiger Unterricht von Landes-Vermessungen, und daher entstehender vortheilhafteren Einrichtung der allgemeinen Landes-Oeconomie und des Cameral-Wesens* (Frankfurt; Leipzig: Stettin, 1765).
- 86 [Anon.], "Zu Weissenfels hat Hrr Joh. Christoph Cröker eines unbenannten I.G.H. Uibersetzung derer Gedancken des Herrn D. Hallbauers, Th. Prof. zu Jena, von der Verbesserung des Schulwesens in diesem Jahre heraus gegeben", *Leipziger Sammlungen* 4 (1747): 142–43. See also Kristin Heinze, *Zwischen Wissenschaft und Profession. Das Wissen über den Begriff "Verbesserung" im Diskurs der pädagogischen Fachlexikographie vom Ende des 18. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Opladen: Budrich, 2008).
- 87 For example, [Anon.], "Gedancken von Verkürtzung und besserer Einrichtung der Lehr-Jahre bey Handwerckern und Profeßions-Verwandten", *Leipziger Sammlungen* 9 (1753): 335–40.
- 88 For example, "Orphanophilus, Gedanken von einer Verbesserung der Erziehung armer Kinder auf dem Lande", *Nützliche Samlungen* 2 (1756): col. 975–84.
- 89 Johan Lange, "A Useful Public Institution? Languages of University Reform in the German Territories, 1750–1800", in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform*, 199.
- 90 Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths, *Gymnastik Für Die Jugend: Enthaltend Eine Praktische Anweisung Zu Leibesübungen; Ein Beytrag Zur Nöthigsten Verbesserung Der Körperlichen Erziehung* (Schneppenthal, 1793).
- 91 For the main trends of agricultural improvement discourse as part of economic enlightenment in eighteenth-century Germany, see Lehmbrock, *Der denkende Landwirt*.
- 92 [Henri Louis] du Hamel du Monceau, *Abhandlung von der Erhaltung des Getraides, und besonders des Weizens*, trans. Johann Daniel Titius (Leipzig, 1755), VI.
- 93 Borsay, "The culture of improvement", 186; Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 85–91.
- 94 For example, A.C.S., "Gedancken und Anmerkungen von der neuen Ackerverbesserung aus dem Mecklenburgischen", *Leipziger Sammlungen* 7 (1751):

- 967; A.C.S., “Nachricht und Betrachtungen, betreffend die Verbesserung des Ackerbaues und der Vieh-Zucht im Mecklenburgischen, nach dem Hollsteinischen Fuß”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 5 (1748): 427–28.
- 95 For example, Ambrosius Zeiger, *Vernünftige Anleitung zur Oeconomie und Kunstmäßigen Verbesserung des Feld-Baues* (Eisleben, 1733); [Anon.], “Anmerckungen von Vermehrung und Verbesserung vieler Gertreyde-Früchte durch Veränderung des Saamens”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 1 (1743): 285–95; “Sendschreiben an den Verfasser der Sammlungen, von der Verbesserung der Landwirtschaft und einem Vorschlag solche zu befördern”, *Leipziger Sammlungen von Wirthschaftlichen, Policy- Cammer- und Finantz-Sachen* 5 (1749): 799–804; P.J.D., “Bericht von der Beschaffenheit, und Einrichtung der Guthswirthschaft, mit verlangten Gutachten, zu deren Verbesserung”, *Oeconomische Nachrichten* 6 (1754): 500–34; Philipp Ernst Lüders, *Oeconomische Unterredungen über die Verbesserung des Ackerbaues* (Flensburg; Leipzig, 1772).
- 96 Bergen, *Anleitung*, 23.
- 97 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Abhandlungen von der Vollkommenheit der Landwirthschaft und der höchsten Cultur der Länder* (Ulm; Leipzig, 1761); Justi, *Oeconomische Schriften* 1, 317–22 (“Von Leimenbrennen zu Düngung und Verbesserung der Aecker und Wiesen”); Vol. 2, 171–81 (“Von Verbesserung der Oeconomischen und Policy-Anstalten zu Erzeugung einer guten Wolle”); 502–509 (“Von der Cultur und Verbesserung der Wiesen”).
- 98 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Vollständige Abhandlung von denen Manufacturen und Fabriken*, Bd. 1 (Kopenhagen: Rothe, 1767), 44 (the preface is signed in 1757).
- 99 Johann Gottlieb Beckmann, *Beyträge zur Verbesserung der Forstwissenschaft* (Chemnitz: Stöbel, 1763).
- 100 For example, “... endlich Vorschläge hören, wie eine Verbesserung vorgenommen werden kann”: [Anon.], “Gedanken von tief und feicht Ackern”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 7 (1751): 159.
- 101 As did Peter von Hohenthal in stating the aim of his journal *Oeconomischen Nachrichten* (1750–1763): Koschwitz, “Die Anfänge”, 238–40. See also the full title of influential journals (my emphases in bold): *Hannoversches Magazin, worin kleine Abhandlungen, einzelne Gedanken, Nachrichten, Vorschläge und Erfahrungen so die Verbesserung des Nahrungs-Standes, die Land- und Stadt-Wirthschaft, Handlung, Manufacturen und Künste, die Physik, die Sittenlehre und angenehmen Wissenschaften betreffen, gesamlet und aufbewahret sind* (Hannover: H. E. C. Schlüter, 1764–1791); *Erlangische gelehrte Anzeigen, darinnen kurze und zur Verbesserung derer Wissenschaften ausgearbeitete Materien befindlich* (Erlangen, 1743–1752).
- 102 *Auswahl neuer Erfindungen, Entdeckungen und Verbesserungen in der Oekonomie, Stadt- und Landwirthschaft, Feldbau, Viehzucht, Gärtnerey, Bräuerey etc.*, Bde. 1–6 (Stadtamhof, 1803–1805).
- 103 Cf. Richter, “Reform”, 154–55, 167.
- 104 Böning, Siegert, *Volksaufklärung*, XXIV; Holger Böning, “Gemeinnützig-ökonomische Aufklärung und Volksaufklärung. Bemerkungen zum Selbstverständnis und zur Wirkung der praktisch-populären Aufklärung im deutschsprachigen Raum”, in Siegfried Jüttner, Jochen Schlobach, eds., *Europäische Aufklärung(en). Einheit und nationale Vielfalt* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1992), 219–21. In this regard Marcus Popplow speaks of “German economic improvers” of the eighteenth century: Marcus Popplow, “Economizing Agricultural Resources in the German Economic Enlightenment”, in Ursula Klein, E. C. Spary, eds., *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe. Between Market and Laboratory* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 261–87.
- 105 Lehmbruck, *Der denkende Landwirt*, 30.

- 106 Bergen, *Anleitung*, 22, 24. Similarly argued also by [Johann Wiegand], *Oekonomische Abhandlungen von der Verbesserung des Ackerbaues, Vermehrung des Fleißes, und Anwuchs des Volkes, [...]* (Wien: Edler von Trattnern, 1768), 18–22; Friedrich Benedikt Weber, *Von den Wirthschaften der Bauern, und über die neuere Cultur der Oekonomie: nebst einer Beantwortung der Frage: wie diese zur Verbesserung jener zu benutzen sey?* (Leipzig: Weigel, 1800).
- 107 See Koen Stapelbroek, Jani Marjanen, eds., *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century. Patriotic Reform in Europe and North America* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- 108 See Heinrich Bosse, “Dialogische Öffentlichkeit. Preisfragen und Preisaufgaben im 18. Jahrhundert”, *Internationales Archiv Für Sozialgeschichte Der Deutschen Literatur* 43 (2018): 235–54.
- 109 A rare early exception is though the title is more bold than it actually offers: [Anon.], *Der glückselige und unglückselige Bauren-Stand, [...] Wobey allenthalben angezeigt wird Auf was Art und Weise einem jeden Lande durch Verbesserung Des Bauren-Standes Eine beständige Gold-Grube zubereitet werden könne* (Frankfurt, ca. 1705); 2nd edition, 1711; 3rd edition, 1721.
- 110 For example, Johann Georg Eisen, a Livonian patriot and cameralist, argued in 1756: “Die leibeigene Verfassung streitet demnach wider eine Verbesserung sowohl in der Landwirtschaft als in den bürgerlichen Geschäften und dem, was der ganze Staat gemeinschaftlich vermögen soll”: Roger Bartlett, Erich Donner, eds., *Johann Georg Eisen (1717–1779). Ausgewählte Schriften. Deutsche Volksaufklärung und Leibeigenschaft im Russischen Reich* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 1998), 176. Similarly, Bergen, *Anleitung*, 349–51; Johann Christoph Bernhard, *Vorschläge zu einer Wirthschaftlichen Policei der Dörfer oder wie die Landwirtschaft daselbest überhaupt, [...] als auch der Inwohner besondere Haushaltung zu verbessern* (Stuttgart: Mezler, 1768), 42–43, 159–60; Schlechte, *Die Staatsreform*, 313.
- 111 For the background of Dohm’s treatise, see Christoph Schulte, “‘Diese unglückliche Nation’ — Jüdische Reaktionen auf Dohms *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden*”, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 54 (2002): 352–65; Avi Lifschitz, “From the Civic Improvement of the Jews to the Separation of State and Church”, in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform*, 296–320.
- 112 Ulrich Kronauer, “Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Letten. Garlieb Merkel im Kontext der deutschen Aufklärung”, in Liina Lukas, Michael Schwidtal, Jaan Undusk, eds., *Politische Dimensionen der deutschbaltischen literarischen Kultur* (Münster: LIT, 2018), 61.
- 113 See [N.N.], “Abschilderung eines ächten und unächtten Cameralisten”, *Leipziger Sammlungen* 5 (1749): 880.
- 114 Borsay, “The culture of improvement”, 186; Robert Friedel, *A Culture of Improvement. Technology and the Western Millennium* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), 2 (a definition).
- 115 Marcus Popplow has called it “Innovationskultur” as part of the Economic Enlightenment of the eighteenth century that promoted mainly agricultural but also industrial innovations, both locally as well as territorially: Marcus Popplow, “Ökonomische Aufklärung als Innovationskultur des 18. Jahrhunderts zur optimierten Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen”, in Marcus Popplow, ed., *Landschaften agrarisch-ökonomischen Wissens: Strategien innovativer Ressourcennutzung in Zeitschriften und Societäten des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 3–6.
- 116 Magdalena Naum, “The Pursuit of Metals and the Ideology of Improvement in Early Modern Sápmi, Sweden”, *Journal of Social History* 51 (2018): 784–807.
- 117 For example, Weber, *Von den Wirthschaften*; Bernhard, *Vorschläge*, 5; see also Lehmbrock, *Der denkende Landwirt*, 64, 66–69, 72.

4 “Changes to preserve everything the way it always was”

The Idea of Reform and the Slow Disintegration of the Old Regime¹

Alexandre Mendes Cunha

“Gattopardism”

In the first chapter of *Il Gattopardo* (*The Leopard*) by Tomasi di Lampedusa, the young Tancredi Falconeri, in 1860s Sicily leaving to join the “camici rosse” (Giuseppe Garibaldi’s redshirts), tells his uncle, Don Fabrizio Corbera, the Prince of Salina, that “if we want everything to stay as it is, everything must change.”² It took a few moments for the phrase to echo in the full extension of its meaning in the old Prince’s head, who finally repeats the motto, thinking of his nephew’s wit, “if we want everything to stay as it is....” The expression “gattopardism” entered political vocabulary to convey a type of transformism: adapting to a new political situation, simulating the conditions of its promoters or supporters, in order to retain previous privileges. This idea of transformism certainly seems to capture young Tancredi’s motivation, but there is also room to speculate that something broader might have crossed Don Fabrizio’s mind before he repeated in an undertone the beginning of his nephew’s sentence.

There seems to be here, in what the literary image evokes, an important key for reading which goes far beyond the *Risorgimento* in the Italian peninsula during the second half of the nineteenth century, and which captures elements of what we might call the slow disintegration of the old regime. It is an obviously complex process, which clearly does not end with the blow (however deadly) of the French Revolution, and which had different rhythms in different geographical contexts. In this sense, “changing to preserve things as they always were” also seems to be an important key to analysing the context of the enlightened reforms of the late eighteenth century. It distinguishes a substantive trait of the political, economic, and social transformations taking place in several countries of southern Europe, and in Portugal in particular. The Portuguese crown is our main example here, but this also includes, by extension, more distant places in the empire, such as Brazil.³

The attempt to capture as clearly as possible this process of disintegration of the old regime implies that we distinguish between different tensions, rhythms, and durations, and should not be confused by the mechanical contraposition of the terms revolution and reform, which only much later

gained traction in political debate, and which without due qualification remains largely an anachronistic perspective for eighteenth-century analysis. As Keith Tribe has suggested in his chapter in this volume, the problem is related to the widespread use of the idea of reform in the historiography of progress, and it demands renewed care in the use of the term in the context of the Enlightenment. The greatest risks are both the attribution of a modern sense of the term reform to the analysis of the transformations taking place in the eighteenth century, and the tendency to read any and all possibilities of change in the period in terms of “reform.” Changing to preserve, however, seems to be a key issue for understanding the period. The idea of change is actually evoked repeatedly and in various ways. It is therefore necessary to consider not only the multiple channels for questioning the old regime opened up by the Enlightenment, but also the simple fact that an intensification of economic and political dynamics at the international level in course of the eighteenth century prompted an increasingly active role for governments in preserving contemporary power structures and social hierarchies. Thus, throughout the century, in several European monarchies, there was a persisting perception of what we might call the “need for change.” This trend was naturally amplified in the last decades of the century by the independence of the 13 American colonies and the French Revolution, but also by other events, such as the slave rebellion in Haiti, which had particular significance for states seeking to maintain their colonial empires, as was the case with Portugal. The need for change, however, is not the same as the need for reform.

The use of a category such as enlightened reformism to analyse Portugal and other states during the final decades of the eighteenth century continues to be of great value. To understand exactly the scope and limits of the use of the term reform in this context it is necessary to advance conceptually, in the definition and conceptualisation of terms related to the idea of change (“reform” and “improvements/betterments” in particular) in the conduct of state affairs and in the internal administration of kingdoms. This chapter examines, as an approach to these questions, the conceptual history of the noun “reform” in Portuguese, and by contrast in other Romance (Spanish, Italian, and French) and German languages (English and German).

Despite the importance of the study of enlightened reformism for the analysis of the Iberian world of the second half of the eighteenth century, reflection on the conceptual history of reform has not been a feature of the historiography. The famous historical lexicon coordinated by Otto Bruner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, has an entry dedicated to the pair of terms “Reform, Reformation,” as well as one for “Revolution, Rebellion.”⁴ However, the GG-inspired Iberoamerican conceptual history project, known as *IBERCONCEPTOS*, did not produce a specific entry for the term reform in its principal publication, the *Diccionario político y social del mundo iberoamericano* (2009–2014), coordinated by Javier Fernández Sebastián, even though the term “revolución”

was chosen as one of the ten basic concepts analysed in the second part of the dictionary. This chapter is a contribution to closing that gap.

Specification of the meaning of the term reform during the eighteenth century is a laborious process; it is also necessary to consider its semantic field and neighbouring terms, such as its use in combination with the noun improvement/betterment, as also the progressive differentiation of the meanings of reformation and reform, accelerating in the later part of the century. “To stay as it always was” quickly ceased to be an option in practice for many European monarchies. “Doing nothing”, always a good option under the old regime, was no longer a cost-free path for the monarch, just as it was no longer exactly viable for the many agents of state administration.⁵ However in some contexts (in southern Europe in particular, and especially in the Portuguese case) the idea that changes would truly be necessary if the ultimate aim was to preserve the old regime became relatively widespread. This is not in any general sense “modernisation,” but it seems clear that there is a sense of urgency in preserving the socioeconomic structure of the old regime; beginning to spread in a diffuse and unclear way through the second half of the eighteenth century, gaining in sharpness and contrast after the French Revolution.

The Portuguese empire must be highlighted here because few examples are so expressive of the “gattopardist” idea of changing to keep everything as it was than the example of the Portuguese monarchy and its American colony, Brazil, from the end of the eighteenth century. Some aspects of this issue have already been captured by Brazilian historiography, particularly regarding the identification of elements that have contributed to the preservation of a profoundly unequal structure of income distribution.⁶

The American colony of Portugal, Brazil, is also an important example because it was the recurrent focus strategies for recovery in the Portuguese economy conceived by enlightened reformism in the last decades of the eighteenth century. As I will show in the final part of this chapter, this is the most eloquent example of the logic of changing to preserve, since the actual transfer of the royal court from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro was a strategy for maintaining the kingdom in the face of Napoleonic invasions. Before that, however, it is necessary to deepen our reflection on the idea of reform, and the route of differentiation and specification of the term throughout the eighteenth century. An obvious way into this project is through the dictionaries produced for the major European languages in this period.

Dictionaries

Although there is certainly a (sometimes very considerable) lag between the entry of a word into contemporary language use and the first dictionarisation of a term, dictionaries are an important source for tracking conceptual transformation over time. The production of dictionaries in several European languages developed rapidly from the late seventeenth century.⁷ In the Iberian world, in Portuguese and in Spanish, the same trend can be

observed and provides an interesting starting point for reflection on the contextual uses of the noun “reform.” To provide a fuller picture, and allow the assessment and effective comparison of usage in the languages of enlightened reformism, comparisons will be made with the two other principal Romance languages, French and Italian, and also with English and German.

The noun “reforma,” in Portuguese, in its origin, is connected to the Latin verb “reformare” (from *re-* “back” + *formare* “to form, shape”), which means to form again or re-establish a previous form. In other words, it is not about a transformation towards something new but essentially a return to a previous state. It is in this way, in variations of the Latin root, and with this meaning of returning to an earlier stage, that the term would pass to the various modern European languages. Among the Romance (Portuguese, Spanish, French, and Italian) and Germanic (English and German) languages analysed here, it is in Portuguese that the term “reforma,” as a noun, is first dictionarised in the new meaning of change for the better, of reversing a prior state of decline and transforming to a better condition. This happens in the first edition of Antonio de Moraes Silva’s dictionary, from 1789. This differentiation between nouns and verbs is particularly important here, precisely to capture something of this dimension of the crystallisation of concepts and institutionalisation of processes.

Throughout the eighteenth century there is a striking broadening of the meaning of the term “reforma” in the Portuguese language. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in Rafael Bluteau’s dictionary (*Vocabulário Portuguez e latino*, 1712–1721), the term appears as “the new form which occurs with the amendment of errors. Correction of abuses, etc.,” and the first example mentioned by the author is “the reform of a Religious Order.”⁸ At the end of the century, nevertheless, in the revised version of the dictionary (or, better said, in the “reformed” version, since the complete title of the work is *Diccionario da lingua portugueza composto pelo padre D. Rafael Bluteau, reformado, e accrescentado por Antonio de Moraes Silva natural do Rio de Janeiro*), the noun “reforma” already includes two distinct combined possibilities: returning to a previous form or moving to something new. The entry says, “the act of reforming, of moving to the old principles, or for bettering what was in decline.” It is interesting to note that the word in Portuguese here translated as “decline” is actually “decay” (“decadência”), meaning decay of power or strength, commonly used in reference to a state of economic ruin.⁹ The first example mentioned by Moraes Silva, and not without reason, is “the reform of studies,” mentioning also “the reform of the University” in another example.¹⁰ The noun “reform,” without invalidating previous uses, begins to include here an idea of something new, something that improves a previous state and therefore becomes related to an idea of transformation, of innovation.

The contrast with Spanish is telling. Even though there are several common elements in the experience of enlightened reformism in both Iberian countries, the noun “reforma” in Spanish would only appear in a dictionary

with the meaning of changing for the better at the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1925, in the fifteenth edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua española* of the Real Academia Española. In Spanish, the noun “reforma” first appears in a dictionary in the eighteenth century; before that, we can only find the verb “reformular,” which is listed, for example, in Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco’s *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (1611) as “to give form to a thing that has been damaged and changed its condition.”¹¹ The entry includes, nevertheless, an allusion to the noun “reformación.” It was necessary to wait until the so-called *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726–1739), which started the sequence of dictionaries produced by the Real Academia Española that runs up to the present, for the noun “reforma” to be finally listed the first time. The meaning presented, however, was that of “correction or to fix to something.”¹² This entry would be repeated in 1780, in the first edition of the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* (now known as the *Diccionario de la lengua española*), and then in all subsequent editions throughout the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, being changed as mentioned above only in the fifteenth edition of 1925, in which the noun “reforma” is defined as “what is proposed, projected or executed as an innovation or improvement in something.”¹³

The case of Italian is particularly interesting for establishing a counterpoint, since here the meaning of changing for the better was from the seventeenth century expressed in the verb “riformare” (although not in the noun “riforma”). Taking the example of the most important historical dictionary of the Italian language, and the original model for the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European academy dictionary, the *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, we can note that the noun “riforma” is not even listed in the first edition of 1612, appearing only in the third edition.¹⁴ The verb “riformare,” nevertheless, had been listed since the 1612 edition and already includes this meaning of change for the better: “reorder, and give new, and better shape.”¹⁵ It is possible to argue, however, that the noun “riforma” still included in the eighteenth century ideas already present in the meaning of the verb, judging from its appearance in the third and fourth editions of the dictionary.¹⁶

In any case, the noun “riforma” was listed in the eighteenth century with the meaning of changing for the better in another Italian eighteenth-century dictionary: Francesco d’Alberti di Villanuova’s encyclopaedic dictionary of 1797 (*Dizionario universale critico enciclopedico della lingua italiana*). This dictionary gives the meaning “reduce to a better form” right at the beginning of the entry, even though it then repeats the established meanings of “correct,” reorder, return to the original form, etc.¹⁷

It is only in the sixth edition (1835) of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* that the noun “réforme” in French would begin to include, in addition to the idea of the re-establishment of an earlier form, also the idea of change to a better condition.¹⁸ All previous editions, including the fifth edition (1798), reproduced verbatim the definition offered in the first edition (1694), that of a return to the previous order.¹⁹

It is significant that the idea of changing for the better was already present in the French verb “reformer” (as in Italian, but not in Portuguese and Spanish), listed at the end of the seventeenth century as “to restore in the old form, to give a better form to a thing, either by adding or by subtracting.”²⁰ Interestingly, the same range of meanings was also already present in the noun “réformation,” which in other languages is usually associated with the idea of returning to the old form, or correcting errors. The noun “réformation” (reformation) had been included since the first edition (1694), meaning both “restoration in the old form, and or in a better form.”²¹ The term, as is known, is traditionally connected to religious discourse, from the sixteenth-century movement that ended in the establishment of the Reformed and Protestant Churches. Currently, however, the term in French for the English religious sense of “Reformation” is not “La Réformation”, but “La Réforme.”

We can also note another interesting aspect of the term “réformation” in Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, published from 1751 to 1772. Here, “Réformation, Réforme” are given as synonyms, where “reformation is the act of reforming” and “reform is the effect,”²² also indicating space for possible interchangeable uses of these two terms in the mid-eighteenth century, even though they were already in course of progressive differentiation. Here among the broad consideration of the religious meaning and use of the term jurisprudential usage of reformation also stands out, as “that which is ordered to prevent some abuses, or to repress them,”²³ the entry stating the term was used in particular for the conservation and administration of forests and woods, corresponding to a key topic of contemporary police.²⁴

We can finally take two eighteenth-century examples of reform, in English and German. It is again the evolution of the verb that deserves attention. The verb “to reform” in the sense of changing for the better was already broadly used in the mid-eighteenth century in English, and this is how it appears listed, for example, by Samuel Johnson in his dictionary (1755): “to change from worse to better,”²⁵ indicating the entry path of the term in the English language via the verb forms in French and Latin. It is interesting to note that there is not even a reference to the traditional sense of re-establishing a previous form, which led to the addition of this meaning by Henry John Todd in the 1818 edition of Johnson’s dictionary: “to form again: the primary meaning. Not noticed by Dr. Johnson.”²⁶ The noun “reform,” however, is simply and very succinctly indicated as meaning “reformation,” and as a French importation. The counterpoint with German can also be mentioned briefly to reinforce some general trends, as Keith Tribe outlines in his chapter. The noun “Reform” is listed by Johann Heinrich Zedler in his *Universal Lexicon*, published between 1731 and 1754, but as a foreign word (“Fremdwort”) printed with a Roman typeface. The reference, however, says only that it is the same as “reduciren,” indicating to the reader: “see ‘reduciren’ (to reduce) as well as ‘reformiren’ (to reform).”²⁷ Note that as a synonym for a noun, two verbs are indicated: “reduciren” and “reformiren.” Interestingly, the verb “reformiren,” whose entry path into

the German language is pointed out in the same way that Johnson does for the English (from the verbs “reformare” in Latin and “reformer” in French), is also immediately associated with the idea of renewal and change for the better, listing verbs again to refine the meaning, to change (“ändern”), to renew (“erneuern”), and to improve (“verbessern”), and adding the idea of “place in better condition.”²⁸

It seems clear that, except for Portuguese and Spanish, in other major European languages, the verb “to reform” already incorporated in the eighteenth century the meaning of changing for the better, but still without projecting this movement into the noun reform, and still combining the meanings of the terms reform and reformation in certain usages. The idea of reform could shape a specific practice in governmental action, but the concept of “reforms” had not yet been effectively developed. Nevertheless, the entry for the verb “reformer” in the first edition of the dictionary of the *Académie française* makes it clear that the idea “to reform” was already associated in the late seventeenth century with changes in institutions, and in the state administration itself. This indeed points to a sense of transformation that would become more often associated with the term over the course of the following century. The entry of the verb “to reform” in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* lists, for example, the use of the verb for ideas such as those in “reforming justice, police, laws, mores (...) reforming the Religious Order (...) people who want to reform the State.”²⁹

The inclusion of this perspective, of improving and giving a better shape to the legislative apparatus, would evolve through the eighteenth century in general association with modifications and improvements to institutions and the legal framework. The sense of the Latin term “reformare,” as the process, and “reformation,” as the result, heavily marks early modern legal discourse. The emphasis given by Zedler’s dictionary in the entry “Reformation” (Lat. *Reformatio*) (Zedler 1741, Bd.30, col.1776–1694) is due in particular to the importance in the Germanic context of the *ius reformandi*, associated with the right of states to decide for “Protestant reform.” It also points in the direction of this broad association with the idea of reforming as an application of changes and improvements to any law or statute in the affairs of police and justice.³⁰

The idea of reform thus became progressively more frequently used in the second half of the eighteenth century as the preservation of the old regime became an increasingly prominent issue. Not only were prudence, constancy, and tradition key watchwords, but demands for progressive change in state administration also began to appear. The path, therefore, seems to be an increase in the frequency with which the idea of reform was used, associated for example with the creation of new police ordinances in different parts of Europe, or with changes in the institutional apparatus of state administration. This provided more frequent opportunities to use the noun “reform” to refer to the process itself, and the plural “reforms” to refer to the set of actions.

This association with the legal field, however, meant that the term reform had somewhat more limited use in the eighteenth century, being necessarily accompanied by another term: “improvements.” Much more broadly used in the eighteenth century for the most varied processes, from improvements in cultivation techniques, through possible changes arising from multiple applications of useful knowledge of the natural world, to new actions in the conduct of state affairs, the term improvement must be analysed together with the idea of reform to understand the nature of the transformations envisaged by enlightened reformism.

Capturing the differentiation of the meanings of the term “reform” in the eighteenth century necessarily implies contrasting it with others, such as “improvement”, related to the idea of change and which could have alternative or complementary uses to the noun “reform”. We must also differentiate the terms “improvement” and “betterment” in English, as well as a sequence of terms derived from the adjective/adverb “better” in different languages, such as “Verbesserung” in German, “amélioration” in French, “mejoramiento/mejoría” in Spanish, “melhoramento” in Portuguese, and “miglioramento” in Italian. Starting with French, it is interesting to see how the meaning of the term was defined throughout the eighteenth century. Listed in the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* of 1694, “amelioration” means “an action by which something better is done.”³¹ Shortly afterwards (in the second edition of 1718), the term came to include the idea of land improvement to increase income, “what is done to land or to a house, to put them in better condition, and by that increase income.”³² Here one can already see in the French term the sense of obtaining material advantage, a point that would be reinforced in the 1740 and 1762 editions, just as the term starts to incorporate (in the 1762 edition) associated meanings, for example in the field of chemistry, where “amélioration” is identified as “an operation by which a metal is brought to greater perfection.”³³ It was only at the end of the eighteenth century that another key term of the English concept was incorporated, the idea of “progress” (progrès). The first line of the definition specifies “progress towards good; best condition.”³⁴

It is interesting to note, however, that the notion of progress is already present in the noun “melhoramento” in Portuguese as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century. In Volume 5 of Bluteau’s *Vocabulario Portuguez e latino*, published in 1716, two nouns are listed as a definition for the term “melhoramento”: “Progress. Advance.” The examples that followed, however, were all more about progress in studies, letters, or customs than actually the idea of material progress.³⁵ Moraes Silva, in 1789, in his *Diccionario da lingua portugueza*, repeats the formula in an abbreviated form, changing only the order of the terms: “Advance. Progress.”³⁶

In Italian, the noun “miglioramento” did not receive much attention in dictionaries, with a very concise entry being repeated from the seventeenth century onwards, with two somewhat generic definitions for the term in the first edition: (1) “the betterment” and (2) “for the better part of having.”³⁷

Spanish, in turn, suggests something similar to the noun “mejoramiento,” which is listed generically in the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1726–1739) as “the act of improving something,”³⁸ which was repeated years later in the *Diccionario de la lengua castellana* of 1780 (Real Academia Española 1780, p. 616). The connected term “mejoría,” nevertheless, is the most adequate equivalent in the Spanish language for the idea of betterment/improvement. If “mejoramiento” has a somewhat generic meaning in the eighteenth century, “mejoría” on the other hand appears in Spanish in the first half of that century, associated with the idea of progress. The definition of “mejoría” in the *Diccionario de Autoridades* is “increase, advancement, progress and augmentation of something,” meanings that would be repeated in later editions.³⁹

Marten Seppel has already devoted a chapter in this volume to the noun “Verbesserung.” He carefully analyses the lengthy evolution of the term and highlights its uses in German discourse on improvement. Tracing the uses of the term in a vast literature, Seppel highlights how one of the initial uses of the term was linked to the idea of correction, but how the term acquired very early in German a perspective related to future-oriented endeavours. At least in lexicographic terms, it is interesting to note that these two uses were still present in the noun in the mid-eighteenth century and figure clearly in the two entries given by Zedler for the term, as correction or as addition, or more specifically, in the sense of “any effort to make good a bad thing,” with emphasis on the Latin term “Emendatio” or “Correctio,”⁴⁰ or as “a new addition or the multiplication of a thing,” corresponding to the Latin “Augmentum.”⁴¹

The entry in Zedler gives us interesting clues about this process of terminological differentiation in German, showing that for some time in the eighteenth century “Verbesserung” both anticipated the meaning of change for the better that the term reform only later acquired, and maintained a meaning coinciding with one of the original meanings of the term reform, such as correction or amendment of errors. The analysis of the noun “Verbesserung” thus directly contributes to the perception of how the meanings of reform and improvement had coincident developments, with a certain overlap, followed by the progressive specification of meanings and progressive differentiation of uses in economic and political discourse.

We can finally deal briefly with the term in English, in which it would experience its most vigorous development, with “improvement” effectively appearing to be detached from “betterment”, and with great importance in the economic and political discourse of the period. In Johnson (1755), the term improvement is not only used in the body of the text of the definitions of several dictionary entries, but also has a specific entry, which highlights the idea of progress. In turn, the noun betterment is used less, and does not even have a separate entry.

Given the variety of issues pointed out here, it seems inappropriate to endorse the idea of an English exceptionalism, an alleged singularity of the process of “the invention of improvement,” as Paul Slack suggests.⁴² Seppel’s chapter demonstrates how equivalent usage in economic and political

discourse can also be easily associated with the evolution of the concept of “*Verbesserung*” in the Germanic world. It can even be added that it is possible to extend this perspective to other cases as well, albeit with different chronologies, in the context of continental Europe. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that the English case precociously amplifies this dimension of material progress at the core of the concept of improvement,⁴³ as the meaning of the term in English was quickly specified beyond the limits of the equivalent “betterment.”

In view of this broad background of the progressive specification of the meanings of the term “reform” and its relationship with the idea of improvement/betterment, investigation of the relative precocity of Portuguese usage in the dictionarisation of the noun “*reforma*” in the sense of changing for the better is particularly relevant. This implies not only a reflection on the specific contribution by the author of the dictionary, Moraes e Silva, where this new meaning was first listed, but also on the broader perspective of uses of the term “reform” by enlightened reformism in the Portuguese context.

Nevertheless, it is important to insist on the idea that it is after all a relative precocity of the Portuguese case, since there are previous records in other languages of the new meaning of the verb to reform, associated with the idea of changing for the better, and also short references to noun derivations, as in the case of the Italian, although without gaining prominence in dictionarisation and receiving a detailed entry for the noun. In fact, what is important here is not to demonstrate an originality in the Portuguese case, but to explore how the production of meanings is very directly articulated to the enlightened reformism in this case. This process undoubtedly seems to gain strength at the end of the eighteenth century, related to an idea of reform that diffused in economic and political language in the sense of changing for the better, but which remains perfectly adapted to and framed by the old regime horizon of expectation, in which changing not to transform but to preserve made complete sense. It is in these terms that the Portuguese case offers a direct illustration of the developments of the noun “reform” in the second half of the eighteenth century, as will be seen below.

Reforms

The idea of introducing a new form that corrects or amends previous errors was already an accepted meaning of the term reformation in Portuguese at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Bluteau even uses the nouns “*reforma*” (reform) and “*reformação*” (reformation) as synonyms at this time. This idea of amendment/correction had been a traditional formula from the seventeenth century in legal documents that modified previous legislation. As a rule, the term used in the sixteenth century for this replacement/correction of previous laws was however “*reformação*,” as in the reformation of justice produced by the royal charter of June 12, 1612, or in the reformation of the statute of the fiscal administration from May

20, 1621.⁴⁴ During the eighteenth century, nevertheless, the term “reforma” began to be increasingly the choice, with the most notable example being the reform of the statutes of the University of Coimbra in 1772, a decisive milestone in the context of the enlightened reformism.⁴⁵

Consultation of the catalogue of the National Library of Lisbon⁴⁶ clearly reinforces this line of interpretation, pointing to a transfer of meaning from reformation to reform, and a progressive expansion of the uses of the term reform in the Portuguese language during the eighteenth century. The noun “reformação” appears in the title of works in Portuguese related to the new form of general legislative statutes and canon law from the sixteenth century, but from the eighteenth century onwards the term is restricted almost exclusively to religious-related topics. The term “reforma,” on the other hand practically does not appear at all in titles of works in Portuguese prior to the eighteenth century, and comes to occupy the place previously held by the term “reformação,” progressively expanding its uses to include catalogue titles related to the reform of institutions (such as the Royal Navy Academy, among others), or topics broadly related more to the idea of improvements, such as the reforms of stills or furnaces.

It is undoubtedly from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards that this process of opening to new meanings gains momentum, simultaneously with the economic and political transformations promoted in Portugal, in particular from the urgent demands presented after the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, coupled with centralising action by the Marques de Pombal.⁴⁷ It is possible, therefore, to think that Moraes e Silva’s sensitivity to these issues was related to his personal experience, including attendance in his early twenties at the reformed University of Coimbra. His time in Coimbra included exposure to new ideas and the ferment of debates with other students, but it also led to persecution by the Tribunal of the Holy Office, the Inquisition, on account of a denunciation for heretical practices. This included his membership of a discussion circle debating prohibited works, including those of Rousseau and Voltaire among other Enlightenment thinkers. Sentenced to imprisonment by the Inquisition in 1779, Moraes e Silva decided to flee Portugal and took refuge in London, under the protection of Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho, the Minister Plenipotentiary of Portugal. Moraes e Silva was Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho’s secretary, and the privileged conditions he enjoyed enabled him to develop his dictionary project. He only returned to Portugal in 1785, a few years before the publication of the first edition of his dictionary in 1789. The protection of Luis Pinto de Souza Coutinho, and access to his library, were remembered in the dictionary’s prologue. Moraes Silva praises and thanks the “infinite benefits” received, including access to Luis Pinto de Souza Coutinho’s “most chosen and copious personal library.”⁴⁸

Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho was one of the main members of an influential group on the Portuguese political scene in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and was responsible for promoting the policy of alliance

with England. His trajectory is well representative of the key names of Portuguese-enlightened reformism, who commonly articulated positions in diplomacy and colonial administration before ascending to positions of power in the administration of the kingdom. After being governor of the Captaincy of Mato Grosso in Brazil, Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho was for 14 years an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary in London, where he established connections with important figures on the intellectual scene, such as the Scots historian William Robertson, and was elected Fellow of the Royal Society of London in 1787. He returned to Lisbon in 1788 as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and War.⁴⁹ He closely collaborated with one of the names most easily associated with Portuguese-enlightened reformism, Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, then plenipotentiary minister in Turin and years later Secretary of State for the Navy and Overseas territories.⁵⁰

The political and economic and administrative memoirs produced during the period are extremely useful sources for tracing and mapping the uses of the term reform. It is possible to trace how the noun “reforma” was repeatedly used in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, this use is less broad and unrestricted than has usually been suggested. In fact, we can see an essential differentiation in usage. The documents produced by Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho are of particular interest and can serve as an illustration here, precisely because of the influence and repercussion on governance and because he himself, Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, is perhaps the name most easily associated by the historiography with enlightened reformism in Portugal.⁵¹ Two manuscripts can be highlighted. They show how specific uses of the noun “reforma” seemed reserved in the late eighteenth century for addressing issues of institutional change or changes in the legal apparatus, and do not just serve as a generic synonym for improvements.

These two manuscripts represent the connection between the administration of the Portuguese colonial empire and perception of the need to promote reforms to ensure the future of the monarchy: “Memoir on the Improvement of His Majesty’s Domains in America” (1797–1798) and “Letter addressed to Prince Regent D. João, giving a detailed presentation on the political conditions of Europe during the Napoleonic Wars, alluding to the invasion of the Peninsula, describing the economic and financial conditions of Portugal (1803).”⁵²

Referring to this first document, with plans for the improvement of the Portuguese domains in America, Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho mentioned a crucial part of the plan in a letter to the then-president of the Royal Treasury, Tomás Xavier Teles da Silva, writing that “once again I remind you that I am ready to start, whenever you want, discussions on the reform of taxation in the American domains.”⁵³ The term reform (*reforma*) in this excerpt is representative of how the noun was then usually reserved for modifications that aimed at improving the institutional or legal apparatus, via the creation of legal instruments (king-legislator).⁵⁴ In particular, this is representative of how the term was consistently used by Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho in his writings.

Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho was at that time the secretary of state responsible for the Navy and all colonial domains. In this document he apologised to His Majesty for daring to speak out on questions related to public finance, thus infringing the sphere of another minister, the President of the Royal Treasury (an institution responsible since Pombal's reforms for the central administration of the empire's finances). Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho sought to ameliorate problems and modernise the fiscal apparatus of the American domains in particular, restoring the empire's finance from "the state of poverty in which the royal finances of the overseas domains is found."⁵⁵

His several contributions on these topics eventually would lead to his nomination as President of the Royal Treasury, a position he held along with that of Secretary of the Navy. This "Memoir on the Improvement of His Majesty's Domains in America" also reveals Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho's understanding of the nature of the crisis in which Portugal then found itself and the direction to be taken to overcome these problems, the reforms to be conducted by the government in the field of colonial policy to ensure the maintenance of the kingdom's own independence:

(...) let me be allowed to address [firstly] the political system that it is more appropriate that our Crown embrace for the conservation of its vast domains, particularly those of America, which properly form the basis of the greatness of our august throne. / His Majesty's domains in Europe form only the capital and the center of his vast possessions. Portugal reduced to itself, within a short period would be a province of Spain.⁵⁶

The manuscript deals extensively with financial questions, "which are the main point on which all others depend, and which is what ultimately decides on the greatness of sovereigns and the happiness of peoples, are what we must now particularly concern ourselves with, whether about some new reform in the general taxation of America, or that of the captaincy of Minas Gerais in particular."⁵⁷ Focusing on the improvements in tax collection in colonial domains, the document deals in detail with the nature of taxation, the form of collection and accounting, and major policies with a view towards ensuring credit and circulation. The document, after detailing the reasons and specific points of the proposed reform in the taxation system in Portuguese America, summarises the main points of the proposed actions to be included in his proposed Decree.⁵⁸

The common path for the implementation of enlightened reformism in the administration of the empire involved the following: the production of memoranda reflecting on the mechanisms that should be created, modified, or improved; followed by the process of seeking to persuade the political actors involved to finally produce a royal charter as a direct representation of the legislative action conducted by the King, i.e., the "King-legislator." Implementation often encountered a series of other obstacles, nullifying many of these pieces of legislation, and the reforms themselves. Nevertheless, it

seems clear that although the term reform was also used in some contexts as a synonym for improvements, its main use in this context was related to change for the better in the institutional and legal apparatus.

A brief comment can be included here on the use of the term “melhoramentos” in the Portuguese literature associated with enlightened reformism in the late eighteenth century. A key point is that usage of the term coincides with a general European economic discourse of improvement/betterment. There is in Portugal, for example, the same multiplication of writings related to improvements in the rural economy as in different parts of Europe. Marten Seppel comments in his chapter in this volume on how Joachim Christian Bergen in his 1785 *Anleitung für die Landwirthe zur Verbesserung der Viehzucht* (Farmers’ Guide to the Improvement of Cattle Breeding) highlights how the great number of “recommendations on improvements could generate confusion between good and bad measures.” Take as an example the extensive collection published by Friar José Mariano da Conceição Velloso in the period, *O Fazendeiro do Brazil* (5 volumes in 11), commissioned and supported by Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, which collected and translated writings on the subject of improvements in agriculture. A free translation of the full title might run: “The Brazilian farmer, improved by the rural economy and other sources of knowledge, and others which can be introduced, in his own factories, according to the best that has been written on this subject, under the auspices and order of His Royal Highness and Prince of Brazil. Collected from Foreign Memoirs by Friar José Mariano da Conceição Velloso.”⁵⁹ The term improvement, just to cite some examples taken from the first volume of this *Fazendeiro do Brazil*, appears in specific contexts, such as improvement in cultivation or in the use of techniques, and more broadly in the idea of the improvement of rural economy.⁶⁰ The most interesting thing to note, however, is that the term is occasionally combined with “reform”, as for example in the phrase “improvement or reform that has taken place at present in the sugar system.”⁶¹ The combination of these two ideas is particularly interesting and potent, reinforcing the synonymy but at the same time complementing the meanings of one term with the other.

The importance given to useful knowledge of the natural world, to which both advances in arts and industry and improvements in the rural economy are connected, was also heavily marked in another large editorial project prior to *O Fazendeiro do Brazil*, but with several names in common: the *Memorias Econômicas da Academia das Sciencias de Lisboa, para o adiantamento da agricultura, das artes e da indústria em Portugal e suas conquistas* (Economic memoirs of the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, for the advancement of agriculture, arts and industry in Portugal and its domains). The emphasis given here to the idea of “advancement/advance,” another key meaning included in the idea of betterment/improvement as mentioned above, indicates the kind of work developed in this collective work, which included memoirs of some of the leading names of enlightened reformism in Portugal.⁶²

The second example selected from Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho's papers is a "Memoir on the transfer of the court to Brazil" (1803). This memoir, actually a letter to the monarch, is largely a corollary of the arguments of the previous memorandum, recognising the importance of Brazil for the survival of the Portuguese empire, but including a (very important) move forward because of the deepening of political tensions in Europe caused by the Napoleonic wars. It includes one of the most radical reforms proposed by Portuguese-enlightened reformism: the transfer of the royal family, the entire court, and all the main institutions of the kingdom (including even the royal library) to the other side of the Atlantic, resulting in the effective move of the kingdom's capital to Rio de Janeiro. This was received with reluctance and the decision was delayed as much as possible, finally taking place only in 1808.

The document includes a detailed analysis of the European political situation and the possible scenarios for Portugal, including reflections on the economy in general and on public finances in particular, stating that "Portugal (...) is not the best and most essential part of the Monarchy."⁶³ The example obviously reinforces the logic of radical changes that, even though including an opening for the new, were ultimately driven by the logic of preserving a state of affairs in the face of shifting times. The impulse to preserve everything as it always was in the context of planning for enlightening reforms, and thus finds a perfect illustration in Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho's memoir:

It is impossible to considered seriously (...)the interests of the Crown of Your Royal Highness without realising that an energetic, strong and desperate defense is the only way that remains to ensure the independence of the Crown of Your Royal Highness and that, while maintaining the well-founded hope of being able to secure the defense of the Kingdom, leaves the certainty of going in any event, Your Royal Highness, to create a great empire in Brazil, and to ensure for the future the complete reintegration of the monarchy in all its parts.⁶⁴

Understanding this logic of preserving an established order associated with the idea of reform is not equivalent to opposing revolution to reform, but is simply the recognition that in the last decades of the eighteenth century, which would be marked by pressures of all kinds, and in particular in relation to the colonial world,⁶⁵ a sense of urgency in government action was amplified, breaking the tendency towards stasis and the immobility of tradition.

Final Comments

Enlightened reformism itself can usefully be thought of as a kind of eclectic platform in which different doctrinal elements (or sometimes fragments) ended up being combined and recombined. It is not open to systematic analysis, since it is the situational combination of elements that form each whole,

not the elements in themselves.⁶⁶ In my previous work I have insisted on the importance of thinking about the place of enlightened reformism in the history of economic thought in terms of the concrete uses of economic language in government action, and argued that it is essential to think of the international dissemination of economic ideas during the eighteenth century not in doctrinal blocs but as single “elements,” often combined and recombined in different ways in new contexts.⁶⁷

This attention to the uses of economic language in analysing enlightened reformism demands that we pay special attention to the lexicon repeatedly encountered in the political, economic, and administrative memoirs produced in the period, and highlights the use of terms such as reform and improvement. The reflection on these two terms developed here, their construction of meanings and their uses, is therefore a key part of an effort to analyse enlightened reformism in Portugal, aiming at the same time to illuminate a degree of synchronicity between the Portuguese experience and different parts of the European continent in the production of economic discourse linked to government practice during the later eighteenth century.

The precocity of the early dictionarisation of the meaning of change for the better in the Portuguese noun for “reform”, by comparison with other European languages, indicates how the theme of reform had acquired operative importance for government action in the Portuguese empire during the last decades of the eighteenth century. A tangle of questions unfolds relating to the growing importance of the colonial sphere for the interests and chances of survival of the Portuguese kingdom itself, as highlighted above.

It is finally important to remember that this reformist action cannot be confused with a contemporary modernisation process. Reformist action would only acquire this associated meaning much later, even though many modern historical writers continue to associate modernisation with so-called enlightened reforms. Reformist action at that time is in fact a project that at all times combines this idea of change with an ideal of preserving the established order. It is exactly the combination of meanings inscribed in the noun reform in the form used in the late eighteenth century that translates this perspective. The idea of reform as correcting errors and returning to the old way, and at the same time as changing to something new and better, gives meaning to the tensions underlying the term reform in the late eighteenth century, and finds in the Portuguese case a precise illustration, reinforcing the perspective of change to preserve everything the way it always was.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Marten Seppel and Keith Tribe for their comments on a first draft of this chapter presented at the 13th European Social Science History Conference at Universiteit Leiden in March 2021. I would also like to thank José Luís Cardoso for his comments and Dorinda Outram for a careful reading of the manuscript and all her detailed suggestions. Financial support from CAPES, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, and CNPq is gratefully acknowledged.

- 2 Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, *Il gattopardo* (Milan: Feltrinelli, [1958] 2008), 41. In the original: “Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi.” All translations of quotations are mine. The spellings of the foreign language terms have generally been kept as in the original.
- 3 This perspective has been highlighted in some of my recent works. See Alexandre Mendes Cunha, “Influences and Convergences in the Dissemination of Cameralist Ideas in Portugal Enlightened Reformism and Police Science,” *History of Political Economy* 53, no. 3 (2021): 497–514.
- 4 Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, Rudolf Walther, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* – Bd. 5 Pro – Soz (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1984), 331–60.
- 5 The standard attitude can be illustrated by the recommendation of State Councilors to D. Luísa de Gusmão in the seventeenth century: “The best, Madam, is do nothing” (“O melhor, Senhora, é não obrar”). Antonio Manuel Hespanha, “Depois do Leviathan,” *Almanack Brasileiro* 5, no. 15 (2007): 55–66, 56.
- 6 Concerned with the duration of the colonial slave society model long after the independence of Brazil, the book *Arcaísmo como projeto* by João Fragoso and Manolo Florentino is an important illustration of this literature. As stated already in the title (“archaicism as a project”), this book is related to this logic of changing to not change being perpetuated from the eighteenth throughout the nineteenth century, even in the face of successive changes in the political situation and in the international economy. See João Fragoso, Manolo Florentino, *O arcaísmo como projeto: mercado atlântico, sociedade agrária e elite mercantil no Rio de Janeiro, c. 1790–c. 1840* (Rio de Janeiro: Diadorim, 1993).
- 7 See John Considine, *Academy dictionaries 1600–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- 8 Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulário português, e latino, aulico, anatomico, architectonico, bellico, botanico...: autorisado com exemplos dos melhores escritores portuguezes, e latinos; e offerecido a El Rey de Portugal D. Joaõ V*, Vol. 7 (Coimbra: Collegio das Artes da Companhia de Jesu; Lisboa: Oficina de Pascoal da Sylva, 1720), 187. In the original: “Reforma, ou reformação. A nova forma, que se dá, com a emenda dos erros. Correção de abusos, etc. (...) A reforma de uma Ordem Religiosa.”
- 9 Antonio de Moraes Silva, *Diccionario da lingua portugueza composto pelo padre D. Rafael Bluteau, reformado, e accrescentado por Antonio de Moraes Silva natural do Rio de Janeiro*, Vol. 2 (Lisbon: Simão Tadeu Ferreira, 1789), 579. In the original: “O ato de reformar, de mudar para o antigo instituto, ou para melhor o que ia em decadência, ou mal; (...) A mudança em melhor produzida em alguma coisa.”
- 10 *Ibid.* In the original: “A reforma dos estudos, das letras, da vida, do costume, de uma ordem, da igreja.”
- 11 Sebastián de Covarrubias Orozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana, o española* (Madrid: Luis Sanchez, 1611). In the original: “Volver a dar forma a una cosa que se haya estragado y mudado de su ser y condición.”
- 12 Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana, en que se explica el verdadero sentido de las voces, su naturaleza y calidad, con las frases o modos de hablar, los proverbios o refranes, y otras cosas convenientes al uso de la lengua* [“*Diccionario de Autoridades*”], Vol. 5 (Madrid: Impr. de F. Del Hierro, 1726–1739), 537. In the original: “Corrección o reglamento that pone en alguna cosa.”
- 13 Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española* (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1925). In the original: “Lo que se propone, proyecta o ejecuta como innovación o mejora en alguna cosa.”
- 14 Accademia della Crusca, *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca*, Vol. 2 (Venice: Appresso Lorenzo Basegio, 1705), 317.
- 15 Accademia della Crusca, *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca, con tre indici delle voci, locuzioni, e prouerbi latini, e greci, posti per entro l’opera. Con priuilegio*

- del sommo pontefice, del re cattolico, della serenissima Repubblica di Venezia, e degli altri principi, e potentati d'Italia, e fuor d'Italia, della maestà cesarea, del re cristianissimo, e del sereniss. arciduca Alberto* (Venice: Appresso Gioianni Alberti, 1612), 708. In the original: “Riordinare, e dar nuova, e miglior forma.”
- 16 Accademia della Crusca, *Vocabolario...*, 1705, Vol. 2, 317 and Accademia della Crusca, *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, Vol. 4 (Florence: Appresso Domenico Maria Manni, 1735), 159–60. On the *Vocabolario degli accademici della Crusca* see: P. G. Beltrami, S. Fornara, “Italian Historical Dictionaries: from the Accademia Della Crusca to the Web”, *International Journal of Lexicography* 17, no. 4 (2004): 357–84 and Considine, *Academy dictionaries...*, chapter 2.
- 17 Francesco d’ Alberti di Villanuova, *Dizionario universale critico enciclopedico della lingua italiana*, Vol. 5 (Lucca: Dalla stamperia di Domenico Marescandoli, 1797), 358. In the original: “il ridurre in miglior forma.”
- 18 Académie française, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 8e ed., Vol. 2 (Paris: Hachete, 1835), 594–95. In the original: “Rétablissement dans l’ordre, dans l’ancienne forme, ou dans une meilleure forme.”
- 19 Académie Française, *Le dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise*, Vol. 1 (Paris: Coignard, 1694), 475–76. In the original: “Restablissement dans l’ordre, dans l’ancienne forme.” Note also that in the first edition (1694), the term “reform” is listed as part of the entry “forme,” and only after the second edition (1718) is the term independently listed, albeit repeating the same specification of meaning presented since the first edition.
- 20 *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, 496. In the original: “Restablir dans l’ancienne forme, Donner une meilleure forme à une chose, soit en adjoustant, soit en retranchant.”
- 21 In the original: “Restablissement dans l’ancienne forme, ou dans une meilleure forme.”
- 22 *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.* (tome 13), ed. Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d’Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1765), 890. In the original: “La réformation est l’action de réformer; la réforme en est l’effet.”
- 23 *Ibid.*, 891. In the original: “ce qui est ordonné pour prévenir quelques abus, ou pour les réprimer.”
- 24 *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.* tome 5, ed. Denis Diderot, Jean le Rond d’Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1755), 204. In the original: “La conservation & la police des forêts & des bois.”
- 25 Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English language, in which the words are deduced from their originals and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are prefixed a history of the language and an English grammar. By Samuel Johnson* (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1755).
- 26 Henry John Todd, Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In which the Words are Deduced from Their Originals; and Illustrated in Their Different Significations, by Examples from the Best Writers: Together with a History of the Language, and an English Grammar*, Vol. 4 (London: Longman; Hurst; Rees; Orme; Brown, 1818).
- 27 Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste, Welche bißhero durch menschlichen Verstand und Witz erfunden und verbessert worden Darinnen so wohl die Geographisch-Politische Beschreibung des Erd-Creyses ... Als auch eine ausführliche Historisch-Generaelogische Nachricht von den Durchlauchten und berühmtesten Geschlechtern in der Welt*, Vol. 30 (Halle: Zedler, 1741), col. 1694. In the original: “siehe Reduciren, ingleichen Reformiren.”
- 28 *Ibid.* In the original: “in bessern Stand-setzen.”
- 29 Académie Française, *Le dictionnaire...* 1694, Vol. 1, 476. In the original: “Reformer la Justice, le Police, les Lois, les Customs (...) reformer un Ordre Religieux (...) des gens qui veulent reformer l’État.”

- 30 Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon...*, Bd. 30, col. 1676. In the original: “Reformation, heißt in denen Rechten überhaupt ein jedwedem Gesetze oder Verordnung, so entweder von neuem bestätigt oder auch in einigen Punkten geändert, oder dadurch eines und das andere in Policey-oder Justitz-Sachen geändert und verbessert worden.”
- 31 Académie Française, *Le dictionnaire...* 1694, Vol. 2, 37. In the original: “Action par laquelle on rend une chose meilleure.” The term was included in the entry “meilleur” (just as mentioned above for the term “réforme,” included in the entry “forme” in the first edition).
- 32 Académie Française, *Nouveau dictionnaire de l'Académie française dédié au Roy*, 2e éd. Vol. 1 (Paris: Coignard, 1718), 56. In the original: “Ce qu'on fait dans un fonds de terre ou dans une maison, pour les mettre en meilleur estat, & pour en augmenter le revenu.”
- 33 Académie Française, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4e ed., Vol. 1 (Paris: Bernard Brunet, 1762), 62. In the original: “une opération par laquelle un métal est porté à une plus grande perfection.”
- 34 Académie Française, *Dictionnaire...* 1798, Vol. 1, 50. In the original: “Progrès vers le bien; meilleur état.” We will not include here an additional analysis of the term progress, but it is important to note that until the eighteenth century, the term in different languages was fundamentally about advances/movements in space/territory, but progressively it also started to include, figuratively, the idea of advances in all fields, such as studies or science. The idea of a movement to an improved or more advanced condition and, in particular, of advances not only in space, but in the progression of time, or a forward movement towards the future, began to have current use only in the second half of the eighteenth century. This would take even longer some time for these meanings of the term to find its place in the dictionaries.
- 35 Rafael Bluteau, *Vocabulario portuguez...* 1716, Vol. 5, 408.
- 36 Antonio de Moraes Silva, *Diccionario...* 1789, Vol. 2, 285.
- 37 Accademia della Crusca, *Vocabolario...*, 1612, 529. In the original: 1. “Il migliorare” and 2 “Per la parte miglior dell' avere.”
- 38 Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana...*, 1726–1739, Vol. 4. In the original: “El acto de mejorar alguna cosa.”
- 39 *Ibid.* In the original: “Medra adelantamiento, progreso y aumento de alguna cosa.”
- 40 Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses vollständiges Universal-Lexicon...*, Bd. 47, col. 145.
- 41 *Ibid.*, col. 146. In the original: “eine jedwede Bemühung, eine schlimme Sache gut zu machen”; “ein neuer Zuwachs oder die Vermehrung einer Sache.”
- 42 See Slack (2015).
- 43 Perhaps echoing the very dimension of advantage/profit that are associated with the origin of the term, from “empower” in the Anglo-Norman French, and for being “to improve” until the sixteenth century in England directly associated with “to make a profit from land.” Paul Slack, *The invention of improvement. Information and material progress in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4.
- 44 *Código Philippino ou Ordenações e Leis do Reino de Portugal: recopiladas por mandado d'El-Rey D. Philippe I*, edited by Cândido Mendes de Almeida, 14 ed., Vol. 5 (Rio de Janeiro: Tipografia do Instituto Filomático, 1870), 1340 and *Collecção Chronologica da Legislação Portuguesa*, ed. José Justino de Andrade e Silva, Vol. 2 (Lisboa: Imprensa de J. J. A. Silva, 1855), 44.
- 45 It is interesting to note that in the royal charter that orders the re-elaboration of the university statutes, the terms reform (“reforma”) and reformation (“reformação”) are used. It speaks of the “reformação” of the previous statutes and at the same time refers to the ongoing process of production of the new statutes as “reforma”, Vol. 1, (Universidade de Coimbra 1772), vi.

- 46 See the online catalog at <http://catalogo.bnportugal.gov.pt/>
- 47 See José Manuel Louzada Lopes Subtil, *O terramoto político (1755–1759): memória e poder* (Lisboa: Edual, 2007).
- 48 Antonio de Moraes Silva, *Diccionario...* 1789, Vol. 1, vii. See also Luiz Carlos Villalta, *Reformismo Ilustrado, censura e práticas de leitura: usos do livro na América Portuguesa* (PhD diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 1999), chapter 7.
- 49 Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho provided authors such as Abbé Raynal and William Robertson with information of South America for their books: Raynal's new edition of the *Histoire des deux Indes* and Robertson's third volume of his *History of America* (1777); see Kenneth R. Maxwell, "The Generation of the 1790s and the Idea of Luso-Brazilian Empire", in Dauril Alden, ed., *Colonial Roots of Modern Brazil* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), 107–44; Gianluigi Goggi, "L'abbé Raynal et un questionnaire sur le Portugal et sur le Brésil", *Studi Settecenteschi* no. 27–28, 2007–2008 (2010): 285–316, 298–99 and Junia Ferreira Furtado, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro, "Raynal and the defence of the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil: diplomacy and the Memoirs of the Visconde de Balsemão." *Análise Social*, n. 230 (2019): 4–33, 7–11.
- 50 Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho and Luís Pinto de Souza Coutinho had the same surname and treated each other as cousins, although they were not in fact related.
- 51 See José Luís Cardoso, "Nas malhas do império: a economia política e a política colonial de D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho", in José Luis Cardoso ed., *A Economia Política e os Dilemas do Império Luso-Brasileiro (1790–1822)* (Lisboa: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses, 2001), 63–109; José Luís Cardoso, Alexandre Mendes Cunha, "Enlightened reforms and economic discourse in the portuguese-brazilian empire," *History of Political Economy* 44, no. 4 (2012): 619–41 and Gabriel Paquette, *Imperial Portugal in the Age of Atlantic Revolutions the Luso-Brazilian World, c.1770–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). A recent and interesting overview on improvements and reforms in the Brazilian history between the second half of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century can also be found in Jurandir Malerba, *Brasil em projetos: história dos sucessos políticos e planos de melhoramento do reino. Da ilustração portuguesa à independência do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2020).
- 52 "Memória sobre o Melhoramento dos Domínios de sua Majestade na América, 1797–1798", in Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU, Lisbon), *Papéis avulsos*: Rio de Janeiro, 1797 in Vol. 2 D. *Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho: Textos políticos, económicos e financeiros: (1783–1811)*, ed. André Mansuy Dinis Silva (Lisboa: Banco de Portugal, 1993), 47–66; and "Carta dirigida ao príncipe regente dom João, fazendo uma detalhada exposição sobre as condições políticas da Europa em fase das guerras de Napoleão, aludindo a invasão da Península, expondo as condições económicas e financeiras de Portugal, 1803", in Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (BNRJ, Rio de Janeiro), *Manuscritos*, I-29,13,022.
- 53 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino (AHU, Lisbon), Mss. mç. 21, no. 4.
- 54 On king-legislator see Airtion Seelaender, *Polizei, Ökonomie und Gesetzgebungslehre ein Beitrag zur Analyse der portugiesischen Rechtswissenschaft am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2003) and Airtion Seelaender, "A polícia e o rei-legislador", in Eduardo Bittar ed., *História do direito brasileiro* (São Paulo: Atlas, 2008).
- 55 *D. Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho: Textos políticos...*, 1993, Vol. 2, 47.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 48.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 54–55.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 59 José Mariano da Conceição Velloso, *O Fazendeiro do Brazil, melhorado na economia rural dos generes já cultivados, e de outros, que se podem introduzir*,

nas fabricas, que lhe são proprias , segundo o melhor que se tem escrito a este assumpto: debaixo dos auspícios e de ordem de Sua Alteza Real e Príncipe do Brazil. Colligido de Memórias estrangeiras por Fr. José Mariano da Conceição Velloso (Lisboa: Regia Officina Typografica, 1798-1806). This work is a milestone in the dissemination of ideas related to the theme of improvements in the rural economy within Portuguese-enlightened reformism. Friar Veloso actually published a large number of books (manuals in particular) related to the theme of the “new agriculture,” including original works by himself and other Portuguese authors, but especially translations of varied European writings, under the direct support of Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho, who even instituted a publishing house (*Casa Literária do Arco do Cego*) under the direction of Veloso to enable the production of works related to reformist interests, and the wide dissemination of these texts. See Ermelinda Moutinho Pataca and Fernando José Luna eds., *Frei Veloso e a tipografia do Arco do Cego* (São Paulo: Edusp, 2019) and José Newton Coelho Meneses, “Rotas de saberes entre Europa e Américas e a edição de livros técnicos de agricultura no mundo luso-brasileiro do século XVIII e início do XIX”, *Revista Internacional em Lingua Portuguesa* 28/29, (2017): 97–119.

- 60 José Mariano da Conceição Velloso, *O Fazendeiro do Brazil*, Vol. 1, i, 31, 155.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 52.
- 62 Academia das Ciências de Lisboa. *Memórias economicas da Academia real das sciencias de Lisboa*, para o adiantamento da agricultura, das artes, e da industria em Portugal, e suas conquistas (Lisboa: Academia Real das Sciencias, 1789–1815). See José Luis Cardoso, “Introdução”, in *Memórias econômicas da Academia Real das Ciências de Lisboa, para o adiantamento da agricultura, das artes, e da indústria em Portugal, e suas conquistas (1789–1815)*, Vol. 1, xvii–xxxiii (Lisboa: Banco de Portugal, 1991).
- 63 BNRJ, Rio de Janeiro, *Manuscriptos*, I-29,13,022, n.p. A pioneering exploration of this document in historiography can be found in Maria de Lourdes Viana Lyra, *A utopia do poderoso império: Portugal e Brasil: bastidores da política, 1798–1822* (Rio de Janeiro: Sette Letras, 1994).
- 64 *Ibid.*, n.p.
- 65 It is important to insist on what was named by Kenneth Maxwell as the Generation of 1790, which corresponds to an effort to renegotiate interests after the failure and harsh repression of the “Inconfidência Mineira,” the main movement to question the Portuguese colonial order. This effort, in which Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho’s direct action is crucial, took shape in the central administration’s attempt to co-opt an elite of Brazilian natives who, after completing their studies at the University of Coimbra, began to exercise strategic positions in the formulation and execution of reformist policies (Kenneth R. Maxwell, “The Generation of the 1790s...,” 107–44. See also Alexandre Mendes Cunha, Sérgio Alcides, “Expectativas e frustrações do reformismo ilustrado em contexto colonial”, in José Newton Coelho Meneses, eds., *Orbe e Encruzilhada. Minas Gerais 300 anos* (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2020), 213–36.
- 66 Alexandre Mendes Cunha, “A Previously Unnoticed Swiss Connection in the Dissemination of Cameralist Ideas during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century”, *History of Political Economy* 49, no. 3 (2017): 497–529.
- 67 See Alexandre Mendes Cunha, “Influences and Convergences..., Alexandre Mendes Cunha, “Cameralist Ideas in Portuguese Enlightened Reformism: the diplomat Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho and his circuits of intellectual exchange”, in Ere Nokkala, Nicholas B. Miller, eds., *Cameralism and the Enlightenment: Happiness, Governance and Reform* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 201–23 and also Keith Tribe, *The Economy of the Word: Language, History, and Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

5 “Changes Are Harmful to the State”

The Concept of Reform in Russian Political Thought, 1700–1790¹

Sergey Polskoy

In late 1762 the Senator and Ober-Hofmeister Nikita Ivanovich Panin received some comments from the Empress Catherine II concerning his project to create an Imperial Council and reorganise the Senate. Panin sought to create unchangeable laws and institutions that could not be reversed or altered by a subsequent monarch. The institutions were intended to stabilise the system of state administration and protect it from the series of *coups* that had disrupted the Russian throne in the course of the eighteenth century. The Empress commented extensively on Panin’s project, one remark directly concerning the problem of how one could actually bring about changes to state order. Catherine was worried that “the inflexible administrative establishment obstructs all turning towards the better, all change and correction.” She faced a dilemma: sooner or later, the administrative system would have to be improved; governing bodies and fundamental laws would also need to be changed, so they could not be “unalterable”. This remark prompted Nikita Panin to respond at length to the Empress’s comment, noting that

The establishment of the form and order of government is indisputably a part of state policy, as is religious faith. Hence frequent changes in both spheres are equally harmful to the state. Russia does not need to search abroad for such examples, its establishments and laws have been changed almost as often and with the same ease as decrees on inheritance, on the vodka tax, on customs duties and on even less important matters. To her distress, Russia has not only experienced an almost constant rocking of the throne of her sovereigns, but also its occupation by Poles, defrocked monks and absconders. Which is why, following the great insights of statecraft, Russia should wish that once a properly established system was created it would remain fixed and unchanged for a long time.²

Panin compared the state structure with religious dogma; no change could be without harm. The monarch should respect not only “fundamental laws”, but also “simple ancient customs, if they do not become generally harmful with the changing times” - only then would correction be needed. It turned

out that the “reformer” Panin was trying to close off the path to “changes”. He sought to do so with an extreme measure, necessary to correct a general corruption that endangered the traditional foundations of society. The same attitude shaped his proposals aimed at restoring order and a monarchical power that had been shaken by a series of coups. Catherine II generally shared Panin’s perspective.

Russian historiography traditionally treats both the Empress and her closest adviser as exemplary eighteenth century reformers. But neither the Empress nor her councillor ever used this concept in its modern sense, instead using the word *réforme* in their French texts to refer to the religious Reformation of the sixteenth century. Was the concept of reform in its modern political sense familiar to these eighteenth-century actors? Is it possible to employ a term introduced by historians during the second half of the nineteenth century to refer to the phenomena of previous eras? Are “reforms” a universal phenomenon for all historical periods? Can we call all past changes and improvements “reforms”?

Any historian seeking to understand the political history of the eighteenth century faces questions of this kind that call for the methods of conceptual history, especially the research associated with *Begriffsgeschichte*.³

Reform or Improvement?

The concepts of *reforma* (reform) and *reformator* (reformer), in today’s sense, only came into active use in Russian political writings and historiography in the second half of the nineteenth century – especially on the eve of, and during, the “Great Reforms” of Tsar Alexander II of the 1860s and 1870s that were designed to modernise the administrative institutions and social practices of the Russian Empire. Greatly influenced by European liberal thought, historians during this period applied a progressive vocabulary to Russian historical development. In particular, the degree of commitment of rulers to a policy of innovation and reform became a symbol of progress, or if its absence, deviation from such policy being seen as a slowing of social development.

All the same, the historians of the time rarely used the European word “reform” directly, more often using its Russian equivalent – *preobrazovanie* (transformation), which had entered the active vocabulary of Russian authors in the second half of the eighteenth century. Sergey Solovyov, the greatest liberal historian of this era, does not use the words “reform” and “reformer” – neither in his multivolume *History of Russia* (29 vols., 1851–1879), nor in his *Public Readings on Peter the Great* (1872).⁴ He always employs *preobrazovanie* (transformation, transfiguration), *preobrazovatel’* (transformer, changer), *preobrazovatel’naya epoha* (transformational epoch).

As early as 1849 the historian Timofey Granovsky did use the concept of *reformator* (reformer) in his course of lectures relating to the key figures of the European Reformation of the sixteenth century, and in 1869 the journalist Nikolay Danilevsky called Peter the Great the *velikiy reformator* (the

great reformer) in his book *Russia and Europe*.⁵ And a later generation of historians, including Vasilii Klyuchevsky and Pavel Milyukov, actively used the term “reform” from the 1890s, along with its synonym “transformation”.⁶ Since the beginning of the twentieth century “reform” has slowly replaced the former-use of “transformation” in works of Russian history.

In Soviet historiography the idea of reform was used for even earlier eras, as far back as the legendary Princess Olga who had, according to Soviet historians, introduced the first administrative reforms in the middle of the tenth century. The same perspective was used of other late medieval and early modern princes, Ivan the Terrible (1533–1584) being seen as the greatest “reformer”.⁷ In the 1990s and the early 2000s the paradigm of reformism as a means of writing historical narratives became especially common – most probably as a response to the reforms of the 1980s and 1990s in Russia. In this historiography the entire history of the Russian state appears as an infinite sequence of reforms and counter-reforms.⁸

“Reform” has become a convenient tool for Russian historians, used to describe practically any innovation of the past: from publishing new laws to introducing new administrative positions – from the tenth to the twenty-first century. Such indiscriminate use has tended to empty the term of any specifically “progressive” signification. The concept is still actively used to describe the activities of historical agents in quite different periods, often leading to an anachronistic interpretation of events. Efforts at critical revision date only from the 2010s, associated with a turn to the methods of *Begriffsgeschichte*.⁹ This implies a turn to the importance of understanding the meaning of “improvements” and “corrections” when used by actors in the past who are now called *reformers*.

The loan-word “reform” is almost never encountered in eighteenth-century Russian, but there are several important synonyms in the language that act as equivalents when translating this concept from European languages. Indeed, the active vocabulary of an educated eighteenth-century Russian rarely included the words “reform” (as well as “Reformation”) and “reformer” – these foreign words were not actually transcribed, and were absent from Russian dictionaries. The first and second editions of the *Russian Academy Dictionary* (1794 and 1822) did not include the words. By the end of the eighteenth century transcriptions of these words began to penetrate everyday language as a synonym for “improvement”. During his interrogation in June 1792, the freemason and publisher Nikolay Novikov stated that he knew that “in German lands there was reform (*reforma*) of Masonic rules”.¹⁰

The meaning of what later became known as “reform” and “reformation” was usually conveyed in Russian by *ispravlenie* (correction, improvement), less often by *ponovlenie* (renewal) or *peremena* (change); only in the last third of the eighteenth century did the term *preobrazovanie* (transformation) appear. The term *ispravliat'* (to correct, to improve) was used to translate the verb “to reform”, then later *peredelyvat'* (to remake), *peremeniat'* (to change) and, finally, *preobrazovat'* (to transform). In the translation of the fourth

edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1762), published in Russian in 1786, the article “Réforme” is rendered as follows:

Réforme. s. f. Restoration of order, correction. *La réforme des abus*, elimination, reduction of abuses. *La Réforme, ou Prétendue Réforme*, reformation, that is, a change in church statutes.

Réformer, v. act. To restore (*vostanovit'*) the ancient, better order, to correct (*ispravliat'*), to transform (*preobrazovat'*). *Réformer la Justice*, to correct justice. *Réformer le Calendrier*, to correct the calendar. *Réformer ses moeurs*, to improve morals, *Réformer un écrit*, to correct a writing.¹¹

At the same time what is now known as the Reformation was called Reform, the word Reformation having a similar, but broader, meaning than reform:

Réformation. s.f. Restoration of ancient or better order, correction, transformation, renewal, establishment of a better order. *La réformation des moeurs*, the correction of morals. *La réformation de la Justice*, establishing the better order in legal practices.

La réformation des abus, des désordres, removing abuses and disorder. *La réformation des monnoies*, recoinage.¹²

At the same time, a reformer is someone who promotes both reform and reformation:

Réformateur, s.m. Transformer, corrector, reformer, renewer. *Réformateur, ou prétendus Réformateurs*, Reformists, or Protestants.¹³

Being close to these terms, the Russian noun *preobrazovanie* (transformation) appears rather late, only in the 1770s. In particular, in Aleksandr Radishchev's Russian 1773 translation of Abbot Mably's *Observations sur les Grecs* (1749) he equally uses *preobrazovat'* (to transform) and *ispravit'* (to correct) to translate the verb “réformer”, just as he uses *preobrazovanie* (transformation) and *ponovlenie* (renewal) to translate *réforme*. But Mably, as well as Radishchev, uses both terms to describe, above all, changes in laws and morals, like “correcting old vices”.¹⁴ But such reforms cannot correct the foundations of government.

Accordingly, *peremena* in its older meaning is seen as change, change of order, change on the throne; and this notion barely affects change in the basis of government and manners of people, unlike reforms that can lead to deeper changes:

The Asians, who were cowed by the autocracy, had to obediently wear chains.....the patient and obedient Persians never thought of rebelling while being oppressed: did they care about the fate of their master? The revolution (*peremena*) that put Darius's crown on the head of Alexander was no change for the state – it retained its position.¹⁵

At the same time, “change” could also act as a synonym for reform. In this sense, the concepts of “reform” and “revolution” under the Ancien Régime turned out not only to be close to each other, but also related in several meanings. In Mably’s *Entretiens de Phocion* (1763; Russian translation 1772) one can read the following statement, as translated by Peter Kurbatov:

And when society has different needs according to time and location; when new circumstances and change (*peremena*) often render the people very different, therefore should not the main focus of politics be to vary its principles and course?¹⁶

Note that here the word “change” (*peremena*) is used to translate the French “révolution”, at this point signifying “the cycle of change”, conveying Mably’s sense that political changes are necessary in an evolving and varying society.

Alongside the term “transformation”, the noun *preobrazitel’* (transformer) appears in the Russian language during the second half of the eighteenth century, being primarily used as a calque to convey the French word *réformateur*. Hence if in the middle of the eighteenth century *réformateur des mœurs* was translated into Russian as “corrector of morals” (*ispravitel’ nra-vo*), by the time of the second edition of the *Academic Dictionary* (1822) this widely used expression becomes “transformer of morals” (*preobrazitel’ nra-vo*); it also being explained that *preobrazitel’* refers to the person “who transformed and changed something into another image, form”.¹⁷ Ivan Golikov, who collected material on Peter I for many years, published in 1788 his multivolume work under the title *The Great Deeds of Peter the Great, The Wise Transformer (preobrazitel’) of Russia*.¹⁸ The term *preobrazitel’* used in the title was however still so rarely used in the Russian language that Golikov rarely uses it; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it was increasingly in use.

Seeking equivalents of *réforme* and *réformateur*, Russian translators used complex constructions that suggested to the reader the meaning of these expressions. Alletz’s 1769 historical dictionary of monarchs refers to Peter the Great: “Le Czar délivré des inquiétudes de la guerre, se livra tout entier à la réforme de son Empire pendant les années suivantes”. This was translated as follows: “Freed of the concerns of war, Peter’s sole concern remained caring for common good (*nazidanie ob obcshem blage*) in his Empire”.¹⁹ The translator does not directly translate the word “réforme”, but gives a semantic translation – “caring for common good”, while following the meaning quite accurately – the “reform” enacted in this period was aimed at achieving *obshcheye blago* (the public good). This is how Catherine II understood her activities, this is what “reformers” or “enlightened despots” had in view as the purpose of “correction”/“reforms”/“improvement” in Europe and Russia during this era.

At this time, the Russian word *ispravlenie* (improvement) was also used to translate the concept “police”. In the case of “police” there was the same

orientation, because the goal of “good police” (*blagochinie*) was to correct manners and morals, to establish good order, to improve and maintain order in the city. This understanding of *ispravlenie* directly relates to the ideas of German cameralists, primarily the treatises by Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi (*Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten*, 1760–1761) and Joseph von Sonnenfels (*Grundsätze der Polizey-, Handlungs- und Finanzwissenschaft*, 3rd ed., 1777), which were also translated into Russian at this time.²⁰

Thus the words “reform”, “reformation” and “reformer”, phonetically transcribed from European languages, were practically absent from the vocabulary of eighteenth-century Russian. To translate these terms and to lend them meaning, the words *ispravlenie* (correction or improvement), *ispravitel'* (corrector or improver) and the corresponding verb *ispravlyat'* (to correct, to improve) were primarily used. The nouns *ponovlenie* (renewal), *peremena* (change), *preobrazovanie* (transformation) and derived verbs were used much less frequently. Semantically these terms remained practically unchanged throughout the century. They designated the meanings linked with the concept *ispravnyi* (proper, correct, serviceable). *Ispravnyi* means meeting any requirement, error-free, true, accurate, correct. *Neispravnyi* is something that has lost this status and should be corrected. Hence *ispravlenie* (correction, improvement) is an action aimed at restoring, returning to a good state.

Most often during this era, when speaking of correction concerning people, it was the correction of morality, the spiritual correction of the personality and the improvement of social morals and manners that was meant. This concept of correction was gradually transferred to the political sphere. During the time of Peter the Great “correction” or “improvement” was used to denote the tsar’s actions, those actions that would be later called “reforms”. Feofan Prokopovich, listing Peter’s deeds for the benefit of Russia, claimed:

He was the true Head of his Country, not by Sovereignty only, but by his Deeds: for as the Head diffuses those enlivening Juices of the Brain, and as they are call'd, the vital Spirits, through all the Members, Limbs, and the whole Compages of the Body, so this most excellent and best of Princes labour'd to transfuse through all the Orders of his Kingdom, the Knowledge he had acquir'd by his own Industry and Study. And did he not indeed make vast Improvements (*ispravleniami*) by his Labours?²¹

This medical and at the same time mystical metaphor of the body politic²² connected the sovereign and his subjects for the improvement of the earthly kingdom. But did the Russian tsar and his contemporaries attribute to his “reforms” the meaning assumed by nineteenth-century historians? Did he and his contemporaries see these “reforms” as purely secular, forward-looking, innovative actions, a clear plan for changes in governance, introducing new institutions and a system of relationships that would improve the life of the whole society?

Renovatio and Improvements, 1700–1740

In eighteenth-century Russia there were two main political ideas involving reform as social “correction”: religious-mystical and instrumental. The first of these concepts became the Christian theory of royal power and bore the imprint of a political theology created in ancient Rome. It was embodied in the emperor’s imitation of Christ (*Christomimetes*); the second was associated with an even more ancient cosmological and eschatological tradition of “renovation” (*renovatio*), seen as a return to the correct sources for existence.²³

The idea that prevailed in most traditional cultures treats renewal as a return: everything negative is a product of modernity, only the past incarnates the correct order; all “disorders” and deterioration are the properties of modern times which destroy the rightful structure, consequent on the deterioration of the human morals. The mythological idea of a bygone “golden age” and the dominance in the present of a destructive “iron” age is part of an ancient European heritage. In this sense, only through returning to an older order could what had been lost be regained.

A common metaphor for any early modern political entity (*state, republic, society*) was a building, a house, a structure erected in the past and since undergoing the blows of a merciless time.²⁴ A properly constructed new house withstands the challenges of fate for a long time, but wind and rain eventually destroy its walls, the foundation subsides, the roof rots, and eventually the house has to be restored or renovated: it needs to be reformed. Like a building, the state suffers from time and the collapse of morals, deteriorating under the blows of evils and temptations. The task of the ruler (or government) is to detect the beginning of such deterioration and protect the state from the blows of moral bad weather, periodically renovating or restoring the state – in this sense, renewal is always restoration and people of the early modern era saw no contradiction between these concepts. At the same time, the architect (that is, the ruler) should not destroy the building and erect a new one, or rebuild it beyond recognition; his goal is only to renew it, thus, to reform. In particular, this metaphor is used by Cardinal Richelieu in his “Political Testament” for Louis XIII – even the visible shortcomings or disorders of the state building finally serve its stability, and therefore they must be protected when carrying out reforms:

Disorders that were established by political necessity and reason of state must be reformed over time. For this, the people’s minds should be gradually prepared, and not go from one extreme to another. An architect who perfectly masters his art and corrects the errors of an old building, and brings it into a suitable symmetry without destroying it, deserves greater praise than one who, having pulled everything down to the ground, erects a perfect and finished structure anew.²⁵

Richelieu's "political testament" was well known in eighteenth-century Russia; the book was translated into Russian twice, in 1725 and 1766.²⁶ Richelieu himself was considered by Peter the Great to be an exemplary statesman. As Voltaire reported during Peter's visit to Paris in 1717, he visited the cardinal's grave and exclaimed: "The Great man! I would give you one half of my land so you could teach me how to rule the other half."²⁷

As already noted, during the era of Peter the Great Russia lacked the equivalent of the modern political concept of "reform". Peter did not explain the term *ispravlenie* (correction, improvement) in his legislation until the beginning of the 1720s. Mostly during this time the concept of *ispravlenie* was used by the church hierarchy to describe religious renewal, changes in Christian life, restoration of spiritual perfection, and finally, fulfilment of their duties. The *okruzhnoe poslanie* (circular letter) of Patriarch Adrian, frequently cited by church leaders, reflected this sense:

The priest should be a reverent teacher, not a blasphemer, not a swearing talker, not a proud, angry and cold-hearted one, not a drunkard, not a murmur or a rebel, and not dare to be a sinner, but correct (*ispravlyat'*) all this in the spirit of meekness.²⁸

"To correct" means a pastoral struggle with the sins and "spiritual ailments" of the flock, being a role model like the apostles had been, as Metropolitan Job writes to Stephen Yavorsky:

I am glad to hear about your spiritual reforms (*ispravleniah*) and care for the common good and salvation of the Church, in this you are like the new Paul, always following the evangelical path.²⁹

At first glance, this moral understanding of correction has nothing to do with the idea of political "reform" in this era. Probably the first mention of *ispravlenie* (correction) as social reform is seen in Peter I's manifesto of January 25, 1721 on the creation of a Spiritual Collegium (Synod) to govern the Russian church, which preceded the publication of *Duhovnyi Reglament* (Spiritual Regulations). Very often, it is seen by historians as a statement of the reformer's political programme:

Amongst the many Cares which the Empire committed to Us by God, requires for the good Government of our Hereditary Kingdoms and Conquests, casting our Eye on the Spiritual Order, and observing in them great Irregularity, and a great Defect in their Proceedings; We should indeed be afflicted in Our Conscience, and have too just Cause to fear lest We appear to be guilty of Ingratitude to the most High, If, after by his gracious Assistance We have happily succeeded in a Regulation (*v ispravlenii*) both Military and Civil, We should neglect the Regulation of the Spiritual Order: And lest when the impartial Judge

shall require of Us an Account for the vast Trust he hath reposed in Us, We should not be able to give an Answer.

We should neglect the Regulation (*ispravlenie*) of the Spiritual Order.³⁰

However, if we read this text carefully we will not find anything new in comparison with the traditional Christian comprehension of “reform”, seen as the duty of the Christian monarch, who acts as *podobie* (icon) and personification of God on earth, striving to renew his subjects in preparation for the Kingdom of heaven. In the same manifesto Peter explicitly declares that he acts “after the Example (*podobiem*) of former religious Kings, recited in the Old and New Testaments, having taken upon Us the Care of the Regulation (*ispravlenii*) of the Clergy, and Spiritual Order”.³¹ In this sense, Peter’s constant use in his laws and letters of the phrases “Our people” and “the people entrusted to Us” (by God) becomes understandable. It is always about the king’s dealing with his people, about his personally responsibility before the Lord for the maintenance and correction of the people entrusted to him. In Russia, the legacy of the Byzantine theory of the Christian “kingdom” (*Basilieia*) was evident in the conception of Eusebius of Caesarea that the ruler “who wants to be a true king must first of all reform himself as man”.³² Contemporaries viewed Peter as a self-created person. Being a semi-educated and unskilful prince, he had educated himself, become a carpenter (outward likening to Jesus Christ the Saviour), a ship builder (likened to Noah, who saved mankind from the flood), the architect of the temple (*hramina*) and defender of justice (like Solomon).³³

The myth of renovation (*renovatio*) was constantly used by panegyrists and Peter’s eighteenth-century biographers.³⁴ However, this inevitably raised the question of the Christian monarch’s duty to the people entrusted to him for, in imitation of God, the earthly sovereign had to strive to correct his subjects. This concept of *Christomimesis* (imitation of Christ) had become the basis of Russian Orthodox political theology and suggested a way of *ispravlenie* (improvement):

Just as the Saviour orders the supernatural Kingdom for His Father, so the emperor makes his subjects on earth fit for it; just as the one opens the doors of the Father’s Kingdom to those who leave this world, so the other after having purged this terrestrial kingdom of godless error calls all pious men into the mansions of the empire (εισω βασιλικῶν οἰκῶν).³⁵

In many ways this political theology determined Peter’s actions. Focused on a secular comprehension of Peter’s activities, traditional historical writings supposed that Peter, like all Russian monarchs of the eighteenth century, was moving towards a secular state and used his reforming activities as a way to legitimise unlimited power aimed at the “common good”. Summarising this trend, Cynthia Whittaker states:

Although paternalistic, Peter had no use for the Muscovite patriarchal-*votchina* realm. He broke the identification of the person of the tsar with the state and insisted that the populace take two separate oaths, one to the ruler and one to the state.... By affirming the right pick his own successor, Peter disparaged the traditional dynastic or genetic basis of rule in the same way that he tried to disclaim edenic, theological associations. Among the populace, of course, these older views of a Saint-Prince or Orthodox Tsar persisted or, better said, coexisted. Thus, Peter's justification for power, the telic criterion of the common good, only strengthened the autocracy by adding yet another source of legitimacy.³⁶

Today almost all of these statements seem anachronistic. Since the 1980s historians have begun to revise this approach, noting that both Peter and his successors retained the religious concept of power and understanding of reform. Stefan Baehr argued that "during the secularisation of Russian culture in the last third of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century" it remains relevant "to portray the tsar and his Russia as a 'political icon' of the heavenly world". This indicated that "a medieval modeling system during a period of modernisation and a church structure during a period of secularisation reflects the fact that Russia's Byzantine and Orthodox heritage remained very much alive after Peter the Great."³⁷ Ernest Zitser comes to a similar conclusion, demonstrating that behind the "sacred parodies" of the All-Joking and All-Drunken Synod, organised by Peter I,

lay not a mission to secularise Muscovy, but rather a belief in the divine gift of grace (charisma) reputedly possessed by Peter Alekseevich, the man whom royal panegyrists hailed as Russia's 'God and Christ', since its organisers, immersed in the religious culture of their time, simply did not have an alternative worldview and were unfamiliar with secular concepts of power.³⁸

Donald Ostrovsky also shows that the gap between the Muscovite past and Peter's Russia is not entirely obvious, "Russia remained more traditional than modern even after Peter's reign"; social and economic patterns, as well as political ones, persisted for a long time.³⁹

It is significant that Cynthia Whittaker cites the case of Tsarevich Alexei as an example of Peter's secular behaviour: "Peter even sacrificed his own son to the state since he could not be expected to continue his father's reforms".⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in the published case of Tsarevitch Alexei,⁴¹ everything is permeated by the biblical justification of the father's and master's behaviour towards the disobedient son and slave, likened to Absalom.⁴² In his 1718 treatise the German political writer and historian Gottlieb Samuel Treuer describes Peter's transformations as acts aimed at glorifying the greatness of the state as the personal possession of an absolute monarch.

The opposition of the new and the old is considered from the perspective of what is useful and useless for this monarch's patrimony; all that is associated with superstition and past delusions, that has lost all utility and can lead to destruction of the sovereign's power (*gosudarstvo*), must be rejected. Adherence to such antiquity is a delusion, and if the heir to the throne cannot be convinced, it is necessary to choose another heir:

The father of this son bestowed on him constant love; he used thousands of ways to eradicate from his heart an attraction towards his people's old habits, but since this was all in vain, he foresaw the future ruin of his empire.⁴³

This logic is followed by Archbishop Feofan Prokopovich in his *The Justice of the Monarch's Right to Appoint the Heir to his Throne* – an official commentary on the law of Imperial succession (1722).⁴⁴ Feofan describes the intentions of the tsar:

our Lawgiver and Sovereign, as a true Father of his Country, who, in his great zeal for the country, has thought little of his own great pains and efforts not only to preserve it, but also to expand it greatly; and to strengthen it with civil and military improvements (*ispravlenii*), and with the bastion of improvement (*ispravlenii*), namely, with most excellent statutes and laws...⁴⁵

Peter strengthens and expands his hereditary patrimony as a caring lord and ruler, correcting his lands, household and slaves, and borrowing useful things from foreign countries. An attraction towards the people's old habits is not an adherence to the truth, but rather to ingrained delusions. The truth is also rooted in the past. It is not by chance that Feofan uses biblical and historical evidence and examples from the past to justify the right of the monarch to depose his unworthy heir and appoint a new one. The new norm of succession is justified not on account of its novelty, but due to the "invention of tradition", rooting this norm in the past.⁴⁶ At the same time, from Feofan's viewpoint the norm itself is rational, its requirements are reasonable, but this is clearly not enough for him to justify "innovation". It has to be shown that it is not an innovation, but has always been natural for "regular nations".

This explanatory model can be transferred to all Peter's "reforms". The improvements that Peter implemented in Russia appear not to be a system of thoughtful reforms as in the understanding of the nineteenth century; in fact, Vasily Klyuchevsky pointed out long ago the absence of any reform plan associated with Peter the Great.⁴⁷ These are genuine improvements aimed at solving specific problems, fixing a crumbling "temple", or rebuilding it according to old patterns borrowed from the European "regular nations" who had built something worthy of imitation in the past, thanks to their thinking and experience. This new temple was built by Peter according to old European patterns. And this novelty is also rooted in the past. Peter was an

improver of his patrimonial estate (realm), in Antioch Kantemir's words – “a tsar taking care of his household” (*tsar domostroynyi*),⁴⁸ and an ambitious ruler who tried to expand and consolidate the position of his dynastic empire.

From the second half of the nineteenth century historians interpreted Peter and his successors as rational reformers, driven by the conception of reform advantageous to a modern impersonal state. But the very idea of such a state was formed no earlier than the time of the French Revolution. Claudio S. Ingerflom has argued that the Petrine vision of his power was remarkable both for its religious and patrimonial features and in its representation of power as inherently personal.⁴⁹ Peter I was focused upon the Byzantine and Muscovite tradition of monarchical duty and the religious-mystical understanding of “reform”. It has been shown that there was not a single Western European early modern political treatise (Machiavelli, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke) in his otherwise comprehensive library;⁵⁰ but there was a translation of the Byzantine “Mirror of Princes” – a book by Agapetus Diakonos, *Horatory Chapters*.⁵¹ Agapetus claimed that “if the king became like God, then his subjects would be re-formed in the image and likeness of their king”.⁵²

Contemporaries and close descendants did not regard Peter as a reformer in the modern political sense. Comments that appeared immediately after his death, both in Russia and abroad, associated his activities with the demiurge, who does not restore the old but creates something new and unprecedented. Peter is equal to God because he created a new Russia from nothing, as Chancellor Gavriil Golovkin said when in 1721 petitioning Peter to agree to the title of Emperor: Peter created his realm “from nothingness into being”.⁵³ This is not reform, nor is it restoration: it is creation. In his 1725 “Elegy for the Death of Peter the Great”, Vasily Trediakovsky puts the following description of Peter into the mouth of mournful Pallas:

... Peter was the keeper of wisdom,
A new creator (*sotvoritel'*) of his state.⁵⁴

Independently following the same position, Bernard de Fontenelle declares in his *Éloge du Czar Pierre I* that there was no previous correct form to return to, it just didn't exist; for Peter it was necessary to build everything from nothing:

Then the great plan that he had designed was revealed in all its scope. Everything had to be done anew in Muscovy, there was nothing to improve. This was the creation of a new nation, and it was necessary to act alone, without help, without tools.⁵⁵

Therefore Peter's deeds are rarely called reforms at this time;⁵⁶ they represented a “general change” (*le changement general*), which meant that Russia was changed by Peter for the better, improved, as Friedrich Christian Weber writes in the preface to his book: «Rußland seit einigen zwanzig Jahren ganz verwandelt und verändert sey». ⁵⁷ In conformity with the terminology

of this epoch, Peter arranged “revolutions” (*les revolutions*) in his state – in the plural, since there were changes made in different areas.⁵⁸ In his *Éloge*, Fontenelle uses the term “réforme” only once, linked with the corrections of the Orthodox Church and the religious life of subjects.⁵⁹ In the preface to French translation of “Das Veränderte Russland”, the publisher used the verb “réformer” in the sense of to correct, to eliminate abuses, to improve.⁶⁰

Therefore Ernest Zitser is right to state that “both ‘reform’ and ‘revolution’, in the sense in which they are conventionally used, are anachronisms that would have very little meaning for actors in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Russia”; Peter’s activity can be understood only through language of his time; his “reforms”, aimed at improving his kingdom, were not substantially modern, but rather were caused by “his sense of divine election for his imperial vocation and his unswerving belief ... that he was predestined for greatness”.⁶¹

Re-form, Manners and Laws, 1740–1790

Peter the Great is therefore seen as the creator of a new flourishing Russia, but his deeds remained unfulfilled; the “temple” (*hramina*), as Peter metaphorically called his renewed Russia, remained unfinished. To a greater or lesser extent his successors legitimated their powers and actions by appealing to his legacy, his great deeds for the renovation of Russia. This was especially true for the reign of two empresses – Elizabeth Petrovna (1741–1761) and Catherine II (1762–1796) – who both came to power through usurpation, on the bayonets of the palace guards; who overthrew the legitimate sovereigns to whom both empresses had previously sworn loyalty. The idea of restoration, a return to the true principles of Peter the Great, was used to justify these “revolutions”. During their reigns reforms began to be interpreted as the restoration of political institutions and principles of state administration first established by Peter I.⁶² However, like any restoration, the actions of Elizabeth I and Catherine II was a work of innovation, since they and their entourage interpreted Peter’s thoughts in a manner beneficial for them. They attributed new meanings to old ideas.

The accession of Elizabeth Petrovna to the throne in November 1741 involved the restoration of her father’s sacred cult. Thousands of copies of sermons were printed at the behest of the Empress, numerous court preachers reminded Elizabeth’s subjects of Peter’s merits, and that his daughter had regained a throne unjustly taken from her.⁶³ At the same time, Elizabeth presented herself not only as the heiress of Peter by “blood”, but also as the continuer of his great deeds. This is how Stephen Kalinovskiy sees the resurrected Peter in Elizabeth:

Elizabeth is not just a daughter of Peter, but a daughter filled with the spirit of her father, so when she ascended the All-Russian throne it is necessary to remember, listeners, that it was Peter who rose from the

dead, that it was Peter who ascended to his throne, it is necessary to think that it is Peter who commands, governs, conquers.⁶⁴

This comparison directly refers us to a mimetic interpretation of the Orthodox monarch, resurrected like Christ. Commenting in a sermon before the Empress on the phrase “Jesus has come to his city” (Matt. 9: 1), Evstaphiy Mogilyanskiy asked the question “what do we mean by this ‘city’?”. Having examined the positions of the church fathers, he came to the conclusion that “the souls of the faithful [to God] accept the city of God in themselves”, but Christ is its true incarnation, and Empress Elizabeth “invincible in faith and love for God” became like Christ himself, she appears as the “Humble Nazarene” in Russia, the embodiment of the City of heaven.⁶⁵ Ioanniky Skabovsky equally sees a manifestation of God’s will in the actions of Peter and his daughter: “God, who worked in Peter, also works in Petrovna”.⁶⁶

At the same time the *ispravlenie* (correction) is interpreted by Elizabethan preachers within the framework of court piety. This idea was fully expressed in the sermon of Bishop Markell Rodyshevskiy on March 28, 1742. Glorifying Elizabeth as the incarnation of Christ, as well “doing beneficence” (Luke 24: 114), the bishop addressed the audience, discovering, on the one hand, the duty of the monarch (“minister of God”) to demonstrate the image of God on earth for his subjects, and the duty of subjects to follow the example of the monarch on the path of correction (*ispravlenie*):

And Christ suffered for us..., he left an image (*obraz*) for us, so let us follow his footsteps, as well as the ministers of God, chosen by God on earth and established by his will, not for their own sake do they keep and fulfil God’s commands... but more for the people, for the sake of the people, showing an encouraging example: so that they also do more of this and remain in the fear of God, and in any subjugation, and not in godless opposition.⁶⁷

On the other hand, the monarch’s duty is to punish subjects who do not follow the example set by his sovereign, who do not want to change their lives according to the precepts of Christ:

The master acts, but the slave does not want for anything, the master labours and the slave is in a state of bliss and self-will, the master strives, and the slave is lazy... Moreover, the Monarch carries a sword, according to the great Apostle, and can take revenge on you fiercely, but is still waiting for your correction (*ispravleniay*) and repentance, you play with fire, you fight with the lion, beware – this meekness will turn into anger, and the judgment will be impartial.

Markell diligently lists many examples of Elizabeth’s Christian piety, her following all Christian sacraments and rituals. He views the Empress as the

veritable image of God – “your resurrector from the dead”, “an imitator of Christ” and “his glorious faithful and benevolent minister”. Thus, spiritual improvement (*ispravlenie*) is the most important act of the earthly monarch, and the deeds of the “pious new [Saint] Helen of Russia”, who intends to expel blasphemers and heretics, eradicate “heretical poison” and publish Orthodox books, are viewed by Markel as a true “reform”.⁶⁸

However, Elizabeth reveals herself not only in moral correction, returning to the institutions and laws of her father; she also restores the previous order by means of *re-forme*, returning to their previous form the old institutions that had been undermined in previous reigns. Rejecting the changes of those who had ruled since her father, Elizabeth solemnly proclaimed in her decree on December 12, 1742:

We noticed that the order of internal state affairs completely differs from that under Our Father... giving rise to much neglect in internal government affairs of any level, and justice has already become very weak... And because of this, to end the disturbance to governance that has occurred up to the present, we order..., that the decrees and regulations [of Peter I] be restored, and that all affairs shall be governed in strict accordance with them – in all governments of Our State.⁶⁹

Further, she ordered the cancellation and withdrawal of all decrees made by previous monarchs that “are not similar to the current state of time and are harmful to the benefit of the state”, while the criterion of any benefit is compliance with the decrees of Peter I. For Elizabeth, the return to the conditions of her father is essentially conservative and traditional – this means the restoration of a true order trampled by corrupted rulers – “villains” during the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna (1730–1740). For Elizabeth, “reform” appears in its true eighteenth-century meaning. It is not an innovation, but adherence to the old order, a return to the “proper” and rejection of the “faulty”.

However, in the 1750s, new trends in understanding of the term *ispravlenie* emerged. It turned out that to restore order in the empire it was not enough to return to the laws and institutions of Peter the Great; constant complaints of subjects regarding unfair trials and a lack of clear and consistent legislation forced the empress to state in the Senate on March 11, 1754 that: “primarily, before any other matters, it is necessary to create clear laws and to start this immediately... because manners and customs change over time, that is why a change in laws is also necessary”.⁷⁰ During the previous 12 years, the Empress had changed her attitude towards correcting laws. Instead of returning to the old ones, she now demanded new laws; but interestingly, there is here an echo of Montesquieu’s ideas about the interrelation of manners and laws. Christof Dipper suggests that an important change in the understanding of “reform” in France took place due to Montesquieu, such that reform became seen as an adaptation of political circumstances

to changed temporal conditions. Monarchs must constantly acknowledge these changing circumstances and reform their country. At the same time, for Montesquieu reform is “a cautious, almost imperceptible process concerning group psyche, aimed at “mœurs et manières”.”⁷¹

Montesquieu stated that

...when a prince wished to make great changes in his nation, it was necessary to reform by laws that which was established by laws, and that he change by manners that which was established by manners; and it is very bad policy to change by laws that which must be changed by manners.⁷²

He cited Peter I as an example of such bad policy:

The law that obliged Muscovites to cut their beards and shorten their clothes, and the violence of Peter I, which limited to the knee the long cloaks of those who entered the towns, was tyrannical. ... Peter I, lending the customs and manners of Europe to one European nation, found this easier than he had anticipated. The empire of climate is the first among all empires. He therefore had no need for laws to change the customs and manners of his nation; it was sufficient to be inspired by other customs and other manners.⁷³

Catherine II had read Montesquieu’s treatise carefully, and Elizabeth seems to have learned about it from her favourite Ivan Shuvalov, an admirer of the French Enlightenment. For correction, it was not enough to return to past correct regulations – new laws were needed, since the subjects and their morals have changed. Unpolished and uneducated under Peter I, they now became civilised and needed other laws. This idea of a nation’s historical development was a new idea for the statesmen of this era, and made them think about the impossibility of drafting universal legislation that would remain forever afterwards unchanged.

This idea is also clearly present in the February 18, 1762 Manifesto on the Nobility’s Liberties, promulgated by Peter III (1761–1762), rendering the Russian nobility exempted from compulsory life-long service. On behalf of the emperor it was stated that nobles had the right to choose either to serve or not because now, thanks to the laws of Peter the Great, there was widespread education and correct manners:

We gladly note... [that] manners have been improved; knowledge has replaced illiteracy... noble thoughts have penetrated the hearts of all true Russian patriots who have revealed toward Us their unlimited devotion, love, zeal, and fervour. Because of all these reasons We judge it to be no longer necessary to compel nobles into service, as has been the practice hitherto.⁷⁴

That is, the change in the manners of the nobility led to the need to grant new rights and broad privileges to subjects.

The same idea, that first we need a moral transformation, and then change in laws will follow, was shared by the wife of Peter III, who removed her husband from the throne in June 1762 and had to legitimate her long reign through her great deeds for the “common good” of her loyal subjects. Like Elizabeth, Catherine II used the image of Peter the Great, she also declares a return to his institutions and laws;⁷⁵ she told the Prince de Ligne that she always mentally asked the question – what Peter the Great “would have done, if he were in my place?”⁷⁶ However, for Catherine II the idea was not to return to Peter’s principles, but to Montesquieu’s idea of a gradual correction of morals, later followed by innovations in legislation.

We are already familiar with Panin’s remarks about “changes”. It should be noted that Catherine II generally shared this position of her first minister. In the 1780s, reviewing her time on the throne in letters to Melchior Grimm, she never used the word reform or transformation, speaking only of corrections and improvements, or new institutions created by her to strengthen the existing order. For example, in 1787, having learnt about the *Assemblée des notables* in France, she remembered her Legislative Commission (1767–1768), and described her goals in the following way:

... my assembly of deputies turned out to be successful, because I told them: There these are my principles. Now please tell me your complaints. Where do your shoes pinch? Well, let us put that right. I have no kind of system; I want only the common good, it is my own.⁷⁷

The metaphor of the tight shoe is not accidental; the sovereign must improve the existing shoes, but not offer new shoes instead of old ones every time. In this sense Catherine II defined herself as an improver. In her *Instructions (Nakaz) to the Legislative Commission* she argued, for example, that “A great Number of Slaves ought not to be in-franchised [i.e. emancipated] all at once, nor by a general Law” (article 260); first it is necessary to provide serfs with property and establish precise standards for work and wages (261, 270), then accustom landlords to the idea that free peasants will be more interested in increasing the productivity of their land and household, and therefore will bring more income to landowners and the state (295–297). And then, in future, it might be assumed that landowners, on the basis of personal agreements with peasants, would be able to free them.⁷⁸ Liberation would be a private matter for landowners and peasants, the sovereign need only create the conditions for gradual changes and a movement towards this goal. After Denis Diderot’s death, having learnt about his harsh remarks about her *Instructions (Nakaz)*, the Empress wrote to Grimm:

... if my *Instruction* was to Diderot’s taste it would turn everything upside down. However I maintain that my *Instruction* was not only good,

but perfect and well suited to the circumstances, because in the eighteen years it has existed not only has it done no harm at all, but also that all the good that it produced and that is generally recognised comes from the principles established by this *Instruction*.⁷⁹

According to Catherine, the monarch-legislator should create laws that correspond to existing circumstances, but not make drastic and total changes. “Changes are harmful to the state”, Catherine could repeat after Count Panin.

During Catherine’s era, the image of Peter I serves as an ideal statesman, for both Catherine II and those of her critics who were sceptical of her “improvements”. In particular, criticism of Catherine’s actions was expressed in the 1780s by Nikita Panin and his court party which, in addition to his relatives (Panins, Kurakins, Repnins), included Panin’s secretary, a talented dramatist and writer, Denis Fonvizin. Describing the intellectual position of the “reformer” Panin and his group, David Rancel identified it precisely with the term *starodumstvo* (literary “old-thought”, more precisely “old-fashioned moral virtue”), after the main character in the Fonvizin comedy *Nederosl’* (*The Minor*, 1782) – *Starodum* (Old-thinker). Reporting the basic ideals of *starodumstvo*, Rancel says:

Since the monarch and his court set the tone for society, corruption spread outward from the center.⁸⁰ After Peter’s death, *starodumstvo* implied, a general decline in moral values set in.... As a result, the state was turning into an unfeeling monster, trampling on honor, justice, and personal integrity in the interests of preserving the privileges of its crooked and unqualified agents.... Since these derived from the corrosive effects of absolute power, the monarch should understand that it was not only his duty but his interest to institute fundamental laws setting limits to the exercise of autocratic power. ... *starodumstvo* stayed strictly within the Enlightenment approach of persuasion, education, and gradualism. It placed the onus for reform on the monarch himself, appealing to him with a blend of arguments culled from Christian morality, natural law theory, and simple common sense, philosophically based in a kind of vulgar deism.⁸¹

Montesquieu’s idea of a relation between morals and the purpose of “reforms” becomes obvious in the comedy *The Minor*: people appear to be victims of their own vices, “because all human beings possessed the germ of evil”. This is the cause of *zlonravie* (bad “mœurs”), which is a consequence of lack of education, and education led the noble people to *blagonravie* (“honneur” in the sense of Montesquieu), but and the sovereign must correct these evils, and not necessarily with the help of laws and institutions. The dialogue of two positive characters in Fonvizin’s comedy demonstrates this:

Pravdin. Human misfortunes, of course, occur due to their own corruption; but the ways to make people kind...

Starodum. ...they are in the hands of the sovereign. Everyone sees that without good behaviour no one can climb the career ladder; that no seniority and no money can buy what is rewarded with merit; that people are chosen for positions, not positions stolen by people – then everyone sees the advantage of his good behaviour and everyone becomes good.⁸²

The monarch's purpose is to correct the morals of his subjects only through self-correction; so the monarch should be a role model for his subjects.⁸³ This is not much different from the theory of assimilation to Christ, only that the God-man image is replaced by the enlightened monarch, serving as a model of virtues. Indeed, Panin's ideals were rooted in the past, and the goals of his "reforms" were limited by the establishment of the power of the nobility – implying educated and well-bred aristocrats who were meant to rule the empire and maintain the administrative building. Therefore, Panin and his contemporaries cannot be regarded as reformers in the image of liberal enlightened bureaucrats of the nineteenth century; they had completely different goals, ideals and concepts.⁸⁴

The letter of Count Semyon Vorontsov to Fyodor Rostopchin reproduces Nikita Panin's typical attitude to reform 30 years later, after the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Brought up at the court of Elisabeth Petrovna, having lived most of his active life under Catherine II, Count Vorontsov in 1814 pinned all his hopes on the Emperor Alexander I, who, after the defeat of Napoleon, had to return to Russia and carry out reforms that Vorontsov presented not as the harmful innovations and inventions of his advisers, but as a return to the correct principles of Peter the Great. In this respect the old Russian aristocrat fully expressed the idea of a political reform as the restoration of the previous order, which he acquired in the middle of the eighteenth century:

It should be hoped that he [the Emperor] will feel that the time has come to restore order and establish justice in his own country, which will perish if he does not restore order and recover everything as it was from the moment the Senate was established by Peter the Great until the first year of the deceased Empress's reign [Catherine II]. She started to innovate; Her son [Paul I] turned everything upside down, not putting in place anything he had demolished; and her grandson [Alexander I] had the misfortune of being surrounded by figures who, full of pride and vanity, considered themselves superior to the great founder of the Russian Empire. These gentlemen began to work on poor Russia, and new laws were issued every day; these gentlemen have become law-making machines; they only did this, with the speed of their ignorance and frivolity. These prescriptions were based on hypothetical representations

of their imagination and on what they read but poorly understood; these were the experiments they wanted to do with poor Russia. They did not know that experiments are good only in physics and chemistry, but may turn fatal in jurisprudence, administration and political economy.⁸⁵

This quote proves that Semyon Vorontsov, calling for corrections and improvements in Russia, insisted on returning to the correct institutions of Peter I and refused to accept any innovations, which were seen as harmful. This statement precisely depicts the understanding of the “reform” in Russia in the eighteenth century. Sophisticated planning, divorced from life and experience, appears to be the unrealisable dreams of “projectors”. This cannot be regarded as a reform, since “reform” is the restoration of order, the correction of what is faulty, the improving of manners and morals, and only after this improving legislation; and thoughtful innovation always appears only as part of the caution renovation.

Conclusion

The rhetoric and practice of *ispravlenie* (correction, improvement) that existed in the eighteenth-century Russia had little in common with the modern concept of reform, formed in the middle of the nineteenth century. The traditional understanding of reform as (1) restoration of the old regular (*ispravnyi*) order, or (2) rising (through imitation) to the proper ideal model (whether it is the image of the God-man or the laws and manners of the “regular European nations”) – prevailed until the middle of the eighteenth century, when joined by (3) the concept of needful coherence of manners and laws, which requires the ruler to bring about constant changes due to the moral changes in his subjects over time. But in this new meaning reform can have a dual meaning: on the one hand, the sovereign is obliged to reform morals carefully, serving as an ideal model for his subjects and pursuing a policy aimed at encouraging the well-behaved and worthy ones; and on the other hand, the very change in manners should lead to the introduction of new legislation appropriate to the updated situation. However, such reform is always aimed at changing people’s behaviour and manners, not institutions, which are always secondary to people.

Russian historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could not therefore find any exact plan of institutional reforms, either from Peter I or from Catherine II, but they nevertheless treated them as reformers. But these “reforms” of the eighteenth century lacked any sense of the planning and systematisation with which progressive nineteenth-century reform was associated. Historians reconstructed the plans of Peter I and Catherine II according to their own frequently anachronistic conceptions of reform, designed according to the patterns of reformism of the nineteenth century.

In the eyes of his contemporaries, Peter the Great was not a reformer, but the *sotvoritel’* (creator) or *ustroitel’* (arranger, improver)⁸⁶ of a new kingdom,

following the models of the old European regular states, while his successors tried to restore the correct order that this *Pater Patriae* had established. Catherine II and her associates attempted to improve the morals and manners of their subjects, certain that “the legitimisation for being kind does not fit into any chapter of the *Ustav Blagochinia* (Police Ordinance)”; they acted slowly and cautiously, primarily focused upon administrative and estate legislation. In this respect they saw themselves first of all as “reformers of morals”.

Notes

- 1 This study was completed within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University–Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2022.
- 2 Nikita Ivanovich Panin to Catherine II, 1762, Nauchno-issledovatel'skii arkhiv Sankt-Peterburgskogo Instituta Istorii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk (NIA SPbII RAN), f. 36, op. 1, d. 400, 179v–180r.
- 3 See Eike Wolgast, “Reform, Reformation”, in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 5 (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1984), 313–60; Neithard Bulst, Jörg Fisch, Reinhart Koselleck, Christian Meier, “Revolution, Rebellion, Aufruhr, Bürgerkrieg”, in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* 5, 653–788; Christof Dipper “Réforme”, in Rolf Reichardt, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Jörn Leonhard, eds., *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820*, Heft 19–20 (München: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 115–40; and the chapter in this volume by Keith Tribe.
- 4 Sergey Solovyev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneyshikh vremen*, Vols. 1–29 (Moskva: universitetskoy tipografii, 1851–1879); Sergey Solovyev, *Publichnyye chteniya o Petre Velikom* (Moskva: v universitetskoy tipografii, 1872).
- 5 Timofey Nikolaevich Granovsky, *Lektsii po istorii Srednevekovia* (Moskva: Nauka, 1987), 55; Nikolay Yakovlevich Danilevsky, *Rossiya i Evropa* (Sankt-Peterburg: Obshchestvennaya polza, 1871), 279.
- 6 Vasilij Klyuchevskiy, *Kurs russkoy istorii*, Vol. 3 (Moskva: Lissnera i Sobko, 1916); Pavel Nikolayevich Milyukov, *Gosudarstvennoye khozyaystvo Rossii v pervoy chetverti XVIII stoletiya i reforma Petra Velikogo* (Sankt-Peterburg: Balasheva, 1892).
- 7 See e.g. Boris Rybakov, *Kievskaya Rus' i russkie kn'azhestva XII–XIII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 363–67; Alexander Zimin, *Reformy Ivana Groznogo* (Moscow: Sotsgiz, 1960).
- 8 Natan Eydelman, *Revolutsiya sverkh v Rossii* (Moscow: Kniga, 1989); Alfred Rieber, “The Reforming Tradition in Russian History”, in Alfred Rieber, A.Z. Rubinstein, eds., *Perestroika at the Crossroads* (New York: Sharpe, 1991), 3–28; Boris Anan'ich, ed., *Vlast' i reformy: Ot samoderzhavnoi k sovetskoy Rossii* (St. Petersburg: OLMA-press, 1996); Alexander Kamensky, *Ot Petra I do Pavla I: Reformy v Rossii XVIII veka* (Moscow: RGGU, 2001).
- 9 See Mihail Krom, “Religiozno-nravstvennoye obosnovaniye administrativnykh preobrazovaniy v Rossii XVI v.”, in Ludwig Steindorff, ed., *Religion und Integration im Moskauer Russland: Konzepte und Praktiken, Potentiale und Grenzen 14.–17. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 49–64; Mihail Krom, Lyudmila Pimenova, eds., *Fenomen reform na zapade i vostokey Evropy v nachale Novogo vremeni (XVI–XVIII vv.): sbornik statey* (Sankt-Peterburg: Evropeyskiy universitet, 2013); Mayya Lavrinovich, “Reformy rannego Novogo vremeni kak model i kak istoriograficheskiy konstrukt”, *Rossiyskaya istoriya* 4 (2014): 4–9;

- Mikhail Kiselev, “K istorii diskursa reform v Rossii rannego Novogo vremeni”, *Rossiyskaya istoriya* 4 (2014): 23–29.
- 10 Nikolay Novikov, *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya* (Moscow; Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoye izdatelstvo khudozhestvennoy literatury, 1951), 614.
- 11 *Dictionnaire de L’Académie française, troisième édition* 2 (Paris: Bernard Brunet, 1762), 566–67; *Polnoy frantsuzskoy i rossiyskoy leksikon*, s poslednyago izdaniya leksikona Frantsuzskoy akademii na rossiyskoy yazyk perevedenny Sobraniyem uchenykh lyudey, Vol. 2 (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskaya tipografiya, 1786), 395.
- 12 *Polnoy frantsuzskoy i rossiyskoy leksikon*, Vol. 2, 395
- 13 *Ibid.*, 395.
- 14 For example, Mably declares that: “un peuple qui commence à se réformer, est capable d’exécuter de grandes choses, malgré les vices dont il n’a pu encore se corriger; mais un peuple qui dégénere et se corrompt, ne retire presque aucun avantage de vertu.” Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, *Observations sur les Grecs ou des causes de la prospérité et des malheur des Grecs* (Geneve, 1766), 145–46.
- 15 Alexander Radischev, *Polnoe sovranie sochineniy*, Vol. 2 (Moscow; Leningrad: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1941), 301; Mably, *Observations*, 226.
- 16 “Puisque la Société a, selon les lieux & les temps, des besoins différents; puisque de nouvelles circonstance & une révolution rendent souvent un peuple si différent de lui-même, la principale attention de la politique ne devoit-elle pas être de varier ses principes & sa conduite?” – Mably, *Entretiens de Phocion, sur la rapport de la morale avec la politique* (Amsterdam: Heideggurr, 1763), 18; Peter Kurbatov, trans., *Razgovory Fokionovy o skhodnosti nravoucheniya s politikoyu* (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1772), 21.
- 17 *Slovar Akademii Rossiyskoy, po azbuchnomu poryadku raspolozhenny*, Vol. 5 (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1822), 224–25.
- 18 Ivan Golikov, *Deyaniya Petra Velikago, mudrago preobrazitelya Rossii*, Vols. 1–12 (Moskva: Novikov, 1788–1789).
- 19 Pons Augustin Alletz, “Pierre le Grand, Czar de Russie”, in *Les princes célèbres qui ont régné dans le monde*, Vol. 4 (Paris: Delalain, 1769), 326; Petr Bogdanovich, trans., *Kratkoye opisaniye zhizni i slavykh del Petra Velikago pervago imperatora vsrossiyskago* (Sankt-Peterburg: Bogdanovich, 1788), 83.
- 20 Ivan Bogayevskiy, trans., *Osnovaniye sily i blagosostoyaniya tsarstv*, Vols. 1–4 (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1772–1778); Matvey Gavrilov, trans., *Iosifa Zonnenfelsa Nachalnyya osnovaniya politsii ili blagochiniya* (Moskva: Novikov, 1787). See Danila Raskov, “Cameratism in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Reform, Translations and Academic Mobility”, in Ere Nokkala, Nicholas B. Miller, eds., *Cameratism and the Enlightenment: Happiness, Governance, and Reform in Transnational Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2020), 274–301.
- 21 “An Oration in Praise of Peter the Great... by Theophanes, Arch-Bishop of Ple-skow and Narve” (June 29, 1725) in Thomas Consett, *The Present State and Regulations of the Church of Russia. Establish’d by the late Tsar’s royal edict* (London: Holt, 1729), 305; *Feofana Prokopovicha arkhiepiskopa Velikago Novagrada i Velikikh Luk... Slova i Rechi pouchitelnyye, pokhvalnyye i pozdravitelnyya*, Vol. 2 (Sankt-Peterburg: pri Sukhoputnom Shlyakhetskome Kadetskom korpuse, 1761), 148.
- 22 See Andreas Musolf, “Political metaphor and bodies politic”, in Ursula Okulska, Piotr Cap, eds., *Perspectives in Politics and Discourse* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2010), 23–42.
- 23 See Gerhart B. Ladner, *The Idea of Reform. Its Impact on Christian Thought and Action in the Age of the Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 7–36, 107–32; Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 5–25.

- 24 Among the most famous authors who used this building metaphor were Jean-Jacques Rousseau (“The Social Contract”, Book II, Chapter 8) and Immanuel Kant (“Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose”).
- 25 *Testament politique d’Armand du Plessis, Cardinal duc de Richelieu* (Amsterdam: Desbordes, 1688), 175–76. In Russian translation: *Testament Politicheskoy kardinala dyuka de Rishelio*, manuscript translation of 1725, Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (RGADA), f. 1274, d. 3166, 49; *Politicheskoye zaveshchaniye kardinala dyuka de Rishelye frantsuzskomu korolyu* (Moskva: pri Imperatorskom Moskovsom universite, 1766), 156.
- 26 The translation of 1725 was distributed in handwritten versions, nine manuscripts have survived in Russian archives. The second published translation went through two editions (1766 and 1788), which demonstrates its popularity.
- 27 Voltaire, *Les oeuvres completes de Voltaire*, Vol. 46 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1999), 78.
- 28 Grigoriy Esipov, *Raskolnichi dela XVIII stoletiya*, Vol. 2 (Sankt-Peterburg: Obshchestvennaya polza, 1863), 80–81.
- 29 Evgeniy Anisimov, ed., “*Moskva i Novgrad edina derzhava Bozhiya*”: *Novgorodskiy mitropolit Iov i ego peregovorki s kontsa XVII-nachala XVIII v.* (Novgorod: Novgorodskiy gosudarstvennyi universitet, 2009), 143.
- 30 The text was prepared by Theodosius Yanovsky and corrected by the tsar himself. *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii*, Vol. 6 (Sankt-Peterburg, 1831) (hereafter *PSZ*), no. 3718 (January 25, 1721). This is a translation by Consett, *The Present State*, 2.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 32 Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 109.
- 33 All these comparisons were endlessly used by his panegyrists in the eighteenth century. Petr Krekshin, among others, compared Peter with Solomon, and wrote: “Solomon did not know how to make great warships, frigates, boats, galleys with his own hands, he did not even see them, did not even hold a musket in his hands nor know anything about these things. Your Imperial Majesty was a skilled craftsman in all of the above, and could do every thing with his own hands, therefore it can be seen that Your Imperial Majesty was gifted with much wisdom from God himself, even more than Solomon, ... and if it did not come from God himself, it was impossible for all such knowledge and crafts to be learned in a life of one hundred years; but Your Imperial Majesty has learned everything in a very short time.” See Petr Krekshin, *Istoricheskoye rozyaskaniye o velichestve del Petra Velikogo* (1752), Otdel rukopisey Gosudarstvenno istoricheskogo muzeya (OR GIM), Uvarov’s collection of manuscripts, no. 434, 10r-10v.
- 34 See Stephen L. Baehr, “In the Re-Beginning: Rebirth, Renewal and ‘Renovatio’”, in Anthony G. Cross, ed., *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century: Proceedings of the II International Conference organized by the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1983), 152–66; Stephen L. Baehr, *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia. Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 41–64.
- 35 Ladner, *The Idea of Reform*, 121–22.
- 36 Cynthia H. Whittaker, “The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth-Century Russia”, *Slavic Review* 51 (1992): 85.
- 37 Stephen L. Baehr, “Regaining Paradise: The “Political icon” in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century Russia”, *Russian History* 11 (1984): 149.
- 38 Ernest A. Zitser, *The Transfigured Kingdom: Sacred Parody and Charismatic Authority at the Court of Peter the Great* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 169.

- 39 Donald Ostrowski, “The Façade of Legitimacy: Exchange of Power and Authority in Early Modern Russia”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44 (2002): 534–63; and his “The End of Muscovy: The Case for circa 1800”, *Slavic Review* 69 (2010): 426–38.
- 40 Whittaker, “The Reforming Tsar”, 84.
- 41 *Obyavleniye rozysknogo dela i suda po ukazu ego tsarskogo velichestva na tsarevicha Alekseya Petrovicha* (Sankt-Peterburg, 1718). This “*Obyavleniye rozysknogo dela i suda*” was translated into German and French and published in Europe in 1718.
- 42 Peter declared that Alexei had an intention that was “sacrilegious and similar to the example of Absalom”. See *Obyavleniye rozysknogo dela*, 40.
- 43 A Russian manuscript translation of Treuer’s dissertation was in the library of Peter I: [sine ind.], *Istiazanie po Natural’noy pravde, skol daleko obladatelskaya vlast rasprostrayetsya pervorodnogo svoeyego printsa ot naslediya derzhavstvovaniya vyklyuchit*, c. 1720, Otdel rukopisey Biblioteki Akademii nauk (OR BAN), manuscript no. 17.15.9, 29r. Passage from Gottlieb Samuel Treuer, *Untersuchung nach dem Recht der Natur, wie weit ein Fürst Macht habe, seinen erstgebohrnen Printzen von der Nachfolge in der Regierung auszuschliessen* (s.l., 1718), 20.
- 44 *Pravda voli monarshey vo opredelenii naslednika derzhavy svoey* (Sankt-Peterburg, 1722).
- 45 Antony Lentin, *Peter the Great: His Law on the Imperial Succession in Russia, 1722. The Official Commentary: Pravda Voli Monarshei* (Oxford: Headstart History, 1996), 135–37. Antony Lentin translate *ispravlenie* as a reform, but in a contemporary German translation this fragment translated as “Civil and Militair-Verbesserungen” – *Das Recht der Monarchen, in willkühriger Bestellung der Reichs-Folge* (Berlin: Ambrosius Haude, 1724), 2. *Verbesserung* conveys the meaning of the Russian *ispravlenie* much more accurately and is closer to the English word *improvement*. See also Christoph Schmidt, “Aufstieg und Fall der Fortschrittsidee in Rußland”, *Historische Zeitschrift* 263 (1996): 5, quotes another description of Peter written by Feofan Prokopovich (“die posthumen Lobrede auf Peter vom 29. Juni 1725”) in a contemporary German translation: “Er liebete sein Vaterland und wollte dasselbe verbessern ... Seine darunter angewandte Mühe hat auch reiche Früchte getragen. Denn alles, was in Rußland jezo floriret und uns ehemals unbekannt gewesen, ist durch ihn eingeführet worden. Ja was wir in besserer Kleidung, im freundlichen Umgange, in Mahlzeiten und andern Dingen als nützlich und wohlanständig angenommen, das haben wir ihm allein zu danken, dergestalt, daß wir jezo uns derjenigen Manieren schämen, deren wir uns ehemals berühmeten.”
- 46 See Sergey Polskoy, “‘Istyazaniye po naturalnoy pravde’: legitimatsiya nasiliya i stanovleniye ratsionalnogo politicheskogo yazyka v Rossii XVIII veka”, in Mihail Velizhev, Timur Atnashev, eds., *Kembridzhskaya shkola: teoriya i praktika intellektualnoy istorii* (Moskva: Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye, 2018), 429–41.
- 47 Klyuchevsky argued that: “At first sight his reforming activity seems to have had no definite plan, no system of consecutiveness, and, though eventually covering the structure of the State throughout, and affecting many sides of the national life, to have revised no sphere of government homogeneously or integrally”; “Peter, in becoming a reformer, did so only involuntarily, automatically, and unawares. The prime factor first introducing him to reform, and then permanently impelling him in the same direction, was the factor of war” – Vasilii Kluchevsky, *A History of Russia*, Vol. 4, trans. G.J. Hogarth (London: Dent and Sons, 1926), 59, 214. Paul Bushkovitch supposes that: “The case of Aleksei was the greatest spur to Peter’s reform in the history of the reign, greater even than the Northern War.” – Bushkovitch, *Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power, 1671–1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 425.

- 48 Antioh Kantemir, *Sobraniye stikhotvoreniy* (Leningrad: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1956), 241.
- 49 Claudio Sergio Ingerflom, "'Loyalty to the State' under Peter the Great? Return to the Sources and the Historicity of Concepts", in Philip Ross Bullock, Andy Byford, Claudio Nun-Ingerflom, Isabelle Ohayon, Maria Rubins, Anna Winestein, eds., *Loyalties, Solidarities and Identities in Russian Society, History and Culture* (London: SSEES, 2013), 18–19.
- 50 See Elizaveta Ivanovna Bobrova, ed., *Biblioteka Petra I: Ukazatel-spravochnik* (Leningrad: BAN, 1978). Judging from this description, it's clear that Peter preferred technical and reference works, rather than theoretical writings. At the same time, there were many religious books in Peter's library. Peter had the historical (but not political) writings of Pufendorf (nos. 655–56, 1414–17), and, importantly, D. Saavedra Fajardo's *Idea of a Christian Political Prince* (no. 193).
- 51 Bobrova, ed., *Biblioteka Petra I*, 57, no. 294; *Agapita diakona Glavizny pouchitelny* (Kiev: v Lavre Pecherskoy, 1628).
- 52 Baehr, *The Paradis Myth*, 17–18.
- 53 Cited in Zitser, *The Transfigured Kingdom*, 169. This phrase corresponds to the central prayer of the Orthodox liturgy, where it is said that God brought "everything from nothingness into being." See Viktor Zhivov, "Kul'turnye reformy v sisteme preobrazovaniya Petra I," in A. D. Koshelev, ed., *Iz istorii russkoi kul'tury*, Vol. 3 (Moskva: Yazyki russkoy kultury, 1996), 550.
- 54 Vasilii Trediakovskiy, *Izbrannyye proizvedeniya* (Moskva, Leningrad: Sovetskiy pisatel', 1963), 58.
- 55 *Éloge du Czar Pierre I. par M. de Fontenelle Prononcé à l'Assemblée Publique de l'Académie des Sciences, le 14 Novemb. 1725* (Paris: s.i., 1727), 14.
- 56 William Richardson, *Anecdotes of the Russian Empire: In a Series of Letters Written, a Few Years Ago, from St. Petersburg* (London, 1784), 177, did write of Peter's "great labour of reforming the Russians", but this usage itself was distinct from that of the later nineteenth century, as argued by Keith Tribe. Even in the 1820s, German literature treated Peter the Great as an "improver" (*Zarische Verbesserungen*): see Benjamin Bergmann, *Peter der Große als Mensch und Regent*, Vol. 1 (Königsberg, 1823), 386.
- 57 *Das Veränderte Russland: in welchem die ietzige Verfassung Des Geist- und Weltlichen Regiments* (Frankfurt: Nicolaus Förster, 1721), I. In the English translation, *The Present State of Russia*, Vol. 1 (London: Taylor, 1723), we read "Russia has been entirely reformed and changed", while in the French, this place is translated "l'Empire Russien a changé depuis vingt-ans". *Mémoires anecdotes d'un ministre étranger résidant à Pétersbourg, concernant les principales actions de Pierre le Grand* (Haye: Jean van Duren, 1737), VII.
- 58 For an example, see the popular eighteenth-century series of books by René Aubert de Vertot (1655–1735) on revolutions in the history of Europe: *Histoire des révolutions de Portugal* (Paris, Michel Brunet, 1711); *Histoire des révolutions de Suède* (Paris: François Barois, 1722), 2 vols. and *Histoire des révolutions arrivées dans le gouvernement de la République romaine* (Paris: Barois, 1727), 3 vols. All these books were translated into Russian by different writers (in 1789, 1764–1765, 1774–1775), but in all cases "revolutions" was translated as *peremeny* (changes).
- 59 "Le Czar osa entreprendre la réforme de tant d'abus, sa Politique même y étoit intéressée." – "The Tsar dared to undertake the reform of many abuses, his policy was itself linked to it." – Fontenelle, *Éloge du Czar Pierre I*, 34.
- 60 "reformer les abus qui s'étoient glissés dans l'administration de la Justice, ou pour mieux dire reformer la Justice elle-même, où le désordre avoit régné jusqu'alors". – *Nouveaux Mémoires Sur L'état Présent de la Grande Russie ou Muscovie* 1 (Paris: Pissot, 1726), X–XI.

- 61 Ernest A. Zitser, “The Difference that Peter I Made”, in Simon Dixon, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Russian History* (Online Publication Date: Jun 2016).
- 62 See on this “scenario” of legitimisation Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 40–43, 65–66.
- 63 See Ekaterina Kislova, “Izdanie pridvornykh propovedey v 1740-e gody”, *XVIII vek* 26 (2011): 52–72; Konstantin Bugrov, “Politicheskoye bogosloviye elizavetinskoy ery: legitimatsiya vlasti Elizavety Petrovny v pridvornoy propovedi 1740-kh - 1750-kh gg.”, *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* 436 (2018): 131–38.
- 64 Stefan Kalinovskiy, *Slovo v den torzhestvennago Vozshestiya na roditelskiy Imperatorskiy Prestol ... imperatritsy Elizaveti Petrovny ... 1742 goda noyabrya 25 dnya* (Moskva: Moskovskaya tipografiya, 1744), 1r.
- 65 Evstafiy Mogilyanskiy, *Slovo v nedelyu pyatuyu po pentikostii, v Vysochayshem prisutstviye ... 1742 goda iyulia 11 dnya* (Moskva: Moskovskaya tipografiya, 1742), 10, 18.
- 66 Ioannikiy Skabovskiy, *Slovo v nedelyu dvadesyat tretiuyu, po soshestviyu Svyatogo Dukha, v vysochaysheye prisutstviye ... 1742 goda noyabrya 14 dnya* (Moskva: Moskovskaya tipografiya, 1742), 11.
- 67 Markell Rodyshevskiy, *Slovo pri prisudstvii Eya Imperatorskago Velichestva ... 1742 goda marta 28 dnya* (Sankt-Peterburg: pri Imperatorskoy Akademii, 1742), 8.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 15–16.
- 69 *PSZ* 11: no. 8480.
- 70 Cited in Sergey Mikhaylovich Solovyev, *Sochineniya v 18 knigakh* 12 (Moskva: Mysl', 1993), 190.
- 71 Dipper, “Réforme”, 5–6.
- 72 Montesquieu, *De l'Esprit des lois*. Book 19 ch. 14 – (Paris: Éditions Garnier, 1973), t. 1 335–36.
- 73 Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, 336.
- 74 *PSZ* 15: no. 11444.
- 75 See Karen Rasmussen, “Catherine II and the Image of Peter I”, *Slavic Review* 37 (1978): 57–69.
- 76 Cited in Evgenii Schmurlo, “Pert Velikii v otzenke sovremennikov”, *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosvesheniya* 6 (1911): 32.
- 77 *Sbornik imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obschestva (SIRIO)*, Vol. 23 (Sankt-Peterburg: Akademii Nauk, 1878), 403.
- 78 *The grand instructions to the commissioners appointed to frame a new code of laws for the Russian Empire: composed / by Her Imperial Majesty Catherine II. Empress of all the Russias ...* Translated from the original, in the Russian language, by Michael Tatischeff: a Russian Gentleman (London: Jefferys, 1768), 136, 138, 144–45.
- 79 *SIRIO* 23, 373.
- 80 This is the central idea of Prince Mihail Scherbatov's pamphlet “On the Corruption of Morals in Russia” (1787–1788), but he dates this corruption precisely from the era of Peter I and accuses him of it. See Antony Lentin, ed. and trans., M. M. Shcherbatov, *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
- 81 David L. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: The Panin Party* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975), 271.
- 82 Denis Fonvizin, “Nedorosl'”, in *Sobraniye sochineniy v dyukh tomakh*, Vol. 1 (Moskva; Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoye Izdatelstvo Khudozhestvennoy Literatury, 1959), 168.

- 83 See Arlette Jouanna, *Le Prince absolu. Apogée et déclin de l'imaginaire monarchique* (Paris: Gallimard, 2014), 223–44.
- 84 David Ransel accurately noticed this distinction: “Much of the confusion has stemmed from the Panin’s frequent appeals to legal standards based on merit and service. These concepts have a very modern ring and seem to belong to the bureaucratic reform era of the nineteenth century, when they came to be associated with notions of objective standards of performance. To aristocrats of the age of absolutism the terms merit and service, while certainly implying a minimum level of competence, were most prominently associated with such ideas as the status and quality of one’s family over several generations, the proved merits of one’s forebears through long service to the crown, and a level of culture and refinement that reflected not merely technical expertise but, more important, an aristocratic moral tone and courtly manner.” – Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia*, 279.
- 85 Semyon Vorontsov to Fyodor Rostopchin, London, 7 (19) June 1814 in *Arkhiv knyazya Vorontsova*, Vol. 8 (Moskva: Gracheva, 1876), 520.
- 86 See *Veysmanov nemetskiy leksikon s latinskim* (Sankt-Peterburg: Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk, 1782), 687 – “Schöpfer, conditor, creator, procreator, tvorets, tvoritel’, sozdatel’, ustroitel’”.

6 Reform and Utopia in Early Modern Italian Political Economy

Historicising a Tension

Adriana Luna-Fabritius

This chapter studies the tension between reform and utopia in early modern Italian historiography, and suggests that Neapolitan discussion of happiness as a pathway to improvement forms a promising way forward. Study of other contexts, such as the German case, has shown that the option between progressive liberalism and reactionary modernism, in which reform is linked to the latter, is in fact the intellectual legacy of nineteenth-century German historical writing;¹ but so far this kind of analysis has not been applied to the Italian counterpart.

German historical commentary did open up discussion of new approaches to the political language accompanying the reorganisation of the Prussian state, mobilised in a series of edicts, proposals and administrative changes that were later labelled “the Prussian Reforms”. However, Italian historiography has accepted the tension between reform and utopia as a commonplace since the later twentieth century. This perspective is owed especially to the work of Franco Venturi, disseminated in his monumental *Settecento Riformatore* (1969–1990) and in *Utopia and Reform* (1970), which has had a considerable impact at the international level. For some scholars, the principal question has been whether the tension between utopia and reform in Venturi’s works could be read as coexistence, exchange and amalgamation of both elements, or as an incompatibility.² The nodal point here is whether the tension between utopia and reform involves different forms of association of these concepts, or instead a change in meaning. This chapter argues that over time rather than amalgamation, these concepts became counterconcepts: utopia became the antithesis of reform.

Although utopia could be read in Venturi’s earlier writing as the will to innovate, “a formula to transform and improve an unacceptable world”,³ detached from the context in which this approach emerged, it has since become a synonym for incompleteness and thus failure. Venturi considered revolution incapable of transforming society, and favoured moderate reform. The tension between utopia and reform was conceived as a critique of an existing political condition, but in the hands of later users it has shed its explanatory capacity. Hence contemporary Italian historiography classifies

early modern “reform plans” for the creation of more or less patriotic civil societies in terms of success and failure.

It is probably for this reason that in the past few years it has become common to find some early modern Italian writers divided between ancients and moderns. The former are negatively labelled as utopians, meaning metaphysicians conservatives; ancients who opposed the improvements of the moderns, or who were unable to formulate realistic reform projects for the development of civil societies. It seems plausible that anachronistic assumptions have distorted the earlier focus of Venturi’s approach, exacerbating the tension between utopia and reform, stripping it of its former objectives. This chapter seeks to illuminate the initial parameters of Venturi’s approach, demonstrate their subsequent distortion and so further discussion of new ways to study early modern Italian writers. My study of the Italian reforms has two main components. I seek to disclose the ideological framework that shaped the conceptual binomial option of utopia/reform employed by Venturi in his approach to eighteenth-century French reformers; and then reassess how this perspective has over the time evolved in the depiction of Italian reformers. The final section reconsiders the concept of reform as fostered by one of the paradigmatic cases of Venturi’s studies, Antonio Genovesi and his school of political economy created in 1754.

The Ideological Patterns behind Utopia and Reform

In Italian historical commentary the concepts of utopia and reform build on the writing of Franco Venturi (1914–1994), Giuseppe Giarrizzo (1927–2015), and Giuseppe Ricuperati (1936–). However, the origin of this leading conceptual couple in Italian historiography is not well-known. Venturi’s *Settecento riformatore*, published between 1969 and 1990 in five volumes, together with his *Utopia and Reform* of 1970, pioneered this line of study. This latter text was developed from the George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered in Cambridge during 1968–1969, and has been considered by some scholars to represent the complete programme of Venturi’s monumental enterprise.⁴ Others have taken a different view, maintaining that Venturi developed his approach to the early modern period in his early works, in the absence of which *Settecento riformatore* would have not been possible at all.

It has been argued that in all these early writings, Venturi developed the leading questions of his *Settecento riformatore*. What steps were necessary to salvage individual, political, and religious liberties from an oppressive power? How can the political action of groups be properly articulated? How can a positive and emancipatory relationship between elites and popular masses be articulated into a project of transformation? Four identifiable lines of research flowed from these questions. The first stressed the relevance of eighteenth-century ideas in their connection to central twentieth-century phenomena; for as Venturi maintained, if eighteenth-century history was not related to the twentieth century, it would lose all relevance. Second, he aimed

to set eighteenth-century Italian phenomena in a European context. Third, he sought to demonstrate that ideas emerged in a concrete reality which they aimed to transform, representing their authors' interests.⁵ Fourth, he emphasised that the flow of ideas and political models was accompanied by a flow of people and objects, revealing the relationships among people.⁶ This was the approach Venturi adopted to the work of reformers.

Venturi's early works include *Diderot's Youth* (1939),⁷ *The Origins of the Encyclopédie* (1946),⁸ *Unveiled Antiquity and the Idea of Progress in Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger* (1947),⁹ *Jean Jaurès and the other Historical Writings of the French Revolution* (1948),¹⁰ and *Alberto Radicati di Passerano* (1954).¹¹ All were written during a period of great personal significance. They started during Venturi's exile in Paris, where he began his political activity as a member of Italian antifascist groups. This was followed by his detention in Portugal, his imprisonment in Spain, a subsequent transfer to Italy and to the concentration camp in Monteforte Irpino, a transfer to Avigliano until 1943, and then the aftermath of the fascist era in Italy that had ended in the Second World War. Given the importance of these events, it has been argued that Venturi's works from this period, and hence his intellectual approach, should be seen as the outcome of his combined political and intellectual interests. In the words of Venturi's companion in the antifascist movement, Vittorio Foa (1910–2008), when looking for continuity in the writings of this generation one should not look for a thread or progressive development but rather a series of ruptures, each forming in turn a different way of approaching the problems, and therefore processes, of knowledge.¹²

Franco Venturi had arrived in Paris in 1937, following his father, the celebrated art historian Lionello Venturi, into exile. This lasted eight years, and at his father's house he met a wide range of Italian antifascist intellectuals: Benedetto Croce (1866–1952), Gaetano Salvemini (1873–1957), Carlo Rosselli (1899–1937), and Carlo Levi (1902–1975).¹³ Upon his arrival, he joined the antifascist revolutionary group *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty), active in Paris between 1929 and 1946.¹⁴ This group, founded by Emilio Lussu (1890–1975), together with the group known as the *fuoriusciti* organised by Salvemini, formed the non-communist tendency. Other prominent antifascists such as Alberto Cianca (1884–1966), Raffaele Rossetti (1881–1951), and Francesco Fausto Nitti (1899–1974) joined immediately after its foundation.¹⁵ The leaders of *Giustizia e Libertà* were Rosselli, Lussu, and Alberto Tarchiani (1885–1964).

In 1930 Rosselli had published his work *Socialisme libéral* in which he argued that fascism was not exclusively an Italian problem, but a European one. This work was mostly seen as a critique of orthodox Marxism,¹⁶ as a synthesis of the two main elements that this antifascist group considered relevant and in which they included their own work: first, the revisionist Marxist tradition linking democracy and reform in line with the ideas of Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932), Werner Sombart (1863–1941), Filippo Turati (1857–1932), and Claudio Treves (1869–1933); and second, libertarian non-Marxist socialism

such as that of Francesco Merlino (1856–1930), Gaetano Salvemini, G. D. H. Cole (1889–1959), R. H. Tawney (1880–1962), and Oszkár Jászi (1875–1957).

At a time when Marxism was consolidating its pre-eminence, Rosselli's proposal was an attempt to create a political alternative in the socialist and liberal spectrum, based on a union of thought and action. Rosselli developed a reformist non-Marxist socialism that has been associated with its homonymous British movement, "liberal socialism".¹⁷ Decades later, Norberto Bobbio (1909–2004), who in his youth was also part of the movement, explained that Rosselli emphasised the possibility of being socialist without being Marxist, and the compatibility of the Italian labour movement with liberalism.¹⁸ In the 1930s, Rosselli attempted to shape a theory of reform that might serve as an alternative to diverse socialist and Marxist theories. Despite these efforts, Rosselli's approach failed to engage broader groups in France; a position that was neither Marxist, nor communist or liberal proved hard to understand.¹⁹

Rosselli sought a European revolution to enable moral and historical renewal supported by a revision of the Enlightenment. He placed at the core of his programme an enquiry into the roots of eighteenth-century political culture, calling for a revision of the political culture of the Enlightenment. In so doing, Rosselli's political agenda also intersected with a broad spectrum of contemporary Enlightenment revisionism, as can be appreciated by the publication dates of Ernst Cassirer's *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (1932), Carl Becker's *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (1932), Benedetto Croce's *La Storia di Europa* (1933), Paul Hazard's *La Crise de la conscience européenne: 1680–1715* (1935), Friedrich Meinecke's *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (1936), or the influential essay by Max Horkheimer, *Traditional and Critical Theory* (1937). This last paved the way for the powerful critique of the Enlightenment, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947), which Horkheimer authored with Theodor Adorno.

We should not overlook some important features of this context in debates over the formulation of an antifascist liberal socialism and the revision of the culture of the Enlightenment, both of which characterised the political group that Venturi joined on his arrival in Paris. At the Sorbonne Venturi attended the lectures of Daniel Mornet (1878–1954), Charles Guignebert (1867–1939), Henri Bédarida (1887–1957), and Paul Hazard, who also supervised his PhD thesis on the Piedmontese-enlightened thinker Dalmazzo Francesco Vasco.²⁰ Venturi immersed himself in the differing positions they adopted in their discussion of the political implications of the Enlightenment. Nevertheless, according to some of Venturi's commentators his intellectual choices should instead be located by three elements: the dedication of his first book *Diderot's Youth* to Rosselli; his proximity to the Italian historians Croce and Adolfo Omodeo (1889–1946);²¹ and his political role in *Giustizia e Libertà*, especially after the murder of Rosselli in 1937. For the latter group of commentators, it is significant that after Rosselli's murder by a French fascist allegedly acting with Mussolini's authorisation, Venturi channelled his energy into the main publications of the movement: *Quaderni*

and *Settimanale*. Up until 1945 Venturi published many historical analyses of contemporary politics, in which he is said to have developed a historical approach very much in line with Rosselli's objectives.²² His first studies of Italian history in a European perspective also date from this period. He sought through his writing a long-lasting solution to European totalitarianism, together with means for the realisation of the liberal socialism proposed by *Giustizia e Libertà*.²³ Additionally, it has been argued that Venturi's generation aimed at initiating an intellectual renewal of the older Italian antifascist forces. Venturi's friend Aldo Garosci explained in retrospect that their group's main interest was not primarily to fight fascism as a political entity, but to secure a moral renewal of European society. The group that Garosci referred to in this context included Nicola Chiaromonte, Umberto Calosso, Mario Levi, Andrea Caffi, and Venturi.²⁴

In 1943 Venturi published his critique of socialism, arguing that having emerged in the early modern period, socialism had been transformed by the confrontation of ideas and events, by the impact of the idea of socialism on reality. "After being an aspiration and a utopia, a movement and an ideology, socialism intertwined with reality, transforming it. The greatness of our time lays precisely in the ability to realise the extent to which what we aspired to has remained incomplete."²⁵ For Venturi, during the early modern period socialism passed from being a utopia into an ongoing programme of reform for European society.

According to Venturi's commentators, the detachment from Rosselli became clearer some decades later when Venturi stated that he aimed to build a socialism guided by freedom and justice. Moreover, they also suggest that he shared with Rosselli an interest in the movement, but not his ideology.²⁶ Venturi defined freedom as a pact of civility to which human beings of all confessions could subscribe in order to preserve their humanity in political struggle.²⁷ He criticised the totalitarian character of the Marxist tradition, corroborated by developments in the Soviet Union, and reaffirmed the significance of freedom as the highest value of society. He added that it was crucial to find a way out of the impasse to which the proletarian cleavage projected by Marx led, instead taking into account the whole of society, and not only one social class. As for his critique of socialism, Edoardo Tortarolo has argued that Venturi was looking for a tradition of universalist, secular and libertarian socialism that could serve as an emancipatory source for the fight against an authoritarian, hierarchical, nationalist, conservative and intolerant totalitarianism that, since the 1930s, had developed in Italy, Spain, and Eastern Europe unchecked by any effective obstacles.²⁸

In his study of Diderot Venturi stated that neither a literary nor a philosophical approach would be capable of reconstructing Diderot's political accomplishments.²⁹ Hence in 1939, Venturi tried to identify an *intelgentia* capable of transforming their reality. He reviewed the ways in which human beings constructed instruments of emancipation, and defined reform as the efficient instrument of profound change, for liberation from oppressed governments.

Reviews of this book suggested that Venturi had revealed the political aspect of the French Enlightenment.³⁰ In a 1939 review published in Italy Adolfo Omodeo declared that a new phase of research on Enlightenment studies had begun, with a more adequate approach.³¹ Omodeo saw Venturi as being still aligned with the commitment of Rosselli's generation to a European revolution underpinned by a revision of the political culture of the French Enlightenment. Giuseppe Giarrizzo agreed, affirming that Venturi consolidated his own place in French historiography by combining political action, historicism and French discussion of historiography, corresponding to his critique of philological analysis in the 1930s.³² Venturi for his part expressed his earlier interest in the historiographical paths of Gustave Lanson, Georges Lefebvre, and Marc Bloch.³³

In Italy during the late 1940s Venturi's approach to the French Revolution was consolidated with the publication of his *Jean Jaurès*.³⁴ This was regarded as a socialist history of the French Revolution, revealing the link between the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century socialism through the Revolution. Venturi described the early modern period as determined by its political problems. Jaurès's own trajectory was said to resemble that of socialism, passing within a century from an extreme myth, a utopia that emerged during the Enlightenment, to an ideology of real and concrete forces. He concluded there that there was a fundamental historical link between the Enlightenment, democracy, and socialism.³⁵

In 1953 Venturi's analysis of the *Risorgimento* set out to evaluate the effects of the Enlightenment, specifically of its cosmopolitanism. He argued that cosmopolitanism simplified the language of Enlightenment and made it comprehensible to all of Europe. Here as elsewhere, he understood by "Enlightenment" chiefly the "French Enlightenment", that France was the source of the European Enlightenment and provided its model. Subsequently, Venturi explained his interest in the relation between the diverse minorities of the Italian peninsula by reference to the enlightened and cosmopolitan world, and the flow of ideas in both directions.³⁶ In 1954 Venturi published the biography of Radicati di Passerano as *Essays on Enlightened Europe*.³⁷ The essays in that book have been considered as a key to the development of his approach, since he there elaborated a new periodisation with which he would later organise his *Settecento riformatore*. This periodisation has been compared to that of Croce; Venturi's Enlightenment actually starts in the late seventeenth century, including the Italian jurisdictional tradition also known as *ceto civile*, rather than in the 1730s as he had expressly stated.³⁸ In addition to the publication of his monumental *Settecento riformatore*, published between 1959 and 1990, Venturi continued publishing in *Rivista Storica Italiana* as one of its main contributors, eventually published 48 articles and as the editor of the journal managing its content.³⁹

Scholars have tended to trace Venturi's later work back to *Settecento riformatore*; in particular, to the conditions for the implementation of reforms: political and territorial stability and the development of modern states. He

later used these against nationalistic interpretations of the conditions for the national unification. The list extends to his studies on patriotism in relation to imperial cities, and his idea that the Enlightenment ended when civil society consolidated its mission through moderate reforms, and not by a revolution that would fail to transform the foundations of the society. This would, therefore, be when the utopia of creating a civil society was completed. At a more abstract level is the relationship between utopia and republicanism. There has been much discussion about the fact that Venturi did not define republicanism as such, that he did not see the republic so much as a political power, a form of government, but as a form of life, an ideal of a liberating political model, a utopia.⁴⁰

Reformers as Political Agents: The Case for Naples

For Venturi, eighteenth-century reformers were individuals who through their actions were able to transform their realities, and whose action programmes could be compared across different contexts. In the 1960s, Venturi embarked on his analysis of Italian reformers, starting with Antonio Genovesi in 1962, presenting his study of the founder of the first school of political economy in Italy (1754).⁴¹ He traced the paths described in the previous section: he placed Genovesi's works in a European context; he identified Genovesi's interests in foreign authors, for instance, in John Cary and in David Hume, and noticed that some of these writers were read in Naples in French translations, like Uztárriz y Ulloa.⁴² Additionally, Venturi was one of the first to reveal Genovesi's reception in Germany, France, and England, together with his impact in the Atlantic space of the Spanish monarchy; also in the United States, especially during its first constitutional moment.⁴³

In 1965 Giuseppe Giarrizzo joined Venturi as an editor of Italian reformers' writings, and as a member of the editorial board of *Rivista Storica Italiana*. Together with Gianfranco Torcellan in 1995 he published the seventh volume of reformers from the ancient republics, the ducats, the Papal States, and the islands.⁴⁴ During this period, Giarrizzo directed attention to the Sicilian economy and took up the debate over Italian Meridionalism, which at this point had already been identified with the backwardness of the south.⁴⁵ In his studies, Giarrizzo followed a path similar to that of Croce and Venturi, searching in the eighteenth century for the roots of the twentieth-century problems of the south. Giarrizzo did identify a crucial moment for Meridional states during which they could have overcome their backwardness: during the decade of the 1790s, with the establishment of freemasonry in the southern kingdom.⁴⁶ But he concluded that the consolidation of this enterprise was unsuccessful. In 2011 Giarrizzo revisited his interpretation of the Enlightenment in a study devoted to this period.⁴⁷

In the 1960s Giuseppe Ricuperati graduated from the University of Turin under Venturi's supervision, producing an impressive list of publications starting in 1970, then becoming the director of *Rivista Storica Italiana* in

1985. In addition to his studies of Italian printing culture and Piedmontese reformers, he devoted a great deal of time to studying the Neapolitan historian Pietro Giannone, and what he termed the “Radical Enlightenment”.⁴⁸ Besides his monographic studies he also edited the writings of reformers. Riciperati’s output is so extensive that it deserves a separate study; his 1974 volume *The Political Thought of Enlightened Authors* must however be considered here, for it expanded Venturi’s account of Genovesi’s interests, shedding light on German cameralist authors such as Jakob Friedrich von Bielfeld, among others.⁴⁹

Venturi’s work had a major impact during the final decades of the twentieth century, not only in Italy but also internationally. Those adopting Venturi’s approach continued tracking early modern elites, the *intelligentia* of the ancient Italian states who were thought to achieve or transform utopias into concrete political and economic forces for change. However, it became increasingly common for historians to write about elites who failed to achieve their goals, or who failed to engage with popular groups in realising reforms. When the reformers failed to turn their utopias into concrete plans for economic and political reform histories of “kingdoms ruled as provinces”, acquired broad acceptance and a negative connotation, without further questioning what this might mean with respect to the Spanish monarchy. These studies mediated and diffused the transformation of the concept of utopia into the counterconcept of reform. This development is best appreciated with respect to meridional reformers who remained within the sphere of the Spanish monarchy in the eighteenth century, in contrast to the Duchy of Milan, which was “liberated” in 1707 from Spanish rule during the War of the Spanish Succession and remained in the Habsburg sphere until 1796.

As for the historiography of southern Italy, the approach developed by Venturi has also been linked back to Croce’s interest in the development of civil culture through several initiatives. Among the most important for was the creation of the *Società Napoletana per la Storia Patria*, its participation in journals such as *Napoli nobilissima* being especially significant. Because of his emphasis upon this line of historical discussion Croce has been treated as one of the pioneers of the study of civil culture in the eighteenth century.

Venturi joined with Croce’s search for the eighteenth-century foundations of the *Italian Risorgimento*; more specifically, Croce and Venturi coincided in their treatment of the revolution of 1799. This was a revolution in which a significant number of Genovesi’s disciples participated, principally Giuseppe Maria Galanti (1743–1806), Francesco Maria Pagano (1748–1799), and Vincenzo Cuoco (1770–1823). This revolution is the principal reason for the attention given to eighteenth-century Neapolitan reformers. Recently some scholars working on the development of civil culture in southern Italy have merged these approaches, creating what is sometimes called the Croce-Venturi approach. The result is a history of a civil and patriotic tradition with Antonio Genovesi as the moving spirit, with his influential new school of political economy founded at the University of

Naples in 1754. This line of study continues to flourish up to the present, with numerous contributors.

There has been an emphasis on Genovesi's success during the 1750s in creating a generation of Neapolitan intellectuals with practical and patriotic concerns.⁵⁰ Taking up arguments advanced by Croce, it has been argued that in so doing, late eighteenth-century reformers fashioned a new patria, becoming its political founders. Moreover, the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries are said to share common issues, such as the importance of a civil role that rendered early modern authors relevant to twentieth-century post-war Italy.⁵¹

In constructing a civil culture there is a clear intention to distinguish between those Neapolitan authors who preceded Genovesi, and those who came afterwards. Repeating arguments first made by Galanti in the later eighteenth century, it has subsequently been argued that in building their civil role late eighteenth-century intellectuals rejected the juridical Neapolitan tradition of the later seventeenth century, the *ceto civile*. Galanti has been represented as a new personality who created a new intellectual genealogy with emphasis on "practical and patriotic dimensions", with a deliberately civil commitment.⁵² Continuing on from Venturi's arguments, modern historians have emphasised that Neapolitan reformers, taught by Genovesi, fostered the shift from intellectual to practical matters.

However, in his *Discourse on the Real Object of Letters and Sciences* (1753), Genovesi had argued that philosophy and the practical concerns of agriculture and manufacturing should not be separated.⁵³ For Venturi, Genovesi's statement was a manifesto, followed by the creation of his new chair for *Commerce and Mechanics* at the University of Naples. This represented, "if not a real break, at least a definite move away from the world of tradition, the clergy and academics".⁵⁴ Venturi noted that Genovesi, in the autobiography wrote between 1755 and 1760,⁵⁵ distanced himself from the juridical tradition and instead emphasised the attempt by Celestino Galiani to establish an academy of science. Galiani had in 1753 effected the reform of the University of Naples, aiming to transform it into a place of intellectual innovation. In Venturi's view, in his autobiography Genovesi celebrated the introduction of Newtonian physics, Lockean philosophy, and the establishment of the chair of natural history, experimental physics, and astronomy.⁵⁶

Here Bartolomeo Intieri (1680–1757), the Tuscan administrator of feudal states in Naples, assumes a special importance in Italian historical writing, since he provided Genovesi with the funding needed for the creation of the chair of political economy. Intieri was therefore considered responsible for the shift from metaphysics to commerce, political economy, mechanics and physics.⁵⁷ Venturi noted that Intieri sought for this position a man who would be useful to the public, and that while he was aware that Genovesi lacked the necessary background, he was appointed to the position with the approval of the king.⁵⁸ Genovesi acknowledged Intieri's interest in practical

and useful matters in the dedication of his *Discourse*, and from this Venturi concluded that Intieri should be placed “at the very foundations of his interpretation of the Neapolitan Enlightenment”,⁵⁹ treating Genovesi as a model philosopher and citizen at the heart of the reform movement.⁶⁰ Genovesi is said to have detached himself from erudition and antiquarianism and created a new tradition fostered by Celestino Galiani and Intieri. His teaching had great impact, especially through the “translation” of economic works, such as John Cary’s *An Essay on the State of England in Relation to its Trade, its Poor, and its Taxes, for Carrying out the Present War against France* (1757).⁶¹

This genealogy of patriotic reformers included authors from the entire second half of the eighteenth century, including those involved with the planned reform of the legal system along lines proposed by Genovesi’s most distinguished pupils, Gaetano Filangieri and Francesco Mario Pagano (1748–1799). Here Galanti’s attempt to create a pantheon of patriotic reformers assumes importance, as it maintained its influence into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, there are some inconsistencies in the narrative that has been created in this way, since Galanti considered jurists like Pagano, treated by contemporary scholarship as a moderate reformist, as belonging to the more philosophical and utopian faction of the reform movement.⁶² Despite the contradictions involved in creating a coherent “patriotic genealogy” for Neapolitan reformers, historians have continued to isolate a turning point based upon Genovesi, earlier authors being stigmatised for “their abstract thinking”.

Vincenzo Ferrone has lately argued that the events of 1989 have had a liberating effect on the old interpretative paradigms and imaginary philosophies of history, fostering the emergence of a new approach to the Enlightenment that points to a complex cultural system, rather than to the circulation of subversive ideas held by an elitist intellectual movement. He maintains that we have finally started to untie the crucial knot that constitutes the old question of the link between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. This has been a persistent dogma of European historical consciousness, considering only a final revolutionary outcome that has influenced Western society. Ferrone argues that the fervent political determination of a handful of heroic protagonists and the originality of their ideas is not enough to explain such a deep and lasting transformation of culture and society. This focus on a final revolutionary outcome has obscured the fact that the original impetus of the Enlightenment was towards reform, obscuring the way in which its specific forms and contents oscillated between utopia and reform. Despite his criticism of the ideological paradigms that have permeated the studies of the Enlightenment, he maintains that we are now at the beginning of a new stage of historiography free from teleology link imposed by a ruling paradigm, he proposes a reinstatement of the conceptual couple of reform and utopia, giving it renewed life; but this time properly contextualised, and freed from the paradigmatic knot.⁶³

Moving Beyond the Tension

Beyond the conventions of modern Italian historical commentary, I would like to suggest that a conceptual analysis of Genovesi's key work, the *Lezioni*,⁶⁴ in the context of juridical practices within the Spanish monarchy reveals new points that can improve our understanding of this tradition of Neapolitan political economy. It has to be emphasised that Genovesi himself rarely uses the concept of reform, and that his vocabulary is indebted to the language used in the practical, political, and intellectual work of seventeenth-century jurisdictional lawyers and writers of Vico's generation. In his attempt to create a new patriotic genealogy Galanti rejected this connection.⁶⁵

While Genovesi expressed in other works the need for moral reform, he does not do so in the *Lezioni*. Here he argued that the reform of a completely dissipated and corrupted (*guasta*) nation is a more complex task than creating new customs for a barbarian nation, since it is more difficult to mould rigid peoples than harden soft ones. Instead of "reform", Genovesi argued that sound principles well applied could be good in the long run, and crises should be avoided since they could only be beneficial after great chaos.⁶⁶ Genovesi engaged here with a discussion that had occupied several early eighteenth-century Neapolitan authors: whether a crisis might be a good moment to reform a society, or was alternatively a moment for a new beginning. Although he did not quote Giovan Battista Vico or any other author on this topic, there can be no doubt of his knowledge of Neapolitan discussions of the role of crisis in the civilising process.⁶⁷

Genovesi also refers to "reform" when stating the nature of a true economic science and the function of a sovereign. For Genovesi, a true economic science would prescribe fundamental rules for the happiness of the public. He emphasises the importance of labour, and the obligation of the sovereign to encourage it. He argued that labour is a form of capital for persons, families, and all social classes, so the fewer people who are idle, the better for the country. Where there was no law to protect public happiness, if the sovereign, father, guardian, curator, economist, and inspector of all his peoples and guarantor of contracts has not made laws due to forgetfulness or negligence, then he should remember that he is obliged by his titles to protect his people. Moreover, that he has the power and duty to establish or reform systems adopted by ancient rulers out of ignorance, and which are now harmful for the state and the people. The sovereign is obliged to prevent the ruin of the republic, and his interest should instruct him that the poorer the people are, the less they can financially contribute to the court.⁶⁸

These quotations and many references to contemporary authors, including Bielfeld, have been used as evidence to argue that Genovesi was thinking of reform from above, by a despotic and paternalistic monarch⁶⁹ modelled on the Prussian government of Frederick II. This interpretation has been reinforced in recent decades by discussion of the concept of public happiness in Genovesi's work.⁷⁰ However, closer reading of the *Lezioni*

in the context of the juridical Neapolitan tradition shows something quite different. Most significantly, the lack of references to reform indicates that this was not at the core of Genovesi's thinking when he wrote his lectures, and that their structure and approach relate directly to the Neapolitan jurisdictional agenda and thus their tradition, whose most important theorist was undoubtedly Giovan Battista Vico.⁷¹ However, despite the argument that he framed his economic thinking within the framework of natural law following Vico and Doria,⁷² the fact that Vico's generation aimed to develop a new science capable of relocating political and economic debate from the language of natural law has been overlooked.⁷³ This passage from what they considered to be an outdated language to another poses a central question to us: whether Genovesi's conceptual and theoretical endeavours should be seen as the concluding phase of discussions of economic matters within the framework of natural law, or alternatively as the establishment of a new language of political economy.

Genovesi's *Lezioni* is the text of lectures delivered during his second course of political economy (1756–1758), known as *Elementi del commercio*.⁷⁴ The first manuscript, as also the next three published editions, is divided into two parts. The first focuses on public economy, commerce, population, industry and arts, luxury, agriculture (Jethro Tull's new method), other productive activities, and how they might be promoted for the benefit of the sovereign. In this first part Genovesi presents his economic analysis of the state of the Kingdom of Naples. The second part deals with more abstract matters of commerce and economics, such as the origin and nature of money, monetary circulation, exchange, credit (especially David Hume on public credit), interest on money and usury, public happiness, and wealth. The last part of contains his tract on public trust.

The first published edition of the lectures appeared in Naples six years after they had been delivered, as *Lezioni* in two volumes (1765 and 1767).⁷⁵ Genovesi continued revising his text until his death in 1769. There was then in 1768 a second Milanese edition in one volume, edited by Genovesi's student Troiano Odazi (1741–1794).⁷⁶ The third edition was published in Naples between 1768 and 1770, with no major changes to the edition published in Milan.⁷⁷ Maria Luisa Perna has noted the variations in these three editions: the intensification of the need for judicial reform (mentioned however only once); the attack on feudal jurisdiction and privileges such as exemption from taxes; and the stance taken towards the Church – the criticism of wasteland, monastic gifts, the monopoly of education, and the jurisdictional battle. The radicalisation of Genovesi's opinion on the problem of land ownership is also evident: land should not be taken out of circulation and should pass into the hands of peasants.⁷⁸ As for commercial society, Genovesi upheld the liberalisation of the grain trade; discussed the impact of tariffs on price formation and inflation; and reviewed the idea of a single tax on land and the reduction of indirect taxes. He advocated liberalisation of the labour market, and recommended attention to the international position of the

kingdom, expressing its opposition to maritime commercial treaties. He also acknowledged the need for the dissemination of a technical and scientific culture together with knowledge of conditions in the kingdom – products, the distribution of land ownership, and the importance reliable demographic knowledge and of a cadastral survey. Genovesi also maintained that greater attention should be paid to the formation of public opinion, assisting the development of civil society. The sovereign should end the monopoly of education by the clergy (he also mentioned the need for reform of the university); and he noted the role that the clergy could play in popular education. Finally, for Genovesi the problem of communication was central.⁷⁹

For the second edition of the *Lezioni* Genovesi included a chapter on how every social group could contribute to the opulence of the state and thus to public happiness; and he reconceptualised the chapter on productive arts, dividing it into the economy of basic arts and the economy of improving arts (*economia delle arti miglioratrici*).⁸⁰ For Genovesi, the aim of science was to improve human reason, the main instrument for achieving happiness. The arts that increase peace and comfort should be cultivated with special zeal.⁸¹ Genovesi divided arts into three parts: the first included hunting, fishing, livestock, agriculture, and metallurgy; the second perfected the products of the first, as metalworking, carpentry, textiles, and the others that make life more comfortable; and the third comprised all the arts of luxury that served the desires of human beings.

The Milan edition has been linked to Gian Rinaldo Carli's (1720–1795) wish to use the *Lezioni* together with the *Principes et observations oeconomiques* by Véron Duverger de Forbonnais (1768) as textbooks for the new chair of economics to be created for Cesare Beccaria at the *Scuole* in 1769.⁸² The Milanese edition has some additions to the text, footnotes, and bibliography that were retained in the second Neapolitan edition, and which have been attributed to Genovesi. Other changes are known as the Milanese corrections by Odazi and are mainly concern with stylistic matters and *errata*.⁸³ In this edition, the analysis of the situation of the Kingdom of Naples formerly in chapter five was moved to chapter twenty second, making the text more generally accessible.⁸⁴

As for the connection of Genovesi with the jurisdictional tradition, Genovesi followed Vico in arguing that the historical process evolves from savage to more civilised nations, humanity improving its condition over time. As also with Vico, Genovesi maintained that civil society was the sole condition in which humans could develop sociability and civil virtues. Genovesi did however add the idea that the exchange of goods among human beings fostered human exchange, developing human sociability, expanding and improving civil society. This had been widely discussed among seventeenth-century Neapolitan authors, especially in the light of their reading of Grotius and Pufendorf and the resulting discussion of *appetitus societatis*.⁸⁵

Political crises had occupied Vico and many other Neapolitan thinkers during the first decades of the eighteenth century in the wake of the Conspiracy of Macchia (1701), and at the beginning of the War of Spanish

Succession (1701–1714).⁸⁶ For the European political context, this discussion addressed the possibility of gaining the independence of the kingdom most probably by a revolution and with the support of the Emperor. Between 1701 and 1707, Neapolitan authors discussed the potential of crisis as a moment in which pacts among monarchs and their subjects are nullified. At these times, therefore, conditions for the renewal of the foundations of the state are favourable. According to Vico, these moments of crisis have occurred on several occasions throughout the civilisation process. For Vico, crisis was also the moment when social groups come together as they became aware of their mutual needs, desires, and aspirations. A crisis is a situation that speeds up the process of the union among people, for they become aware of their need of mutual assistance, an argument that has been considered as one of the most distinctive in Genovesi's political economy.⁸⁷ So, despite Genovesi rejecting the role of crises, he certainly framed his account of human sociability along the lines of Vico's account of the civilising process. For Genovesi, economic relations are relations of mutual assistance, where exchange is a general law of civil society. Reciprocity is a fundamental law and the basis of mutual trust.⁸⁸

As with Doria's account of *love of country*, Genovesi argues that this awareness of a human need of mutual assistance had to be fostered with a system of rewards and punishments based on the exaltation of glory or dishonour for their contribution to the opulence of their society. Regarding public trust, this had for Genovesi three components: ethical, economic, and political. All three are fundamental to the development of trade and the creation of wealth. According to Doria and Genovesi, in savage societies there is no trust, so the development of societies occurs when people begin to exchange things and trust each other. Only at this moment is wealth produced. "...tutte e tre queste maniere di fede si vogliono con ogni diligenza e delicatezza coltivare e conservare nella loro robustezza, siccome fondamenti della civile società, delle arti, dell'industria, dello spirito della nazione, del commercio e dalla pubblica quiete e opulenza."⁸⁹ In his diagnosis of the situation of corrupted societies, Genovesi maintains that social evils can be cured by cultivating ethical trust through the civil and religious education of people in churches and public schools.

The review of the events of the Conspiracy of Macchia by Vico's generation⁹⁰ showed a pending matter, the criticism of the failure of the *ceto civile*, or the *ceto mezzano* as Genovesi called it,⁹¹ during the collective action that included the Neapolitan nobility and plebians during the three days that the Macchia uprising lasted. Perhaps it was precisely Vico's criticism of the *ceto civile*, or the possibility of nullification of the social pact, that led Genovesi to mistrust the potential of crisis as a moment of social amalgamation. From Genovesi's comment on crisis it seems clear that he was reluctant to commit to drastic processes that might lead to revolution, and this could well be why Venturi labelled him a reformer. Vico's critique of the role of the *ceto civile* to which Vico and Genovesi belonged could also be the reason for

Genovesi's emphasis on the need for the members of his own social class to acquire a leading role in Neapolitan society. Likewise, it is important to understand that the situation of the kingdom of Naples in the 1750s and 1760s, when Genovesi wrote the *Lezioni*, was not the same as that of 1701 during the crisis that precipitated the Spanish War of Succession, when it seemed Naples had a real possibility of becoming an independent kingdom. From 1714 to 1734 Naples returned to the Habsburg sphere, Charles of Bourbon then declaring it independent, although it remained in several respects within the Bourbon sphere.

Genovesi here openly supported the idea of the key role of the *ceto mezzano*, which he considered could bring about the improvement of society. Perhaps he also had in mind training technically competent administrators. To achieve this, however, instruction in the useful sciences was necessary. Members of the *ceto mezzano* would thereby improve themselves – creating also the possibility of initiating a general movement towards the achievement of public happiness.⁹² The mission of public happiness that Genovesi attributed to the *ceto mezzano* was not something original to his *Lezioni*. During the 1650s, pacts had been established to solve the economic, political, and social crises of the Spanish monarchy. These crises had included international wars, popular revolts (1647–1648 in the Neapolitan case), and natural disasters culminating in the great pandemic of 1654–1656 that halved the population of the city of Naples and caused significant damage in other parts of the kingdom, creating food shortages. During this period, the *ceto civile* strengthened its position within the monarchy as guarantor of the new pact between the Spanish monarch and the City of Naples. Justice and the happiness of the kingdom were the conditions for the peace and loyalty of Neapolitans. In this way the *ceto civile* acquired a pre-eminent place in Neapolitan society that served to expand the public sphere and happiness. Their mission in guaranteeing the improvement of justice extended public happiness, gaining greater scope and involving more people. Happiness acquired a double meaning: the expansion of the public sphere and the common good of the people.⁹³

From that group there emerged ministers who served in the itinerant courts of the Spanish viceroys. Beginning their *cursus honorum*, they aspired to eventually attain positions at the courts and in the Councils of the Spanish monarchy. The majority of the *ceto civile* resident in Naples worked as political intermediaries defending the privileges and local liberties conceded to the City of Naples by the Spanish monarch, working in some cases against the king himself as with the devaluation of the coinage in 1675, or against the Pope and the Roman Inquisition in the trial of the ex-members of the *Accademia degli Investiganti* (1650–1683) during the period 1688–1697.⁹⁴ The Neapolitan *ceto civile* provided leadership for the politicisation of society in the defence of their local liberties, and especially of the *Libertas Philosophandi*.⁹⁵ The achievements of Vico, Genovesi, and Filangieri in creating a new science should be thus placed in the context of the *ceto civile*'s

struggle for local liberties and the defences of self-government. This new science should be seen as the ultimate stage in the reformulation of juridical practice and the improvement of justice beyond the Neapolitan courts. By the end of the seventeenth century they had already developed advanced arguments regarding a new tradition of Catholic political thought that was distinct from their adversaries the Jesuits, leaders of the Inquisition, and French Jansenists.

The defence of the *Libertas philosophandi* involved the development of science, anatomy, jurisprudence, and literature – the promotion of their academy, improvements that would diminish the risk of food shortages, the drainage of marshland and other measures to prevent epidemics. This is what drew the attention of the Neapolitan *ceto civile* to the existence of wastelands, and the need to limit privileges and redistribute the property of the nobility and of the church. It would be mistaken to think that the theoretical advances of Vico's generation were disconnected from a practical agenda for solving specific problems of Neapolitan society. It was rather the opposite: for Vico's generation's intellectual achievements were a stage in the transformation and improvement of legal, scientific, and political practices, preparing the Kingdom of Naples to be free and self-sufficient.⁹⁶

Genovesi's maxims presupposed these practical, conceptual, and theoretical concerns, and should be understood as a step in the creation of a new political science that could provide a basis for a new political state. Genovesi also argued that a concern with wealth had become dominant in the historical process. In the economic thinking of Genovesi, Naples was neither a savage nation nor barbarous, nor a nation that had established a colonial empire. It was a nation with an important port that could assist in the improvement of the kingdom and foster public happiness, where all social classes would have a key role. A project for improvement of this kind would create a few simple laws from previous maxims, treating – as with Doria – the nature of the soil and the character of the peoples, founded – as with Vico – on a contemporary idea of justice. This project was completed by one of Genovesi's most exceptional students, Gaetano Filangieri, whose *Science of Legislation* of 1780–1785 surpassed the impact of the *Lezioni* in the Spanish Atlantic realm, especially after the first phases of Latin American independence.

The historical example of the evolution of legal practices that Valletta had provided at the end of the seventeenth century was passed on from Vico to Genovesi. Their new science was another instance of the development that began with barbarous peoples and the emergence of natural laws and continued with the legal production of the Middle Ages. Vico and Genovesi considered the Middle Ages to be a benighted epoch, an obstacle to the progress of civilisation. Simplification of the law became a critical task. However, the new science as outlined in the *Lezioni* was not a collection of laws based on an outmoded idea of justice, but a set of maxims founded upon revised ideas of justice, happiness, and trust. While Vico made the

development of language the beginning of the civilising process, Genovesi introduced the exchange of goods among persons into the heart of his new science, which he termed civil economy. Improvement in the production of goods thus acquired a central role in Genovesi's account of the historical process. It is also possible that Genovesi's new science may have also borrowed from Bielfeld's model insofar as wealth became an essential part of politics; not however in any idea in Genovesi of an interventionist science of the state, as has been suggested when he has been labelled a cameralist.⁹⁷

Genovesi read Bielfeld in the French edition (1760).⁹⁸ His interest in the *Institutions* was twofold: the structure of the text, and the presentation of the monarchical institutional model upon which he commented in his *Lezioni*, in his *Logic* as well as in private correspondence.⁹⁹ For Genovesi *Institutions* was an effectively organised and clearly explained political manual, which he recommended for the instruction of young students as a complement to the subjects addressed in his *Lezioni*.¹⁰⁰ Elugero Pii has noted that Genovesi also found in Bielfeld a model of public education, in which education is the first of Genovesi's five objects of politics.¹⁰¹

Genovesi's *Lezioni* and the maxims that he there develops are, more than an absolutist theory, a reminder of the rights of sovereigns and their duties. They should be read as a framework for the evaluation of a ruler's performance in the public sphere; a monarch that did not promote and improve people's happiness should be considered a tyrant.¹⁰² This was a distinction also made by the generation of Doria.

Conclusions

While studies of early nineteenth-century German "reforms" remained linked to reactionary modernism, in the Italian case, Venturi connected the concept of reform to the moral and political agenda of liberal socialism as outlined by the movement *Giustizia e Libertà*. Furthermore, studies of reform influenced by Venturi were diffused through *Settecento riformatore* and *Rivista Storica Italiana* and placed Genovesi as a paradigmatic initiating case that was followed by Beccaria and others.

Given the tension between utopia and reform as concepts in recent studies adopting Venturi's approach, it can be said that the meaning of these concepts has shifted until they have become counterconcepts: utopia becomes the antithesis of reform. This shift is possibly encouraged by the fact that Venturi developed his approach in relation to Diderot, Jean Jaurès, and the French Revolution, moving from a radical myth to a utopia that emerged during the Enlightenment as an ideology of real and concrete forces. Venturi saw the French Revolution as the source of the European Enlightenment. He argued that cosmopolitanism simplified the language of the Enlightenment and made it understandable to all of Europe. For him, the Enlightenment ended when the utopia of creating a civil society consolidated its mission through moderate reforms.

Venturi preferred reform as the effective instrument of profound change over a revolution that he considered to involve only a change of elites. He searched for political groups that had articulated transformational projects, and tied the importance of eighteenth-century ideas in relation to twentieth-century phenomena. However, when this approach is applied to Italian cases, the conceptual couple utopia and reform produces a tension that fails to explain the various Italian movements. A weighty ideological load is projected on to any object of study by this approach.

In the case of Genovesi's *Lezioni*, Venturi's approach has detached it from its political, economic, and intellectual agenda: the creation of a new science of economy for the improvement of justice and happiness that was intended to complement Bielfeld's account of government. It has ignored Genovesi's vocabulary, obscuring the real context of his enterprise. Genovesi rarely used the concept of reform, and was concerned with understanding the nature of the Neapolitan kingdom and the character of Neapolitans: their means, their aims, and the relationship between them, leading to the principles according to which they should be governed. Nonetheless, as Ferrone has emphasised, we must finally detach ourselves from the established question of the link between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Ideas are the outcomes of cultural practices, the resultant of interactions between all social actors.

Considering Genovesi's vocabulary in the context of the juridical practices of the Spanish monarchy, the *Lezioni* can be seen as a framework for dealing with economic, social, and political improvement, raising the problems posed by usury, luxury, idleness, and monopolies. Genovesi's *Lezioni* develop from a language of natural law, underpinned by fundamental natural laws such as those of self-preservation and freedom. He develops a new definition of property (that includes property in labour); and also of happiness, as the right and duty to improve oneself, expanding the public sphere and the common good. There is a revision of human needs and desires in the civilising process, including the provision of humans with comforts and luxuries. This is the new framework for happiness and justice. Quoting Hume's *History of England*, Genovesi states that "luxury is a great refinement in the gratification of the senses".¹⁰³ The core of Genovesi's civil economy is presented in maxims that consider the modified and increasing complexity of human needs and desires, the process of exchanging goods, of mutual assistance, of trust. For Genovesi, public happiness would contain all these elements. As with Vico, it is common sense that leads human beings to realise their need for mutual assistance in preserving themselves. This could be seen as the foundation of Genovesi's conception of individual and public happiness and trust.¹⁰⁴

An excess of luxury can lead humans into corruption and crises from which it is almost impossible to escape. Genovesi's new economic science of politics is not a mirror for princes or a programme of reform from above. It is created from the belief that humans can improve their existing condition

through all of them increasing their awareness of their need of mutual assistance, and their trust that each will seek to improve themselves, and hence society. The development of a civil economy improves civil society.

Notes

I would like to thank Eduardo Tortarolo and Antonio Trampus for their generosity and assistance at the beginning of this project and Keith Tribe for his detailed comments on all the steps in the development of this chapter.

- 1 Keith Tribe, "Revision, Reorganization and Reform. Prussia, 1790–1820", in Béla Kaposy, Isaac Nakhimovsky, Sophus A. Reinert, Richard Whatmore, eds., *Markets, Morals, Politics. Jealousy of Trade and the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 142.
- 2 Maria Luisa Pesante, "Influire in un Mondo Ostile. Franco Venturi e il Discorso sull'Utopia", *Quaderni Storici* 32, no. 94 (1997): 288.
- 3 Franco Venturi, *Le origini dell'Enciclopedia* (Roma; Florence; Milan: Edizioni U, 1946); 2nd ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1963), 10.
- 4 Franco Venturi, *Utopia e riforma nell'Illuminismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1970); *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971).
- 5 Luciano Guerci, "Gli studi venturiani sull'Italia del 700: dal Vasco agli Illuministi italiani", in Luciano Guerci, Giuseppe Ricuperati, eds., *Il Coraggio della Ragione. Franco Venturi Intellettuale e Storico Cosmopolita* (Turin: Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 1998), 203–42. All quotations from Italian are my own translation.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 237.
- 7 *Jeunesse de Diderot* (Paris: Skira, 1939); there is an Italian edition *Giovinetza di Diderot: 1713–1753* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1988).
- 8 *Le origini dell'Enciclopedia* (Roma; Florence; Milan: Edizioni U, 1946); 2nd ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1963).
- 9 *L'antichità svelata e l'idea de progresso in Nicolas-Antoine Boulanger* (Bari: Laterza, 1947).
- 10 *Jean Jaurès e altri scritti storici della Rivoluzione francese* (Turin: Einaudi, 1948).
- 11 (Turin: Einaudi, 1954). Venturi confirmed this selection of works as the most relevant for his approach; see Franco Venturi, *Europe des lumières. Recherches sur le 18e siècle* (Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1971), 285–89.
- 12 Vittorio Foa, *Il Cavallo e la Torre. Riflessioni su una Vita* (Turin: Einaudi, 1991), 326. Maria Luisa Pesante suggests instead that one could study the construction of Venturi's approach via some crucial themes in his main works; see "Influire in un Mondo Ostile. Franco Venturi e il Discorso sull'Utopia", *Quaderni Storici* 32, no. 94 (1997): 269–98.
- 13 Edoardo Tortarolo, "La rivolta e le riforme. Appunti per una biografia intellettuale di Franco Venturi (1914–1994)", *Studi Settecenteschi* 15 (1995):11; *Id.*, "L'esilio della libertà. Franco Venturi e la cultura europea degli anni Trenta", in Guerci, Ricuperati, *Il coraggio della ragione*, 89–114; Laura Iamurri, "Carlo Levi e Lionello Venturi" in Maria Cristina Maiocchi, ed., *Gli anni di Parigi. Carlo Levi e i fuoriusciti, 1926–1933* (Turin: Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2003), 42–54.
- 14 Leonardo Casalino, "L'esperienza politica di GL nella Francia degli anni Trenta", in *Gli anni a Parigi. Carlo Levi e i fuoriusciti. 1926–1933* (Turin: MBAC, 2003), 31–41 and Alessandro Galante Garrone, "Da Giustizia e Libertà al 'Settecento riformatore'", in Franco Venturi, *La lotta per la libertà. Scritti politici* (Turin:

- Einaudi, 1996), xxxv; Michele Battini, “Carlo Rosselli, ‘Giustizia e Libertà’ and the enigma of Justice”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 17 (2012): 205–19.
- 15 Stanislao Pugliese states that the leadership was in the hands of Carlo Rosselli, Ferruccio Parri (1890–1981), and Sandro Pertini (1896–1985); cf. his *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Antifascist Exile* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 51.
 - 16 Aldo Garosci, *Storia dei fuoriusciti* (Bari: Laterza, 1953), 181.
 - 17 Spencer Di Scala, *Italian Socialism: Between Politics and History* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 87 and Battini, “Carlo Rosselli”, 207.
 - 18 Norberto Bobbio, “Introduzione”, in *Carlo Rosselli, Socialismo Liberale* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997), xxvi.
 - 19 Marco Gervasoni, “Per una nuova cultura politica il socialismo liberale italiano tra le due guerre”, in Id., ed., *Giustizia e Libertà e il socialismo liberale* (Milan: M&B, 1999), 11; Gian Biagio Furiuzzi, *Il Socialismo liberale. Dalle origini a Carlo Rosselli* (Manduria: Lacaita, 2003); and Michelangelo Bovero, Virgilio Mura, Franco Sbarberi, eds., *I dilemmi del liberalsocialismo* (Florence: Nuova Italia Scientifica, 1994).
 - 20 Venturi’s thesis was published as *Dalmazzo Francesco Vasco (1732–1794)* (Paris: Droz, 1940).
 - 21 Venturi, *Jeunesse*; Cf. Giuseppe Ricuperati, “Categoria e identità: Franco Venturi ed il concetto di Illuminismo”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 108 (1996): 550–648; Edoardo Tortarolo, “Historians in the Storm. Emigré Historiography in the Twentieth Century”, in Matthias Middell, Lluís Roura, eds., *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 377–403.
 - 22 Tortarolo, *La rivolta*, 18.
 - 23 Giovanni De Luna, *Il Partito d’Azione* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), quoted by Tortarolo, “La rivolta”, 32.
 - 24 Aldo Carosci, “Profilo dell’azione di Carlo Rosselli e di Giustizia e Libertà”, *Quaderni dell’Italia libera* 34 (1945): 21 quoted by Tortarolo, “La rivolta”, 13.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 3; Leo Aldi [Franco Venturi], “Socialismo di oggi e di domani”, *Quaderni dell’Italia Libera* 17 (1943).
 - 26 Franco Venturi, “Carlo Rosselli e la cultura francese”, in *Giustizia e libertà nella lotta antifascistica e nella storia d’Italia. Attualità dei fratelli Rosselli a quaranta anni dal loro sacrificio* (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1978), 163–78. On Rosselli’s pessimism Cf. Pesante, “Influire in un mondo ostile”, 281–82.
 - 27 Venturi, “Carlo Rosselli”, 163–78.
 - 28 Tortarolo, “La rivolta”, 18–20.
 - 29 Venturi, *La Jeunesse*, 9.
 - 30 Tortarolo, “La rivolta”, 24.
 - 31 Adolfo Omodeo, “Franco Venturi, Jeunesse de Diderot”, *La Critica* 37 (1939): 379–80.
 - 32 Giuseppe Giarrizzo, “Venturi e il problema degli intellettuali”, and Daniel Roche, “Histoire des idées, histoire de la culture, expériences françaises et expériences italiennes”, in Guerri, Ricuperati, eds., *Il coraggio*, 9–59, 151–70 respectively; and Giuseppe Galasso, “Il modulo storiografico di Venturi”, *Storici italiani del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008), 291–326.
 - 33 Girolamo Imbruglia, *Illuminismo e storicismo nella storiografia italiana* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 2003).
 - 34 Venturi, *Jean Jaurès e altri scritti*, 35.
 - 35 *Ibid.*, 48.
 - 36 Franco Venturi, “La circolazione delle idee”, *Rassegna Storica del Risorgimento* 41, no. 2–3 (1954): 178–79.
 - 37 *Saggi sull’Europa Illuminista, I, Alberto Radicati di Passerano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1954).

- 38 Venturi, *Utopia e Riforma*, 32–34; Pesante, “Influire in un mondo”, 284 and John Robertson, “Franco Venturi’s Enlightenment”, *Past & Present* 137, no. 1 (1992): 186–87, 196.
- 39 Giuseppe Ricuperati, “La Rivista storica italiana e la direzione di Franco Venturi: un insegnamento cosmopolitico”, in Guerci, Ricuperati, *Il coraggio*, 243–308.
- 40 Pesante, “Influire in un mondo”, 289.
- 41 Franco Venturi, “Nota introduttiva”, in *La letteratura Italiana. Storia e testi* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1962), 5.
- 42 Antonio Genovesi, *Storia del commercio della Gran Bretagna scritta da John Cary...3 vols.* (Naples Casari: 1757–1758). Franco Venturi, “Economisti e riformatori spagnoli e italiani del ‘700’”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 74, no. 4 (1962): 717–38. These threads have been followed by Sophus Reinert, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); and Rosario Patalano, Sophus Reinert, eds., *Antonio Serra and the Economics of Good Government* (New York: Palgrave, 2016).
- 43 Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore, I: Da Muratori a Beccaria* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969), for pioneering studies on this line of research see Juan Carlos Chiaramonte, “Gli illuministi napoletani nel Rio de la Plata”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 86, no. 1 (1964): 114–32; for the Mexican case Adriana Luna González “La Recepción de Ideas de Gaetano Filangieri en José María Luis Mora: Un Primer Acercamiento al Contexto Constitucional Mexicano”, *Istor, Revista de Historia Internacional* 29 (2007): 120–49 and Adriana Luna-Fabritius “El modelo constitucional Napolitano en Hispanoamérica”, in Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Pablo Mijangos, Rafael Rojas, eds., *De Cádiz al siglo XXI. Doscientos años de tradición constitucional en Hispanoamérica* (México: Taurus, 2012), 123–52 and for the Ecuadorian case Federica Morelli, “Filangieri e l’altra America: storia di una ricezione”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 1 (2007): 88–105.
- 44 Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Gianfranco Torcellan, Franco Venturi, eds., *Illuministi italiani, t. VII. Riformatori delle antiche repubbliche, dei ducati, dello Stato pontificio e delle isole* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1965). Id., *Illuministi italiani, III, Riformatori delle antiche repubbliche, dei ducati, dello Stato pontificio e delle isole*, 2nd ed. (Milan: Ricciardi, 1998).
- 45 Giuseppe Giarrizzo, Elio D’Auria, *La questione meridionale* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani, 1992); Id. *Cultura e economia nella Sicilia del ‘700* (Caltanissetta: S Sciascia, 1992); Id., *Mezzogiorno senza meridionalismo. La Sicilia, lo sviluppo, il potere* (Venice: Marsilio, 1992). For the backwardness of the south see Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (New York: Free Press, 1958) and Robert D. Putman, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 91.
- 46 Giuseppe Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo nell’Europa del Settecento* (Venice: Marsilio, 1994).
- 47 *Illuminismo* (Naples: Guida, 2011).
- 48 Giuseppe Ricuperati, *L’esperienza civile e religiosa di Pietro Giannone* (Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1970); Id., *La Città terrena di Pietro Giannone. Un itinerario tra “Crisi della coscienza europea” e illuminismo radicale* (Florence: Olschki, 2001); Id., *Nella Costellazione del Triregno: testi e contesti giannoniani* (San Marco in Lamis: Quaderni del Sud, 2004).
- 49 Giuseppe Ricuperati, *Il pensiero politico degli illuministi* (Turin: UTET, 1974), 364–71.
- 50 Melissa Calaresu, “Constructing an Intellectual Identity: Autobiography and Biography in Eighteenth-century Naples”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6, no. 2 (2001): 157–77.

- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid., 158 and Benedetto Croce, *La rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* (Naples: Bibliopolis, [1948] 1992), 271.
- 53 Antonio Genovesi, *Discorso sopra il vero fine delle lettere e delle scienze* (Milano: Gaia, [1754] 2014).
- 54 Venturi, *Riformatori napoletani*, 17–18 and *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, trans. S. Corsi (London: Longman, 1972), 201.
- 55 Venturi, *Riformatori napoletani*, 47 and Gennaro Saverese, ed., *A. Genovesi, Autobiografia, lettere e altri scritti* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), 3–4, 53.
- 56 Genovesi in Venturi, *Riformatori napoletani*, 54.
- 57 Venturi, *Riformatori napoletani*, 73.
- 58 Ibid., 73–74.
- 59 Franco Venturi “Alle origini dell’illuminismo napoletano: Dal carteggio di Bartolomeo Intieri”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 21, no. I (1959): 416–56 and Calaresu, “Constructing an Intellectual Identity”, 167.
- 60 Venturi, *Riformatori napoletani*, 941–85.
- 61 Giuseppe Maria Galanti, *Elogio storico del signor abate Antonio Genovesi Pubblico Professore di civil economia nella università di Napoli* (Venice, 1774), 17–18, 6; Id., *Elogio storico del signor... abate Antonio Genovesi* (Florence, 1781), 15; John Cary, *Storia del commercio della Gran Bretagna* (Naples, 1757).
- 62 Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment*, 213.
- 63 Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment. History of an Idea* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), viii and 92.
- 64 Antonio Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni di Commercio*, ed. Maria Luisa Perna (Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2005), 257–891. From now on quoted as *Lezioni*.
- 65 Galanti, *Elogio storico*.
- 66 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, Part. I ch. VI §XI footnote q. 368. Galanti, *Elogio storico*.
- 67 On Genovesi’s recognised debt to Doria and Vico cf. Paola Zambelli, *La formazione filosofica di Antonio Genovesi* (Naples, 1972), 294–320 and 305; Eluggiero Pii, *Antonio Genovesi. Dalla politica economica alla ‘politica civile’* (Florence: Olschki, 1984).
- 68 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, Part. I ch. XIII § XVII 468.
- 69 See Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “Signs of Happiness: A Proposal for a New Spanish Empire”, *History of Political Economy* 53 (2021): 515–32 and for the secularisation of happiness in Vico, Doria, Muratori, “The Secularisation of Happiness in Early Eighteenth-century Italian Political Thought: Revisiting the Foundations of Civil Society”, in László Kontler, Mark Somos, eds., *Trust and Happiness in the History of European Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2018). With a different interpretation see Luigino Bruni, *Civil Happiness: Economics and Human Flourishing in Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2006), ch. 4, and “On Virtues and Awards: Giacinto Dragonetti and the Tradition of *Economia Civile* in Enlightenment Italy”, *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 35 (2013): 517–35; setting Wolf at the centre of Genovesi’s account of public happiness see Federico D’Onofrio, “On the Concept of ‘*Felicitas Publica*’ in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy”, *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 27 (2015): 462.
- 70 D’Onofrio argues that Genovesi’s civil economy is interventionist in the tasks of the state that make it similar to the Cameralist tradition and that is a process from above. However, he affirmed that this came from the influence of Wolff in Genovesi’s *Lezioni*, 464. Bruni has disputed this interpretation source.
- 71 Genovesi, *Autobiografia e lettere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962).
- 72 This has been argued in relation to Genovesi’s *Diocesina*, Niccolò Guasti, “Antonio Genovesi’s *Diocesina*: Source of the Neapolitan Enlightenment”, *History of European Ideas* 34, no. 4 (2006): 385–405 and Pier Luigi Porta, “Italian

- Enlightenment”, in Gilbert Faccarello, Heinz D. Kurz, eds., *Handbook on the History of Economic Analysis. Vol. II Schools of Thought in Economics* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2016), 92–106.
- 73 Adriana Luna González, *From Self-preservation to Self-liking in Paolo Mattia Doria: Civil Philosophy and Natural Jurisprudence in the Early Italian Enlightenment* (Florence: European University Institute, 2009), 6–7, 15, 24, 51, 73–74.
- 74 Antonio Genovesi, *Elementi di commercio* (Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, 1756–1758), Ms XIII B 92. This manuscript has been published by Perna, in Genovesi, *Lezioni*, 1–256.
- 75 Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni di Commercio o sia d’Economia Civile. Da leggersi nella Cattedra Interiana* (Naples: Fratelli Simone) 2 vols. 1765 and 1767.
- 76 Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni di Commercio o sia d’Economia Civile. Da leggersi nella Cattedra Interiana di Napoli edizione accresciuta di varie aggiunte* (Milan: Federico Agnelli, 1768).
- 77 Genovesi, *Delle Lezioni di Commercio o sia d’Economia Civile. Da leggersi nella Cattedra Interiana... Seconda Edizione Napoletana*, 2 vols. (Naples: Stamperia Simoniana, 1768 and 1770).
- 78 Perna, “Nota critica”, 905–21.
- 79 Maria Luisa Perna, “L’universo comunicativo di Antonio Genovesi”, in Anna Maria Rao, ed., *Editoria e cultura a Napoli nel XVIII secolo* (Naples: Liguori, 1998), 391–404.
- 80 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, part I, ch. IX, 395–437.
- 81 Genovesi, “Proemio”, 261–68.
- 82 Véron Duverger de Forbonnais, *Principes et observations oeconomiques* (Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey, 1767).
- 83 Perna, *Antonio Genovesi*, 917.
- 84 Despite the additions to the Milanese edition, and Carli’s recommendation, Beccaria did not accept Carli’s suggestion. He maintained that there was no single Italian book sufficiently complete and suitable for the requirements of economic science – no teacher had brought together all the required topics in one text of a suitable size. For Beccaria, Genovesi’s text might have seemed to have served this purpose, but the *Lezioni* was two volumes long and far from complete. It contained many things that were superfluous and remote from economic science, adapted to the circumstances and laws of the Kingdom of Naples rather than those of the province of Milan. According to Perna, the main problem was that the Beccaria’s Milanese chair was intended to train technically competent administrators, civil servants for a much more efficient administration than that in Naples. See Perna, “Nota critica”, 916.
- 85 Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “Providence and Uses of Grotian Strategies in Neapolitan Political Thought, 1650–1750”, in Hans Blom, ed., *Sacred Politics, Natural Law and the Law of Nations in the 16th–17th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).
- 86 For a list of texts on this matter see Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “The Crisis of Spanish Monarchy and the Renewal of the Foundations of Early Modern Neapolitan Political Thought: The Nation as the New Political Actor”, in Cesare Cuttica, László Kontler, eds., *Crisis and Renewal in the History of European Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 142.
- 87 For Vico see Luna-Fabritius “The Crisis”; Genovesi, *Lezioni*, ch. I, §§ 17–20 and Francesca Dal Degan ed., *Lezioni di economia civile* (Milan: Vita & Pensiero, 2013), 22–23.
- 88 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, part I, Ch. I, §§ XVI, XVII, 282–84.
- 89 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, part II, Ch. X §IV, 754: “all three of these ways of trust should be soundly cultivated with all diligence and delicacy, as the foundations of civil society, the arts, industry, the spirit of the nation, commerce, and public peace and opulence”.

- 90 Luna-Fabritius, “The Crisis”, 141–46.
- 91 The *ceto mezzano* is the intermediate social group between the nobility and the people. Spanish translators from that period already translated this as middle class, but it is anachronistic to treat it as such. Prior to Genovesi’s period the author that better describes the *ceto civile* is perhaps Paolo Mattia Doria see Luna González, *From Self-preservation to Self-liking*, 293, Giovan Battista Vico, *L’Autobiografia, il carteggio e le poesie varie* (Bari: 1929 [1725]).
- 92 Luna-Fabritius, *From Self-preservation*, 293.
- 93 Bruni argues that interactions among the people propagated happiness “horizontally”. Although Genovesi did not use this term, for Bruni horizontal means reciprocity as the basis of civil economy; see Luigino Bruni, “On the concept of *Economia civile* and ‘*Felicitas Publica*’: A Comment on Federico D’Onofrio”, *Journal of History of Economic Thought* 39, no.2 (2017): 276–77.
- 94 Luna-Fabritius, “The Secularisation”, 173–82.
- 95 *Ibid.*
- 96 Luna-Fabritius, “Providence”.
- 97 In the interpretation of D’Onofrio, 464. He also argues that Genovesi was deeply influenced by Wolff, who Genovesi never cites.
- 98 Genovesi had access to J.F. Bielfeld, *Institutions politiques*, 2 vols. (La Haye: Pierre Gosse, 1760). A third volume was published in Leiden by Samuel et Jean Luchtmans in 1772.
- 99 Genovesi, “Proemio”, *Lezioni*; *Id.*, *La Logica per gli giovanetti* (Bassano: Remondi di Venezia, 1779), 45 and “Letter from A. Genovesi to Angelo Pavesi”, 21st January 1775 in *Letteri familiari di A. Genovesi* vol. 2 (Venice: P. Savioni, 1765), 29–30 in which he warmly recommends Bielfeld’s text.
- 100 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, 268; Eluggiero Pii, *Antonio Genovesi. Dialoghi e Altri Scritti Intorno alle Lezioni di Commercio* (Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, 2008), 201; Giuseppe Ricuperati, *Storia delle idee politiche, economiche e sociali* (Turin: UTET, IV, II, 1975), 364–66; Girolamo Imbruglia, “Recensione a F. Arata, *Antonio Genovesi. Una proposta di morale illuministica*, Padua: Marsilio, 1978”, *Bollettino del Centro di Studi Vichiano* (1980): 230–32.
- 101 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, “Proemio” and Pii, *Antonio Genovesi*, 201.
- 102 The number of texts on this topic during the first decade of the eighteenth century is vast. On the limits of rulers’ performance, see Adriana Luna-Fabritius “Limits of Power: Gaetano Filangieri’s Liberal Legacy” in *Pléyade* no. 20 (2017): 61–83.
- 103 Genovesi, *Lezioni*, part I, Ch. X, §XI, 412.
- 104 On Neapolitan discussions of sociability related to *imbecillitas*, the inability of individuals to survive by themselves, and the need for a civil society, see Adriana Luna-Fabritius “Visions of Sociability in Early-Modern Neapolitan Political Thought”, in Martin van Gelderen, Ere Nokkala, Jonas Gerlins, eds., *Processes of Enlightenment – Essays in Honour of Hans Erich Bödeker* (Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, Liverpool University Press, forthcoming).

Part II

**Agents and Ideas of
Improvement and Reform
in Context**



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7 Projects for the Improvement of Constitutional Order

Late Cameralists as Advocates of Political Change

Ere Nokkala

Introduction

This chapter proposes that German cameralists contributed to European political thought through their advocacy of improvement (*Verbesserung*) and political change. It is argued that the cameral sciences formed a *Lehrfach*, a discipline, quintessentially oriented to improvement. Many cameralist reforms and projects of improvement had a precise practical economic focus. Books were written on how one might improve manufactures, mines, agriculture, and forests. Another branch of literary production concentrated on the broad questions of state activities, aimed at the general welfare of subjects. These books were written under the umbrella concept of police sciences (*Polizeiwissenschaften*). A further branch of cameralist literary production was aimed at improving the “condition of nourishment” (*Nahrungsstand*) of the state – anachronistically, one could speak of the “economy” of the state.¹ However, this chapter pays special attention to another important, but often neglected part of cameralist discourse: cameralist writings on the art of state management (*Staatskunst*). As this chapter demonstrates, late cameralists were in favour of projects that aimed at improving the political and constitutional order of states. Indeed, a balanced constitution was a precondition for the improved “cultivation of the land”. Therefore, I argue that cameralist discourse, often considered to be directed towards mere administration, was in fact thoroughly political, future-oriented, dynamic – and it also recognized contingency. Late cameralists – most prominently Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi (1717–1771)² and Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer (1718–1787) – repurposed the absolutist political conception of fatherly government as the politics of an economic state.³ In the background was the idea that improvements, including improvement to the form of government and of constitutional order in general, called for knowledge.⁴ And this new knowledge for improving the political and constitutional order of states was to be provided by cameralist *Staatskunst*.

Improvement is about change.⁵ What is then the place of cameral sciences within the broader European framework of languages of change in use during the eighteenth century? No other scholar has done more to identify

the Enlightenment with change than Franco Venturi, and therefore reflecting on his legacy gives us an opportunity to place cameral sciences in a broader European context. Not unsurprisingly, Venturi's work provided the framework for the most recent European history of the language of change.⁶ Venturi's focus was on the relation between political ideas and their implementation in practical reform processes. His transnational studies on practical social, political, and economic reforms in eighteenth-century Europe have inspired a generation of historians.⁷ But while Venturi's work remains widely used, its particular shortcomings are increasingly recognized. He focused primarily on republican ideas seen through an Italian "prism"; he interpreted the European Enlightenment through the eyes of its Italian commentators.⁸ He studied the writings of Italian reformers, their contributions to journals and diplomatic reports. His transnational analysis relied heavily on contemporary Italian perspectives and the associated secondary literature.⁹ Furthermore, there are conceptual problems: a reformer is for Venturi someone whom he regards as a reformer. He was not that much interested in analysing what reform and reformer might mean in his sources. He was not interested in the occurrences of the word itself.¹⁰ Neither was he interested in the concept of improvement. It is through the eyes of selected Italian writers – "reformers" – that he reconstructed the era of Enlightenment as an era of reforms.¹¹

The recent collective volume on the language of change took an important step towards extending the legacy of Venturi by emphasizing contemporary understandings of the concepts of reform and improvement. However, this can be taken further, since many of the contributors use these two terms interchangeably. Another merit of this new work is that it fills a gap in relation to Venturi's neglect of Prussia and what has been called *enlightened absolutism*, or *enlightened despotism*.¹² Venturi may be praised for having a broad perspective including Russia and the American colonies, but he had very little to say about the German Enlightenment and its main institutions, the universities. He paid next to no attention either to German natural law or to cameral sciences, which combined with his rather narrow "Italian prism" explains the limited interest in his work in the German-speaking language area.

To remedy this Susan Richter has devoted a whole chapter to discussion of cameralism and its relationship to the language of change.¹³ She argues that the direction and path of change did not change within the writings of the later eighteenth-century cameralists. In this she contradicts the findings of Andreas Bihrer and Dietmar Schiersner, who have argued that reformers fundamentally changed "the social system of language and action", new terms gaining acceptance.¹⁴ In contrast, Richter emphasizes that cameralists used old models and metaphors in their defence of the language of change. In her view the language of the cameralists was typically monarchical, characterized by its recursiveness. My argument in this chapter is different. According to my interpretation, late cameralists – above all Justi and Pfeiffer – were innovative language users. The principal contribution of

the cameralists was to repurpose concepts by giving them new meanings. Richter argues that “Justi’s contemporaries did not develop a special term for the act of reforming and therefore did not call themselves ‘reformers’”.¹⁵ However, as I will show in the first part of this chapter, they did have a special term for someone having a plan for improvement and seeking to put this into practice. This was the concept of a projector (*Projekt-Macher*). As I will show projector was not a new concept, but it was the concept the late cameralists used to describe as the agent for the act of improving.¹⁶ The language used here was not a language of reform, but of improvement. The cameralists repurposed the negative concept of a projector as a concept with positive connotations. Cameralists used the concept of projector to describe their own activities. The projects of projectors ranged from improving the forestry to improving the constitutional order.

The second part of this chapter focuses on special model that Justi discussed in his work at length: the negative example of the Swedish form of government of 1719/1720, and what it had become. This discussion was later taken up by Pfeiffer. Justi explained that the Swedes had sought to improve their form of government in enlightened times, and that this therefore deserved scrutiny. It is in this context that Justi introduced into German discussion the concepts of balance of power and separation of powers. He was then in the business not only of repurposing concepts, but also of introducing new concepts to the discourse on *Staatskunst* in the cameral sciences. Justi argued that the path chosen by the Swedes was wrong, and that it had led to devastating consequences. Sweden’s mixed constitutional order knew nothing either of the separation or of the balance of powers. Where Justi first discusses the Swedish constitutional order is revealing: it is in the middle of his essay *Von der Cultur der Oberfläche der Länder, in Absicht um die Gewässer auf der Oberfläche zu leiten, und in Ordnung zu bringen* (1758).¹⁷ Justi’s point was that any improvement of agriculture was without a firm foundation if the constitutional order of the country did not guarantee sufficient freedom for its inhabitants. The precondition for this was a balanced constitutional order, whereby the balance must be created primarily between the legislative and executive powers. Having such a balanced constitutional order was a matter of improvement. Not unlike other human creations, constitutional order was to be continuously improved and perfected. Hence, even if most of the cameralist literature focused on agricultural “reforms”, as argued by Richter, there would be no point in undertaking them unless the country in question had a good constitutional order; and even if the country had a good constitutional order, it could surely be still improved. This is to say that agricultural, economic, and constitutional improvements were all interrelated in cameralists’ projects of improvement. Justi was certainly not a revolutionary and his writings were often consultative.¹⁸ He was aiming for gradual, durable improvements. But we cannot treat his use of language as a mere recycling of earlier concepts. We should not reinforce an outdated static picture of the German Enlightenment. A cameralist was interested in

the improvement of his own community. This outlook was provided by the cameral sciences, which were to help in the cultivation of arts and manufactures, as well as of constitutions. In their practical commitment to improvement, they come very close to Venturi's "reformers", committed to concrete political action.¹⁹ Cameralists were interested in gradual improvements accomplished within existing state structures, and this included the political and constitutional order.

Repurposing "Projector"

A key concept for understanding the cameralist language of change is happiness (*Glückseligkeit*). In different variations, cameralists were interested in the happiness of subjects, of the ruler, and of the state. It was the task of the cameralist to promote the temporal happiness of the inhabitants of the country he served. This duty of the cameralist was extended to include the "temporal happiness of future generations", an idea that was commonly advocated by German political and economic writers during the second half of the eighteenth century.²⁰ The late-cameralist idea of unknown, contingent, and plannable conceptions of the future can be reconstructed through a study of the concept of the projector. Until 1720s they were widely considered charlatans, after which cameralists redescribed the concept in positive terms. They even argued that "projector" could be regarded as an honourable title.²¹ Anyone who supported happiness according to a plan aimed at the improvement of one's own life and that of the community was to be a projector. Projects were aimed at improvements, which were to enhance happiness. The future would remain hypothetical, but the projector's imagination and vision would allow them to imagine it more vividly.²²

Seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century usages of the concepts of the projector and of projects had been highly negative. This negative image was a legacy of Elizabethan and Stuart England. A projector was an outsider, not a member of a profession or of a trade organization. The more established members of society looked down upon projectors. Nonetheless, the first defence made of projectors argued that perhaps an outsider's view could offer new alternatives to existing forms of expertise.²³ In the German language "Projekte" and "Projekte-Macher" had a negative meaning.²⁴ This can be seen in the leading German encyclopaedia, Zedler's *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, which in 1741 defined a projector as someone who presents himself as an inventor of various projects that will yield great profits. Echoing the German intellectual and cultural milieu of the first half of the eighteenth century, Zedler advised against taking projectors seriously because the probability that they were charlatans was high.²⁵ In the dominant view, projectors were corrupted adventurers, who sought to misuse the trust and money of court administrations.

The redescription of the projector followed in the writings of cameralists such as Heinrich Zincke (1692–1769), Justi, and Johann Heinrich Ludwig Bergius (1718–1781). This change of concept of the projector took place in the context of the academization of the cameral sciences. The first chairs had been founded in 1727.²⁶ Zincke, who lectured on cameral sciences at the University of Leipzig, wrote at length on projects and projectors in his preface to Peter Kretschmer's book *Oeconomic Proposals (Oeconomische Vorschläge)*. Kretschmer (1693–1764) wrote here about the improvement of forestry. Zincke did not deny the existence of bad projectors. However, he argued that some projectors might in fact be suggesting useful projects. As a useful projector Zincke imagined someone who did not suffer from the common deficiency of "lacking lively images of inexistent and future things".²⁷ Having lively images of inexistent and future things was a key to successful projects. Zincke emphasized that projection was a concept taken from mathematics and consequently he recognized similarities between mathematics, careful state planning, and economic planning. The gaze should be maintained on the distant prospect, and the entire project had to be considered carefully before deciding whether it was reasonable. Skilful implementation of a project required a well-drafted plan.²⁸

For Zincke, what was decisive was how projects might be implemented that would promote happiness and growth without diminishing the happiness of future generations: how to conduct the improvements in a sustainable way? In his *Elements of Cameral Sciences (Anfangsgründe der Cameralwissenschaft)* (1755), Zincke argued that

Use of all available state and woodlands that is sustainable and serviceable to improvement, and especially in these times both a continual new plantation of wood, and bringing into use ever better means of economizing on wood, and after this, a good cultivation and peopling of the towns and villages and the flourishing of those activities which have need of wood and forest products.²⁹

The expectation was improvement, but sustainable improvement.

Justi repurposed projectors without further reservation. He published a short article "On Projectors", in his periodical *Deutsche Memoires* (1751). Here Justi's position was still somewhat ambivalent. He observed that projectors were active in all of Europe's courts. Some of them advocated foolish projects, while others had useful proposals on internal affairs of the state, police, commerce, mathematics, professions, arts, and sciences. According to Justi, projectors were treated with suspicion because of the fear of change. People were everywhere wary of alterations (*Neuerungen*) and changes (*Veränderungen*). Even if the positive consequences of changes were evident, people would still hesitate.³⁰ Justi pointed out that it was often the ministers and officials in the service of princes who were resistant to changes. Hence even the most reasonable projects were not implemented.

Justi argued that human matters and institutions required continuous improvement; they would never be perfect.³¹ Without projects, changes, alterations, and improvements we would remain in a state of ignorance.³²

Justi completed the redescription of the concept of “projector” in his periodical *Neue Wahrheiten* (1754), in an essay called “News about a Special Projector, and some Thoughts on Projects and Projectors”.³³ Justi emphasized that temporal happiness (*zeitliche Glückseligkeit*) should always be promoted by best means possible. Because institutions, and even people themselves, were constantly changing, matters of government, the “interconnectedness of the condition of nourishment” (*Zusammenhang des Nahrungsstandes*) i.e. economy, together with the entire welfare of the state, could be continuously improved for the better. There was an endless need for projects to this end.³⁴ Justi defined a project as “a detailed plan of a particular venture to promote our own and other people’s temporal happiness.”³⁵ In the introduction to his *Political and Financial Writings* (1761–1764) he argued that neither a ruler nor a private person will become happy unless he is a good householder. Furthermore, we should always seek to improve our circumstances, which would make us happier. Projects were needed for this purpose. Hence, everyone seeking their own happiness by improving his/her circumstances should be a projector. We have arrived at a complete redescription of the projector. A negative concept had been turned into a concept to be shared by all human beings promoting their own happiness. Justi even stated that it was an honour to be called a projector (*Ehrennemens eines Projectmachers*).³⁶

Justi’s redescribed concept of the projector gained acceptance in the work of cameralist Johann Heinrich Ludwig Bergius (1718–1781), whose work was a near plagiary of Justi. According to Bergius, for men who drafted reasonable and useful projects the term *projector* should be considered an honourable name.³⁷ Like Justi, Bergius argued that human institutions were permanently changing and therefore needed constant improvement. Projects were necessary in all states to improve their governance, the economy of the country (*Zusammenhang des Nahrungsstandes im Lande*), and the common welfare of the state. Echoing Justi, Bergius argued that leading state officials and ruler should be projectors in this sense.³⁸

On Improving the Constitutional Order: The Negative Example of Sweden

The question then arises: how should projects of improvement and change be implemented in a state? Justi and Bergius both proposed that the procedure for choosing reasonable projects should be institutionalized. Since an infinite number of projects was possible, establishing an institution for evaluating the proposals was necessary. Officials on the evaluating board should be open-minded individuals with the mind-set of a useful projector. However, there were different kinds of projects. The improvement of the constitutional order of a country was certainly different from, for instance,

any improvement to forestry. How could the constitutional order of a country be improved? As Marten Seppel has argued elsewhere in this volume, cameralists were not revolutionary, they instead adopted a more consultative relationship to their rulers. In his *Nature and Essence of the State* (1760) Justi argued that if the constitution of a country was wanting, the ruler could seek to move the people to improve constitutional order. However, he should never do this arbitrarily or with violence, because that would break the bond between him and his subjects.³⁹ It is noteworthy that Justi maintains that it is the people (*Volk*) who were to improve constitutional order; he was talking about the ruler moving the people to improve the constitution. Furthermore, Justi emphasized that for improvements to be durable they needed to be done gradually.⁴⁰ He was part of a shift towards making improvement something for larger group of agents active in the public sphere.⁴¹ After all, Justi stated that fellow-citizens (*Mitbürger*) have the duty to do all they can to improve the constitutional order of the state, if they think that it does not promote happiness as it should.⁴² However, Justi emphasized that citizens had to do this in permissible and just ways. He does not elaborate on what he means by these permissible and just ways. Pfeiffer argued along similar lines in his *Staatskunst* (1778), advocating that citizens had a duty to seek to improve the constitutional order of a state if this order was in conflict with the aim of the state, this is to say, with the happiness of the state and its citizens. Furthermore, Pfeiffer pointed out that no ruler could oppose this.⁴³

Writing and discussing constitutions was a daring topic in the eighteenth-century Holy Roman Empire. However, several scholars suggested that studying the rules for building a state was a perfectly legitimate enterprise for a *Politicus*, as Gottfried Achenwall, Professor of Natural Law and Politics, argued in 1761. According to Achenwall, the perfection of the state was measured by its durability and on how well it served the final aim for which had been constructed.⁴⁴ Justi likewise appealed similarly to the right to study constitutional order. He argued that since there was clearly no agreement on the perfect form of constitution, the matter should be reasonably discussed. In his view there should be freedom to explore different forms of government and constitutions because improving constitutional order would be impossible if one were not even allowed to talk about these matters.⁴⁵ Once again Justi was making improvement a matter of public discussion. He recognized the danger of tyranny lurking around the corner. Rulers had an increasing number of means to keep subject dependent, while enlightened subjects recognized that resistance was only likely to cause civil wars and decay.⁴⁶

The constitutional order that Justi wanted to discuss was that of Sweden. Justi's evaluation of Sweden's form of government drew heavily on Montesquieu. This was not surprising because later eighteenth-century political thought was dominated by the different modes of government presented by Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*. In many European countries it was

fashionable to compare different modes of government, and discuss which was best. Almost every writer who wrote about politics, society, or law felt obliged to defend or attack Montesquieu's categories. Justi was one of the first German writers to comment at length on Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois*, which he had read in 1752 in Vienna where, as a member of the censorship committee, he defended the publication of Montesquieu's book against the resistance of Jesuits. Yet it was only in 1757 that we can see direct engagement with Montesquieu in Justi's political writings.⁴⁷ Most likely, Justi's period of residence in the "progressive" town of Göttingen opened his eyes. Another possible explanation is that Justi had been afraid of losing his position in Vienna and therefore did not speak too positively about *Esprit des Lois* while he was still there. Justi discussed the Swedish constitutional order in the light of the theory of separation and balance of powers for the first time in his periodical *Neue Wahrheiten* in 1758 in an essay that has remained relatively neglected. It might come as a surprise for a modern reader that Justi included such political reflections in an essay that is titled *Von der Cultur der Oberfläche der Länder, in Absicht um die Gewässer auf der Oberfläche zu leiten, und in Ordnung zu bringen*.⁴⁸ However, for Justi, the context was clear because he was convinced that a good constitutional order was a prerequisite for cultivating a country successfully. According to Justi, there was little hope of cultivating the land in Sweden because it existed in such state of unfreedom.

Sweden was for Justi an example of a country where the people had taken foundational power back into its hands and legislated for a new constitutional order. Justi thought that the Swedish constitutional order was full of flaws and should not be emulated in Prussia or anywhere elsewhere. He explained in detail why the Swedish case was important, and why he as a foreign subject was entitled to discuss it so openly. According to Justi, there were several good reasons why foreigners had an equal right to evaluate the Swedish constitutional order. He pointed out that Sweden had changed its form of government of its own will during enlightened times. In Sweden, the people had taken back their foundational power. After having taken this power back, the people were in a position to either elect a new ruler or choose a new form of government. As Justi explained, the latter had happened after the death of Charles XII in Sweden. A new form of government was chosen in 1719. This could be seen as an example of an application of contractual natural law. Justi approved of what had happened: the Swedish people had had the right to reassert their power and legislate for a new form of government. However, Justi argued that since Sweden had freely chosen its form of government, it deserved to be reviewed very closely. One had to ask now whether Sweden really did have a constitutional order that supported the happiness of the state and reasonable freedom for its inhabitants (*Einwohner*). Justi pointed out that since there was no freedom of the press in Sweden, and because all Swedish writers challenging the constitutional order and government were punished, he as a foreigner would need to evaluate

the Swedish constitutional order.⁴⁹ The Swedes could not do it themselves. Justi was convinced that reasonable Swedes would be thankful to him after he has pointed the “leading faction” in Sweden in the right direction. He argued that all foreign goods were banned in Sweden, and this seemed to hold true for principles of government as well. In sum, Justi regarded it as ridiculous that Sweden presented itself as a free country. He claimed that it was against the nature of a free state to restrict freedom of the press and to punish writers who wrote critical writings.⁵⁰ If the people of Sweden really enjoyed freedom, as periodicals published in Sweden claimed, there was no reason for censorship. A free people is able to judge state affairs and their management. Therefore, the restrictions on printing were the first sign that Sweden’s form of government was that of a corrupted aristocracy. The prime motive of Justi’s attack on Sweden seems to have been his position as a pro-Prussian writer. He regards his writing as *Repressalien* against a Sweden that had attacked Prussia.⁵¹

Justi emphasized that Sweden’s constitutional order was a recent creation, unlike that of Germany, which was the result of lengthy historical development. Germany’s constitutional order had never been freely chosen. In addition, the freedom of the *Landesstände* – their privileges – relied on imperfections in the constitutional order. Hence they would not be in favour of improving it.⁵² While Justi was clearly very careful not to criticize Frederick II or any other German ruler directly, there were elements in his writings that can be interpreted as criticism of German circumstances, and of the constitutional order of the country. He argued that there was very little left from German freedom (*Deutsche Freiheit*) about which Tacitus had written, for almost all of the princes ruled in a despotic manner.⁵³ Furthermore, Justi argued that serfdom was an indicator of a monstrous constitutional order, which could not be retained without shame. According to Justi, therefore, the Prussian constitutional order was shameful.⁵⁴ It could be supposed that Justi’s statement was directed towards the *Landesstände*, who were not willing to improve the constitutional order of the country.

In Justi’s view Sweden had never enjoyed a free constitutional order that would have encouraged industriousness in the country’s inhabitants. Here he relied on contemporary assumptions of climatology: in the belief that human intervention could improve weather patterns. Colonization, population and agriculture were supposed to ameliorate the climate.⁵⁵ The wildness of nature in the North proved to Justi how lazy the Nordic people were. Almost all provinces of Sweden, not to speak of Finland, consisted of nothing but unorganized lakes, moraine and some dry soil. On a pleasure trip to Scania Justi had seen the many small and large lakes even near a larger town called Helsingborg. Justi believed that the cold climate in the North was a result of the idleness of the people. If they had properly controlled rivers and drained lakes, the climate would also have become warmer. For Justi, Germany was an example of such a development. Tacitus described Germany as a cold country, but according to Justi, this no longer applied thanks to the

cultivation of the earth.⁵⁶ Justi's view may sound alien, but in the eighteenth century the idea that human intervention would ameliorate the climate had many followers. Carl Frängsmyr has shown that already in the seventeenth century climate can be said to be identical to the physical *habitat* on which human influence could have a positive effect.⁵⁷ According to Justi, Sweden was a cold country because its idle people had not colonized and populated it properly. Hence it remained an uncultivated and a cold country.

Justi argued that the cultivation of the land was best done in a state that had a sensible constitutional order. In his view, the happiness of human society was mostly due to reasonable constitutions and governments. The wisdom of the constitution was again due to the separation and balance of the three powers in the state (*Anordnung und dem Gleichgewichte der drey Gewalten*). Industriousness was the outcome of a wise constitutional order that allowed for freedom, the fruit of which is industriousness and aspiration.⁵⁸ Justi argued that a diligent disposition could be possible in Sweden despite the climate, if it only had a constitutional order that would support freedom and thus also work. Unfortunately, this was not the case in Sweden. Sweden lacked a true sense of freedom.⁵⁹ Justi used Sweden as an example of how a mixed form of government should not be constructed. According to Justi, the mixed constitution should have three characteristics. First, the highest power in the state should be in a position to act quickly. According to Justi, the executive power in Sweden was not capable of using its power effectively, causing slowness and inefficient management (*mit einer Unterthätigkeit, Langsamkeit und schlechten Erfolg verwaltet werden*).⁶⁰ Second, the constitutional order should support the happiness and freedom of its citizens. Finally, the highest power should be limited, and in balance. The constitutional order of England served for Justi as an ideal: "The constitution of England has all these three qualities to it, and it is certainly the finest model of a judiciously limited supreme power that human prudence could ever invent."⁶¹ Justi held that, if you excluded England, there was no real freedom anywhere in Europe.⁶²

In Sweden, none of Justi's three principles existed. The executive power was not in a position to act effectively, the freedom of citizens was tyrannized by factionalism in the Diet, and there was nothing balanced in Sweden's constitutional order. Justi was sure that Sweden was about to have riots and revolutions (*innerliche Unruhen und Revolutionen*) especially because the nobility, which was over-represented in Diet, and would have been able to develop the constitutional order, prevented any sensible improvements, since its own power was based on the new arrangements. Hence, Justi's view was that the Swedish constitutional order that had been established to prevent tyranny was most likely to end in tyranny.⁶³ It is possible to recognize a parallel to German circumstances here. As an anti-aristocratic thinker Justi was critical of the position of the hereditary nobility within any state. It was the nobility that effectively blocked reasonable improvements in Sweden, in the same way as it did in Germany.

According to Justi, the main flaw in Sweden's constitutional order was that the power of the Diet (*Riksdag*) was not limited, which allowed the factions to exercise tyranny. The situation would be the same if power were united in one person. Such a situation would be called despotism. The Diet controlled not only legislative power, but also the judiciary. Justi emphasized that there were many bloody examples of how the Diet had exercised its judicial power. Justi referred to the executions of Alexander Blackwell (c.1700–1747), Carl Emil Lewenhaupt (1691–1743), and Georg Heinrich von Görtz (1668–1719).⁶⁴ To avoid such abuses of power the king should be given the right to veto such questionable decisions. Worse still, the *Riksdag* had not only legislative and judicial power, but also executive power. In short, in Sweden, all powers were united in one body, and that made the ruling faction a tyrant for all citizens. The executive power was in the hands of people who were simultaneously members of the legislative body. This put citizens' freedom at risk because the people with whom the legislative and executive powers were united could exercise their power without being controlled.⁶⁵

The part of Justi's criticism that provoked most discussion in Sweden was his treatment of the Council of the Realm that acted as the government of the country. The Council of the Realm consisted of 16 Councillors of the Realm, and of the King. King had two votes, whereas all the Councillors had one vote. Justi stated that if you look more closely, it becomes clear that all power in Sweden depends on the cabal of the Council of the Realm. The Council of the Realm appoints all officials, and since most wealthy men were civil servants, the Councillors of the Realm were able to tyrannize the nation. The Councillors of the Realm could raise both fears and hopes among members of the Diet. Thanks to this, the Councillors were able to tyrannize the entire nation and they were not truly accountable to the Diet, although they were meant to be so. As an ardent opponent of hereditary aristocracy and aristocracy as a state form, Justi emphasized that the chief issue was mostly the nobility's proper position in the state. England and Sweden both had mixed forms of government, which were simultaneously monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic. While England had perhaps the most excellent form of government on Earth, Sweden was the worst because the Councillors of the Realm – who were all aristocrats – used the executive power in the King's name alone and had the legislative power of the Diet in their hands. Swedes had turned their King into a simple machine, and he remained the puppet of the Council of the Realm. Provocatively, Justi argued that all Sweden had thereby gained was that the members of the new Council of the Realm could receive larger subsidies from foreign powers, and start unfortunate wars.⁶⁶ Justi referred here to the widespread corruption in Sweden, and he emphasized that it was the Swedish Council of the Realm that had made the decision to wage war against Prussia, for whom Justi worked as a pamphleteer.⁶⁷ Shortcomings in Sweden's constitutional order had caused its entry into war. What Justi was referring to was the claim that France had purchased the support of the Hat Party for the war.

Justi argued that corruption was a typical feature of Sweden's constitutional order, and hence it was easy for foreign powers to buy most votes, nor did it cost very much because there was little money in Sweden.⁶⁸ Pfeiffer echoed this point in 1778 when he was looking back to the reasons why Sweden's former government had collapsed in 1772, when Gustaf III seized power. According to Pfeiffer, Councillors of the Realm had had much too much power, and they were a dread example of how the executive power of the ruler had been limited to a minimum due to the expansionary lust of the Councillors of the Realm.⁶⁹

Conclusion

For Franco Venturi the key agent of the Enlightenment was a reformer committed to practical political action. Venturi's prime example of a reformer was Genovesi, who argued that the cultivation of arts and manufactures was necessary for the progress of Naples. The intellectual framework for the betterment of one's community was provided by political economy.⁷⁰ In this chapter I have argued that for the late eighteenth-century German language of change – the language of improvement – cameral sciences set the tone in a similar fashion as political economy provided the perspective for Genovesi's political action. The cameral sciences were all about bringing order to the change of things.⁷¹ The agent of change was the projector, whom the cameralists, as innovative language users, redescribed in positive terms.

The improvements achieved by projectors were to be guided by knowledge. This knowledge was provided by the cameral sciences, which ranged from forestry to police science and *Staatskunst*. As I have argued in this chapter, cameralists were able to introduce new concepts to their conceptual apparatus. This was exemplified by Justi's appropriation of the concepts of balance and separation of powers. This makes clear that cameralist discourse was a language of change in terms of political language: the political and constitutional order could be and should be gradually and endlessly improved with the help of *Staatskunst*.

Both Justi and Pfeiffer argued that improvements were to be publicly discussed; a citizen was to be allowed to inform the ruler about improvements to the constitutional order. Because there should be order in the change of things, the implementation of improvements should be done gradually, so that they were lasting. It is also clear that Justi identified uninformed state officials, ministers and the *Landesstände* as the main obstacles to the gradual improvement of the constitutional order. This was the message to be learnt from Justi's account of the Swedish constitutional order. Justi argued that the King of Sweden had become a mere observer of how party spirit (*Parteygeiste*) was ripping Sweden apart. Justi was not against parties as such. On the contrary, he argued that a free state needed parties. However, if one faction was risking the public good or the freedom of the people, another faction must alert the people to what was happening. The opposition has the right to

alert the people. If the ruling faction prevents the other faction from warning the people, it practices tyranny. According to Justi, this was exactly what was practised in Sweden when the ruling noble Hat party was seeking to monopolize power for the nobility. According to Justi, real Swedish patriots and anyone familiar with the truths of *Staatskunst* stood on the side of the King, supported giving him more power so as to create a just separation and balance of powers in Sweden.⁷² The King should be given the right to dissolve the parliament and veto all matters of the state. Justi did not know of any country where reasonable freedom had ruled without the King having the right to set limits to the judiciary and legislative power. Justi's preferred government was a limited or mixed government, where the power was heavily concentrated in the hands of the ruler. Sweden as an aristocratic republic with a weak monarch was the worst possible option among mixed constitutions, and put a stop to all improvements. Hence Sweden would remain an uncultivated and cold country. Sweden would need a project to improve its constitutional order founded upon a true knowledge of *Staatskunst*, such as he himself was able to provide.

Notes

- 1 For a late cameralist account of the improvement of the *Nahrungstand* see Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer, *Grundsätze der Universal-Cameral-Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: EBLinger, 1783), 96.
- 2 Ulrich Adam, *The Political Economy of J. H. G. Justi* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006); Ere Nokkala, *From Natural Law to Political Economy. Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi on State, Commerce and International Order* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2019) (Open access <https://www.lit-verlag.de/media/pdf/be/e5/0b/9783643910356.pdf>).
- 3 Horst Dreitzel "Universal-Kameral-Wissenschaft als politische Theorie. Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer (1718–1787)", in Frank Grunert, Friedrich Vollhardt, eds., *Aufklärung als praktische Philosophie. Werner Schneiders zum 65. Geburtstag* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1998), 149–71; Ere Nokkala, "From Fatherly Government to an Economic State. Late Cameralists on Natural Rights, Freedom and Pursuit of Happiness", *History of Political Economy* 3 (2021): 479–95.
- 4 See the Introduction to this volume.
- 5 See Marten Seppel's chapter in this volume.
- 6 As Bela Kapossy states, Venturi provided a backbone to the recent volume on languages of change. See Béla Kapossy, "Words and Things. Languages of Reform in Wilhelm Traugott Krug and Karl Ludwig von Haller", in Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century. When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change* (New York; London: Routledge, 2020), 384–403, at 384; John Robertson, "Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", *Past and Present* 137 (1992): 183–206, 197.
- 7 Pascal Firges, Johan Lange, Thomas Maissen, Sebastian Meurer, Susan Richter, Gregor Stiebert, Lina Weber, Urte Weeber, Christine Zabel, "Introduction. Languages of Reform and the European Enlightenment", in Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, Manuela Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century*, 1–26, 8.
- 8 Robertson, "Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", 194.
- 9 Perhaps the best example of this is his account of Sweden. Considering Venturi's reputation, especially in the Anglophone world, it is noteworthy that

- Venturi's lengthy treatment of Swedish reforms has gone unremarked in Swedish historiography.
- 10 Gisela Schlüter, "The Concept of Reform in Polyglot European Enlightenment", in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century*, 29–61, 30.
 - 11 Koen Stapelbroek, "'The Problem of the Republics' – Franco Venturi's Republicanism Reconsidered", *History of European Ideas* 35 (2009): 281–88. Stapelbroek argues that the relative inaccessibility of Venturi's writing, by virtue of its Italian provenance, means that it has been open to interpretation for different purposes. As further deficiencies of Venturi's account Stapelbroek points out the lack of treatment of trade, war, and interstate relations.
 - 12 Firges et al, "Introduction", 8; Gabriel Paquette, ed., *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and Its Atlantic Colonies, c. 1750–1830* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).
 - 13 Susan Richter, "Reform as Verbesserung. Argumentative Patterns and the Role of Models in German Cameralism", in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds. *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century*, 153–80.
 - 14 Richter, "Reform as Verbesserung", 167; Andreas Bihrer, Dietmar Schiersner, "Reformen – Verlierer: Forschungsfragen zu einem besonderen Verhältnis", in Andreas Bihrer, Dietmar Schiersner, eds., *Reformverlierer 1000–1800. Zum Umgang mit Niederlagen in der europäischen Vormoderne: Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, Beiheft 53 (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 2017), 11–36.
 - 15 Richter, "Reform as Verbesserung", 157.
 - 16 It is interesting to note that Gabriel Paquette has shown that semantical field around *proyectos* dominated the reform discussion in the Spanish-speaking world. See Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and Its Empire, 1759–1808* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 10; Schlüter, "The Concept of Reform", 43.
 - 17 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche der Länder, in Absicht um die Gewässer auf der Oberfläche zu leiten, und in Ordnung zu bringen", in Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, ed., *Neue Wahrheiten zum Vortheil der Naturkunde und des gesellschaftlichen Lebens der Menschen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1754–1758), 11 (1758): 503–53.
 - 18 On the consultative nature of cameralist writings, see Marten Seppel's chapter in this volume.
 - 19 Robertson, "Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", 203.
 - 20 Dominik Hünigler, "What is a Useful University? Knowledge Economies and Higher Education in Late Eighteenth-Century Denmark and Central Europe", *Notes and Records. The Royal Society Journal of the History of Science* 72 (2018): 173–94, 182. On happiness in early modern German economic thought, see Lars Magnusson, "On Happiness: Welfare in Cameralist Discourse in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Ere Nokkala, Nicholas B. Miller, eds., *Cameralism and the Enlightenment. Happiness, Governance and Reform in Transnational Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2019), 23–46; see also Ulrich Engelhardt, "Zum Begriff der Glückseligkeit in der Kameralistischen Staatslehre des 18. Jahrhunderts (J.H.G. v. Justi)", *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung* 8 (1981): 37–76.
 - 21 Georg Heinrich Zincke, "Vorrede, worinnen von Projecten und Projecten-Machern gehandelt wird", in Peter Kretzschmer, *Oeconomische Vorschläge* (Halle, 1744); Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, "Von den Projectmachern", in Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, ed., *Deutsche Memoires*, Vol. 2 (Krauß: Wien, 1751), 530–33; Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, "Nachricht von einem sonderbaren Projectmacher, nebst einigen Gedanken von Projecten und Projectmachern", in Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, ed., *Neue Wahrheiten*

- zum Vortheil der Naturkunde und des gesellschaftlichen Leben der Meschen, Vol. 5 (Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1754), 536–60; Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, “Gedanken von Projecten und Projectmachern”, in Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, ed., *Gesammlete Politische und Finanzschriften*, Vol. 1 (Copenhagen, Leipzig: Rothe, 1761), 256–81; Johann Heinrich Ludwig Bergius, ed., “Project. Projectmacher”, *Polizey und Cameralmagazin* 7 (Frankfurt: Andreäischen, 1773): 209: “ehrwürdige Benennung”. For research literature, see Vera Keller, Ted McCormick, “Towards a History of Projects”, *Early Science and Medicine* 21 (2016): 423–44, 438; Georg Stanitzek, “Der Projektmacher. Projektionen auf eine ‘unmögliche’ moderne Kategorie”, *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 17 (1987): 135–46; Stefan Brakensiek, “Projektmacher. Zum Hintergrund ökonomischen Scheiterns in der Frühen Neuzeit”, in Stefan Brakensiek, Claudia Claridge, eds., *Fiasko – Scheitern in der Frühen Neuzeit: Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte des Misserfolgs* (Transcript: Bielefeld, 2015), 39–50; Koji Yamamoto, *Taming Capitalism before Its Triumph. Public Service, Distrust & “Projecting” in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
- 22 On German political and economic thinkers’ conceptions of the future as a fiction in this context, see Marcus Sandl, “Development as Possibility. Risk and Chance in the Cameralist Discourse”, in Philipp R. Rössner, ed., *Economic Growth and the Origins of Modern Political Economy: Economic Reason of State, 1500–2000* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 139–55, 146.
- 23 Keller, McCormick, “Towards History of Projects”, 434.
- 24 Brakensiek, “Projektmacher”, 42
- 25 Johann Heinrich Zedler, ed., *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* (Halle; Leipzig, 1731–1754), 68 Vols. (www.zedler-lexikon.de/). Zedler, *Universal-Lexicon*, 29, 784:

Projectenmacher, heissen insgemein diejenigen, welche den Leuten dieses oder jenes Project, davon sie sich vor die Erfinder ausgeben, entdecken, und sie zu deren Ausführung unter scheinbahren Vorstellungen eines daraus zu erwartenden grossen Gewinnstes anermuntern. Einem solchen muß man nicht sogleich Gehör geben, weil sie insgemein Betrüger sind, vielweniger Geld=Summen seinen hochherausgestrichenen Vorschlag damit auszuführen, geben, denn das und nichts anders ist es öftters, was solche Leute intendiren.

- 26 On the academization of the cameral sciences, see Norbert Waszek, ed., *Die Institutionalisierung der Nationalökonomie an deutschen Universitäten. Zur Erinnerung an Klaus Hinrich Hennings, 1937–1986* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercatoriae, 1988).
- 27 Zincke, “Vorrede”, § 16: “Andern fehlet es an lebhaftigen Bildern von abwesenden und zukünftigen Sachen”.
- 28 Zincke, “Vorrede”, § 4:

Denn eine Vorstellung einer Kugel-Fläche, wie sei dem Auge auf einer gläsernen Tafel in einer gewissen Weite auf einmal in einem Blick erscheinen würde, wenn alle Strahlen, die aus jedem Punkte in das Auge gezogen werden, in ihrem Durchgange durch die Tafel eine sichtbare Spuhr hinterlassen, wird eine projection genennet, und es ist bekannt, daß dergleichen Entwürfungen ihren Nutzen in Verfertigung der Land-Charten haben, ja daß man sich durch diesen Vortheil ein noch zukünftiges Vorhaben als gegenwärtig, sonderlich zum Behuff der Einbildungskraft, der Erinnerung und der genauen Betrachtung lebhafter und bequemer, sonderlich in der Baukunst vorstellen könne. Eben darinne aber bestehet die Ähnlichkeit eines zuverlässigen Entwurffs, den wir in Staats und oeconomischen Sachen ein Project nennen, mit jenen, daß er uns gleichsam ein einem Blick und zum

voraus in der Ferne das ganze Vorhaben, die Sache, den Zweck, die Mittel und Gegenmittel vorstelle, damit man eine Rechte genaue Ueberlegung zum Entschluß und eine geschicke Einrichtung zur Ausführung machen könne.

29 Quoted after Paul Warde, *The Invention of Sustainability. Nature and Destiny, c. 1500–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 180.

30 Justi, “Von den Projectmachern”, 531:

Bey dem gemeinen Wesen seynd dergleichen Leute allerzeit Verhasst, weil überall die Einwohner, vor alle Neuerungen und Veränderungen einen Abscheu tragen, und mehr geneigt seynd, bey der bösen alten Gewohnheiten zu verbleiben, als etwas neues zuzulassen wenn gleich der daraus folgende Vortheil ganz klar und offenbar wäre.

31 Justi, “Von den Projectmachern”, 532: “Alle menschliche Dinge und Verrichtungen jederzeit etwas Unvollkommenes bey sich führen”.

32 Justi, “Von den Projectmachern”, 532:

Wenn man jederzeit in der Welt alle Neuerungen verworfen, und niemals einzige oft ungewisse Veränderungen, und Verbesserungen, versucht hätte, würden wir noch in einer grossen Unwissenheit und befinden, und so viele heilsame Mittel, und nützliche Dinge, nicht wissen, noch besitzen. So lange die Welt stehet, wird immer etwas neues erfunden werden.

33 Justi, *Nachricht, von einem sonderbaren Projectmacher, nebst einigen Gedanken von Projecten und Projectmachern*. This piece was later republished under the title *Thoughts about Projects and Projectors (Gedanken von Projecten und Projectmachern)* in Justi’s *Collected Political and Philosophical Writings*.

34 Justi, “Gedanken von Projecten”, 260–61:

Denn da wir uns niemals werden rühmen können, daß wir die Regierungswissenschaften zu ihrer Vollkommenheit gebracht haben; und da der Zustand und die Beschaffenheit der Völker selbst, auf welchen sich alle Regierungsanstalten gründen müssen, nicht allein gar sehr von einander unterschieden, sondern auch beständig der Veränderung unterworfen sind: so werden bis zu ewigen Zeiten in allen Staaten Projecte möglich seyn, wodurch dieser oder jener Theil der Regierungsangelegenheiten, oder Zusammenhang des Nahrungstandes im Lande, und überhaupt die gesammte Wohlfahrt des Staats mehr verbessert werden kann.

35 Justi, “Gedanken von Projecten”, 257: “unter einem Project einen ausführlichen Entwurf eines Gewissen Unternehmens, wodurch unsere eigene oder andern Menschen Zeitliche Glückseligkeit befördert werden soll”.

36 Justi, “Gedanken von Projecten”, 257.

37 Bergius, ed., “Project. Projectmacher”, 209: “In Ansehung solcher Männer bleibt der Name eines Projectmachers allemahl eine gar wohlgemeinte, vorzügliche und ehrwürdige Benennung”.

38 Bergius, ed., “Project. Projectmacher”, 209:

Beständig Veränderung unterworfen sind; und folglich bis zu ewigen Zeiten in allen Staaten Projecte möglich seyn werden, wodurch dieser oder jener Theil der Regierungsangelegenheiten, oder der Zusammenhang des Nahrungsstandes im Lande, und überhaupt die gesamte Wohlfahrt des Staats mehr verbessert werden kann; so sollte in diesem Verstande nicht allein der Regent sondern auch vornehmlich die obersten Staatsbedienten Projectemacher seyn.

- 39 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Die Natur und das Wesen der Staaten* (Berlin, Stettin, Leipzig: Rüdiger, 1760):

Wenn die Grundverfassungen nichts taugen und die Glückseligkeit des Staats nicht befördern; so kann er zwar das Volk zur Verbesserung der Grundverfassung zu bewegen suchen; allein, er kann hierinnen nicht eigenmächtig und mit Gewalt verfahren, ohne das Band zwischen sich und seinen Unterthanen zu zerreißen.

- 40 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Der Grundriß einer guten Regierung* (Frankfurt, Leipzig: Garbe, 1759), 318: “Die Glückseligkeit und Dauerhaftigkeit der Verbesserung erfordert, daß man allenthalben mit Ueberlegung und nur Schritt vor Schritt zu Werke gehet”.
- 41 Thomas Maissen, “Conclusion. Bringing a Despotic Agenda into the Public Sphere. Concluding Remarks on Languages of Reform”, in Richter, Maissen, Albertone, eds., *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century*, 405–23.
- 42 Justi, *Grundriß*, 439: “so ist es die Pflicht eines jeden vernünftigen Mitbürgers auf erlaubten und gerechten Wegen an der Verbesserung einer so unglückliche Staatsverfassung zu arbeiten”.
- 43 Johann Friedrich von Pfeiffer, *Grundriß der wahren und falschen Staatskunst 1* (Berlin: Himburg, 1778), 310:

Wenn nun eine solche fehlerhafte Grundverfassung wider die Natur und den Endzweck eines jeden Staats streitet, mithin eines guten Bürgers Pflicht ist, auf erlaubten Wegen zur Verbesserung einer so unglücklichen Staatsverfassung beyzutragen, so kann es um so weniger einen Regenten der ganz vörzüglich zu Beförderung der Staatswohlfaht berufen ist, übel genommen werden, wenn er eine so ungeschickte Grundverfassung auf alle mögliche Art abzuändern bedacht ist.

- 44 Gottfried Achenwall, *Die Staatsklugheit nach ihren ersten Grundsätzen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1763 [1761]), Preface §12, 25, § 14.
- 45 Justi, *Grundriß*, 440: “Wie? die Grundverfassungen eines Staats sollten niemals verbessert werden, ja man sollte nicht einmal davon reden können?”
- 46 Justi, *Vergleichungen der Europäischen mit den Asiatischen und andern vermeintlich Barbarischen Regierungen* (Berlin, Stettin, Leipzig: Rüdiger, 1762), 210–11.
- 47 Frank Herdmann, *Montesquieurezeption in Deutschland im 18. und beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Olms 1990); Rudolf Vierhaus, “Montesquieu in Deutschland. Zur Geschichte seiner Wirkung als politischer Schriftsteller im 18. Jahrhundert”, in Rudolf Vierhaus, *Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert. Politische Verfassung, soziales Gefüge, geistige Bewegungen. Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1987), 9–32; Paolo Bernardini, “Das hat Montesquieu der Aufklärer getan!”. Percorsi della ricezione di Montesquieu nella Germania settecentesca”, in Domenico Felice, ed., *Poteri, democrazia, virtù. Montesquieu nei movimenti repubblicani all'epoca della Rivoluzione francese* (Milan), 65–78. Bernardini emphasizes Montesquieu's influence on the German Enlightenment and on Justi's political thought (at p. 66); Uwe Wilhelm, *Der deutsche Frühliberalismus. Von den Anfängen bis 1789* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1995), 125, footnote 27. Ferdinand Frensdorff, *Über Das Leben und die Schriften des National-Ökonomen J. H. G. von Justi*. Nachrichten von der Kgl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Göttingen, 1903), 386, see footnote 1.
- 48 Justi, “Von der Cultur der Oberfläche”; For a short discussion of the piece see Wilhelm, *Der deutsche Frühliberalismus*, 127.
- 49 This truly was the situation in Sweden prior to the legislation of the Freedom of Press Act of 1766.

50 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 519–21.

51 Ibid., 521.

52 Ibid., 519.

53 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Vergleichungen der Europäischen*, 26–27:

Was die unumschränkte Gewalt anbetrifft: so muß man zur Ehre der meisten Könige von Europa gestehen, daß sie hierinnen dem Sinesischen und allen andern Asiatischen Monarchen nicht den geringsten Vorzug übrig lassen. Ohngeachtet die meisten Europäischen Königreiche von teutschen Völkern gestiftet sind, die ihre Freyheit über alles schätzen, die gar keinen Begriff von der unumschränkten Gewalt ihrer Könige hatten, und die sich nach dem ausdrücklichen Zeugnis des Tacitus mehr durch das Beyspiel ihrer Könige und Fürsten, als durch ihre Befehle regieren ließen; so haben doch die Regenten fast allenthalben mit so glücklichen Erfolg an der Knechtschaft ihrer Völker gearbeitet, daß wenn man Engelland ausnimmt, in allen diesen von teutschen Völkern gestifteten Reichen von der ursprünglichen Freyheit nicht die geringste Spuhr mehr übrig ist. Selbst in Teutschland in dieser Hauptquelle und eigentlichen Wohnplatz der Freyheit der Völker, ist diese Freyheit mit Strumpf und Stiel ausgerottet. Der geringste Fürst, der kaum zehen Tausend Unterthanen hat, glaubet zu einer unumschränkten und despotischen Gewalt berechtigt zu seyn.

54 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten, oder, Ausführliche Vorstellung der gesamten Policey-Wissenschaft* 1 (Königsberg und Leipzig: Hartungs, 1760), 150:

Die Freyheit des Bürgers und aller Mitglieder des Staats ist gleichsam die erste wesentliche Eigenschaft aller bürgerlichen Verfassungen; und Staaten, worinnen ein Stand, oder Classe des Volkes den andern mit Unterthänigkeit, oder Leibeigenschaft verwandt ist, haben eine monströse Verfassung, die nur in denen allerbarbarischen Zeiten hat entstehen können, die aber gesittete und Vernünftige Zeiten ohne Schande nicht fortsetzen können.

55 Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, "Climate Change and the Retreat of the Atlantic. The Cameralist Context of Pehr Kalm's Voyage to North America, 1748–1751", *William and Mary Quarterly* 72 (2015): 99–126, 100, 125.

56 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 506–13.

57 Carl Frängsmyr, *Klimat och karaktär. Naturen och människan i sent svenskt 1700-tal* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2000), 17–18.

58 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 527:

Die Glückseligkeit der menschlichen Gesellschaften, kommt am meisten auf vernünftige Grundverfassungen der Republiken an; und die Weisheit der Grundverfassung, woraus Freyheit, Glückseligkeit und Wohlfahrt des Staats entspringt, beruhet lediglich auf der Anordnung und dem Gleichgewichte der drey Gewalten, aus welchen die oberste Gewalt des Staats bestehet.

59 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 528.

60 Justi, *Grundriß*, 170–71.

61 Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, *Natur und Wesen der Staaten als die Quelle aller Regierungswissenschaften und Gesetze. Mit Anmerkungen herausgegeben von D. Heinrich Godfried Scheidemantel* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1771 [1760]), 131.

62 Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 26–27.

63 Justi, *Grundriß*, 396–97: "Ohne ein Prophet zu seyn, kann man dennoch Schweden große innerliche Unruhen und Revolutionen vorher sagen, weil die schwedischen Reichsräthe und der schwedische Adel in eine vernünftige Verbesserung ihrer Grundverfassung jemals einwilligen werden".

64 Blackwell was convicted of conspiracy, Lewenhaupt was accused of poor performance in war and for tarnishing Sweden's military honour. Görtz was a diplomat for King Charles XII after whose death the fury over Charles's absolutist rule was directed towards Görtz. All these three cases are still today widely regarded as judicial murders.

65 Justi, *Grundriß*, 170–71.

66 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 524. Justi, *Grundriß*, 151–52, 396; Justi, *Natur und Wesen der Staaten* [1771], 130 and Justi, *Vergleichungen*, 7:

Die Schweden, welche glaubten, daß ihre souverainen Könige den Staat durch unnöthige Kriege unglücklich gemacht hätten, entzogen nicht allein ihren Könige die Macht Krieg anzufangen, sondern auch alle andere königliche Gewalt, und setzten sich nur eine Maschine von einem Könige, welchen der Reichsrath wie eine Puppe am Drathe ziehen sollte. Was haben die dadurch gewonnen? Nichts, als daß die Reichsräthe desto wichtigere Pensionen von auswärtigen Mächten ziehen können, um eben so unnöthige und unglückliche Kriege anzufangen.

67 Andreas Önnersfors, *Svenska Pommern. Kulturmöten och identifikation 1720–1815* (Lund: University of Lund, 2003), 42–70, 163–64.

68 Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 523.

69 Pfeiffer, *Grundriß*, 312.

70 Robertson, "Franco Venturi's Enlightenment", 203.

71 Marcus Sandl, "Zirkulationsbegriff, kameralwissenschaftliche Wissensordnung und das disziplinengeschichtliche Gedächtnis der ökonomischen Wissenschaften", in Marcus Sandl, Harald Schmidt, eds., *Gedächtnis und Zirkulation. Der Diskurs des Kreislaufs im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 65–81, 68.

72 Justi, *Grundriß*, 179–80; Justi, "Von der Cultur der Oberfläche", 520.

8 Joseph von Sonnenfels and the Political Codex (1763–1817)¹

Ivo Cerman

Across Central and Eastern Europe during the “Age of Enlightenment” the reorganisation of administration and social order was often associated with a codification process. In the later 1760s, as part of this movement, the Habsburg monarchy initiated local compilations of administrative regulations, but this quickly developed into a centralised project that had more directly political implications. Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817) had in 1763 been appointed as a professor at the University of Vienna and charged with the preparation of a textbook on the cameral and police sciences, which was duly published in three volumes from 1765 to 1776 and which went into numerous editions. In 1780 Sonnenfels joined the codification project and sought to give it a more systematic cast, moving it away from a simple administrative compilation to a more general legal and political code – hence the name “Political Codex”. The project was abandoned in 1818 after the death of Sonnenfels; but more importantly, all of the official materials relating to the period before 1790 were destroyed in 1927 when the archives of the Ministry of the Interior were destroyed by fire during the July Revolt. This has made it very difficult to reconstruct the manner in which a compilation of administrative measures turned into a broader political project that in some lights appeared to be an effort to write a Constitution.

The genesis, history and nature of the Political Codex has consequently been relatively neglected. While mentioned in earlier commentary,² it was only Stephan Wagner’s groundbreaking edition of documents that brought it to the attention of scholars.³ Wagner’s reconstruction of this very unlikely political enterprise was based on meticulous research in the archives of the central administration in Vienna. Using fire-damaged fragments, Wagner painstakingly reconstructed an almost complete edition of the later phase of the Codex as it developed after 1790. However, the early history, before 1790, is missing from this edition. Nonetheless, thanks to Wagner’s persistence, the edited fragments are very illuminating and clearly indicate why the Political Codex was assembled. In his 2011 biography of Sonnenfels Simon Karstens re-examined the material,⁴ and also located two original documents, although this was not enough to allow a full reconstruction of the whole project. Wagner then updated his findings on the basis of Karstens’s later

discoveries in an article that also provided a useful summary of his earlier monograph.⁵ Whereas the early commentary considered the Political Codex to be a harmless compilation of administrative regulations, Wagner comes to the conclusion that it was a draft Constitution. Karstens by contrast seems to have returned to the older idea that it was just an administrative handbook, since he consistently refers to it as a codification of *Staatsverwaltung*.

During earlier work for a monograph about the Chotek family⁶ I discovered that in fact copies of all the key memoranda and minutes related to the Political Codex had been preserved in the Chotek Family Archives in Prague. What was once thought lost has now been found. I have to thank Stephan Wagner for helping me to correctly identify these sources in 2011, for they were incorrectly categorised in the archival inventory and I was not immediately aware of their significance. These materials document the entire history of the Political Codex from its beginnings until 1818; and the documents are complete and undamaged. On this basis I can attempt here a reconstruction of Sonnenfels's own understanding of the connection between the Political Codex and his own system of police and cameral sciences. I can also provide a better answer to the question of whether this Codex was meant to be simply a collection of administrative regulations, or whether it pertained to public law and the constitution.

The Periodisation of Political Codification

As with the Austrian Civil Code of 1811 (*Allgemeines bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*), the Political Codex has a very long history. It began in 1768 and ended in 1818, when the project was terminated after Sonnenfels's death. I can best address the complex history of the reciprocal relationship between Sonnenfels's thought and this project if I separate the codification and Sonnenfels's own involvement, and divide each of them into distinctive periods.

The codification process before Sonnenfels joined the project may be divided into an initial period of decentralised compilation (1768–1774), and a period of centralised compilation carried out by Franz Kröhnly (1774–1780).

Sonnenfels's involvement may be divided into three periods. The first period (1765–1768) coincides with his beginning writing a three-part textbook (1765–1776), *Sätze aus der Polizey, Handlungs- und Finanzwissenschaft*, first retitled as *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanzwissenschaft* and then by the fifth edition of 1787 appearing as *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung, und Finanz*. The second period (1780–1782) was the time when he intervened in the compilation process and created a general framework for codification. The final period (1790–1817) was a period of conflict in which he adjusted the content to political demands.

In what follows I will focus upon the second period, when Sonnenfels created his outline. He joined an existing project aimed at collecting administrative regulations, and sought to demonstrate that merely collecting regulations without a clear framework was bound to fail. He argued that the

cameral and police sciences were the best instruments to achieve this. The question of whether he was preparing a neutral handbook for bureaucrats, or a written constitution, may properly be understood only if we consider his particular conception of a “science of police”.

Preparation of the Framework (1765–1768)

When Sonnenfels in 1763 accepted his post as the first professor in cameral and police sciences at the University of Vienna he was directed to write a textbook of his own.⁷ The reason was a fear on the part of the Catholic monarchy that the course would have to be based on Protestant authors, since there were no reliable Catholic textbooks available. Nonetheless, the new professor was recommended to base the cameralist part of his course on Justi’s 1755 text, *Staatswirthschaft*; which he did, promising that he would submit the draft of his own handbook by 1765. This text does however also lean heavily on Justi, but whereas in Justi *Polizei* can be seen as an instrument of welfare, in Sonnenfels commerce and taxation are a means for achieving the objectives of *Polizei* – good order and a balance between classes and social ranks.⁸ This relationship was not so evident in his inaugural address, from which Justi is notably absent; his review of existing German literature includes Gasser, Dithmar, Moser, Zincke and Darjes. These writers, he suggested, were overly reliant on practical experience, and contrasted them with French, English and Spanish writers who sought to develop systematic knowledge of the true path to national wealth. Rather than the existing prejudice that the oeconomic sciences represented practical knowledge with no need for principles, he drew on Forbonnais to emphasise that there were principles, *Grundsätze*, that were universal.⁹ In 1763 the project of a systematic codification of civil law was already running, and the compilation of penal laws had also been initiated. Sonnenfels began to draft his textbook without knowing that the work on the political code was just about to start too. The text would comprise three parts – on *Polizei*, on commerce, and on state finances – the first part in 1765 covering only *Polizei*.¹⁰ It was this first volume that would provide the framework for his work on the Codex, while the material in the other two volumes, on commerce and state finances, provided the rationale for it. Even though Sonnenfels kept revising the first volume, the changes consisted mainly in extensions or omissions of some items, but the framework remained the same. The main change in contents occurred in the edition of 1787, and this version was reedited also in 1819.¹¹

In his textbook, he sought to prove the scientific status of the cameral and political science by providing a logical structure of its material. He believed that the logical framework was the defining feature of a scientific work.¹² In doing so, he combined the logical form and the empirical content provided by research and observation. His method was elaborating on Montesquieu, Rousseau and Justi, but he did not simply repeat them. His science of police established a fixed list of positive attributes to be protected, and

then attached to each of them an open-ended series of possible threats that should be countered. The list of these checks could be altered or amended over time according to current circumstances. The positive goods were defined as Security of Actions (*Sicherheit der Handlungen*), Security of Persons (*Sicherheit der Personen*), Security of Honour (*Sicherheit der Ehre*) and Security of Goods (*Sicherheit der Güter*).¹³

These liberties were to be protected by law, but Sonnenfels put more emphasis on establishing institutions that would ensure that harmful events would never happen. He followed Montesquieu in his conviction that police differs from the law through the implementation of positive measures which would encourage citizens to follow a particular course of action, whereas the law prevents people from specific actions. Hence as part of his medical *Polizei* Sonnenfels urged the sovereign to establish public health institutions and faculties of medicine so that people might not contract illnesses,¹⁴ or construct roads in such a way that accidents did not occur.¹⁵

The Making of the Political Codex (1768–1782)

Sonnenfels was able to elaborate these ideas before Maria Theresa requested that he assist with the work on the Codex. The early history of the project can be reconstructed from the newly discovered handwritten *Aktengeschichte* by Franz Kröhny,¹⁶ who was actually the principal clerk for the compilation. After Maria Theresa decided that the police regulations from the Bohemian lands should be collected and systematised, in May 1768 it was ordered that each provincial government should establish a Compilation Commission to complete the assignment.¹⁷ Even though the Court Chancery in Vienna deliberated on the issue on 7 May 1769,¹⁸ it did not provide any standardised classification for the compilation. It was expected that each of the provincial governments in Prague (Bohemia), Brno (Moravia) and Opava (Silesia) would develop their own classification. However, only the government in Opava, Silesia, submitted a collection of their laws,¹⁹ in six volumes.

The need for a Political Codex became more urgent with the Bohemian Famine of 1771–1772. Since the crisis clearly exceeded the capacities of the local government in Prague, in February 1771 Maria Theresa summoned an interdisciplinary Court Commission in Vienna.²⁰ The Commission dispatched its member Franz Kressel von Qualtenberg to Bohemia to check the situation. His conclusion was that the situation had been aggravated by the misapplication of protective cameralist measures. When the co-regent Joseph II agreed with this the Commission concluded that a fundamental revision of state administration was needed. In addition, the annexation of Galicia in 1772 made administrative reform even more urgent.

In December 1772 the government councillor Franz Anton Blanck proposed comprehensive changes in response, as part of negotiations between the Viennese Commission and *Oberstburggraf* Karl Egon von Fürstenberg, who had been asked by the commission to propose solutions to the crisis.

The *Oberstburggraf* was the head of the Bohemian provincial government in Prague, but outraged by the behaviour of Viennese officials Fürstenberg resigned and asked Blanck to submit the final memorandum, intended to propose general reforms for the whole monarchy.²¹ The reform proposal, which is entitled *Entwurf zur Emporbringung der österreichischen Staaten* (Project for the Advancement of the Austrian States), is very far-reaching.²² It proposes improvements in manners through a system of compulsory public schooling, reform to church administration, the abolition of guilds and serfdom, and the codification of law. While the overall argument differed from Sonnenfels, many of the particular measures corresponded to those proposed by him. The *Entwurf* is based on the belief that each state has three essential powers: the educating power (*aufklärende Macht*), the power of command (*befehlende Macht*) and executive power (*ausübende Macht*). The Political Codex should be a part of the power of command, just like the civil code and the criminal code. The codex is here conceived as a collection of existing regulations, not as new legislation.²³ This early systematic outline demonstrates that this compilation of police regulations was supposed to complete the civil and criminal codes, enabling the emergence of a coherent body of law to emerge. The *Entwurf* also contains discussion of economic policy.²⁴ Contrary to Kressel's report, which had proposed free trade, Blanc argued that a degree of protection was needed to help develop domestic industry. However, this should not result in economic warfare with other states, but allow foreign imports to stimulate competition. Even though the author does not refer to Sonnenfels by name, his memorandum ends by praising cameral science as a very useful discipline which should be protected.²⁵ The *Entwurf* did become the basis for far-reaching reforms, since Maria Theresa submitted it together with Joseph II's reform proposal to Kaunitz, the State Chancellor, so as to stimulate debate that would provide the state with a comprehensive proposal for reform.²⁶ Maria Theresa then signed the amended reform project in June 1773 as her political testament, and bound her successor to realise the changes.²⁷ Parts of Blanc's *Entwurf* were published in Schlözer's journal *Briefwechsel* under the authorship of Emperor Joseph II.²⁸ Parallel with these efforts officials in Vienna resumed the work of compilation. Since the local governments in Prague and Brno did nothing, Vienna decided to intervene. In 1774 the Viennese Court Chancery dispatched Franz Kröhny, an articled clerk, to Bohemia to collect the administrative regulations in person.²⁹ He was given an instruction dated 19 March 1774 which provided rough definitions of police regulations.³⁰ Kröhny carried out the compilation in Prague from 11 April 1774 to 7 February 1775.³¹ In the reports that he wrote after his return to Vienna Kröhny complained that the local government relied on a private compilation conducted by an old clerk called Josef Kropatschek, which had a very chaotic structure.³² The compilation in Moravia was done by April 1776, and the mission in Silesia finished by 20 October 1776.³³ Kröhny returned to Vienna with a great deal of material that was yet to be systematised. Surprisingly,

Sonnenfels had not yet been asked to propose a classification because the court councillor Johann Wenzel Margelik had left this to Kröhny. He did draft a system of his own, but as time went on complications multiplied. Then Kröhny had to return to Brno and Prague in 1778 to collect new regulations issued after his departure.³⁴ While Kröhny was struggling in Prague with the local post office, the authorities in Vienna asked Sonnenfels to assess Kröhny's system and adjust his own courses in the cameral sciences to the classification used in the contemporary compilation process.

After checking the documents Sonnenfels concluded that he did not need to alter his own approach, for he could see a number of illogical faults in the proposed classification.³⁵ Kröhny's system, based on official orders, divided the material into seven headings: *Politica, Publica, Commercialia, Finantialia – Cameralia, Ecclesiastica, Militaria, Judicialia mixta*.³⁶ This division lacked any unifying principle, and Sonnenfels argued that the distinction between *Politica* and *Publica* was quite illogical. Kröhny's instruction stated that *Publica* pertains to matters related to foreign states and to the organisation of domestic political offices. However, the category *Politica* also included matters concerning political offices! In addition to that, Sonnenfels expressed disappointment that the system singled out ecclesiastical affairs as a special category and thereby helped strengthen the widespread prejudice that the church is exempt from state oversight.³⁷

On 15 February 1780 Sonnenfels presented Maria Theresa with a memorandum "Reflections on the Conception of a General Political Codex".³⁸ He argued for a more systematic approach that would focus on one objective, and seek to systematise all regulations on the basis of their relation to this aim. These police regulations were not included in the ongoing codification of civil and criminal laws. Furthermore, he asked for assistance that would allow him to complete the project. Sonnenfels later claimed that Maria Theresa gave him the title of *Hofrat* (court councillor) and employed him in the Court Chancery to complete the plan. In fact he was given the honorary title of *Hofrat* for establishing public street lighting in Vienna,³⁹ and in 1780 the full title of *Hofrat* for his membership of the *Studienhofkommission* (Court Commission for Education).⁴⁰ It is true, however, that Sonnenfels was sent to the Bohemian-Austrian Court Chancery to discuss practical measures with their officials. The officials gave him a hard time, as Sonnenfels's second memorandum of 15 May 1780 shows.⁴¹ In it he concedes that conversations with the officials made him revise some of his initial assumptions, but he still concluded with a triumphant apology for a systematic approach. He argued that the proposed project should not be called merely a compilation, because that would mean that archivists (*Registratoren*) would be collecting documents and doing historical work. He warned that the administration would continue to practice a shapeless casuistry.⁴²

Things began to move only after the death of Maria Theresa on 29 November 1780. On 20 March 1781 Sonnenfels presented Emperor Joseph II with a lengthy memorandum, "A Simple Outline for a Collection of Political

Laws” (*Der einfache Umriss zu einer politischen Gesetzessammlung*) in which he summed up developments up to that point, and proposed his own codification framework for police regulations.⁴³ He regretted here that the previous government did not have the courage to implement these necessary reforms, and hoped that the new monarch would show more energy.⁴⁴

He sought to explain here why the cameral and police sciences could be of use in this practical enterprise. If I seek to remove contradictions from laws, he argued, I need to have logical principles that will help us to structure the material. Without them, contradictions will necessarily occur. The clarity of one single law depends on the style of language, he argued, but the clarity of the whole body of law depends on its logical structure.⁴⁵ If I wish to systematise police regulations I need to see them from one vantage point and in reciprocal connections. His post as professor of police science taught him to see these connections.

As already noted with respect to the *Sätze* of 1765, for Sonnenfels the state was a body of citizens, not a set of institutions distinct from them. As other contemporary writers, he employed the terms “state” and “society” as synonyms. Correspondingly, codification pertained to relationships among citizens observing laws.⁴⁶ Its aim was to establish an equilibrium between the classes, so that the upper classes have their status secured, and the lower classes are not oppressed. Arts and sciences should be protected from criticism. With a benign political constitution – not a statutory framework as such, but a coherent body of laws furthering the security of individual citizens and their property – he argued that classes would not work against each other, but connect with each other in harmony (*Übereinstimmung*) to achieve a common goal. In order to set this social body in motion, the political constitution also needed to remove the bondage of “exclusion and guild coercion” (*Ausschlüsse und Zunftzwang*), so that it creates impetus (*Triebfedern*) and liberates people’s will to work (*Arbeitsamkeit*). It is only this interplay of action, freedom and will to work that will really set the spirit of nation in motion, and which will provide the state with a “political constitution” (*politische Verfassung*).

Any regulations can be seen as political laws if they are considered from the perspective of their relation to this political structure. For this reason *ecclesiastica* should not be seen as a separate category.⁴⁷ What religion means for civic manners belong to *Religions-Polizey*, what the church has as property belongs to civil law, and what the priest is obliged to do for the commonwealth belongs to civic duties.

In the *Umriss* itself Sonnenfels proposed a structure based on his conception of the four securities (*Sicherheiten*) and preventive measures for their protection. He suggested that the material should be divided into four categories: *Militare*, *Politicum*, *Commerciale*, *Cameral*. However, as already stated in 1765, the state had need of a large population that would guarantee a diversity of trades and professions. For this reason the categories were preceded by a chapter on the means for studying, reviewing and multiplying

the population. He also believed that the state had to be strong militarily, guaranteeing the domination of the state over all other instances of private power, and for this reason the military took precedence over all other branches. The doctrine of the equilibrium of forces required also that the state does not allow any aristocratic family or church institution to be extensive landholders. Sonnenfels even believed that the Bohemian famine removed the fear of a lack of equilibrium between the classes.

This memorandum actually presented a finished plan which, while later supported or amended, remained the same in structure. It was only after this point that the codification based on Sonnenfels's principles really began. Emperor Joseph II was certainly impressed, since on 25 March 1781 he issued a *Handbillet* asking his officials about the progress of the political codex project.⁴⁸

A Compilation Commission at the Court Chancery in Vienna was immediately established. It was headed by Count Heinrich von Auersperg, but Sonnenfels was given the position of a *Referent*. Yet the officials of the Court Chancery were still not willing to support Sonnenfels's plan. In a harsh rebuttal submitted in July 1781 officials condemned his outline as vague reflections suitable for schools, but not for real administration.⁴⁹ That required a straightforward compilation of regulations in chronological order. They also objected that Sonnenfels's system would violate the differences between laws of individual provinces, and that his revisions would give him the power to make new laws. These were serious objections. Joseph II made a strategic decision. In a resolution of 21 July 1781⁵⁰ Joseph II made it clear that he did not intend to issue any new legislation. Sonnenfels should restrict his task to clearing the collected texts of contradictions and ambiguous passages. If he came across cases that required new legislation, he should submit his amendments to Emperor Joseph II via the Court Chancery. The final decision would then be taken by Joseph II.

Sonnenfels faced the same dilemma that Kröhny had before him. As he went about his work during 1782 officials pointed out that new regulations had been issued which would not be included, and other rules had in the meantime been repealed. He would either have to declare a binding *terminus ad quem* in the near future, or halt the process and provide an outline for future items. In October 1782 Emperor Joseph II asked Sonnenfels how long he would need to finish his project. Sonnenfels testified in a memorandum that he would be able to complete the Code by the end of April 1783.⁵¹ Joseph II concluded that two-thirds of the regulations would be annulled by then, and decided to discontinue the project.⁵² In discussion with the Court Chancery Joseph II approved the replacement of a systematic codification by a mere compilation in chronological order. The Court Chancery actually had purchased the private collection of laws collected together by the unwell Prague official Joseph Kropatschek. This surrender of any systematic approach was something of which even Kröhny could not approve. In response to this move, he drafted his *Aktengeschichte* in 1783, in

which he repeated his criticism of Kropatschek's chaotic compilation. He actually published a handbook that was a compromise between the systematic and the chronological approach. In this collection of Bohemian laws⁵³ items were organised in chronological order, but some more general entries included cross-references to all regulations that were related to them. For example the entry *Unterthan* (the Subject) included a long list of regulations and cross-references to entries on serfdom, property, testaments, labour services and all other relations that concerned a Bohemian peasant.

The Struggle for the Political Codex (1790–1817)

Discontinuation of this project did not mean disgrace for Sonnenfels. On the contrary, he began to focus more and more on practical work after 1781, with the approval of Joseph II. His success lay not in his systematic knowledge of Cameral Sciences, but in his language skills. After 1781 he began to provide courses in proper modes of expression in conducting affairs of state (*Geschäftsstyl*) to which he applied his experience as a literary author. His reform proposals, in which he also corrected the style of the early Instruction for Kröhny, convinced Joseph II that good style was really needed to render laws clear. Joseph II ordered that all new laws would have to be checked and corrected by Sonnenfels. After the Court Chancery objected on the grounds that involving Sonnenfels would make the legislative process longer, Joseph II decided that new orders would pass from Sonnenfels directly to him. The Court Chancery was excluded from the process in order to save time.

Sonnenfels, who perceived the discontinuation of the Political Codex as the outcome of a conspiracy, sought to convince his colleagues in the Court Chancery to resume the project. The frenetic pace of Josephinian reforms aggravated the already chaotic nature of Austrian laws, so that the officials could see the benefit of a systematic approach. Joseph II issued new bills and laws almost every month and officials did not have the time to review their general structure. On 7 April 1790, shortly after Leopold II acceded to the throne, Sonnenfels presented him with a lengthy memorandum, explaining the previous history of the project and requesting the re-establishment of the Compilation Commission.⁵⁴ Sonnenfels complained that the project had been discontinued due to unfair criticism behind his back. The Court Chancery had convinced the Emperor that the Political Codex would have deprived him of his power, and that its implementation would have disrupted the laws of the lands. Sonnenfels could have rebutted this criticism, but he was not given the opportunity to reply.

The 1790 memorandum is important because Sonnenfels stated here explicitly that the aim of his project was to provide the monarchy with a Constitution (*Staatsverfassung*). Even though this motive was present already in the *Umriss* of 1781, it was not stated explicitly. Now he could also appeal to the fear created by the French Revolution. Sonnenfels argued that states could see their foundations collapse if they do not strengthen the principles

of administration. He expressed his confidence in Leopold because he believed that the new monarch was not afraid to see his power limited; he would not wish to govern on the basis of arbitrariness, but on the basis of laws and through the laws.

Leopold II considered this project unusual, but Sonnenfels's successes with practical administration during the 1780s changed his mind. In 1791 Leopold II asked the officials from the Court Chancery to renew the Political Compilation Commission with Sonnenfels as their Referent. On 26 March 1791 Sonnenfels was invited to present his project again.⁵⁵ This version was still based on the 1781 *Umriss*, but he had added some new content and placed emphasis on "human rights" (*Rechte der Menschheit*). Officials and even Members of the *Staatsrat* responded with harsh criticism, and forced Sonnenfels to replace the inflammatory term "human rights" with "civic rights" (*Rechte der Bürger*).⁵⁶ However, the Compilation Commission was allowed to resume work, the Emperor ordering the Court Chancery to act in a supervisory capacity. However, the commission did nothing, because Sonnenfels was busy with other administration projects. Then the untimely death of Leopold II on 1 March 1792 interrupted their activities.

Surprisingly, it was the government of the reactionary Emperor Franz II, who ascended the throne in 1792, that set things in motion once more. The Court Commission for Legislation was established in 1797 and asked to resume the work of political compilation,⁵⁷ but their work made no progress. It was only in 1801 that a new commission headed by Friedrich von Eger began serious discussion.⁵⁸ Once again it was Sonnenfels who was the driving force. He had urged the Supreme Chancellor to profit from the occasion that presented itself when the work on the Penal Code was finished, and resume the Political Code.⁵⁹ This new enterprise was slowed down in November 1802 due to Eger's retirement, but continued until 1803 under the supervision of Anton Maximilian von Baldacci.⁶⁰

The real resumption came only in 1808 when the amendments to the Civic Code were finished, and Franz I asked his officials to get back to the work of political codification. This was 50 years since the inception of the project, and 28 years since Sonnenfels had become involved. The original *Umriss* also needed updating. The first conceptual change was introduced by Sonnenfels, who explicitly rejected the idea that his project was about administration, and added a supplementary constitutional level to his original plan. The second conceptual change was pushed through by count Heinrich Rottenhan, the commission president, who ordered the officials to omit the military.

Sonnenfels's Amendment (*Beitrag*) was presented on 21 November 1808.⁶¹ Initially it is just a repetition of the original *Umriss*, in which he stresses again the need for systematic codification. However, he revisits the question of the systematic status of police regulations and argues that these are all affairs in which a state office has to interfere.⁶² He also added a lengthy survey of books about the cameral and police sciences that had inspired him.⁶³ He confirmed that the Political Codex was meant to complete the

newly existing Penal and Civil Codes.⁶⁴ The most innovative feature was his response to the issue of the criteria used to differentiate between private law and police statutes. Sonnenfels began with a self-critical reassessment of the original *Umriss* of 1781, leading him to add a new constitutional level to the enterprise.⁶⁵ He explained that a full political code should begin with the constitutive element and then proceed to the dispositional section. The first was the real *Staatsverfassung*, the dispositive part are mere administrative regulations. Due to the circumstances of the time the original *Umriss* of 1781 was limited only to the dispositional part, but Sonnenfels felt he had to add the constitutional elements as well.

After that, he sketched a new outline of a Constitution starting with the position of the supreme power (*Oberste Gewalt*) and ending with families. The Habsburg monarchy was an absolute monarchy in which the monarch has supreme power.⁶⁶ Laws are an expression of his will. Instead of discussing the role of parliaments, or estates diets, he proceeds directly to discussing the status of all classes of society, from the nobility through to the *Landvolk*. In so doing, he argues that the term *Untertan* should no longer be understood as relating to the connection between subject and lord.⁶⁷ He imagined a society of classes in which all individuals are directly subordinate to the state, but within a stable system of classes. One manuscript version of the *Beitrag* started with a quote from Condorcet.⁶⁸ Generally the *Beitrag* was a surprising departure from cautious discussion of administrative regulations.

The second conceptual change was introduced by Professor Franz von Egger, Sonnenfels's disciple, in his presentation during December 1808.⁶⁹ He first explained that he had been warned by the President of the Commission Rottenhan not to include the military in the Codex. Military legislation was understood as laws that were only binding upon soldiers, so that for example they involved the regulations governing conscription. This omission of the military was a new move, and a significant alteration of Sonnenfels's original framework. His conception of a society as an interplay of social forces assumed that the power of the state must always be overwhelmingly stronger than all other forces combined. For this reason his original 1781 *Umriss* sought to guarantee the preponderance of the state.

In Egger's conception, the Codex consisted just of two parts, a political and an administrative part. In this he abandoned Sonnenfels's system and embraced the classification of Karl Heinrich Pölit's *Staatslehre* of 1808.⁷⁰ He drew also on the lectures on politics and law that Martin Adolf Norbert Kopetz gave in Prague.⁷¹ The outline that followed described the constitutional rules relating to the highest offices of the monarchy. The political part began with the rules of the ruling house, and proceeded on to the highest offices and thence to the status of officials. Parliamentary assemblies were not mentioned. The second administrative part was almost an exact copy of Sonnenfels's science of police as outlined in the original *Umriss*, founded on the four securities. The main difference was that the military was excluded,

and the exposition began with the role of religion and education in the maintenance of civic manners. Sonnenfels's original conception was not completely discarded, it was just moved to a lower subcategory.

This was a very promising start. From then on, the Commission met regularly, and since they did not have their own building, they convened in Sonnenfels's house on the Fleischmarkt in Vienna.⁷² After the death of the first president Rottenhan in 1809 the presidency was transferred to his son in law Johann Rudolph count Chotek, who subsequently preserved all of its documents in his family archives. In 1813, the Commission announced the completion of its task. During 1814 and 1815 warfare interrupted their work, but the final editing of the codex was intended to start in 1816. However, Sonnenfels died in April 1817 and this loss proved to be fatal for the project. In February 1818 the remaining members convened for the last time and decided to discontinue the Political Codex.

Conclusion

I have sought in the above to explore the connection of work on a Political Codex to the principles advanced in Sonnenfels's writings on cameral and police sciences, primarily his three-volume *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanz*. My research is based on newly found original documents that are preserved in the Chotek family archives in Prague and which form a substitute for the official documents that were destroyed in Vienna during the fire of 1927. Whereas the conceptions expounded in Sonnenfels's published books are well known, the conceptions which he proposed to be applied as a part of the Political Codex remain disputed.

Even though Stephan Wagner's edition of the Viennese fragments have been helpful in reconstructing the function of the Codex, the documents recovered from the Chotek family archive have for the first time provided a full perspective on the development of the project. By considering the conceptual basis of the framework that Sonnenfels applied during the process we might also be able to resolve the old question of whether the Political Codex was a Constitution under another name, or whether it was no more than a systematisation of existing administrative regulations.

There is no evidence that Sonnenfels was involved in the project before 1780. The newly discovered documents and Kröhny's handwritten *Aktengeschichte* demonstrate the very significant problems that the compilation process encountered before Sonnenfels joined the project. The new material also proves that Sonnenfels's conception of the Political Codex was already fully shaped in 1781 when he presented Joseph II with his *Umriss*. His previous memoranda for Maria Theresa did not include such a plan, and the later memoranda simply repeated the structure of the *Umriss*. The second most important document is the *Beitrag*, which he presented in 1808 when the codifications of civil and criminal law were definitively finished, and the state resumed work on the broader political project.

The *Beitrag* echoes the principles that Sonnenfels had outlined in his *Grundsätze* of 1768. It is likewise based on the protection of the four securities (of action, of persons, of honour, of property) and the overarching aim of increasing the population. The most striking difference is that he now added the military and put them in first place. This was in conformity with his doctrine that the forces of the state must be stronger than all private forces combined. In addition, in 1808 Sonnenfels and his former disciple Egger added a whole new level of real constitutional regulations. Sonnenfels had already argued for a written constitution in 1790 when he tried to persuade Leopold II of the merits of the codex. It was only in 1808 that he then conceded that a genuine political codex had to be constructed through laws that would define the supreme power and constitutive elements of the state. His disciple Egger added a more detailed list of these institutions.

However, the list of these constitutive laws pertained more to what we would today describe as society and not state. For much of the eighteenth century these terms had been used synonymously, that “society” had no inherent order other than that which the state gave it. In the early nineteenth century this idea was in the process of being displaced by the idea that not only were the two distinct, but that society contained its own self-organising powers in human action and human reason. Sonnenfels, drawing upon a physicist way of thinking about society, believed that the state would be stable if basic physical relations within society were secure. He believed that the state would remain orderly if the relationship between classes and ranks was based on equilibrium of social forces. This was what he contributed to the codex. The main task of a constitution, as he understood it, was to guarantee the equilibrium between classes and ranks by controlling and supervising all social institutions from the central administration, through towns and down to relationships between family members. For this reason, he was pre-occupied with even the most trifling social rules.

The reason for this holistic approach was that it was still believed that the notion of a society separated from the state was still quite new and it was believed that social cohesion has to be based on a well-crafted plan that would be safeguarded by state administration. He was living in a time which was abandoning the old notion of a society of ranks that was held together by a vertical chain of subordination between landlords and subjects, but which was not sure about the alternative ties. Sonnenfels proposed a society of classes, in which the social coherence was guaranteed by welfare policy and a balance between social forces.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a result of work funded by the University of South Bohemia project, “The Habsburgs in the History of the Bohemian lands in the Early Modern Age”. Abbreviations: HHStA = Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv; SOA = Státní oblastní archiv; NA = Národní archiv.

- 2 Karl Ferdinand Hock-Hermann Ignaz Bidermann, *Der österreichische Staatsrat* (Wien: W. Braumüller, 1879), 124–27; Sigmund Adler, “Die politische Gesetzgebung in ihren geschichtlichen Beziehungen zum allgemeinen bürgerlichen Gesetzbuche”, in *Festschrift zur Jahrhundertfeier des ABGB* (Wien: Manz, 1911), Vol. I, 83–145; Karl Heinz Osterloh, *Joseph von Sonnenfels und die österreichische Reformbewegung im Zeitalter des aufgeklärten Absolutismus. Eine Studie zum Zusammenhang von Kameralwissenschaft und Verwaltungspraxis* (Lübeck: Matthiessen, 1970), 204–33.
- 3 Stephan Wagner, *Der politische Kodex. Die Kodifikationsarbeiten auf dem Gebiet des öffentlichen Rechts in Österreich 1780–1818* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 2004).
- 4 Simon Karstens, *Lehrer-Schriftsteller-Staatsreformer. Die Karriere des Joseph von Sonnenfels (1733–1817)* (Wien: Böhlau, 2011), 446–61.
- 5 Stephan Wagner, “The Political Codex Project of Joseph II”, *Opera historica* 16 (2015): 269–301.
- 6 Ivo Cerman, *Chotkové. Příběh úřednické šlechty* (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 2008).
- 7 Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv Wien, Studienhofkommission, box 16. See Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 69–78.
- 8 Tribe, *Governing Economy*, 121.
- 9 Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Antrittsrede* (Wien: Paul Krausens, 1764), 8, Epigraph. For an account of the Inaugural Address see Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750–1840*, 2nd ed. (Newbury: Threshold Press, 2017), 116–17.
- 10 See F.-L. Knemeyer, “Polizei”, *Economy and Society* 9 (1980): 172–96 for a translation of the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* entry on this term.
- 11 This is the version republished in 1970. Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Grundsätze der Polizey, Handlung und Finanz*, ed. Oscar Nuccio (Rome: Edizioni Bizzarri, 1970), 3 Vols.
- 12 Sonnenfels, *Sätze*, 18–22.
- 13 Sonnenfels, *Sätze*, 30–31; Idem, *Grundsätze*, Vol. I, 65–66.
- 14 Sonnenfels, *Grundsätze* (1970), Vol. I, 271–93.
- 15 Sonnenfels, *Grundsätze* (1970), Vol. I, 304.
- 16 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Entwurf zu einer Aktengeschichte von Entstehung eines Kompilations-Geschäfts bis zum Schlusse der böhmischen Nachtragssammlung*, 1783, fol. 582r. (Hereafter *Aktengeschichte*.) Only the first page has a folio number, the remaining folios are unnumbered. I will refer to section numbers (§).
- 17 *Aktengeschichte*, §§ 4–5. For the Compilation Commission in Prague see NA Praha, ČG – Contributionale, call no. A 9/2.
- 18 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, fol. 641r–643r.
- 19 *Aktengeschichte*, §8.
- 20 Fritz Blaich, “Die wirtschaftspolitische Tätigkeit der Kommission zur Bekämpfung der Hungersnot in Böhmen und Mähren (1771–1772)”, *Vierteljahrschrift für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte* 56 (1969): 299–331.
- 21 The connection is explained in Fürstenberg’s undated memorandum titled *Nota* (from September 1772). HHStA, Vienna, Kabinettsarchiv, Kabinettskanzlei, Nachlass Leopold Kolowrat, Fasz. 63, fol. 329–37; SOA Praha, Velkostatek Křivoklát, Sign. C 56, Nr. 2, no folio number (a handwritten copy of the same memorandum). Fürstenberg’s negotiations in Vienna have been reconstructed by Jaroslav Prokeš, who failed to discover the final *Entwurf*.
- 22 Published in Ivo Cerman, Michal Morawetz, “Der Entwurf zur Emporbringung der österreichischen Staaten (1772)”, *Opera historica* 16 (2015): 269–301.

- The Viennese commission referred to Blanck's proposal as to a "system of reforms" as is confirmed by the handwritten summary entitled *Extractus des Hofrat Blankischen Reforme-Sistem*.
- 23 Cerman and Morawetz, "Entwurf", 281–83.
 - 24 Cerman and Morawetz, "Entwurf", 288.
 - 25 Cerman and Morawetz, "Entwurf", 299–300.
 - 26 HHStA Vienna, Staatsvorträge, box 110–12.
 - 27 HHStA Vienna, Staatsvorträge, box 112, Maria Theresa, 1 June 1773.
 - 28 Cerman and Morawetz, "Entwurf", 271.
 - 29 *Aktengeschichte*, §9. The claim of Hock–Bidermann that Kröhny was building his collection from 1757 onwards must be either a misprint or a misunderstanding based on the fact that Kröhny included documents dated already to 1757 and older. See Hock and Bidermann, *Der österreichische Staatsrat*: 125.
 - 30 *Aktengeschichte*, §§ 10–13.
 - 31 *Aktengeschichte*, § 13. See František Roubík, "K vývoji zemské správy v Čechách v letech 1749–1790", *Sborník archivních prací* 19 (1969): 160–61.
 - 32 NA Praha, Stará manipulace, call no. J 18/13; NA Praha, Nová manipulace, call no. J 3/42. Both of these files, used by Roubík in his article, have been misshelved by the archivists and can no longer be found.
 - 33 *Aktengeschichte*, § 16.
 - 34 *Aktengeschichte*, § 32.
 - 35 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Umriss*, fol. 269r.
 - 36 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Umriss*, fol. 264v. The instruction is not preserved, its content has been summarised by Sonnenfels in *Umriss*, fol. 264v–265r.
 - 37 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Umriss*, fol. 264r.
 - 38 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Gedanken über die Verfassung eines allgemeinen politischen Kodex*, 15 February 1780, fol. 621r–625v; another copy fol. 628r–630v. Another copy has been discovered in Vienna HHStA Wien, Familienkorrespondenz A, box 26, fol. 36–44, 44–46. See Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 446; Wagner, *The Political Codex*, 212.
 - 39 Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 351.
 - 40 Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 380.
 - 41 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, Inv. Nr. 1965, *Allerunterthänigste Promemoria über die Verfassung eines politischen Kodex*, 15 May, 1780, fol. 631r–633v. It has been preserved as a supplement to Kröhny's *Aktengeschichte*.
 - 42 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, fol. 633v. "...schwankende, zweifelhafte Casuistik".
 - 43 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, *Umriss*, fol. 261r. The full title reads "An Seiner Majestät überreicht Hofrath von Sonnenfels einen einfachen Umriss zu einer politischen Gesetzsammlung", 20 March 1781, fol. 261r–305r. (Hereafter referred to in the main text as "Umriss")
 - 44 *Umriss*, fol. 266v.
 - 45 *Umriss*, fol. 267v.
 - 46 *Umriss*, fol. 263r–v.
 - 47 *Umriss*, fol. 265v.
 - 48 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 32.
 - 49 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Vortrag der böhmisch österreichischen Hofkanzlei*, 21 July 1781, fol. 611r–15r.
 - 50 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 36–37.
 - 51 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, Sonnenfels's Memorandum, 16 October 1782, fol. 200r–203r. According to Karstens, he claimed to be finished in four years. Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 448.
 - 52 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 38–39.

- 53 Franz Kröhny, *Auszug der politischen kaiserlich-königlichen Gesetze und Verordnungen welche seit dem Jahr 1740 bis zum Schlusse 1781 für Königreich Böhme ergangen sind* (Praha; Wien: Johann Ferdinand Schönfeld, 1782).
- 54 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, “*Denkschrift welche Hofrat Sonnenfels über die Nothwendigkeit und Nutzen einer systematischen Gesetzesammlung dem Kaiser Leopold bald nach seiner Thronbesteigung überreichte*”, fol. 308r–13r. Published in Wagner, *Der Politische Kodex*, 235–45.
- 55 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1964, *Plan zu einer vollständigen politischen Gesetzesammlung vom Hofrath v. Sonnenfels*, 26 May 1791, fol. 212r–242v. The fragment of the burnt Viennese document has been published in Wagner, *Der Politischer Kodex*, 256–84.
- 56 For the minutes see SOA Praha, FA Chotek, inv. no. 1964, fol. 204r–11r. See Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 64; Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 451–52.
- 57 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 116–17.
- 58 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 122.
- 59 Fragments of his memorandum of 4 July 1800 published in Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 303–309.
- 60 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 128–34.
- 61 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag zu der Berathschlagung über den Plan des politischen Codex*, 21 November 1808, fol. 419r–40r. Fragments of the Viennese document published in Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 354–82.
- 62 Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 368.
- 63 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag*, fol. 432v–433r; Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 373–75.
- 64 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag*, fol. 436r; Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 377.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag*, fol. 436v.
- 67 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag*, fol. 438v.
- 68 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Beitrag*, fol. 441r–93r.
- 69 SOA Praha, FA Chotek, box 141, inv. no. 1965, *Vorläufiger Plan zur Bearbeitung eines politischen Codex für die deutschen Erbländer vom Professor Egger*, fol. 379r–91r. Fragments published in Wagner, *Der politische Kodex*, 389–407. Since the fragment lacked the title page Wagner was unaware of Egger’s authorship.
- 70 Karl Heinrich Ludwig Pölitz, *Die Staatslehre für denkende Geschäftsmänner, Kammeralisten und gebildete Leser. Zwei Teile* (Leipzig: Hinrichs Verlag, 1808).
- 71 Kopetz (1764–1832) was awarded a Prague doctorate in philosophy in 1784 and one in law in 1794, publishing in 1789 a *Leitfaden zu dem Sonnenfels’schen Lehrbuche der politischen Wissenschaften*. After a few years in private practice he was appointed to a Prague chair in “Politik und des allgemeinen Staats-, Völker- und Criminalrechtes”.
- 72 Karstens, *Sonnenfels*, 457.

9 The Translation, Adaptation and Mediation of Cameralist Texts in Austrian-Habsburg Lombardy's "Age of Reform"

Alexandra Ortolja-Baird

Eighteenth-century Habsburg Lombardy is given a prominent role in histories of cameralism. Not only was the Austrian-Habsburg Empire exemplary in its self-conscious adherence to cameralist theories of state and economics, but Milan – Lombardy's capital – was also home to one of the earliest university chairs in cameral science, held by the Milanese philosopher Cesare Beccaria. As such, Habsburg Lombardy has presented two fruitful avenues of research into the history of cameralism: the interaction between cameralist ideas and administrative practices, and the development of the cameral sciences as a university curriculum and pedagogy outside Germany. However, while these vital lines of enquiry examine cameralism *in situ*, questions remain regarding how ideas about the cameral sciences made their way into Lombardy in the first place and via which physical carriers. To address these questions, this chapter explores the dissemination and circulation of cameralist texts in Austrian-Habsburg Lombardy in the late eighteenth century, commonly considered the final stage of the Lombard "age of reform".¹ Examining the selection and availability of works, as well as their forms, such as translation, reprinting and abridgement, it will highlight the processes by which discourses of cameral sciences were made available, by whom, and for what purposes. Moreover, it will question how these discourses – themselves oriented towards reform and improvement – interacted with the existing political languages and reform programmes of the Lombard Enlightenment.

Despite Lombardy's prominence in cameralist histories, to date there has been little investigation into the people, forms and processes by which cameralist texts entered and were disseminated throughout the Milanese bookscape. Although the rich traditions of the history of the book and the history of political economy in Italian scholarship, as well as the rise in translation studies, have produced a wide range of translation histories examining works of political economy, these have rarely sought to disentangle cameralist works from the broader genre.² This stands in contrast to recent scholarship examining the history of cameralist translations and the circulation of cameralist literature in Spain, Portugal, Russia and the Dutch Republic.³ In addition to outlining the translations available in these environs, this research has shown how cameralist works were adapted to regional settings, and has

emphasised the role of individuals and institutions in translation histories and the dissemination of ideas.⁴ This chapter builds on this literature not just in singling out cameralist writings but in examining the role of individuals in the production and circulation of these translations. In so doing, it interprets the acts of translation, editing, reprinting and other adaptations of texts as an inherently political process. Editorial decisions do not only reflect deeply engrained personal subjectivities, biases and preferences, as well as cultural and social limitations and mores, such as religion or regional terminology, but can also actively channel political views which alter the original writer's intentions. Editors, translators and commentators are not just intermediaries, but political agents in their own right, deliberate or otherwise.

To recover the history of cameralist translations in eighteenth-century Austrian-Habsburg Lombardy, the chapter will initially outline the political context of the region, before then illustrating its impact on the Milanese book trade. It will be made clear that the Milanese did not have access to many books that are considered part of the cameralist canon, and that those that were available were mainly translations presented in either excerpted form or accompanied by extensive exegesis. These were often manipulated or realigned by editors and translators to make them appropriate to the political situation in Milan and the reformist agenda of the intellectual class, or to insert their discussions into existing Italian conceptual lexica. Such editorial choices were largely framed in terms of their necessity for public utility, as was communicated to readers through prefaces, letters to the reader and other paratextual features. However, they should also be read against the political and intellectual contexts of their creators. To demonstrate the extent to which cameralist and related works were being consumed in mediated forms, the chapter will focus on the translation of two better-known cameralist works published in Milan in the 1780s: Joseph von Sonnenfels's *Grundsätze*, and Johann Peter Frank's *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*.⁵ On the one hand, these examples illustrate the diversity of treatments that texts underwent upon entering the Italian language and press. On the other, they display similar difficulties regarding the translation of incommensurable political languages and political interests. Building on recent scholarship emphasising the perceived porousness of cameralist discourses outside the German-speaking lands, these examples highlight the unique interpretations of cameralist writings in Lombardy, which were frequently infused with ideas from a diversity of economic and political doctrines. Overall, it will become apparent that the works of Sonnenfels and Frank read by the protagonists of the Lombard Enlightenment, such as Cesare Beccaria and Pietro Verri, were not necessarily those read by their contemporaries elsewhere, but were distinct products created by editors, translators, printers and commentators which were tailored to the political landscape and language of Habsburg Lombardy.

A note is warranted regarding the classification of "cameralist" and "cameral science" used in this chapter. While it is beyond the scope of this investigation to assess whether the works in focus are representative of any

cameralist orthodoxy, or any degree of parity between them, or if we can or should speak of a “cameralist” canon of works in the first place, it is worth stating that the examples examined do not have a straightforward relationship with the cameral sciences. Sonnenfels, for instance, is often viewed as somewhat of an outlier in the history of cameralist thought, and there are questions regarding the connections between discourses of medical police, such as Frank’s, and the cameral sciences.⁶ Nonetheless, the texts in focus can be broadly categorised as important contributions to the cameral sciences *writ large*.⁷ Moreover, given the limited number of Italian “cameralist” translations within this period, these works raise questions as to why they were selected for translation over those which we might consider as more representative cameralist texts, such as the work of Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi. Similarly, this chapter takes for granted the improving and reformist nature of cameralist writings, as is addressed in detail elsewhere in this volume. In many cases, this quality, often interpreted as “utility”, was precisely the reason why Lombard editors and translators claimed to select these works for translation. Yet, what will be stressed is that these works were not treated as gospel. Rather, the cameralist writings explored here were often picked over for ideas, language and concepts, above all variations of *police*, that were potentially advantageous or suitable for Habsburg Lombardy.

Reform not Revolution: The Political Context of Habsburg Lombardy

There is arguably no period of history so thoroughly characterised by “reform”, “reformers” and “reformist spirit” than the Lombard Enlightenment. Not only did the Austrian-Habsburgs pursue a rigorous policy of Lombard reform from Vienna, but they garnered support from a young generation of “reformist” Milanese intellectuals, such as the philosophers Cesare Beccaria and Pietro Verri, who saw the promise of social and political change in enlightened absolutism. This thesis stems from the seminal work of historian Franco Venturi, above all in his magnum opus *Settecento Riformatore*.⁸ Within this “political history of ideas”, Venturi sought to account for how reformist ideas evolved among Milanese intellectuals and their subsequent attempts to institute these reforms from within the Habsburg-Lombard administration. In so doing, he presented a picture of reform-driven collaboration between Habsburg functionaries and Milanese intellectuals:

In considering any one reform it has often been questioned whether its origin was in Vienna, or among the Lombards and other Italians active in Milan. What is essential is not the reformers’ provenance or social condition but that they all ended up working together. Nor is it of much use to divide functionaries from intellectuals. All were cultivated men.⁹

Though few deny the importance of Venturi’s work for the history of the Lombard Enlightenment, many have since questioned whether the universal

reformist spirit driving collaboration between the Habsburgs and Milanese reformers is a sufficient explanation for the period's reforms. Since the 1980s, historians have drawn attention to the diversity of intellectual currents motivating individual Milanese reformers, the practical realities of political compromise between centre and periphery, and the role of institutions in shaping reforms.¹⁰ Others have questioned the true extent of Habsburg reforms in practice, asking whether reformist rhetoric masked a limited reform programme, as well as the assumed correlation between "reform" and "improvement".¹¹ Most recently, scholarship has recovered the role of practical actors – instrument makers, artisans, surveyors, scientific amateurs – in the development of reformist agendas.¹²

While the explanations for Lombard reform have increasingly sought to capture the complexity of the period, there remains little debate over the centrality of reform, at least in ambition and rhetoric, to the history of Austrian-Habsburg Lombardy. Shortly after the turn of the eighteenth century, the formerly Spanish-Habsburg Lombardy came under Austrian-Habsburg control. Being subsumed into the Austrian Empire, it was subjected to the centralisation and reform policies of Empress Maria Theresa, marking the start of the "age of reform". As much of the political and economic administration of the territory shifted to Vienna, Lombardy gradually lost the majority of the privileges and institutions that had been preserved by the Spanish-Habsburgs.¹³ Centralisation was a deliberate process intended to divert authority away from the Lombard patrician class who had long held crucial positions in Lombardy's political and juridical institutions. However, the increasing integration of Lombardy into the Empire's administrative apparatus was also the result of the growing debts accrued by the Austrian-Habsburgs during the Seven Years War (1756–1763). As a consequence, the reforms were initially directed towards economic structures and sweeping changes were made in the 1730s–1760s to taxation, the sale of offices and the organisation of economic administration.

As Venturi highlighted, the Habsburg reform programme struck a chord with the younger generation of Lombard elites. Recognising the potential for change brought about by the removal of traditional political structures, these Milanese reformers not only actively supported Habsburg absolutism, but also collaborated with Habsburg envoys by taking up key positions within the Habsburg-Lombard administration.¹⁴ This was initially visible in the creation of the Supreme Council of the Economy in 1765, wherein the young reformers contributed to the shaping of economic policy alongside non-Milanese members. From here, the reformers' presence spread to other departments of the regional administration, as well as the Palatine School in Milan and the University of Pavia. Cesare Beccaria, for instance, took up the first chair of cameral science at the Palatine School in 1768, before then joining the Supreme Council of the Economy in 1771, and later becoming responsible for various administrative departments overseeing agriculture, trade and public health. The unusual role of the Milanese reformers within Habsburg institutions in the 1760s and 1770s has been characterised

as an outlook of “reform over revolution”.¹⁵ In this reading, the new generation of Milanese intellectuals saw their reformist ambitions mirrored in the actions of the new administration and, with the encouragement of the Habsburg Plenipotentiary of Lombardy, Count Joseph von Firmian, chose collaboration over protest.¹⁶ In so doing, they often clashed with the older generation of Milanese patricians, such as Pietro Verri’s own father Gabriele, who strove to protect their existing positions of power by obfuscating orders from Vienna.

The pragmatic compromise of cooperation proved a challenging task. Already in the 1770s, there was growing discontent in Milan regarding the true balance of local-foreign participation in policy.¹⁷ This was amplified by a series of more resolute centralisation programmes initiated during Joseph II’s period of co-regency (1765) alongside his mother Maria Theresa; and then after her death in 1780, which resulted in a further skewed dynamic of collaboration as new areas of Milanese life and society were administered from Vienna.¹⁸ Under Joseph, the tone of Lombard reforms also changed, expanding from financial and administrative concerns, through the suppression of religious orders and tribunals, to broader social issues including education, welfare and public health. The most visible areas of reform were legislation and justice, with the extension of the Austrian criminal and civil codes to Lombardy in 1787. This shift has traditionally resulted in the Theresian and Josephian reigns being defined by toleration and collaboration, and rationality and subordination, respectively.¹⁹ However, this reading has been largely replaced by interpretations emphasising that while the pace and nature of reforms evolved over the period 1750–1790, reflecting a growing state remit and the rise of a new bureaucratic class, they were underpinned by an ongoing philosophy dedicated to centralisation and uniformity. Capra has thus divided this “age of reform” into three stages: the first (1707–1733) being the transfer of the Duchies of Milan and Mantua to the Austrians; the second being the period of the Habsburg succession wars of the 1730s/1740s and the Seven Years War, which was marked by vast attempts at financial and administrative reorganisation; and the third, which saw the continuation and conclusion of this reform programme in the later part of Empress Maria Theresa’s reign and that of her son Joseph II (1780–1790).²⁰

The “age of reform” of Maria Theresa and Joseph II ended in 1790. The brief reigns of Leopold II, who inherited Joseph II’s title as Holy Roman Emperor, and then Francis II, who became Emperor in 1792, were dominated by the events of the French Revolutionary Wars (1792–1802), eventually resulting in the loss of Lombardy to Napoleon in 1796. Under Napoleon, Lombardy was integrated into the new Cisalpine Republic in 1797 and, with it, an entirely new political and institutional framework.

The Milanese Bookscape

The shifting political framework in Austrian-Habsburg Lombardy had significant repercussions for the production and circulation of books and

printed ephemera in the territory in the eighteenth century. In particular, this dynamic produced a confusing and frequently arbitrary censorship system and regulation of booksellers.²¹ As responsibilities moved between departments, and with both Church and state weighing in on the matter, censorship was often heavy-handed and overreaching, frequently extending to disciplines and topics which were offensive to neither party. Frustrated by these inconsistencies, the Habsburgs restructured the censorship laws in 1768 in order to limit the censorship of disciplines and works which could not be directly perceived as blasphemous or dangerous to the state or social mores. Importantly, the new regulations stipulated freedoms for:

... the books that focus on the country's political and economic interests, or on objects of public administration, such as the matters concerning the *Annona*, currency ... commerce, and public finances, *Polizia*, and the like, the discussion of which can serve as instruction to the nation, and to stimulate the talents: And therefore we propose ... a fair freedom to be able to treat and write on these useful objects.²²

Although some authors, like Voltaire, remained prohibited under the new regulations, the amendments were intended to prevent works on matters of statecraft and economics being pre-emptively treated as pernicious, and to acknowledge the important intellectual role of the population in state issues.

Despite these efforts, attempts to reform censorship in Milan made limited progress. Writing to the Plenipotentiary of Lombardy Count Firmian in 1782, the Habsburg State Chancellor Prince Kaunitz-Rietberg demanded that the "arbitrary and pedantic"²³ censors should:

... adopt maxims of a discreet freedom, not to intimidate, less to harass the authors of sciences, which sometimes have suffered difficulties for having been of a different sentiment than that of the censors in matters that neither concern religion, nor the government, nor good customs.²⁴

Returning to the issue in 1788, he reiterated that:

Censorship, which forms an element of *polizia* in well-regulated nations, must have constant laws, and if one does not find in a manuscript sentiments clearly opposed to religion, good morals, or rights of the principality, then it cannot be said that the censors possess the arbitrary faculty of tormenting authors for the better or more perfect treatment of subjects: this is a matter of purely literary discussion.²⁵

Kaunitz was concerned by the steady stagnation of Milanese publishing caused by censorship and the regulation of booksellers and printers.²⁶ This was particularly noticeable in comparison to other Italian cities. While the output of major publishing centres increased exponentially from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, with Venice producing around 25,000 books,

Turin 19,000, Rome, 15,000 and Naples 11,000, Milan produced only a paltry 4,000 editions, a decrease of almost 50 per cent.²⁷ Of equal concern was the reality that censorship was limiting Milanese intellectual progress. It had resulted in the most important works of the Milanese Enlightenment being published elsewhere. Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* (*On Crimes and Punishments*), for instance, had been published in Livorno, as had Pietro Verri's *Meditazioni sull'economia politica* and *Discorso sull'indole del piacere e del dolore*. The terror of the censor was captured by Beccaria in a letter to his French translator André Morellet:

... in writing it, I had before me the examples of Machiavelli, Galileo and Giannone. I could hear the rattling of chains of superstition and the howls of fanaticism stifling the faint moans of truth. It was this that caused me – forced me – sometimes to veil the light of truth in a pious shroud. I wished to defend humanity without being a martyr to it. The habitual caution instilled in me by the need to express myself obscurely has sometimes made me do so even when I need not to.²⁸

Predictably, censorship and the strict regulation of booksellers stimulated an illegal trade in books. In terms of sourcing books from abroad, a crucial dimension of the Milanese booktrade was the connection of many booksellers and printers to the Swiss publishing house and bookseller, the *Société Typographique de Neuchâtel* (STN) which traded between 1769 and 1794. As the STN traded from outside of Milan, it was able to deal in all genres of book, including illegal and pirate editions that had been banned in Habsburg Lombardy. Although primarily a French-language press, the STN also provided works translated into French from English, Italian, Spanish and many other languages which it traded with Milanese booksellers. The records of the society show some of the trends in book circulation between Neuchâtel and Milan. Focusing on the most traded works of economics and politics (broadly conceived), we see that the Milanese had access to a diverse array of works and extensively used the STN to source banned authors, such as Voltaire.²⁹ However, while French, Swiss and French translations of English, Scottish, Dutch and even German works of political and economic thought were all readily available, the STN carried only a few works that we can consider part of the cameralist canon, none of which are recorded as being sold to Lombardy. Moreover, a general absence of German-language publications, and a limited knowledge of German within Lombardy, meant that these works were not available in their original editions either.³⁰

It was additional Swiss connections that countered this vacuum. The group around the Protestant polymath Fortunato de Felice in Yverdon (1758–1766), responsible for the production of the Yverdon *Encyclopédie* (1770–1780), and a rival of the STN, became a vital source of French- and Italian-language print for the Milanese, including such works as the first controversial French translation of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.³¹ Their connections to Milan were fostered through the Milanese printer and

bookseller Giuseppe Galeazzi. Galeazzi was woven into the very intellectual fabric of the Lombard Enlightenment, collaborating with figures like Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria in the publication of their journal *Il Caffè* (1764–1766) as well as seminal works of the Lombard Enlightenment including Pietro Verri's *Meditations on Happiness* and Cesare Beccaria's *Investigations into the Nature of Style*.³² This collaboration continued in 1766 as De Felice's journal, the *Estratto della letteratura europea* (1766–1799), moved to Milan to be printed by Galeazzi in partnership with Pietro Verri, Cesare Beccaria and other Milanese reformers. As Cunha has demonstrated in the discovery of De Felice's anonymous publication of Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi's *Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten* under the title *Éléments de la police générale d'un Etat*, De Felice's press was an important meeting place of French and Germanic ideas of police which had a significant impact on the circulation of these ideas in Southern Europe.³³ The *Estratto* was consequently an important vehicle for the circulation of cameralist and cameral-conversant ideas, above all from the *École romande de droit naturel* tradition, in the "age of reform". Notable translated extracts include Emer de Vattel's *Droit des gens* (translated 1758), Jakob Friedrich von Bielfeld's *Institutions Politiques* (translated 1761) and Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (translated 1760–1761), all published significantly before full-length Italian translations became available.³⁴

As the century proceeded, Milanese domestic printing culture began to revitalise, thanks to the combined efforts of Milanese printers and booksellers, their Swiss connections and the appeals of Habsburg-Lombard functionaries. New Italian-language works and translations slowly began to complement the wealth of imported Swiss-French translations. Galeazzi, in particular, played an important role in this regeneration, printing just under 650 volumes between 1757 and 1796. This included translations of important Enlightenment works like Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon's *Histoire Naturelle* and, as the next section explores, Joseph von Sonnenfels's *Grundsätze*.

Ideas of Good Government: Translating Joseph von Sonnenfels's *Grundsätze der Policey, Handlung und Finanz*

The Austrian jurist and later prominent Habsburg government advisor Joseph von Sonnenfels (1732–1817) is perhaps best known for his three-volume work on *police, commerce and finance* published between 1765 and 1776,³⁵ which was linked to his teaching at the University of Vienna where he held the Chair of *Polizei* and Cameralism from 1763. This type of textbook was already a longstanding feature of cameralist university education, intended to efficiently educate new generations of civil servants and functionaries. The genre had grown alongside the spread of cameral science curricula within the German universities,³⁶ and significant examples include those compiled by the prominent cameralists Johann Heinrich Gottlob von Justi, Justus Christoph Dithmar and Georg Heinrich Zincke. Despite this rich corpus, Sonnenfels's *Grundsätze* became an extensively used and reprinted

textbook well into the nineteenth century, even outside the cameralist university states.³⁷ Though it was not used as a formal textbook in Milan's Palatine School, its influence in Lombardy can be seen in the development of the Milanese cameral science curriculum under Cesare Beccaria, Chair of Cameral Sciences and Civil Economy,³⁸ as well as in the continued reprinting of the text in Milan into the nineteenth century.³⁹

The *Grundsätze* first appeared in Italian rather late, in 1784, as *La Scienza del Buon Governo del Signor Sonnenfels* [*The Science of Good Government by Signor Sonnenfels*], printed in Milan by Giuseppe Galeazzi. It was shortly followed in 1785 by a near-identical Venetian edition printed by Giovanni Vitto.⁴⁰ As its title suggests, the Italian translation was limited to the first volume of the *Grundsätze* which focused on the topic of *Polizey*. The edition was not a full translation, but rather a synthesis of Sonnenfels's ideas, proceeding, more or less, through each section of the original text, often simplifying or abridging the arguments. In his introduction to the reader, the translator Carlo Amoretti explained the scope of Sonnenfels's work and his motivation behind its translation. The book, he claimed, though perhaps not entirely new in content, was a rare example of a comprehensive, methodical and logically inter-woven set of political lessons that was of great benefit to society. It was, above all, the volume on *Polizey* that most "merited the public's attention", as Amoretti remarked:

Is it not surprising that in countries which are prosperous and abundant, political sciences [*scienze politiche*] are cultivated and promoted, and are neglected in those whose existence depends solely on commerce, and their happiness on internal security? ... Wars, triumphs, acquisitions flatter the vanity of the Sovereigns and increase the evils of man. On the contrary, the rules of good government protect the peoples, ensure the state, and remind the sovereigns that the measure of their power is the good of the subjects. These and similar reflections moved me to translate Mr. Sonnenfels's *Science of Good Government*.⁴¹

Amoretti's statements raise questions regarding why Sonnenfels's reflections on good order were perceived as more useful than those on commerce (*Handlung*) and finance (*Finanz*), as well as why these elements were not seen as fundamentally connected, as was central to Sonnenfels's original work. It is helpful in this regard to consider Lombardy in light of scholarship on the circulation of the cameral sciences outside the German-speaking lands which emphasises both the appeal of the concept of *Policey* abroad and its greater compatibility with competing frameworks and contexts of political and economic thought than other elements of cameralist doctrine. In her discussion of the dissemination of Justi's *Polizeywissenschaft* in Bourbon Spain, Adriana Luna-Fabritius has argued that "the science of police and the concept of common happiness in its German version seemed to have reached a level at which they could be empty concepts, capable of

being filled by the circumstances and requirements of different contexts”.⁴² In Lombardy, this context was one of political and institutional flux. After the death of Empress Maria Theresa in 1780, Joseph II instigated a series of more ruthless centralisation policies which dissolved many of the institutional collaborations between the Habsburgs and Milanese reformers that had been fostered under his mother’s rule, above all the Lombard Senate which was disbanded in 1786. As Amoretti’s statements on the measure of sovereign power suggest, the increasing transfer of authority to Vienna raised concerns regarding the limits of sovereign power and the protection of individuals in Lombardy. While the promise of common happiness had led to support for Habsburg absolutism, or even “beneficial despotism”,⁴³ in the earlier decades of Maria Theresa’s reign, there was a fine line between absolutism and outright despotism which the Milanese increasingly saw as being crossed. This was captured in contemporary Lombard discussions, above all the writings of Pietro Verri. Verri’s growing disenchantment with Habsburg governance was fuelled by the loss of his position as President of the Cameral Court in 1785 and subsequent rejections from other diplomatic and administrative posts, which pushed him towards more democratic and constitutional ideas of liberty and equality.⁴⁴ The translation of Sonnenfels’s “political lessons” played into this growing anxiety over the relationship between sovereignty and the public good. The first volume on *Policey* was deemed to hold the greatest advantage for Lombardy precisely because it explored the advantages of a centralised, well-ordered state while simultaneously emphasising the obligation of respecting the public good.

This context is visible in the language of the translation. Some elements and concepts are rendered literally; for instance, the *scienza del buon governo* [science of good government] is subordinated to the *scienza di stato* [science of state], just as Sonnenfels subordinates *Polizeywissenschaft* to *Staatswissenschaft*. The principles that pertain to external security (*Staatsklugheit oder Politik*) are called “politics”; the principles that concern increasing the means of subsistence through the circulation of the products of the earth and industry (*Handlungswissenschaft*) are called “commerce”; and the science of how state revenue should be raised and administered (*Finanzwissenschaft*) is the “science of finance”. However, throughout the text, Amoretti refers to the principles pertaining to internal order – the *Polizeywissenschaft* – as *scienza di buon governo* [science of good government], or, less frequently, *scienze politiche* [political sciences]. This was not due to the unfamiliarity of both the French and Germanic concepts of police in Italian, nor their possible translation as *polizia*. More than a decade earlier, in his lectures in cameral science and political economy at the Palatine School in 1768, Cesare Beccaria had used the terms *polizia interna* [internal police] and *polizia civile* [civil police] to describe this concept, as based upon his own reading of *Polizeywissenschaft* from Sonnenfels’s *Grundsätze*. However, while there is no profound difference in meaning between *buon governo* and *polizia* in Amoretti’s rendering, their different semantic origins shift the translation

into an existing Italian political language and discourse. The concept of *buon governo* had been central to Italian writings on statecraft for centuries and was a fundamental notion in Renaissance political thought, characterised, above all, by commitment to the public good and justice.⁴⁵ However, by the eighteenth century, the influence of wider European political debates had broadened the concept, and although still pivoting around the ideal of the primacy of the rule of law, it became a more nebulous category incorporating a wide diversity of meanings and associations. This evolution of the concept of *buon governo* in Italy is largely read as a shift from classical political models of republican virtue to democratic and constitutional ideas. Sonnenfels played an important role in this transition, especially in the Italian Habsburg territories where his science of good government shaped forms of absolutist governance. As Antonio Trampus has argued, his conception of good government as the carrying out of state activities within the limits of the law was fundamentally different to the classical republican model that was “often regarded as incompatible with the principles of modern freedom in that its central notion of the common good placed limits on personal liberties”.⁴⁶ This is captured in Amoretti’s translation. Although he inserts the text into an existing, familiar political language, the collocation of *scienza* and *buon governo* is an unusual one, and is indicative of the shift from the *art* of government to the *science* of government, commonly seen as the transition from Ludovico Muratori to Beccaria in the history of Italian political thought.⁴⁷ Although this reflected wider shifts across the spectrum of European intellectual traditions, cameralism included, the language of Amoretti’s translation encapsulates the changing discourse in Lombardy, mediating between domestic and Habsburg political structures.

Other domestic political concerns similarly affected the translation of the *Grundsätze*. We see this in the largely legal readings of the text in Lombardy which deviate from the traditionally non-judicial dimension of police. As outlined above, Sonnenfels’s rationalisation of law and security intended to protect individuals from the arbitrariness of the state. In Lombardy, this resonated strongly with the ambitions of the Milanese reformers engaged in ongoing criticism of the Lombard legal system and criminal law codes. This is especially noticeable in the positive reception of Sonnenfels’s statements on the relationship between good administration, the happiness of subjects, and the reduction of crime and delinquency. This interest had already been explored in Amoretti’s earlier translation of Sonnenfels’s work on torture (*Über die Abschaffung der Tortur*). Printed in 1776, only a year after the original was published, the translation was entitled *Su l’Abolizione della Tortura del Sig. di Sonnenfels Consigliere nella Reggenza D’Austria di S. M. I e Professore di Politica* [*On the Abolition of Torture by Sig. di Sonnenfels, Councillor in the Austrian Regency of S. M. I and Professor of Politics*].⁴⁸ Although it presented a more faithful rendering of the original work than seen in the translation of the *Grundsätze*, the printer Galeazzi alerted readers to the modifications that had been made to the original text in order to

render it more appropriate for the Lombard audience. The most significant of these is the addition of an anonymous supplementary discourse entitled *Osservazioni sopra l'uso della tortura* [Observations on the Use of Torture]. This 15-page treatise, later identified as having been written by the Milanese jurist Paolo Risi,⁴⁹ was included in order to render the book “more useful to our criminal proceedings”. Risi argued that philosophers condemning the use of torture had largely failed to examine whether its foundations were legitimate, and he consequently offered a practical legal interpretation of the subject, concluding that no legal foundation could be found which justified either the utility or necessity of torture.

Sonnenfels had few issues with Amoretti’s translation, which he found almost “entirely recognisable” in its new language: “Find me a translation where the translator did not add anything to the original, or, better yet, correct the author with French liberty!”⁵⁰ He did, however, respond to Risi’s anonymous essay. In spite of the similarities in their conclusions, Sonnenfels was quick to remark on their different opinions regarding the use of torture for accomplices, which he had considered permissible. More crucially, he stated that Risi’s argument from the side of law and justice was insufficient in convincing him that torture had no utility in this scenario, and he concluded that Risi’s notion of *Recht* and *Unrecht* was in fundamental opposition to his own. These contradictions between Sonnenfels’s statements and those in the supplement had been acknowledged by Galeazzi in his note to the reader; however, Sonnenfels’s treatise was nonetheless considered an important contribution to the already vibrant Lombard discussion on criminal law reform, famously instigated by the publication of Cesare Beccaria’s *On Crimes and Punishments* in 1764. In this regard, the timing of Amoretti’s translation was paramount. It coincided not only with the abolition of torture in Austro-Bohemia by Maria Theresa in 1774 – encouraged by Sonnenfels himself – but also with the *consulta* of the Senate of the Duchy of Milan over Maria Theresa’s appeal to abolish torture in Lombardy. The *consulta* was a point of division between the younger Milanese reformers dedicated to penal reform and the older patrician class keen to preserve the institution. The committee, led by the father of the philosopher Pietro Verri (who himself wrote a treatise against the use of torture),⁵¹ concluded that Vienna did not understand the particular form of criminality in Milan, whose hardened criminals rendered torture a necessary deterrent for public safety.⁵² Moreover, they disputed the primarily philosophical reasoning for abolition which, they argued, had little recourse to practical juridical matters.⁵³ In this context, not only did Sonnenfels’s arguments resonate with the Milanese criminal law reformers, but his criticism of the former Habsburg legal code helped lend credence to a contentious viewpoint in Milan. Yet, it was the inclusion of Risi’s “practical” legal reading of torture, which directly served to address the concerns of the committee over the largely philosophical interpretations of abolition. In so doing, Sonnenfels’s text, itself responsible for the abolition of torture in Austria, was re-framed to meet the immediate needs of the Lombard criminal law reformers.

Amoretti is a sage reminder of how translators – their backgrounds, agendas and politics – become entangled in the circulation of ideas. Although Amoretti translated many works (often in collaboration with Giuseppe Galeazzi), he was far from just a translator. Rather, he was a polymath who was highly integrated in the intellectual and political pursuits of the Lombard Enlightenment. Primarily concerned with the dissemination of useful knowledge, he was the editor of the first scientific journal published in Milan, the *Scelta di opuscoli interessanti tradotti da varie lingue* (1775–1777), and also wrote and translated numerous treatises on the agricultural and economic sciences. This outlook links to Amoretti’s identity as a dedicated reformer, associated with the younger generation of Milanese reformers including Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria. During his time teaching ecclesiastical law in Parma, he had been closely connected with the educational reform projects of the Minister Léon Guillaume Du Tillot. After moving to Milan, his perspectives on the means of stimulating the Lombard economy and his support for the reforms of Empress Maria Theresa earned him an appointment to the Milanese Patriotic Society – addressed in the following section – of which he became Secretary. He would later become the librarian of the Ambrosiana Library and, during the Napoleonic period, a member of the Commission on Forests and Mines. Against this backdrop of reformism and scientific endeavour, Amoretti’s translations take on new meaning, as does his framing of his translation of the *Grundsätze* as a “small contribution to his Patria”. His activities, though diverse, were directed towards exploring (and exploiting) the connections between scientific advancement and good political and economic governance.

The Appeal of Medical Police: Johann Peter Frank’s *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*

While Sonnenfels’s writings found expression in Lombard political and criminal law debates, other elements of cameralist police discourses likewise gained traction due to their perceived potential for reform. The concept of medical police (*Medizinische Polizei*) – the formation and administration of public health policy for the benefit of the state – in particular, had a significant impact in Habsburg Lombardy. This is visible in the Milanese translation of Johann Peter Frank’s *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*, translated as *Sistema Compiuto di Polizia Medica* [*Complete system of medical police*].⁵⁴ Frank (1745–1821) was a crucial figure in the development of public health policy in the Habsburg Empire. After studying medicine at Strasbourg and Heidelberg, he became a Professor of Physiology at the University of Göttingen in 1784, before then taking over from Samuel-Auguste Tissot as Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Pavia, Lombardy. In 1786, Frank was appointed as the Sanitary Inspector General of Lombardy, enabling him to pursue reforms in medical practice and education. Later, he was appointed Director General of the

principal hospital of Vienna, before becoming a professor at the Medical and Surgical Academy of St Petersburg and later returning to Vienna to direct the Allgemeines Krankenhaus. Frank's experiences in these roles inspired him to produce his nine-volume work *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*, published between 1779 and 1827. As its title suggests, the book presented a holistic system of primary medical prevention based on Frank's commitment to alleviating the social causes of preventable diseases. It comprehensively addressed matters of hygiene and public health, covering such concerns as sanitation, water supplies, paediatric health and food hygiene among many other topics. In addition, it drew attention to the necessity of good record keeping, the use of statistics in public health provision and the responsibility of the state in public health issues. While Frank's views were especially influential in the German-speaking lands, his work also played an important role in disseminating and popularising the concept of medical police throughout Europe.⁵⁵

The translation of the *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey* was first published in 1786 in Milan by the Imperiale Monistero de Sant' Ambrogio Maggiore printers in three volumes, mirroring the three volumes of the original work available at the time. It was followed at the turn of the nineteenth century by a subsequent edition from the printers Pirotta e Maspino which included the later volumes of Frank's opus. In his preface to the 1786 edition, the translator, P. Ruttini, clarified the importance of the concept of medical police. Claiming that Frank's advice had been both uniformly well received and effective in Germany, he stated that its translation could only be of the utmost advantage to Italy. Ruttini carefully followed Frank's second edition, section by section, footnote by footnote, communicating Frank's arguments clearly and without noticeable deviation. He explained the faithfulness of the edition in his letter to the reader:

The patriotic love which induced the praiseworthy author to give his fatherland the precious gift of this work, has also driven the desire to give Italy this translation. ... [it] perhaps lacks the purity and exquisiteness of style, but you shall certainly not, O dear reader, be wanting of diligence and accuracy. Working under the very eyes of the author, he was pleased to see that all the words were well-rendered and that the construction of sentiments was not changed ... It was necessary to keep the exotic word "police" [*polizia*] as no other Italian word exists which can embrace all the ideas of the illustrious author.

While Amoretti had rendered the concept of police in an existing Italian vernacular, Ruttini acknowledged the conceptual differences between *buon governo* and *polizey*, and the limitations of the Italian language to communicate this specific concept and its wider connotations. The limitations of Italian political vocabulary were largely the result of the Accademia della Crusca, which sought to preserve the purity of the Italian language through

establishing a linguistic corpus based on Renaissance literary Tuscan.⁵⁶ This strict lexicon had prevented authors from introducing foreign words which could facilitate the communication of political concepts, under fear of censorship. It became a recurrent point of contention in the Lombard Enlightenment. In the 1760s figures like Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria had vociferously criticised the pedantry of the Academy in their journal *Il Caffè*, calling for linguistic freedom.⁵⁷ They wanted to develop a sophisticated and comprehensive language to accompany the growing systematisation of the political and economic sciences, especially a science of governance that was tailored to the Lombard context.⁵⁸ This growing criticism resulted in the suppression of the Accademia della Crusca in 1783. In this light, Ruttini's decision to use the term *polizia* demonstrates not just a form of conceptual accuracy, but reflects the purposeful expansion of the Italian language to accommodate foreign political concepts which were potentially beneficial to the improvement of society. This commitment is further demonstrated by the disambiguation of the elements of police science in the text, namely between "police" [*polizial polizia universale*], "medical police" [*polizia medica*] and "legal medicine" [*medicina legale*]. While the science of police aimed to preserve internal security, its subsidiary science of medical police was directly intended to preserve the common health of men in society. This was entirely distinct from legal medicine, which attended to the legal and ethical framework of medicine, and the forensic assessment of physicians.

The separation of medical police from the universal science of police is indicative of how this element of police discourse was more readily accepted in Lombardy. This was partially due to the unique nature of early modern Italian political structures which rendered the concept of medical police especially viable. Unlike other regions, such as Russia, Hungary and Denmark, touched by the spread of cameralist ideas, governments within the Italian peninsula had long been involved in matters of public health administration, above all regarding disease control. Come the eighteenth century, this outlook had moved beyond administrative practice alone, becoming deeply entrenched in the political philosophy of the Italian Enlightenment.⁵⁹ Both Ludovico Muratori's *Trattato governo-politico medico e ecclesiastico delle peste* (Modena, 1714) and *Della Publica Felicità* (Lucca, 1749) addressed the correlation between society, health and the role of government, and Cesare Beccaria, Antonio Genovesi and Pietro Verri likewise explored this intersection in their works on political economy and philosophy.⁶⁰ This context rendered the idea of medical police as an easily imaginable, even desirable development. In Lombardy, this took shape in the Habsburg-Lombard administration's increasing intervention into diverse public health concerns in the 1770s and 1780s, such as the reform of medical education and the foundation of the Milanese veterinary school, among other sanitation and health reforms. Yet, while much of this was in keeping with the longer development of Lombard public health policy, the language and rationale framing the reforms increasingly reflected medical police philosophies, above all those

of Johann Peter Frank, whose position as the sanitary inspector general for Lombardy and personal connections to the Habsburg-Lombard administration granted him great influence in the health reforms of the period.⁶¹

The translation of Frank's *System* was well received in a number of periodical reviews which praised Frank's demonstration of the connections between health and the public good. According to Ruttini, Frank, too, was pleased to see the "slavish" rendering of his translation and the "mechanical" arrangement of words intended to preserve the fidelity of his text. Frank's own involvement in the book's production undoubtedly played a role in this regard; he not only oversaw the translation but added new notes to the Italian edition. While Frank's role in shaping Lombard health policy from within the administration and university is widely known, less has been said about his involvement and influence in the translation and translocation of the concept of medical police through print. Perhaps the most obvious example of this influence is the six-volume publication (1787–1790) of the prominent Jewish Physician Benedetto Frizzi's *Medical Police Dissertation on the Pentateuch* [*Dissertazione di polizia medica sul Pentateuco*] printed by Pietro Galeazzi, son of Giuseppe Galeazzi, in Pavia.⁶² Frizzi was a disciple of Frank at the University of Pavia, and his dissertation used Frank's *System* as a template to analyse medicine and public health within the Torah and Jewish culture, and to spread the concept of medical police more widely within the Jewish community and beyond.⁶³ However, Frank's involvement was representative of wider collaboration between Habsburg envoys and Milanese reformers in fostering Lombardy's textual culture of medical police. We see this in the translation of the Hungarian Professor of Agriculture Science and *Œconomia Ruralis*, and graduate of the Theresianum in Vienna, Ludwig Mitterpacher's *Elementa rei rusticae* [*Elements of Agriculture*].⁶⁴ The Latin work, based on Mitterpacher's university lectures, addressed agricultural practices in the Hungarian Habsburg territories, focusing on elements such as botany, cultivation, husbandry and apiculture. Though not explicitly framed as a contribution to police science, the *Elementa* holds a number of parallels with such discourses. In addition to the systematisation of agriculture and instructive nature of the text, the *Elementa*, like Frank's *System*, identified the social dimensions of this science, drawing attention to the interactions between agriculture, social relations, education and economics.

Mitterpacher's textbook was identified by Habsburg State Chancellor Kaunitz-Rietberg as potentially beneficial to Milanese agriculture and a translation was subsequently commissioned by the Habsburg-Lombard government in 1784.⁶⁵ The edition was intended to be distributed among the parishes as part of a dual literacy and agricultural education initiative supported by Kaunitz, and "to convince parish priests that, after Christian doctrine, agriculture should be their first catechism".⁶⁶ The translation was undertaken by Carlo Amoretti, this time within his role as Secretary of the Patriotic Society of Milan, and with commentary by Paolo Lavazzari and Giacomo Cattaneo.⁶⁷ The Society was formed and funded in 1776 by royal dispatch

from Maria Theresa and served to bring together scientific practitioners and reformers from different social stations with a view to improving agricultural and manufacturing practices, as well as their relationship to government and administration.⁶⁸ This included Lombard university professors, administrative functionaries, technical experts such as engineers and political figures. Prominent local members and correspondents included Pietro Verri and Cesare Beccaria, and foreign correspondents included figures like Frank, Samuel-Auguste Tissot, Joseph Banks and Antoine-Augustin Parmentier.

The influence of medical police discourses is prominent in the Society's attitude towards public health, which emphasised the social relations of health and well-being.⁶⁹ Regional matters relating to diet and sanitation, especially in rural settings, were of particular interest, as endemic diseases like Pella-gra (later discovered to be caused by nutritional impoverishment) continued to devastate rural populations well into the nineteenth century. These were, as the Society's proceedings indicate, "of special occupation for the Society, the major hospitals and the Royal government", who together offered financial prizes for research into the causes and treatments of such diseases. Such concerns for public health were largely framed in terms of population growth, echoing claims made by Justi among many other earlier cameralists; however, additional paternalistic arguments also prevailed that embodied the more humanitarian statements of figures like Sonnenfels and Frank.

According to Amoretti, what set Mitterpacher's work apart, in a field rich with publications, was that it offered "an ordered course of agriculture, reasoned according to principles of physics, adapted to our circumstances". However, although the *Elementa* was seen as unique in its potential for instruction, the translation conveyed the view that there could not be a single, uniform approach to agricultural improvement throughout the Habsburg lands. What is appropriate in Hungary and Austria, claimed Lavazzari, did not necessarily pertain to Lombardy,⁷⁰ and thus it was futile to try to "stick a human head to a horse's body".⁷¹ Consequently, while adhering to much of the framework and outlook of Mitterpacher's text, the "exact but not slavish" translation was "abbreviated, augmented and. ... accompanied by notes which apply the principles to cultivation in Lombardy as well as tables and a bibliography of Italian authors to make the text more useful for those studying this science in Lombardy".⁷² These included reflections on climate, water quality and regional agricultural practices among other information specific to local circumstances. The translation thus not only captures how such discourses were adapted to maximise their potential in regional settings but also indicates that this practice was actively encouraged by the Habsburg-Lombard government.

The capaciousness and appeal of the language and concept of medical police in Lombardy is demonstrated by its ongoing use in calls for reform after the reigns of Maria Theresa and Joseph II. In the 1790s, domestic works and translations continued to position systems of medical police as vital to domestic improvement, despite the profoundly different political and administrative cultures in Lombardy under Holy Roman Emperor, Francis II (1792) and the Cisalpine Republic (1797). One such example is the 1799 translation

of Johann Daniel Metzger's *Handbuch der Staatsarzneykunde, enthaltend die medicinische Polizey und gerichtliche Arzneywissenschaft; nach den neuesten Bereicherungen beyder Wissenschaften entworfen* (1787), which was printed in Pavia by the Bolzani House and translated and augmented by Dr Carlo Pietro Ferrari as *Compendio di polizia medica recato della tedesca all'italiana favella con alcuna vista del Carlo Pietro Ferrari*.⁷³ Metzger, a Professor of Medicine at the University of Königsberg, wrote extensively on issues pertaining to medical police and medical legislation, and his textbook outlined the nature and purview of medical police in a fashion similar to Frank's *System*. In his introduction to the translation, Ferrari emphasised the potential of medical police for the improvement of the new Cisalpine Republic in Northern Italy, especially in remedying pressing regional issues such as bovine epizootics, the sanitary conditions and health of agricultural labourers, the low acceptance of smallpox inoculation and the quality of water. However, he also introduced a number of contextual elements which illustrate how the idea of medical police could be stretched to accommodate changing political concerns, above all, the socio-economic repercussions of the military conflict resulting in Napoleonic overthrow. In so doing, medical police becomes a catchall for demands for, on the one hand, a well-ordered and managed society, and, on the other, governance that respected the rights of all individuals. This latter dimension is emphasised by Ferrari's comparison of the health and lifestyle of plantation slaves with that of the Italian peasantry. Using statistics and descriptions from Smith, he demonstrated how peasants faced comparable risks of sickness and death as plantation slaves due to the similarities in their inadequate diets, sanitation, and living and working conditions. In addition to drawing detailed parallels between the two groups' abject lifestyles, thus demonstrating the connections between environment and health and population, Ferrari appealed to the social rights [*dritto sociale*] of peasants and the responsibility of government in the preservation of public health. In so doing, he called for the suppression of what was ostensibly a *Code Noir* – the French legal code defining the conditions of slavery and race – and demanded legislation that protected this neglected part of the population. This, he argued, was essential to the preservation of public happiness [*felicità pubblica*], which he corresponded directly to individuals in a reading indicative of late eighteenth-century shifts away from collective understandings of happiness and towards liberal rights discourses. In so doing, Ferrari developed the paternalist views of liberty offered by Frank in the second edition of his *System*. In response to criticisms that the extension of police jurisdiction restricted liberty and promoted despotic legislation, Frank outlined how natural liberty was ultimately incompatible with society, and thus required reasonable limits. Moreover, he claimed that the science of medical police actively encouraged social freedom:

In the offices of the medical police I do not see what could be more considered more favorable to the freedom compatible with society; I do not see how reasonable citizens can be regarded as slaves of the legislative

authority, which takes care of their most certain and primary good, and only takes from his children the knife with which they are in danger of harming themselves.⁷⁴

The balance between the oft-considered binaries of paternalism and rights presented in late eighteenth-century medical police discourses was indicative of changing political views towards the turn of the century, especially in the new republican territories. However, while there has been doubt as to how medical policing could be compatible with modern concepts of freedom and social justice, such examples demonstrate how some elements of medical police were inherently adaptable to changing political attitudes beyond idiom alone, above all the sense of moral imperative driving social health.⁷⁵ Thus, although medical police ultimately represents a narrow sliver of both cameralist thought and police discourses, and one that in many ways gave a vocabulary and logic to already widespread practices in Lombardy, its continued usage post-Habsburg absolutism indicates that its capaciousness as an “ideological superstructure” was precisely what made it so useful in proposing and rationalising regional reforms.⁷⁶

Conclusion: Complex Chronologies, Complex Communities

The translations explored here illustrate the diversity of forms in which the textual culture of police reached Habsburg-Lombardy. Readers not only faced the difficulty of incommensurable political languages, but were also presented with interpretations, be it through omission, alteration or addition, which shifted the intellectual contexts of these works. Many of these editorial and translation decisions were based upon an understanding of the utility of the text for the domestic situation and, although variously praised for their systematisation of the subject matter, there is little indication that such cameralist systems were perceived as compatible with the Lombard context in anything other than a piecemeal fashion.

The concepts of police and medical police appear to have been of greater interest and compatibility in Lombardy than other aspects of the cameral sciences. This was primarily driven by domestic concerns for improvement, especially within the changing dynamics of Habsburg absolutism, but it was also due to the capacity of the police sciences to accommodate diverse contexts. The examples here testify to how cameralist discourses were adapted to local circumstances. This took a number of forms, including readings which reflected contemporary concerns, such as legislative reforms, and attempts to align cameralist concepts with the evolving Lombard political vernacular and systematisation of politics, as well as other intellectual traditions. It nonetheless highlights a number of tensions, among them, tensions between criticisms of absolutism and growing acceptance of the science of governance, between paternalism and rights, and between the language and practice of reform. In many ways, these tensions mirrored the changing personal

and institutional relationships in Lombardy. The translations highlight the entanglement of reformers, translators, editors, bureaucrats and institutions in the selection, production and interpretation of these works, and illustrate how they are inextricable from the push-pull dynamic of Lombard-Habsburg collaboration in the later stages of the “age of reform”. Moreover, the dominant roles of Johann Peter Frank and Carlo Amoretti, whose engagements spread across Habsburg-Lombard institutions and networks, are indicative of the powerful influence of single individuals in translation culture.

Finally, the translations raise larger questions regarding the legacy of the cameral sciences in Lombardy post-Habsburg rule and their relationship with reform, as well as the link between cameralism and absolutist government more generally. *La Scienza del Buon Governo* and the *Sistema Compiuto di Polizia Medica*, both late translations in the history of the cameral sciences, were reprinted in Lombardy in the nineteenth century, alongside other cameralist works. On the one hand, this might be explained by the increasing desire for more rigorous forms of Europe-wide political communication. Speaking of the delayed translations of Vattel’s work in Italian, Trampus has argued that “the translation strategies of the Enlightenment responded to the need for a new political vocabulary and a common European lexicon”.⁷⁷ However, it also suggests a response to more urgent regional needs. In the cases above, it appears that police frameworks were not necessarily predicated on absolutist politics, but upon the need for systematic, locally tailored reform. As such, the language and overarching ethos of police could be made compatible with the new Republic.

Notes

- 1 Carlo Capra, “Habsburg Italy in the Age of Reform”, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2005): 218–33.
- 2 For instance: Antonella Alimento, “Translation, Reception and Enlightened Reform: The Case of Forbonnais in Eighteenth-Century Political Economy”, *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 8 (2014): 1011–25; Manuela Albertone ed., *Governare il mondo. L'economia come linguaggio della politica nell'Europa del Settecento* (Milan: Annali della Fondazione Feltrinelli, 2009); Antonio Trampus, *Il linguaggio del tardo Illuminismo. Politica, diritto e società civile* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011).
- 3 See Adriana Luna-Fabritius, “Cameralism in Spain: *Polizeywissenschaft* and the Bourbon Reforms”; Danila E. Raskov, “Cameralism in Eighteenth-Century Russia”; Koen Stapelbroek, “The International Politics of Cameralism: The Balance of Power and Dutch Translations of *Justi*”. All in Ere Nokkala and Nicholas B. Miller, eds., *Cameralism and the Enlightenment: Happiness, Governance, and Reform in Transnational Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2020), 245–66; 274–301; 99–124.
- 4 Tribe has emphasised the importance of “working from institutions and biographies to discourse; not the other way round”. Keith Tribe. “What is Cameralism?”, in Nokkala and Miller, eds., *Cameralism and the Enlightenment*, 271.
- 5 Joseph von Sonnenfels, *Sätze aus der der Polizey, Handlungs- und Finanzwissenschaft*, 3 vols. (Vienna, 1765–1776); Johann Peter Frank, *System einer vollständigen medicinischen Polizey*, 6 vols. (1779–1819).

- 6 See George Rosen, "Cameratism and the Concept of Medical Police", *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 27, no. 1 (1953): 21–42.
- 7 See Ere Nokkala, Nicholas B. Miller, "Introduction", in Nokkala and Miller, eds., *Cameratism and the Enlightenment*, 1–20.
- 8 Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore I–V* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969–1990).
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10 How Undiplomatic Memoirs Shaped Enlightenment Reform

Melchor Rafael Macanaz's
Memorias and Contexts of
Change in Bourbon Spain

Edward Jones Corredera

Introduction

What was the relationship between diplomacy, memory, and reform in eighteenth-century Europe? As the editors of this volume suggest in their introduction, the scholarship on early modern European discourses of improvement and reform has traditionally focused on the growth of a more efficient state administration. In this respect it has assumed, rather than studied, the future-oriented focus of these policies. But narratives of statehood have distorted both temporal and spatial dimensions of the past, for ideas of reform often emerged outside of a state's borders.¹ The role of diplomatic writings, diplomatic practices, and diplomats in the growth of said ambitions in eighteenth-century Europe and beyond has yet to be studied in a systematic way.² Yet diplomacy was, this chapter argues, central to the development of intellectual ideas of reform, and diplomatic spaces hosted discussions which could, in turn, facilitate the improvement of the political administration of a polity. The eighteenth-century Spanish debate over whether diplomatic ideas of peace could stimulate internal reform lies at the heart of this paper.³

Three generalised trends in Europe show that the influence of diplomacy on internal policy-making intensified in the Age of Reason. First, at the outset of the eighteenth century, a range of European officials agreed that peace, mediated through diplomacy and trade, was a prerequisite for reform, even if these reforms only served to accelerate the development of the fiscal military state.⁴ Second, a growing number of prime ministers, including the marquess of Pombal and Thomas Pelham-Holles, Duke of Newcastle, established their reputation and rose to prominence by coordinating their polity's foreign affairs.⁵ Finally, the term "diplomat" was not common currency at the time, and recently scholars have argued that the study of the diplomatic roles embodied by thinkers who influenced Enlightenment debates and political reforms, such as Henry St John, Viscount of Bolingbroke, Benjamin Franklin, or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe ought to challenge uncritical definitions of the term, since their diplomatic positions informed their broader intellectual and cultural reforms.⁶ This chapter,

then, explores the capacity of diplomacy to serve as a vehicle for internal reform and improvement, and sheds light on the methodological foundations of the Diplomatic Enlightenment.

This chapter focuses on two ties between diplomacy and reform in the Spanish Empire. First, it shows how, in early eighteenth-century Spain, diplomatic spaces hosted enlightened discussions and enriched policy debates that aimed to improve Spain's standing in Europe and bolster its ability to reorganise the empire. Second, it sheds light on the role of letters, unpublished manuscript writings, and *aide-mémoires*, defined as note-based aids to the memory and informal diplomatic messages, in the transmission and recollection of economic, intellectual, and chorographic information.⁷ The chapter focuses, in particular, on how, when he was asked to lay the foundations for a diplomatic strategy that would make Spain the arbiter of Europe, one of the most prolific Iberian political writers of the century, Melchor Rafael Macanaz, used this note-taking format; how he accumulated thousands of sheets of *aide-mémoires* and letters, and collected them into "a Powerful Library to root out all of this Monarchy's problems", in a two-volume notebook titled *Memorias para la historia y juntas de Breda* (1745–1748), which has remained overlooked to this day.⁸

This episode in the history of the transmission of political ideas is important for our understanding of the contexts of eighteenth-century Spanish reforms: Macanaz's most famous text, whose authorship and date of completion has been a subject of debate, the *Nuevo Sistema de Gobierno Económico para la América*, was published in 1789. This political treatise, which envisaged the growth of manufacturing in the Spanish Americas as a way to end its reliance on the slave trade, "the cruel commerce of the human species in our Indies", and bolster imperial trade, proposed the establishment of corporations managed by Amerindians. It also sought to turn Manila into a clearing house for the silver trade and was, according to recent research revised, or finished, the same year Macanaz completed his *Memorias*.⁹

The study of the context behind these writings generates a different interpretation of the origins of Macanaz's ideas and the genesis and publication history of the *Nuevo Sistema*. Beyond the significant textual differences across the several variants of the text, and the organisation of the book under alternative subheadings in each version, a number of substantive points, such as the shift in the interpretation of slave labour across Macanaz's writings, in the *Memorias*, in the manuscript versions of the *Nuevo Sistema*, and in the published text, suggest that later editors collated, edited, and amended the text ahead of their publication in print.¹⁰ This chapter therefore encourages a reconsideration of the traditional approach to the study of Spanish enlightened reforms. Visions of Spanish imperial reform, we have been told, emerged out of a desire to fix epiphenomenal problems: historians of the eighteenth-century Spanish Empire have tended to ignore the political contexts of political authors, and have blended their views together under the banner of a putative Bourbon ideology, or a uniform movement

of Enlightenment.¹¹ The role of diplomacy in the generation of reform has been overlooked. Yet Macanaz's ideas of imperial reform were shaped by his diplomatic experience at Breda. The views he expressed in his *Memorias* were, moreover, a response to a diplomatic scheme drafted by the minister who chose Macanaz as the Spanish envoy, who handed him a detailed set of instructions, and who devised a way to make Spain into the "arbiter of Europe": José de Carvajal y Lancaster. The two men held two separate visions of Spain in Europe: one that saw the Spanish Empire as a potential lever of the balance of power in Europe and the other who imagined its future as a closed commercial state. Carvajal promised peace, the entrenchment of the power of the elites, and gradual reform; Macanaz promised economic growth and social mobility for all Spanish subjects, and saw no reason to fear or avoid war.

In the second half of the century, some of the ideas that Macanaz had proposed – a model of nationhood and confessionalism based on the memory of the Visigoths, free trade between Spaniards of both hemispheres, and the gradual reform of the Spanish imperial administration – influenced thinkers like Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes and were used to construct the languages of reform of the late Spanish Enlightenment. This chapter, therefore, encourages a more nuanced analysis of the various contexts of debate and reform in eighteenth-century Spain and, more specifically, calls for further research on the variety of contexts in which a text could be produced and the diversity of meanings that could be later attributed to it. The early Spanish Enlightenment was shaped by discussions on the balance of power in Europe. During the second half of the century, by contrast, Enlightenment ideas were used to craft a nation state with an empire, and earlier texts were often taken out of context and reinvented in order to legitimate reforms.

Through its study of early modern Spain, this chapter contributes to the broader research on enlightened debates on communication, reform, and improvement in eighteenth-century Europe. Early eighteenth-century Spanish reforms, and enlightened discussions, often emerged from manuscripts and unpublished correspondence across borders: one author described his manuscript as an "Index" of ideas to be explored, Samuel Pufendorf's works were cited in letters to the King, which were then transcribed into memoirs; the ideas of Hugo Grotius, Charles Dutot, and debates on luxury were referenced in manuscript reports drafted by diplomats abroad; one of the most important economic reforms of the century, the establishment of the first Spanish bank, set up to manage bills of exchange in Europe, the *Real Giro*, and the proposal to create a colony in the south of Spain, in Sierra Morena, were planned by the ambassador to the Netherlands in a series of letters; and ideas about "perpetual peace" and the arbitration of Europe were discussed in the correspondence of diplomats and ministers.¹² As part of growing research on the interplay of manuscript and printed sources, this study encourages greater attention to the letters, note-taking practices, and unpublished manuscripts: these sources shed light on the sources of

management and mismanagement of political information and the transnational origins and spaces of Enlightenment debate and reform.¹³

This chapter first analyses how the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) shaped the nature of a number of debates on both diplomacy and reform. The treaty issued in a transnational Enlightenment which sought to host war and religion within a system of civil society, based on norms drawn from diplomacy and international commerce, and brought with it new challenges and opportunities for Spain.¹⁴ One of the clearest Spanish responses to the terms of Utrecht was drafted by Carvajal, who envisioned a model of European cooperation based on a strong union between Spain and Britain which would improve the economic standing of both powers, and make Spain the arbiter of Europe. The chapter then moves on to analyse how a senior official, Macanaz, was asked to lay the groundwork for this change in Spanish diplomacy, and how the latter believed that internal reform, not diplomacy, ought to be prioritised, and defended instead the merits of a closed commercial state.¹⁵ The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the forgotten legacy of these early eighteenth-century manuscript-based debates, and the subsequent reinvention of some of the ideas proposed by Macanaz in the second half of the century. The recovery of this context is crucial for our understanding of the composition of the *Nuevo Sistema*, since it supports the interpretation proposed by the first editor of the book: that the writing process behind it was a collaborative enterprise based on the collation and the creative interpretation of Macanaz's ideas.

The Treaty of Utrecht and José de Carvajal's Arbitration of Europe

The Treaty of Utrecht, the pursuit of the balance of power, and plans for perpetual peace were means to avoid war and its economic consequences, in order to allow monarchies and republics to improve and reform their governments. Greater European cooperation facilitated the improvement of administrations, but it was by no means synonymous with the reform of the social order, as scholars have argued that it facilitated the discussion among "enlightened men" but retained, and entrenched, many of the structures of the *ancien régime*.¹⁶ Leading thinkers and officials considered ways for Spain to react to the effects of the Treaty of Utrecht on its diplomacy and its internal reforms. The influential political economist Gerónimo de Uztáriz, in his *Theorica*, encouraged Spanish ministers to think of the balance of power on a global scale.¹⁷ "Reason of state", he wrote, compelled "Kings and Republics" to undermine "any power that aspires to universal control" – in this case, the Dutch Republic, who "possessed a type of Universal Monarchy, or Dominion" over Asia.¹⁸

Yet it was the preservation of equilibrium in Europe that was a particularly powerful argument to convince monarchs of the internal benefits of peace. Some hoped it would generate greater political accountability. Faced

with the renewal of a dynastic crisis, the Spanish jurist Antonio José Álvarez de Abreu, in his own *Memorias de la negociación de Alemania*, a collection of his correspondence with the King's secretary, felt compelled to highlight the connections between foreign policy and internal reform, and to draw on the ideas of Samuel Pufendorf and the terms of Utrecht to remind the Spanish King, Philip V, that denying the value of treaties could lead to the resumption of war, and that it was incumbent on a wise ruler to avoid overtaxing his subjects.¹⁹

Following Philip V's death and the rise of his son, Ferdinand VI, to power, two leading ministers, José de Carvajal y Lancaster and the marquess of Ensenada, sought to foster the improvement of the administration of empire by establishing the first Spanish bank, the *Real Giro*, sending officials to study industrial techniques in Europe, and establishing learned academies.²⁰ They further sought to change the course of Spanish diplomacy, in order to prevent further costly wars that would undermine internal reforms. Abreu had registered and transcribed his handwritten correspondence with the King's secretary to serve as an *aide-mémoire*, and the two statesmen further used a handwritten memoir to signal a significant change in Spanish diplomacy. One of the first texts they drafted was a diplomatic memoir for the official Melchor Rafael Macanaz, the representative at the diplomatic negotiations of the Congress of Breda, which sought to bring an end to the War of Austrian Succession. Signed by Ferdinand VI, these orders declared the need to convey to the rest of Europe that "since the Treaty of Utrecht, or perhaps the years following 1714, the maxims followed by the Spanish Monarchy have gone against its true reason of state".²¹ It was important, therefore, "to change our conduct" on the diplomatic stage.²²

José de Carvajal y Lancaster had a clear plan to improve the economic efficiency of the empire and reaffirm Spain's standing in Europe. Carvajal, like Uztáriz, saw the question of the balance of power as a global one and, in line with the memoir for Macanaz, believed that Spain had to reform the equilibrium established by the Treaty of Utrecht: "the equilibrium was established not for us but for others. Utrecht ensured we could not trade with other nations in the Americas through any association".²³ As he explained in 1745, in his manuscript *Testamento Político*, his goal was to rewrite Spain's role in the Utrecht-based configuration of European power to trade with other nations free from the predatory alliance with France, and to ultimately establish a system of equilibrium that favoured Spain's economic and diplomatic interests.

"The alliance of Spain, the German Austrian House, Britain, and Portugal, well directed, is the true equilibrium of Europe", explained Carvajal.²⁴ The Spanish statesman hoped to deploy the logic of interests and profit to cement these partnerships and, above all, entice Britain to enter into the alliance.²⁵ This equilibrium would ensure that other powers did not enter into wars with members of the coalition, and that there was no conflict within its ranks: "no one", he argued, would "dare pursue that which hinders them"

and if “other Nations” quarrelled among them, the alliance could “stand to one side, safe in the knowledge that if it were to intervene to pacify affairs they would all come to their senses”.²⁶ Beyond the economic benefits of peace, Carvajal believed that cooperation of Britain would yield benefits for Spanish trade, since it would not just discourage British piracy: the assistance of British naval forces would, in exchange for a fixed sum, be enlisted to undermine fraud and illicit trade on Spanish shores.²⁷ This alliance would, moreover, allow Spain to fundamentally abandon the Bourbon coalition, since Carvajal believed that France wished for the “extermination” of Spain, and would not rest until it had destroyed its trade and its internal administration.²⁸

An important part of this scheme was the establishment of the Philippine Company. Carvajal, who had served as Superintendent of Quicksilver for the Council of Indies, was aware of the Chinese reliance on silver and, above all, the Mexican *peso*. Eighteenth-century Chinese merchants were so familiar with the Mexican *peso* that they referred to one of its stamps as the “Buddha Head” (*fotoumian*).²⁹ The reason that Chinese merchants preferred the Mexican *peso* to its alternatives was that, unlike other currencies, the coins were made out of pure silver, and were not alloyed with cheaper metals. This decreased transaction costs, as it meant that Chinese traders did not have to study the nature of the coin for its worth or consider exchange rates.³⁰

Carvajal, then, realised that the *peso* served as a crucial nexus of Sino-European trade. He envisaged that the establishment of a Philippine Company would allow Spain to regulate the supply of *pesos* to China, creating an entrepôt in Manila, thereby further improving the economy of the Philippines.³¹ Crucially, Britain, as Spain’s main ally, would be granted a supply of *pesos* if they showed a willingness to cooperate with Spain. The alliance of Spain and Britain would make the two powers the “lords of the seas”, and Spain, free from the threat that Britain had always posed to its imperial dominions, would become the “arbiter of Europe” by coordinating the provision of the most important currency with regard to Sino-European trade. The control of this global network of trade would allow Spain to set the rhythm of European politics. The corporate element of the plan was, moreover, the most distinctive aspect of this scheme for the arbitration of Europe. In Carvajal’s view, corporations could both allow transnational investments that both fostered closer commercial cooperation and generated the funds to improve roads, establish canals, and lower the price of goods. Diplomacy and reform, therefore, were one and the same. A few years later, when Carvajal established treaties with Austria, Britain, and Portugal that facilitated greater collaboration with these states, he declared that he had achieved Saint-Pierre’s ambition to establish perpetual peace in Europe.³²

His plan to use the Mexican *peso* to foster a currency-based alliance with Britain was likely the subject of one of Macanaz’s letters at Breda, as the latter wrote that he was following Carvajal’s “secret instructions”, and that “the negotiation with the British regarding the Mexican *pesos* is going well”.³³ While it was not published until decades later, Carvajal’s

text circulated among other Spanish officials, and when, decades later, the Council of Indies debated the merits of free trade, the *Testamento Político* was used to buttress arguments in its favour.³⁴

In the event, Carvajal's plan provided a glimpse into his high expectations of European diplomacy. In 1746, he would ask Macanaz to represent Spanish interests in the negotiations over the War of Austrian Succession at Breda, with a view to further improving relations with Britain in order to put an end to the War of Jenkins' Ear.³⁵ To understand why he chose Macanaz, and how the latter saw the relationship between diplomacy and reform in completely a different way, we must first consider Macanaz's experience as a reformer, a diplomat, and a political writer.

Macanaz: Walking *Arcana Imperii*

Melchor Rafael de Macanaz was a legislator, an industrial spy, a recluse, a diplomat, a reader of Voltaire, and, above all, an opinionated man. He left behind over “wo hundred” pamphlets, books, and treatises on “the problems of our Monarchy in the four corners of the earth”.³⁶ After studying at the universities of Salamanca and Valencia, during the War of Spanish Succession Macanaz spearheaded the reorganisation of the Bourbon Spanish administration.³⁷ He sought to enhance the authority of the Bourbon Monarchy in the face of Habsburg structures, criticised the Council of Castile for trying to become the “council of all councils”, and was instrumental in bringing about some of the earliest reforms in the Bourbon administration, such as the *Nueva Planta*.³⁸ Macanaz was the intellectual architect of one of the most important political discourses of Philip V's reign: regalism. Throughout his life, Macanaz would draw on examples of Spanish history in order to demonstrate that regalism was “the way to respect the memory of past Kings”.³⁹

His vocal support for regalism would have a devastating impact on his political career, as he tried to remove some of the Inquisition's privileges, and titled one of his works “the Inquisition has no other superiors than God and the King”.⁴⁰ In 1715, his efforts to reform Inquisition led to his banishment from Spain, and throughout his life Macanaz would try to regain the support of the Crown and to justify his actions in countless texts. Macanaz nonetheless continued to serve Spain abroad. In France, he contributed to industrial reforms as he helped the Crown find skilled Flemish and French artisans who were sent to Spain and established a variety of industrial schemes.⁴¹ He also served as a diplomatic envoy at the Congress of Soissons (1728) and continued to submit his political writings to the Spanish Court. When Ferdinand VI's ministers, Carvajal and Ensenada, were granted the opportunity to manage Spain's diplomatic approach towards the negotiations that were to put an end to the War of Austrian Succession, Carvajal chose Macanaz as a diplomatic envoy. He was the perfect scapegoat. If France protested that Spain was trying to break up the Bourbon alliance, as Carvajal stated: “we will say that he is mad, and until they do, he can do

what we would never dare to do".⁴² It was possible, therefore, that Macanaz had been ordered to implement Carvajal's ambitious scheme, as outlined in the *Testamento Político*, during the negotiations, and that some of the aspects of the plan were relayed through secret instructions. The official plan drafted by Carvajal and Ensenada, included in another set of memoirs, was consistent with Carvajal's ambitions: Macanaz was to favour "neutrality" towards France and resolve the commercial issues that had fostered the ongoing War of Jenkins' Ear with Britain.⁴³

However, Macanaz did not stick to the script. While he was meant to cautiously collaborate with all foreign diplomats with the exception of the French representatives, foreign reports showed that he behaved erratically during the negotiations and frequently interrupted the proceedings.⁴⁴ As news of his behaviour spread in Europe, the Duke of Huéscar, an elite Spanish official, complained to Carvajal about his choice, but the Spanish secretary of state explained there was logic to Macanaz's madness. His disruptions amounted to a message for Britain to reaffirm the possibility for cooperation: "Letters from London have already acknowledged that he is not as mad as the French say he is".⁴⁵ In the careful choreography of a congress, the act of sending a disruptive diplomat could signal a break with the established order.⁴⁶

But undiplomatic behaviour could also be seen as the result of a lack of organisation. By 3 May 1747, the Duke of Huéscar believed Macanaz had failed to execute the Crown's plans, and wrote to Carvajal declaring his desperation towards the situation created by the diplomat.⁴⁷ Carvajal drafted orders disavowing Macanaz, and instructed another official to travel to Breda to replace him.⁴⁸ The months that followed demonstrated that an experienced diplomat could be too knowledgeable for his own good: a walking, unreliable, and unsteady archive of *arcana imperii*. Macanaz, however, tried to organise his ideas, and recorded his thoughts, his letters, and his notes about European diplomacy in his *Memorias*. Over two volumes featuring over a thousand pages of notes, Macanaz meticulously considered the relationship between diplomacy and reform.

These memoirs, then, were to serve as *aide-mémoires*, as an exculpatory historical record of his own involvement in this episode of Spanish diplomacy, and, perhaps, as notes for the mid-eighteenth-century manuscript version of his *Nuevo Sistema*. After binding the notebooks on 16 June 1747 in "Huy, in the principality of Liège", in a number of flyleaves in the first volume of his *Memorias*, Macanaz wrote that upon reading these memoirs the "curious" reader would understand "the tyrannical persecution" that Ensenada, Carvajal, and Huéscar were pursuing against him. These three men, he explained, were "without substance and full of ambition", and had "harmed the King's honour". Macanaz argued that he had tried to make the King "the arbiter of Peace in Europe"; that he had tried to "reintegrate his Crown", and to put an end to the French pursuit to "involve Spain in a continuous war since the year 1701". By wasting Spain's resources on conflicts and stalling reform, France had sought to remain "the incontestable Arbiter of Europe".⁴⁹ Macanaz and

Carvajal agreed, then, that the alliance with France had not favoured Spain's interests. They disagreed, however, on how diplomacy and reform could serve to improve Spain's economy and its standing in Europe.

Macanaz and the Closed Commercial State

In 1746, Macanaz was aware that, after writing countless texts on Spanish politics, this would perhaps be his last opportunity to influence the Spanish Court, to promote regalism, to defend his desire to undermine the Inquisition's privileged position in Spain, and to remind ministers of how France had betrayed Spain in diplomatic and military settings.⁵⁰ But how was he, as a diplomat in Breda, to compile and analyse the type of information that would assist him in this task?

In the *Memorias*, Macanaz transcribed a number of letters, reports, and notes on a variety of foreign reforms. He featured a report by a British "deserter" regarding details of the vessels, the number of officers on board, and the number of cannons therein.⁵¹ This was followed by a commentary on the "armaments of vessels" during the assault on the port of Cartagena during the Battle of Cartagena de Indias (1741), which Macanaz described as "a memorable battle".⁵² He included an "Extract of the value of Rents and other properties of H.M. in 1740 from a report ordered by José Campillo".⁵³ Finally, he featured an edict he read in a gazette whereby Frederick II had, on 18 January 1747, "renewed the privileges and franchises of foreigners who settle in Prussia".⁵⁴

But Macanaz did not just study reports on foreign reforms. He also corresponded with members of the republic of letters and with other diplomats, in order to debate both European politics and the means of administrative improvement. He therefore transcribed hundreds of pages of correspondence with a number of influential Spanish officials, including Nicolas de Carvajal y Lancaster, marquess de Sarria, and José de Carvajal y Lancaster's brother, the military official Juan Gregorio Muniáin Panigo, the diplomats Alfonso Clemente Arostegui and Joaquin Ignacio de Barrenechaea y Erquiñigo, marquess del Puerto, and important authors such as Gregorio Mayans.⁵⁵ He included references to his discussions with foreign statesmen such as John Montagu, Earl of Sandwich, and his letters to Giovanni Fogliani Sforza d'Aragona, the leading minister in Naples, and the marquess d'Argenson.

To understand contemporary diplomacy and study the logic of reform, one had to read about foreign news, European literature, and global history. In 1745 and 1746, Macanaz sketched out his thoughts on a weekly basis on the reports of events in cities like Edinburgh, London, or Milan, in the French *Mercure*, the *Gazette d'Hollande*, or the *Gazette de Paris*, and added his memories and reflections on diplomatic events.⁵⁶ He reflected on a number of publications featured in these periodicals. He crafted a set of comments on the French translation of *The Voyage of Captain John Saris to Japan*, where he noted that, in 1613, Saris had prevented Spaniards from recruiting locals to fight the Dutch, and he considered the confessional politics of

Nagasaki and Macao.⁵⁷ He reflected on Gabriel Bonnot de Mably's analysis of the death of Charles XII of Sweden in his *Droit Public de l'Europe*, and he commented on a passage from Voltaire's *Histoire Universelle*, published in the French *Mercure* of 1746, regarding the relations between church and state in twelfth-century Spain.⁵⁸

Gradually, a number of themes emerged from his writings. Macanaz had traditionally focused on economic or administrative reforms: the relationship between the Inquisition and the King, the administration of councils, or the institutional roots behind the poor state of trade. Yet, by 1746, Macanaz had spent the bulk of his adult life outside Spain, and had acquired extensive knowledge of diplomacy and industry. Macanaz was both an insider and an outsider in the context of Spanish politics, and the *Memorias* remain the only source of his thinking on the connections between internal reform and foreign affairs. In his view, the first political issue that linked the two was the behaviour of France towards its ally, since French officials had stalled the reform of the Spanish administration. As he repeated over and over, Macanaz believed his role at the negotiations was to prevent France from becoming the arbiter of Europe – a goal not too distant from Carvajal's own. Macanaz believed that this could not be done through diplomacy, but through internal reform. Failure to implement new policies would merely “contribute” to the view that “Spain was still under the tutelage of France”.⁵⁹ Policy reform, therefore, was a way of signalling diplomatic change.

More importantly, policy reform was the only way of reforming Spain's standing in Europe. This was the crucial difference between Macanaz and Carvajal: the former accused the latter of relying on diplomacy to drive economic and imperial reform. Macanaz quipped that “even if you enlisted a [figure like] Demosthenes” as a Spanish representative to diplomatic gatherings, Spain would continue to be “sold out”. Diplomats would find it impossible “to revert the treaties made since the start of the century since Europe was focused on preserving that which they had occupied from us, and increasing their trade”.⁶⁰

For Macanaz, foreign powers were acting like “nothing more than thieves”, and there was “nobody to hold them accountable for their robberies”.⁶¹ Instead of following what “that power or this power did”, or creating a system of equilibrium that would foster collaboration, Spain should merely act as a closed commercial state, reform its own empire, and “give law to Europe”.⁶² Macanaz claimed to have expressed to his fellow diplomatic representatives that “since the King arrived till the year 1713, all of Europe, and France more than anyone else, was against us” alongside those in the “Crown of Aragon and of the Castiles” who had “decimated” the Crown; and “the towns of the two Castiles gave law to all of them” so there was “no reason to fear” Europe's retaliation.⁶³

Amid his reflections on European gazettes, and his letters to Carvajal, Macanaz began to sketch his views on imperial reform and commented on contemporary reforms. After summarising the contents of the issue of

the *Gazette de Paris* published on 6 August 1746, he wrote a response to “two letters by Carvajal and Ensenada” from 29 July, praised Carvajal’s desire to “open their door to foreigners”, to establish a cadastre, and to lower the price of goods, and Macanaz considered how “the public utility of Government” could be better served.⁶⁴ Spain did not need to “wait for peace”, or establish “marriages”, or analyse the behaviour of other “Powers”: it could reform its own economy by “opening its doors” to skilled foreign workers, since no foreign power could prevent them from “taking their factories to the New World”.⁶⁵ The companies of Caracas and Havana, explained Macanaz, should limit the import of alcoholic beverages “to encourage” the locals to produce their own.⁶⁶ Spain should manufacture its own clothing as a means to further encouraging the migration of skilled workers to the Americas who, unable to trade with Spain or the New World, and faced with the “decadence” of their trade, would “travel there”.⁶⁷ Those goods that were missing in the New World would be supplied “via the Philippines”.⁶⁸ In the published version of the *Nuevo Sistema*, Macanaz defended the need to establish manufacturing in the New World as a means of increasing consumption and trade.⁶⁹

Ideas of administrative reform complemented these political economic designs. Macanaz further proposed the reform of the intendents, who should be made to “manage the public, juridical, and economic government”, and “anything related to the Treasury”, in order to undermine fraud.⁷⁰ He proposed the reform of the *audiencias*, the *chancillerias*, the “*tributos de Indios*”, the creation of hospices for the poor, the establishment of *Visitadores Generales*, and the expansion of trade between “the Spaniards from here and the Spaniards from there, in the style of nations which have colonies there”, policies which would appear in the *Nuevo Sistema*.⁷¹ He also suggested the creation of a free port to manage the slave trade, something that Carvajal had proposed.⁷² There was, therefore, no mention of bringing an end to the slave trade in the Spanish Americas in the *Memorias*, in contrast with the *Nuevo Sistema*.

Macanaz, moreover, could not avoid engaging with the dispute that had led to his banishment from Spain: the reform of the Inquisition. These political economic reforms were to be complemented by the reorganisation of the religious institution, and the memory of the Visigoths was to serve as a guide to achieve a confessional and regalist model of imperial unity. Macanaz, who took pleasure in making hieratic statements, believed that during the negotiations at Breda, he had “opened the door to the establishment of the Government” which “the Visigoths established in the year 411”.⁷³ The clearest explanation of his view on this topic was to be found in his notes on a passage regarding twelfth-century Spain from Voltaire’s *Histoire Universelle*, published in the *French Mercure* of 1746. Macanaz accused Voltaire of “altering history” when he mocked Spaniards for referring to Ferdinand I (1015–1065) as “great” when he had merely “usurped” his brother, and had taken control of Navarre.⁷⁴ Macanaz explained that Spaniards praised Ferdinand because he had been instrumental in organising the Council of Coyanza (c. 1055), an assembly where the legislation surrounding religious cohabitation was overhauled, and had

subsequently reaffirmed the “Gothic Laws” and the “Fuero Juzgo”.⁷⁵ Ferdinand I, and the broader Visigothic record in Spain, based on a constitutionalist, regalist, and confessional model of the state, therefore offered a model for the Spanish Crown to gain greater control over the Inquisition. Spain, then, did not need to look to cooperation to revitalise its standing in Europe. A closed commercial state, guided by Spain’s history of regalism, would soon allow Spain to “give Europe peace, and become arbiter of Europe”.⁷⁶

Macanaz recognised the encyclopaedic purpose of his *Memorias* as he declared that he had formed, in his own words, “a Powerful Library” to “remove the roots of all the problems of our Monarchy”.⁷⁷ Yet, as he sketched out his ideas, Macanaz, a man in his 70s, grew increasingly desperate in exile. On 13 April 1747, he asked to be sent to a location where he could continue with his historical and political economic studies. Macanaz asked to travel to Britain “where through my study I can provide the necessary lights” to “gather” information about trade and, in particular, “the universal New World” and the “Oriental Trade” that “absorbs” the “Silver that comes from America”.⁷⁸ He thought about travelling to Paris, or somewhere in Portugal, but he knew that “the Inquisition there corresponds with the one in Madrid”, and it would therefore be unwise for him to travel there, since he feared his earlier disagreement with the religious institution would make him an unwelcome visitor.⁷⁹ His pleas were ignored, and he was invited to return to Spain under false pretences, where he was imprisoned.⁸⁰

On 22 January 1748, in one of his last letters, sent to the retired military official Carlos de Areizaga y Corral, Macanaz changed his recollection about his true intentions at the Congress of Breda. He explained that he had proposed a very different scheme. He claimed that he had truly believed that the best way to resolve the issue of the War of Austrian Succession was to make the Bourbon King of Spain into a Habsburg sovereign.⁸¹ To stop France from becoming the “arbiter of Europe”, Macanaz claimed that he had “convinced” other diplomats to ignore the “multitude of unequal treaties that had been signed since 1701, and to solve this another way, by reintegrating Spain as it was, with that which the Emperor Charles VI had gained, since following his death it was returned to Spain”. This was precisely what Philip V had hoped to achieve in 1741: in this scheme, Spain would rule Austria, and the other Habsburg territories, as it had once ruled Portugal and “separate the possessor” of the titles from the ruler, in the same way “as the separation of Portugal, so that it would be regulated in a different way, and with injustices undone, it would be seen that H.M. hoped for [internal] peace, and that of all of Europe, rather than reintegrating its crown”.⁸²

These were the words of a desperate man, who was disillusioned with his life’s legacy and who perhaps suspected that he would be imprisoned soon after. Yet it was significant that Macanaz, the intellectual architect of the early Bourbon reforms of the Spanish Empire, believed that the best way to bolster imperial trade and revitalise Spain’s standing in Europe was to recover the traditions of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Carvajal, one of two leading Spanish ministers in power at the time, and a defender of the principle of European equilibrium, agreed with him. Behind Bourbon regalist ideas and diplomatic policies, then, hid a deep sense of distrust towards Spain's ally, France, and a sense of disappointment with the lack of reform under Philip V. It was no surprise, then, that reformers in the second half of the century resorted to the invention of the Bourbon tradition in order to shore up support for the Crown, or that past memoirs and political proposals were repackaged into new *Memorias* and presented by the Royal Economic Society of Madrid, in their first volume of this kind, as evidence that Spain had "always had a great deal of economic thinkers" in order to connect the Bourbon dynasty to Spain's Habsburg past.⁸³

Conclusion: Contexts of Reform and the Memory of the *Memorias*

Macanaz's *Memorias* reveal the ties between diplomacy and reform: in the eighteenth century, when ideas of emulation, jealousy of trade, and balance of trade, all of them based on an appreciation for diplomacy, dominated debates on state reform, visions of improvement transcended the binary of the foreign and domestic. The mechanisms, processes, and texts that served to transmit ideas of improvement were, however, often not the same as those that would later be used to disseminate the same ideas in print. In this context, *aide-mémoires*, letters, and manuscript texts could serve as repositories of "operative knowledge", and they were no substitute for the efficient storage systems of archival states, but thrived instead in political systems like the Spanish Court, where distrust and suspicion were rife.⁸⁴

Visions of Europe and peace were crucial to the generation of ideas of reform in eighteenth-century Spain – and these have been entirely overlooked to this day. These ideas were lost as reformers sought to create a nation within an empire: early eighteenth-century ideas, written by Macanaz and others, were used to craft the political discourses used to legitimate reform during the second half of the eighteenth century. The printed text that carried many of the economic views that Macanaz expressed in the *Memorias* was the published version of the *Nuevo Sistema*. The most original arguments in the *Nuevo Sistema* were those in favour of the growth of manufacturing in the Spanish Americas.⁸⁵ Macanaz argued that this would serve several purposes. It would increase consumption among the natives, it would foster the circulation of wealth among them, and it would make them "useful" to the Empire.⁸⁶ Workshops in the Iberian Peninsula could continue to produce those goods which benefited from existing robust industries, like linen and wool, but for those goods that were bought from other nations, like cotton, Macanaz explained that he saw "no reason" for these not to be produced in the Spanish Americas instead.⁸⁷ There was an important difference, however, in the author's views on slave labour across the two texts: by "civilising and applying" the natives, Macanaz argued in the *Nuevo Sistema*, "we will

not need blacks”, and there would therefore be “less pretexts” to perpetuate both “illicit trade” and the “cruel trade of humans in our Indies”.⁸⁸ In this context, the focus on the transnational dimensions of political economic reform that dominated the *Memorias*, and earlier manuscript versions of the *Nuevo Sistema*, was replaced with an emphasis on “civilising” the natives and stimulating consumption in the Americas, a change likely made by later editors of the text.

The *Nuevo Sistema* was published in 1789, and attributed to a contemporary of Macanaz, the former Prime Minister José Campillo. In the 1780s, Spanish political authors often buttressed radical ideas by framing them as the designs of earlier authors, in order to frame them as part of a Bourbon tradition, which may explain the commentary on slavery.⁸⁹ As with Carvajal’s *Testamento Político*, however, Macanaz’s manuscript of the *Nuevo Sistema* was read by officials before it was published in print, including Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes and Bernardo Ward.⁹⁰ Indeed, from the moment that Macanaz was imprisoned, he was seen as a heroic figure by thinkers like Mayans: his friend and fellow *ilustrado* Antonio Capdevila even wrote a rough draft of a work titled *Heroe* about Macanaz’s life, which he never published.⁹¹ Capdevila spent time assessing the family archives of the Macanaz family, and catalogued the collection, which included some of his letters.⁹² There was no mention of the *Nuevo Sistema* or the *Memorias*.⁹³

Historians have long argued that Macanaz’s writings were an important intellectual source in the making of the Spanish political culture of the second half of the eighteenth century, yet the degree of influence of his ideas varied.⁹⁴ The memory of the Visigoths became a staple of the late Spanish Enlightenment, and a means to vindicate Bourbon regalism, as authors sought to depict the original reforms of the Bourbon dynasty in Spain, many of which Macanaz had developed, and many of which he had criticised, as the twilight of the Enlightenment, ahead of its dawn under Charles III.⁹⁵ The Inquisition was not weakened but invigorated, as the rate of censorship increased exponentially during the second half of the century.⁹⁶ Some writers and officials were, however, aware of the Macanaz’s irenic intentions at Breda, as one of the most important collector of early eighteenth-century texts dedicated an issue of his *Semanario Erudito* to Macanaz, and explained that his diplomatic instructions stated that he ought to “ensure the King would be the arbiter of peace, or of war”, and a printed text that appeared in 1791, and which featured him as one of the greatest Spanish writers of the century, explained that at the Congress Macanaz was “about to establish a form of peace [...] more advantageous than any established since the Catholic Kings [Ferdinand and Isabella]” before his enemies stood in his way.⁹⁷

An improved understanding of how manuscript works written in the early eighteenth century, in pursuit of the balance of power in Europe, or drafted to establish a closed commercial state, were circulated, received,

and reinvented in the second half of the eighteenth century will foster a richer interpretation of the contexts of change, improvement, and reform in the *Ilustración*.⁹⁸ Further research will shed light on the influence of the *Nuevo Sistema*, which has been assumed rather than studied, while its relationship with Macanaz's other works has mostly been ignored.⁹⁹ After it was published, it was reviewed in a number of autochthonous and foreign periodicals, including the 1793 issue of *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, and constituted another example of how late eighteenth-century Spanish officials drew on other earlier eighteenth-century texts to develop their critique of the practice of enslavement of African peoples.¹⁰⁰

The study of Macanaz's scholarly activities and his correspondence during his time in Breda reshapes our understanding of the reception of his ideas. If a draft of the *Nuevo Sistema* was outlined in 1719, as some scholars have suggested, the *Memorias* will provide a glimpse into Macanaz's shifting attitudes towards diplomacy and reform. If indeed, further research supports the theory that the first finished manuscript of the *Nuevo Sistema* was completed in 1747, the *Memorias* and the Breda negotiations would serve to contextualise the ideas of the author in said book. In prison, Macanaz continued to write, drafting another commentary in 1757 on how the Visigoths could inform Spain's confessional regalist state, a work which he described as a response to his reading of a text he wrongly believed to have been written by Voltaire and Frederick II, and which "had appeared in 1751", "Frederick's Code": Samuel von Cocceji's *Code Frederic*.¹⁰¹ However, the shift in the views on slave labour, the differences across the various copies, and the extensive list of Macanaz's correspondents who supported him in his scholarly endeavours, all suggest the possibility that others wrote up Macanaz's reflections into a coherent text based on the *Memorias* and other writings.

This theory about the book's authorship was, after all, the one proposed by the editor of the first edition of the *Nuevo Sistema*. When the book was eventually published, the editor addressed the issue of the authorship of the manuscript, since some of the dates in the text appeared to conflict with one another. The editor considered two possibilities. Either the dates were wrong or the author had "left part of his work in rough drafts" which had then "been edited by someone else, but preserved the name of their original author, as has been the case with the *Memoirs* and *Testaments* of Richelieu, Louvois, Colbert, Mazarin, Alberoni, and other Ministers".¹⁰² This was, indeed, a good intuition. Spanish eighteenth-century political reforms emerged from drafts, redrafts, and memoirs that were applied in new contexts and unfamiliar settings. Diplomatic spaces generated realms of memory and memoirs were fractal reflections of half-forgotten thoughts and nascent expectations. But often authors had to reconstruct and reinterpret those spaces they failed to illuminate: in the Spanish Court, where distrust ran rife, reform was nothing more than an imperfect collective exercise in the imprecise art of memory.

Notes

I am grateful for the comments provided by Adriana Luna-Fabritius, Keith Tribe, and Javier Fernández Sebastián regarding some of the ideas in this piece.

- 1 On the impact of methodological nationalism in Spanish history and the need to overcome it by studying diplomatic networks, see Edward Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment: Spain, Europe, and the Age of Speculation* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 22–23.
- 2 The figure of the scholarly ambassador has, by contrast, always attracted a great deal of attention. In the context of early modern Spain see, for example, Fabien Montcher, “La carta como taller historiográfico. Elaboración y circulación de materia genealógica entre Alonso López de Haro y Diego Sarmiento de Acuña (1608–1620)”, Manuel Joaquín Salamanca López, ed., *La materialidad histórica: nuevos enfoques para su interpretación* (Oviedo: Instituto de Estudios para la Paz y la Cooperación, 2011), 88–162.
- 3 Echoing and developing some of the insights found in Jacob Viner, “Power Versus Plenty as Objectives of Foreign Policy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, *World Politics* 1, no. 1 (1948): 1–29. I am grateful to Keith Tribe for drawing my attention to the context behind this piece.
- 4 For the most recent literature on this topic, see John Shovlin, *Trading with the Enemy: Britain, France, and the 18th-century Quest for a Peaceful World Order* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021); Stella Ghervas, *Conquering Peace: From the Enlightenment to the European Union* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 1–29; Stella Ghervas, David Armitage, “Introduction: from Westphalia to Enlightened Peace, 1648–1815”, in Stella Ghervas, David Armitage, eds., *A Cultural History of Peace in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 1–18; Antonella Alimento, Koen Stapelbroek, eds., *The Politics of Commercial Treaties in the Eighteenth-Century Balance of Power, Balance of Trade* (London: Palgrave, 2017).
- 5 Hamish Scott, “Diplomatic Culture in Old Regime Europe”, in Hamish Scott, Brendan Simms, eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 58–85.
- 6 Hillard von Thiesen, “Diplomacy in a Changing Political Order”, in Matthias Pohligh, Michael Schaich, eds., *The War of the Spanish Succession: New Perspectives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 63–84, 65; James Sheehan, “Introduction: Culture and Power during the Long Eighteenth Century”, in Scott, Simms, eds., *Cultures of Power in Europe*, 1–13, 13.
- 7 On the importance of manuscripts in eighteenth-century European political culture, see David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42–66. Judith Pollmann has shown that early modern practices of memory coexisted with, and were not replaced by, the growth of modern historiography. See Judith Pollmann, *Memory in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 47–71.
- 8 Melchor de Macanaz, *Memorias para la historia y juntas de Breda*, 2 vols. Archivo del Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores. MSS. 218, 219. Macanaz, *Memorias*, 219, 427. The first volume was used once by Didier Ozaman but has otherwise been ignored, while the second volume has been entirely overlooked. See Dider Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI. Correspondencia reservada entre D. José de Carvajal y el Duque de Huéscar, 1746–1749* (Madrid: CSIC, 1970).
- 9 José de Campillo y Cossio, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno económico para la América* (Madrid: Benito Cano, 1789), 228, 203–204, 121, 278; herefrom referred to as *Nuevo Sistema*. While the *Nuevo Sistema* was attributed to José Campillo when

- it was published, in 1969 Henry Kamen attributed the authorship of the *Nuevo Sistema* to Macanaz. He claimed it had been written in 1719, and drew attention to his influence in the generation of eighteenth-century Spanish policies. Henry Kamen, “Melchor de Macanaz and the Foundations of Bourbon Power in Spain”, *The English Historical Review* 80, no. 117 (1965): 699–716, 713–714. In *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), Stanley Stein and Barbara Stein argued that the text was Macanaz’s own. More recently, Fidel J. Tavárez has suggested the text was completed in 1747 in “A New System of Imperial Government: Political Economy and the Spanish Theory of Commercial Empire, ca. 1740–1750”, in Jeremy Adelman, ed., *Empire and the Social Sciences: Global History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 15–30, 20.
- 10 See the different comments on labour in the Americas, and the criticism of slavery, in Campillo, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno*, 114–21 and *Nuevo Sistema*, Vol. 2, BNE, MSS. 10620 Vol. 2, 286–97. Compare the manuscript in the Instituto Valenciano de don Juan, *Nuevo Sistema*, 26-III-39, 158 and Campillo, *Nuevo sistema de gobierno*, 242. The majority of the other copies are in the National Library of Spain, have been digitised, and be accessed online. I am compiling a page-by-page comparison of the texts.
 - 11 Jesús Astigarraga, *A Unifying Enlightenment: Institutions of Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Spain (1700–1808)* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 17–22; Gabriel Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform in Spain and its Empire 1759–1808* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 30–35, 56–92; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 155–203; Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 8–10; Jeremy Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution in the Iberian Atlantic* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press: Princeton, 2006), 13–55; Kenneth Andrien, “The *Noticias secretas de America* and the Construction of a Governing Ideology for the Spanish American Empire”, *Colonial Latin American Review* 7, no. 2 (1998): 175–92.
 - 12 José de Carvajal y Lancaster, “Testamento Político”, in *Testamento Político: reducido a una idea de un gobierno católico, político, militar y económico, como conviene para la resurrección y conservación de España*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS. 10446, pp. 1–137, p. 3. Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, pp. 45, 160–74, 149.
 - 13 On the need to study both manuscripts and printed texts to understand the transmission of ideas in eighteenth-century political culture see, most recently, Robert Darnton, *Pirating and Publishing: The Book Trade in the Age of Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021), 180, 254. On the archival state, see John C. Rule, Ben S. Trotter, *A World of Paper: Louis XIV, Colbert de Torcy, and the Rise of the Information State* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014); Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2009).
 - 14 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Discovery of Islands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 110.
 - 15 On the idea of the closed commercial state, see Isaac Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State: Perpetual Peace and Commercial Society from Rousseau to Fichte* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
 - 16 Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990), 712; Anthony Pagden, “Definitions of Peace”, in Ghervas, Armitage, eds., *A Cultural History of Peace in the Age of Enlightenment*, 19–34. Debates about social reform and the balance of power would in turn dominate early

- nineteenth-century politics. See Hamish Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System, 1740–1815* (London: Routledge, 2005), 362–68.
- 17 Gerónimo de Uztáriz, *Theorica y práctica de comercio y de marina* (Madrid: A. Sanz, 1742), 90–92.
 - 18 Uztáriz, *Theorica*, 88–89.
 - 19 Edward Jones Corredera, “The Memory of the Habsburg Monarchy in Early Eighteenth-Century Spain”, *Global Intellectual History* 6:4 (2021): 443–62, 450–51; José María Iñurritegui Rodríguez, “Traducción y geografías del interés en la ilustración temprana española”, *Studia Historica. Historia Moderna* 43:2 (2021): 283–304.
 - 20 Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 141–51.
 - 21 *Instrucciones a D. Melchor de Macanaz Ministro Plenipotenciario a las Conferencias de Breda*. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Estado, 3457, 39.
 - 22 *Instrucciones a D. Melchor de Macanaz*. Pages not numbered.
 - 23 Carvajal, “Mis Pensamientos”, in Carvajal, *Testamento Político*, 138–68, 141.
 - 24 Carvajal, “Testamento Político”, in *Testamento Político*, 19–20.
 - 25 *Ibid.*, 3–6.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 19–20.
 - 27 *Ibid.*, 50. Saint-Pierre proposed the same measure in his 1742 pamphlet, *Idées Pacifiques*, and while Carvajal was aware of his ideas there is no evidence that he had read this specific text. See Saint-Pierre, “Idées pacifiques sur les demelez entre l’Espagne et l’Angleterre”, in Antoine-Augustin Bruzen de la Martinière, ed., *État politique de l’Europe*, Vol. 3 (La Haye: Adrien Moetjens, 1740).
 - 28 Carvajal, “Testamento Político”, in *Testamento Político*, 13.
 - 29 Richard Von Glahn, “The Changing Significance of Latin American Silver in the Chinese Economy, 16th–19th Centuries”, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Economic History* 38, no. 3 (2020): 553–85, 573.
 - 30 Alejandra Irigoin, “The End of a Silver Era: The Consequences of the Breakdown of the Spanish Peso Standard in China and the United States, 1780s–1850s”, *Journal of World History* 20, no. 2 (2009): 207–43, 235.
 - 31 Carvajal, “Testamento Político”, in *Testamento Político*, 128.
 - 32 Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 176–179.
 - 33 Melchor de Macanaz, *Carta de Don Melchor de Macanaz, al Duque de Huéscar, escrita desde Breda a principios de mayo de 1747*. Biblioteca Nacional de España Mss.11261–19. Due to COVID-19, I was unable to track down the documents at the National Archives at Kew that might have facilitated a better understanding of the scheme from the British side, but I hope to do so soon.
 - 34 Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 225.
 - 35 On the congress, see Scott, *The Birth of a Great Power System*, 62–71.
 - 36 Macanaz, *Memorias*, 219, 137.
 - 37 Concepción de Castro Monsalve, “La Nueva Planta del Consejo de Castilla y los pedimentos de Macanaz”, *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* 37 (2012): 23–42.
 - 38 Melchor de Macanaz, Luis Salazar y Castro, “Explicación jurídica e histórica de la consulta que hizo el Real Consejo de Castilla al Rey nuestro Señor”, in Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, ed., *Semanario Erudito*, Vol. 4 (Madrid: Blas Román, 1788), 3–142, 90–93.
 - 39 Macanaz, Salazar y Castro, “Explicación jurídica”, 90–93. On the invention of the image of Philip as a wise ruler, see Ricardo García Cárcel, *De los elogios a Felipe V* (Madrid: CPPCE, 2002).
 - 40 José Antonio Escudero, *Estudios sobre la Inquisición* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005), 358.
 - 41 Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 103.
 - 42 Carvajal to Huéscar, 10 April 1747, in Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 173.

- 43 *Instrucciones a D. Melchor de Macanaz.*
- 44 Luis Olbés Fernández, *La paz de Aquisgrán: Contribución al estudio del reinado de Fernando VI* (Unpublished), PhD diss., Universidad de Madrid, 1926, 23.
- 45 Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 173.
- 46 Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs*, 358.
- 47 Huéscar to Carvajal, 3 May 1747, in Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 186.
- 48 Ozanam, *La diplomacia de Fernando VI*, 191.
- 49 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 218, 2.
- 50 Antonio Valladares de Sotomayor, ed., *Semanario Erudito*, Vol. 7 (Madrid: Blas Roman, 1788), 1–11.
- 51 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 218, 7–8.
- 52 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 9.
- 53 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 101.
- 54 *Ibid.*, Ms. 219, 58.
- 55 The best source on the biographies of Spanish officials during this period is Didier Ozanam, *Les diplomates espagnols du XVIIIe siècle: introduction et répertoire biographique 1700–1808* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1998).
- 56 On the Congress of Soissons see Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 218, 53.
- 57 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 59.
- 58 Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 181. Macanaz would later write more extensively about Voltaire's work. See Kamen, "Melchor de Macanaz", 714–15.
- 59 Macanaz, *Memorias*, MS. 218, 524. On Montesquieu's view that Spain required France's "tutelage", see Pablo Fernández Albaladejo, "Entre la "gravidad" y la "religión": Montesquieu y la "tutela" de la monarquía católica en el primer setecientos", in José María Portillo Valdés, José María Iñurrategui Rodríguez, eds., *Constitución en España: orígenes y destinos* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales, 1998), 25–50.
- 60 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 218, 917.
- 61 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 482.
- 62 There are interesting parallels between this reaction to diplomatic stasis and Fichte's idea of a closed commercial state. See Nakhimovsky, *The Closed Commercial State*, 130–65.
- 63 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 218, 451.
- 64 On these reforms, see Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 141–51.
- 65 Macanaz, *Memorias*, MS. 218, 53.
- 66 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 53.
- 67 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 54.
- 68 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 54.
- 69 Campillo, *Nuevo Sistema*, 228–29.
- 70 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 219, 55.
- 71 *Ibid.*, Ms. 219, 57. Macanaz here used the term "colonia", perhaps an indication that he had been reading foreign sources which used the term "colony", and not Spanish ones.
- 72 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 867.
- 73 *Ibid.*, Ms. 219, 371.
- 74 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 49.
- 75 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 49. On the context of the Council of Coyanza, see Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Cortes of Castile-Leon, 1188–1350* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 9–19.
- 76 Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 219, 65.
- 77 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 427.
- 78 *Ibid.*, Ms. 218, 465.

- 79 Ibid., Ms. 218, 462.
- 80 Kamen, “Melchor de Macanaz”, 711.
- 81 For the earlier context of this scheme, see Jones Corredera, “The Memory of the Habsburg Monarchy”, 446–47.
- 82 See Jones Corredera, “The Memory of the Habsburg Monarchy”, 446–47. Macanaz, *Memorias*, Ms. 219, 507.
- 83 *Memorias de la sociedad económica*, Vol. 1 (Madrid: Antonio de Sancha, 1780), xviii. On this shift see Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 204–15.
- 84 On operative knowledge see Rule, Trotter, *A World of Paper*, 322–23.
- 85 He was not the only one to propose this reform. See Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 162–63.
- 86 Campillo, *Nuevo Sistema*, 115, 118, 120.
- 87 Ibid., 116.
- 88 Ibid., 121.
- 89 Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 225 n.136.
- 90 Stanely J. Stein, “‘Extender a todo el Reino el comercio de América’: Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes as *proyectista* (1762)”, in Thomas Calvo, Alain Musset, eds., *Des Indes occidentales à l’Amérique Latine*, Vol. 2 (Mexico: CEMC, 2006), 461–76. Parts of it appeared in Ward’s published writings. See Tavárez, “A New System of Imperial Government”, 18.
- 91 Francisco Preciso Izquierdo, “De héroe regalista a sabio patriota. Construcción, representación y circulación de la memoria política de Melchor Macanaz entre dos épocas (siglos XVIII–XIX)”, *Investigaciones Históricas. Época Moderna y Contemporánea* 35 (2015): 81–110, 89.
- 92 Antonio de Capdevilla a Gregorio Mayans, 2 June 1771, in Antonio Mestre Sanchis, ed., *Espitolario: Mayans y los médicos* (Valencia: Deputación de Valencia, 2006), 245–47.
- 93 Capdevilla a Mayans, 245–47.
- 94 Kamen, “Melchor de Macanaz”, 713–15; Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution*, 13–14; Izquierdo, “De héroe regalista a sabio patriota”, 81–110.
- 95 Paquette, *Enlightenment, Governance, and Reform*, 78–81.
- 96 Jones Corredera, *The Diplomatic Enlightenment*, 222–23.
- 97 Valladares de Sotomayor ed., *Semanario Erudito*, Vol. 7, 5; *Retratos de los Españoles ilustres con un epitome de sus vidas* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1791). Pages not numbered.
- 98 And further complement the study of the politics of manuscripts in the broader context of the Spanish Empire. See Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-century Atlantic World* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).
- 99 Tavárez, “A New System of Imperial Government”, 15; Adelman, *Sovereignty and Revolution*, 13–14.
- 100 *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, Vol. 3 (Göttingen: Johann Christian Dieterich, 1793), 1437–38; *Memorial Literario* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1789), 428–29; Edward Jones Corredera, “The Assembly of Public Trust: Dynastic Crises and the Origins of Spanish Political Economy”, *History of European Ideas* (Early View) (2021): 1–11, 10–11.
- 101 Melchor Rafael Macanaz, “Breve epitome del verdadero gobierno cristiano universal, que Federico Rey de Prusia ha publicado en 1751, para el mejor gobierno de sus vasallos, por Macanaz”, in *Papeles Varios*, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Mss11020, 255–93.
- 102 Campillo, *Nuevo Sistema*, 3–4.

11 Making and Trading Metals

A Narrative of Swedish Improvement¹

Måns Jansson and Göran Rydén

In 1776, Bengt Qvist Andersson gave a speech at the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences (*Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien*), on the making and marketing of metals. As a loyal employee of the Swedish Board of Mines (*Bergskollegium*), his political foundation was cameralism, in which a country's "strength is dependent upon a plenitude of inhabitants, who help each other in cultivating the land, raising cattle, refine useful Metals and Minerals, establish specific handicrafts, practise trade and defend the country against the intrusion of foreign powers". It was essential to make use of "the country's return ... and [it's] best treasury", and to employ "more working hands ... at foreigners' expense." Qvist's point of departure was a society where foreign trade was to be kept under close surveillance, and where imports were restricted in favour of domestic goods.² In Sweden, the main "treasury" was found below ground, in the form of iron ore. It was a truism that Sweden should supply Europe and the world with bar iron, and that metalworking was the foundation on which wealth and happiness rested. Having said that, Qvist noted that this was difficult, as many foreign places had "a limited freedom of trade", and that progress was needed; "an industrious People" had to "expand the prime trades [and to] encourage Science, useful arts and handicrafts". Building on these observations, he elaborated on the extent of foreign markets and how to enhance Sweden's position. The British market was at the centre of attention, and Qvist discussed how different suppliers competed, Swedish makers along with Russian and British producers. Still, he also noted that the reality was more complicated than uni-directional commodity chains, emphasising interconnected markets as well as intricate links between production, trade, and consumption; "nothing is more general than to hear that when one talks about the creation of iron and metal manufacture, it is the outcome of its sales". It was through "diligence" and "endeavour" that people "maintained and expanded" these important sectors and rose to "prosperity". Production should be improved through the encouragement of "Sciences, useful arts and crafts", while marketing should be developed with an "Intrusive spirit", which incorporated "new trading places, trading freedom as well as Factories with ample Warehouses".³

At the time of Qvist's speech, Swedish metalworking had made a healthy recovery from a dismal outlook half a century earlier. Bar iron output had

risen and Swedish iron dominated European markets. The so-called *Öregrund Iron* had a monopoly position vis-à-vis English steelmakers, as high-quality steel was made from this brand. Re-exported bar iron also found a small market in West Africa, but an increasing number of bars remained in Sweden to be refined into metal wares. Steel production saw a remarkable development, with rising output geared towards domestic consumption, and providing customers with alternatives to imported goods.⁴ This development was linked to rising demand, but Swedish producers were also backed by a supportive state. True to the ideas of cameralism, metalworking was never far from the controlling ambitions of the authorities, being integrated into scientific, technological, and organisational discussions within the *Bergskollegium*. In 1747 the iron makers also created their own organisation, the Ironmasters' Association (*Jernkontoret*), which often acted in tandem with the Board. They were both institutions "in which knowledge was collected, systematised, authorised and disseminated", connected to the state and its ambition for "utility" and "welfare".⁵ They employed travelling agents both in Sweden and abroad, viewing markets, mines, and production sites, reporting on the novelties they observed.⁶ As a result, production not only rose, but improved in quality as well.

Qvist was important in this development. He had begun work in the iron industry during the 1750s as an assistant to Sven Rinman, the greatest mind in Swedish iron making at the time. From 1764, he toured Europe with a special interest in steelmaking. On his return, he informed the *Bergskollegium* about crucible steel, a recent improvement in British manufacturing, and later founded his own steelworks. Even if his new venture was not a commercial success, it was a sign of a man involved in both the practical side of metalworking and its intellectual understanding. Qvist admitted in 1787 that part of his output could not find a market, and that much steel was only made "to enlighten the Theory about steel". His steelworks was thus both a production site and a laboratory, and Qvist might be labelled a "hybrid figure", to use Ursula Klein's concept, combining as he did "natural and technological inquiry" with involvement in "industry and commerce".⁷

1776, when Qvist delivered his speech, is a year memorialised by the appearance of another text on the relationship between making and markets. Adam Smith began his *Wealth of Nations* by stating that "The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgement with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour". The title of Chapter 3 then notes that "the Division of Labour is limited by the Extent of the Market."⁸ A precondition was that the market was unregulated and free. Qvist made a similar argument, relating the organisation of labour and the extent of the market to what Rinman called "general improvements": economic growth was the outcome of an interplay between labour and markets. These relationships have since been called "Smithian growth", and connected to the emergence of modern society.⁹ Together with technological

development and the establishment of a parliamentary democracy, one might see them as the pillars of modernity. Neither Qvist nor Smith talked about technology, but it was only another year before the term was introduced into the discussion of economic development. In 1777 the German scholar Johann Beckmann published *Anleitung zur Technologie*, in which he defined technology as “the science which teaches how to treat natural products, or the knowledge of handicrafts.” It was a science of how to make things “in systematic order”, related to the organisation of labour. Qvist was not a stranger to “making things” from “natural products”, but he lacked this concept. It was another decade before the term was used in Sweden, and it was Rinman who defined “technology” as “the knowledge of how to prepare raw materials from the three natural kingdoms and to make use of them for oeconomy, factories, arts and crafts”.¹⁰

Our ambition is to insert Qvist into this discussion about labour, markets, technology, and economic change. He might not have been aware that he lived in a period that we, in hindsight, have labelled the “revolutionary age”, but, as stated by the French historian Daniel Roche, this was a common denominator for eighteenth-century people. Neither Smith nor Beckmann saw themselves as harbingers of a modern society. But the task for historians is to look for signs of change in a period where contemporaries found no such signs.¹¹ A man like Qvist might here be a better exemplar than Smith or Beckmann, as a “hybrid figure” combining making with an intellectual understanding. In this chapter, we concentrate on the intellectual side, leaving physical activities in laboratories and workshops for later analyses. Our beginning is Qvist’s speech from 1776, but the discussion also includes other officials in the metal trades, such as Johan Westerman and Eric Thomas Svedenstierna. Our aim is to analyse how the key concepts of the organisation of labour, markets, technology, and progress were transformed through the writings of these “hybrid figures” during the late-eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century.

1776 is an appropriate beginning to modernity, and scholars have rightly used it in that way. *The Wealth of Nations* was after all not the only emblematic text published that year, and it might be argued that *The Declaration of Independence* has had an even greater impact on later development. However, the 1770s was not only a decade of important texts, as it also saw significant technological and industrial developments, with James Watt’s steam engine as the paramount example. Making an analogy with the French Revolution, Arnold Toynbee suggested that the Industrial Revolution was initially set in motion by the “mighty blows of the steam-engine”, creating a narrative in which the advent of modernity had both political and economic sources.¹² A crucial feature, in this context, is the question of economic growth. The full title of Smith’s book points in that direction, with division of labour leading to growth, and hence the establishment of ideas of “Smithian growth”. Later scholars have replaced the division of labour with technology, and instead pleaded for a “Kuznetzian growth” with technological development as an engine.

Economic historians have even made a chronological demarcation between them, with the industrial revolution as a watershed; “Smithian growth” took place in early modern society, while “Kuznetzian growth” signals modernity.¹³ A similar idea has been elaborated by the British scholar Anthony Wrigley, who viewed the industrial revolution in terms of a departure from what he called an organic economy. Initially the “advanced organic economy” grew, thanks to the division of labour. But sustained economic growth only developed when the consumption of mineral coal began to have an impact, a phase Wrigley called the “mineral-based energy economy”. These two models are complementary, with the steam engine, the emblematic machinery of industrialisation, as a voracious coal consumer.¹⁴

If we listen to contemporary voices, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between division of labour and technology, separating “Smithian” from “Kuznetzian” growth. For Smith, the development of machinery was a logical outcome of the division of labour, as the latter created innovations.¹⁵ Also for Beckmann, *Technologie* was integrated into the organisation of labour, as “knowledge of handicrafts”, rather than something radically new. Furthermore, neither of these observers anticipated a period of prolonged growth. Well into the nineteenth century, as Wrigley has reminded us, none of the classical economists could foresee a future with fundamental changes; industrial society was not something that was on their horizon. Instead, they foresaw a stationary state, in which the fixed nature of land would curb any prolonged period of growth.¹⁶ Smith and Beckmann wrote their books when change began to appear, with agricultural development, a gradual replacement of organic fuel for mineral coal, and embryonic industrial growth due to division of labour *and* machinery. It is only in hindsight that we see the late-eighteenth century as the beginning of what we call the industrial revolution.¹⁷

The advent of modernity was not only a material event. The German scholar Reinhart Koselleck has dubbed this period *die Sattelzeit*, and stressed that it was an epoch when people began to think in a “modern way” and use concepts familiar to us today – a time “in which the past was gradually transformed into the present”, and when old words “have taken on new meanings”. Important concepts like revolution, freedom, crisis, history, and progress became what he called “Janus-faced”; they opened up a past whose “social and political realities [are] no longer intelligible to us without critical commentary”, and also our present, where their meanings are “directly intelligible to us”. This created a rupture as radical as the industrial revolution, and Koselleck emphasised some general features of the way in which concepts gradually gained new meanings, and were given a temporal dimension pointing towards an open future. There was an “acceleration” of time, creating a gulf between the past and the future. Another feature was the appearance of more abstract and ambiguous concepts, so-called “collective singulars”. These traits were “mutually dependent”, and changed the way people perceived time, history, and the future.¹⁸ One important concept that changed its meaning during *die Sattelzeit* was progress, or *Fortschritt*. It “became a

modern concept when it shed or forgot its natural background meaning of stepping through space". Its beginning was the spatial description of "taking a step forward", but gradually it was filled with a temporal meaning of "moving" in time while leaving the past behind; it became a "collective singular". Its meaning changed to "condense ever more complex experiences on a higher level of abstraction", and assumed an independent and leading role in the development from the past to the future. It was given historical agency.¹⁹

Keith Tribe uses a similar approach when tracing the meaning of another concept, "economy". He outlines its shifting connotation up until our present time, and indicates that it assumed a more intelligible meaning during the half-century after the publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. It, too, developed into a "collective singular", and Tribe stresses how an independent economic discourse became separated from political thinking. Interestingly, he makes a comparison between developments in Britain, France, and Germany, and for our discussion, the German example is paramount, since it deals with dissolution of cameralism and the emergence of a nascent political economy, a development resembling parallel developments in Sweden.²⁰ In tracing the changing meaning of concepts like division of labour, (free) markets, technology, and progress in Swedish texts, we strive to follow Koselleck's and Tribe's trail, highlighting gradually altered views on economic life in the "revolutionary age".

Johan Westerman and Signs of a "Smithian growth"

Another man involved in the Swedish metal trades was Johan Westerman. He was a contemporary of Qvist, and followed the same career pattern, with academic studies, administrative training, and travelling in Europe.²¹ Not a practical man like Qvist, he was instead taught in "subjects that belong to common householding", before being enrolled as a junior official at the Board of Trade (*Kommerskollegium*). Westerman's continued work as a civil servant was enriched by his experiences during a long European study tour in the years 1758–1760. In 1763 he left Sweden again, this time with England as the main destination.²² He would rise through the ranks, and from 1773 Westerman served as State Secretary of trade and finance. His intellectual background was similar to Qvist's, with cameralism and its structure of connected layers of householding. It was rooted in natural law and Wolffian philosophy, but incorporated inputs from natural science and state-making. It was the task of a ruling state – under whose protection community members renounced some of their liberties – to preserve the order of the common household through "*Polity, Oeconomie, and taxation*". Supervision should be based on statistical surveying and "information-gathering".²³

Divergent ideas were however developed, with Anders Nordencrantz stressing the benefits of "private vices", competition, and individual passions as a foundation for a well-functioning society. He drew inspiration from Samuel Pufendorf, but also from a "naturalistic view" in accordance

with Bernard Mandeville and Adam Smith. A good society was one in which the ruling power was based on “a fraternity of free, independent citizens” and where the state prevented “privileges and extraordinary advantages for certain individuals”.²⁴ Such perspectives, often embedded in a critique of economic policies, gained momentum during the 1760s, and Westerman was one of those inspired by them. He maintained that Swedish shipping, which ideally gave “life and movement to all other trades”, had “taken a bad turn and deviated from its proper objective”. This was illustrated by the fact that “the value of imports exceeds our exports” and that “most of the trade relies on foreign capital”. As long as this was the case, he concluded, manufactures aiming “to improve common householding and reduce luxury” would fail.²⁵

Westerman included the iron trade in this discussion, and investigated the market for metal wares, given the extensive state effort to stimulate metal manufacture. He was influenced by his old teacher, Anders Berch, who supported the promotion of “those arts and crafts that employ larger numbers of people, make requisite goods for the inhabitants’ needs, [and] which cause a greater circulation of money, etcetera”.²⁶ This seemed like an obvious course of action, but Westerman would also criticise the state’s agenda. In 1774, he denounced “the hitherto incorrect manufacturing-systems” that invested in “establishments that are built on artificial foundations”. In a sparsely populated country like Sweden, “improvement” was promoted by “bringing a few crafts, suited to the country’s nature, to the greatest possible perfection”. Each of these, especially those that contributed to a “significant increase in the realm’s exports”, was to be allowed to “pass from father to son like a national trade”.²⁷ There was a consensus that metalworking had a central place in this group of trades, since Sweden was “endowed with the greatest natural advantages”, but the small domestic market was a constraint to the rise of a “national” manufacture.²⁸ This became apparent in the 1760s. The state supervisor for fine metalworking, Samuel Schröder, emphasised that “the lack of sales is one of the most prevalent difficulties”, and stressed that “the Domestic Market will not suffice”.²⁹ Exports had to be encouraged, and the potential for Swedish activity on the market was a key to both Schröder and Westerman when they embarked on their European journeys. Their discussions linked the spheres of production, consumption, and trade, while pointing towards two interwoven developments. The market expanded in a promising way, but it was characterised by growing competition, which would have negative consequences for Sweden if no changes were made.

Amsterdam was a hub for European trade in “iron wares”. It was so extensive, Westerman noted after a visit, that the “annual sale” of each iron-monger “by far surpasses the value of the entire Swedish bar iron export”.³⁰ The reasons for Dutch supremacy had a long history. The republic had diligently sought out “all kinds of trading and householding branches”, while also seeking to acquire the seagoing trade of countries “that have neglected or not known about their own advantages”. Sweden belonged in the latter group, as it instead had “made war, the enemy of trade, into its main

concern". A vast territory and "many favourable Products" made no difference, since the Dutch Republic was "the richest Country in the world" while Sweden was "the poorest Country in Europe".³¹

However, the commercial networks converging in Holland also gave Westerman hope. Benefiting from generous policies regarding manufacture and trade, Swedish merchants could be persuaded to make "new trade attempts" to gain sales in Amsterdam, but also to compete with the Dutch for the southern European market. Westerman concluded that gaining access to this trade depended on the "adoption of a better System".³² He was not alone in using such a metaphor for the metal trades. In the late-1740s, Schröder described Sweden's role as an international supplier of bar iron in terms of an "Iron system" – a network that connected Swedish ironworks with English manufacturers, who in turn supplied a global market. To Schröder, this system was essentially static and could not generate change itself.³³ Westerman had in view a radically different iron market, and envisioned "a future decline in our Bar iron exports". If Sweden should keep its position in the iron trade, and "impede our competitors", bar iron had to be shipped at low costs, but it also needed to be supplemented by "finer wares" customised to "the circumstances of foreign consumption".³⁴

To compete on foreign markets required in-depth knowledge as well as an active presence in important marketplaces, for example through the establishment of "trading offices". Still, the circulation of metal wares was, to an even larger extent than that of bar iron, marked by fierce rivalry. While he was in Amsterdam Westerman emphasised how "caution and persistency" was needed "when one wants to enter a branch of trade, which has been occupied by others for many years".³⁵ In yet another memo, he pointed out that the Swedes still had not "sufficient funds and means" needed to compete with British traders, emphasising the "lack of harmony" in Sweden among "those who make and those who ship the goods" – that is, manufacturers and merchants.³⁶ Despite these circumstances, Westerman was in no doubt that a rise of domestic manufacture had to be built on competition and reciprocal trading connections. In a speech to *Vetenskapsakademien*, in 1770, he questioned the protectionism that prevailed in Sweden, as in other countries. European states put up barriers to "a useful mutual trade" and "forgot the boundaries set by nature itself". These "householding arrangements" did nothing but limit industry and commercial activity. In Sweden, he noted that "disorder" and an inadequate division of labour existed among merchants, but also stressed that the practitioners had to solve these problems themselves, "in line with the liberty that trade desires". If necessary, the state should assist in creating "a better order".³⁷

These arguments should not be understood as an advocacy for a general free trade, but rather as favouring liberty within the common household, sanctioned by a benevolent state.³⁸ "Far-reaching competition" would eventually "bring everything back to its natural condition", Westerman noted, and the ruling power had an obligation to take active part in this process.³⁹

Others would not agree. In 1765, Anders Chydenius, the Finnish cleric, pointed out that instead of following examples set by “[g]reat trading nations”, Sweden had turned to “restrictions, exclusive privileges and secrets”, measures that only benefited a small number of merchants.⁴⁰ “In a word”, Chydenius later added, “monopolies, bill-jobbery and a national deficit can never arise unless they are protected by the laws[,] but may well be maintained once they have been established”. To the disadvantage of export sectors like the iron trade, these arrangements had been complemented by regulations that prevented foreigners trading “freely in the largest towns” and thereby challenging “the vested interests in the country through competition”. The creation of *Jernkontoret* in 1747, with the intentions of counteracting the low iron prices set by overseas traders and facilitating loans to ironworks-owners, had hardly made any difference: “as to whether this benefited the poorer or the more affluent ones is common knowledge”, Chydenius concluded.⁴¹ In 1766, this critique was developed, when he stressed that the ironmasters’ own association was a remnant of an old “Trading System”; countering the interests of influential merchants with such an institution was only to balance one monopoly with another.⁴² All “economic privileges”, Chydenius emphasised, led to “distortions [...] that favour certain people but hinder others in the conduct of their business”. The state’s protectionist agenda and *Jernkontoret*’s activities thus failed to invigorate exports and led to difficulties for the metal trades as a whole.⁴³

These discussions point to the importance of bar iron export, but also indicate that something more than commercial improvement was needed. Also in 1766, Rinman wrote of what “hinders the growth of [our] metal works” and created “the basis for such poor sales in foreign places”. He noted the lack of capital, expensive input goods, and a poor presence in overseas marketplaces, but he also stressed the lack of “competition” and few “facilitating machines”.⁴⁴ General improvements could only be achieved if alterations were made simultaneously in the spheres of circulation and production. Westerman echoed this in his speech to *Vetenskapsakademien*, noting that an “even sale” and “quality goods” went hand in hand; “manufacture and marketing are alternately the effect and cause of each other’s perfection and survival”.⁴⁵ In this respect, he had already paid attention to the impact of individual liberties during his journey to Britain. A “Manufacturing Town” endowed with “unrestricted liberty”, where “Natives and foreigners of whatever religion they may have” could practise their trade, was “the first pillar” of improvements in “fine” metalworking. An urban area “liberated” from guilds and state regulations would result in an influx of artisans and “stronger emulation”, but also create opportunities for using a “rational economy and division of labour” and “Mechanical Machines”. Examples from Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester, Westerman concluded, had, “in a short time”, proven how such a “principle of liberty” gave rise to a “remarkable strength and populousness”.⁴⁶ These observations added a layer to Westerman’s ideas on overseas trade. In 1768

he discussed the “slower pace of Work”, a major reason for poor Swedish manufacture, by placing domestic production within a larger context. The making of saleable products and the expansion of export, as well as population growth and rising prosperity, were all associated with “more intensity and diligence” in the sphere of production. He emphasised Sweden’s disadvantage with a “small number of working hands”, which prevented “competition for employment”. Still, there were opportunities to follow “more advanced” countries. England, again, was the main comparison, with its concentration of the workforce, “the use of handier Tools and Machines”, and a “more convenient division of labour, by which each worker does not deal with more than one task”. Westerman was confident in following the English “method”, but more ambivalent when it came to the origin of these changes. On the one hand, “diligence and perseverance” in other nations seemed to have arisen “more because of population and other events, than of any general Householding-regulations”. On the other hand, in promoting the application of piecework he stressed that such a matter “could profit from measures taken by the legislative power”, if employers failed to “voluntarily” adopt the correct organisational model. The state should, therefore, intervene if individual “householders” did not comply with changes that were for the “service of the public”, especially so when dealing with the “most useful arrangements” that took a “long time” to implement.⁴⁷

We should not jump to any conclusions regarding the way in which the visit to Britain affected Westerman’s discussion of Swedish manufacture. It was one source of inspiration, but he was certainly also inspired by other commentators. Chydenius reasoned along similar lines, as he turned against the coercion and monopolies that characterised Swedish manufacture, stressing that “freedom” was “a term with too wide a meaning”. There was a real risk, he noted, that it became entangled with the privileges of specific groups – “the freedom of a few individuals”. In *Den Nationnale winsten*, he emphasised the mutually reinforcing connections between liberty, competition, and toil, and criticised what he believed to be excessive state interference.⁴⁸

Industriousness and diligence require a cheerful disposition and constant competition if they are not soon to slacken off. They never exist under oppression, but when they are encouraged by liberty, a rapid turnover of products and individual profit, that natural sluggishness will be overcome which can never be permanently removed by violent means.⁴⁹

Again, Chydenius went further than most in his critique. As with overseas trade, we should not regard the remarks by Westerman as a tribute to liberty in general. Instead, it was a way of promoting alterations within a well-defined segment of the economy; freedom and competition in the metal trades, combined with organisational and technical improvements, was to be initiated in a top-down fashion and framed by the “regulated structures” of the

existing householding system.⁵⁰ Still, Westerman saw a potential for more extensive changes that went beyond the perimeters of “free towns”. After being active in promoting such an initiative, the foundation of Eskilstuna *Fristad* in 1771, he stressed that it would be of vital importance for metal manufacture, by “attracting working hands and fostering competition”. It was evidently the state’s task to provide for liberty and “proper competition”, but once in place, one could expect “good products at a low price” and “ample sales”, which in turn affected “the craft’s expansion”. In this way, “the creation of free manufacturing communities” could also “serve as a model for the improvement of the entire trade”. On the other side of the spectrum, Westerman saw “artificially created crafts”, as “alien plants in greenhouses”, which tended to “wither and die, if something is missing in their delicate care”.⁵¹

Given the criticism from commentators such as Chydenius and Westerman, it is not difficult to imagine that these “alien plants” referred to mis-directed and state-subsidised enterprises of the prevailing “manufacturing system”.⁵² Encouragement of domestic production, they stressed, should rather be geared towards trades with an innate potential for “expansive movement”, without excessive state governance. Metalworking was among these sectors, based upon rich “natural” resources. Still, other countries had the lead, and Sweden was trailing. In Westerman’s view, *Fristaden* was part of the solution, but liberty, technical improvements, and a better organisation of work had to be complemented by activities in the commercial sphere: “If Iron-refinement is to be duly assisted and improved, then this assistance must extend in a Systematically coherent manner to all parts”.⁵³

It must be remembered that these discussions reflected changes in the market, as Westerman observed during his foreign tours. Moreover, in British towns he had witnessed the positive effects of individual liberties and competition. Thus, when he spoke of “Systematically coherent” measures, it is evident that these were also intended to lay the foundation for man-made improvements in the metal trades. The same measures were promoted in texts that more explicitly favoured “free trade”. The anonymous *Tankar om Fri Handel*, from 1779, dealt with many of the improvements that featured in Westerman’s writings, but it did so with important additions. In criticising protectionist measures and promoting competition, the author referred to Smith’s newly published *Wealth of Nations*. If domestic products were made better and at the same price as imported ones, it was said, consumers would always choose the former and the latter would be “expelled” by the forces of the market. In this way, each country could specialise in making things from their own “raw goods”, at the same time as consumers and entire nations enjoyed the benefit of a “freer mobility”. This was unregulated markets and division of labour interacting to create improvements in the spheres of circulation and production. The text also referred to Qvist’s 1776 speech in stressing that competition did not exist simply within national borders. The author used the term “intrusive spirit”, and argued that the export of Swedish

products would be much facilitated “If Sweden just owned one Place, well, even the smallest of patches in the West Indies”.⁵⁴

To Westerman and his peers, improvements in the metalworking sector were seen against a background of expanding markets, liberty, and an elaborate organisation of labour, features that have been identified as key qualities in “Smithian growth”; although in this case, these advances were conceived within a static system of householding still to be governed by cameralist principles of an active state. It would take a few more decades before further alterations generated a different, in many respects more modern, perspective on economic progress.

Svedenstierna, Machinery, and Growth

In 1801, Eric Thomas Svedenstierna left Sweden for Paris, where he went to lectures in chemistry and mineralogy. A year later, he crossed the English Channel, for London and British industrial districts. He viewed copper smelting in Swansea, the gigantic ironworks at Merthyr Tydfil, metalworking in Birmingham, coal mining at Newcastle, and much more. In 1803, he was back in Sweden, and the following year he wrote a book about his journey, “in a rather easy and free style”.⁵⁵ Svedenstierna trod a similar path to Qvist and Rinman. Born to a family of ironmasters, he studied chemistry and mineralogy at Uppsala University, and defended a thesis in *Oeconomia* in 1782.⁵⁶ He was soon appointed to a position at the *Bergskollegium*, where he stayed for a decade, being entrusted with “hands-on” tasks, such as overseeing pig iron making. In the 1790s an ironmaster gave him the resources to experiment with novel forms of making iron, but he also took part in canal construction. At the turn of the century, Svedenstierna was one of the most gifted young servants of Swedish iron making, and a perfect candidate for a journey to Britain, where he was expected to study iron production and market conditions for Swedish iron.

Much had happened in Britain since Qvist’s journey, but neither the *Bergskollegium* nor *Jernkontoret* had sent any travellers to report on developments. The Swedish authorities realised that they needed to know more about recent developments, especially about the advent of what Wrigley called the “mineral-based energy economy”, with coal being used in iron production. It had been acknowledged since at least mid-century that pig iron was made with coal, but Swedish officials were also aware about new ways of making bar iron. The latter was potentially a bigger threat, since Sweden competed in the British market for bar iron. Puddling, as the new process came to be known, was described in Rinman’s *Bergwerks lexicon*, where the author stated that the British iron was of inferior quality. Coal was also used in the newly invented steam engines, also powering hammers and rolling mills.⁵⁷

Svedenstierna was the perfect choice for the mission of informing the mining administration about what was happening in Britain, but the book he published on his return was not what *Jernkontoret* wanted, even if the

section on Merthyr Tydfil included an account of puddling. They wanted a scientific treatment that expanded what was already known. Svedenstierna was aware of the plain narrative of the book, and noted that “in the future” he would “give a more complete description”. The coming decade saw a drawn-out conflict between Svedenstierna and *Jernkontoret* about such a publication. During that period, he was busy with other projects and returned to his employment, overseeing pig iron making and improving blast furnaces. In 1805, bar iron making was added to Svedenstierna’s tasks, and he was to educate younger colleagues in both practical work and theoretical knowledge. Moreover, he initiated the first Swedish periodical on iron making, *Samlingar in Bergsvettenskapen*. As both editor and main author, he contributed texts on the relationship between theory and practice, iron export, and technical upgrades. *Samlingar* only lasted from 1807 to 1811, but Svedenstierna had shown his proficiency, and in 1813 his long-awaited scientific treatment of British iron making appeared. It was indeed an ambitious book, with the production of iron inserted into a wide framework of economic and technological reasoning, but many readers were disappointed since it only dealt with pig iron. To some extent this was remedied four years later when he published an article called “On Puddling”, which was a compilation of what the French metallurgist Jean Henri Hassenfratz had written on the topic. That article was published in 1817, in the first volume of a new periodical, *Jernkontorets Annaler*. Once again, Svedenstierna served as both editor and main author.⁵⁸

A foundation for Svedenstierna’s thoughts in the early 1800s was the connection between Swedish iron and British development. Export was the obvious link, but British development implied so much more. The difficult times faced by Swedish iron producers in these years was the outcome of “a surprising development of England’s Political, Industrial and Trade System”, and it was with an analysis of this “system” that he gradually broke with his eighteenth-century predecessors.⁵⁹ When people like Schröder imagined *one* system, Svedenstierna saw a plethora of systems, all related to each other. From this perspective, he created a flexible model in terms of which Swedish dependency on British developments should be analysed, centred on industry, market, science, freedom, and progress. He did not use the concept of technology, but technological development was crucial to his thoughts.⁶⁰

One novelty signalled by Svedenstierna was the dissolution of the unifying concept of trade used in the previous century, as an amalgam of making and commerce. He did not stop there, however, as he also made a distinction between the means of production and the practice of labour (“construction methods and labour processes”). This made him capable of dealing with the different aspects independently, before putting them together again, which, in turn, gave him the opportunity to analyse “the physical artefacts” on its own, and thus to scrutinise what we later have called technology. He abandoned Beckmann’s definition of *Technologie*, as “the knowledge of handicrafts”, for an analysis of technological development with a potential

to change society. His discussion of puddling is paramount, but it also related to coke-smelting, and James Watt's improved steam engine. While the earlier generation discussed the division of labour and the importance of skill, Svedenstierna only mentioned these in passing, when dealing with labour costs in relation to machinery; with new blowing machines lower wages were an option.⁶¹ This separation between machines and labour pushed the latter into the background of the analysis, something that was accentuated by the emphasis on machine building. In this way, Svedenstierna emphasised the technological aspect of production, and it became his main theme.

To an extent this replacement of labour by technology is partly hidden by the slow introduction of a new concept, that of industry. The word had existed in Swedish for a long time, meaning to be diligent and industrious, but from the latter decades of the eighteenth century it began to appear with a modern meaning, pointing towards production taking place in mechanical workshops.⁶² Svedenstierna used the concept when looking back on his British journey and in his 1813 book "industry" denoted specific aspects of the British economy. Through this intellectual manoeuvring he was able to redirect the attachment of markets to production to a conception where the market – preferably a free market – was related to one particular type of production, that of industrial production. He gave a thorough account of the relationship between production and consumption, and how Swedish producers were completely dependent on the British market. Changes in British demand had an immense effect in Sweden, and the development of puddling was a threat, but high British tariffs were also a menace to Swedish producers. It was "England's natural advantages, its wide-reaching commerce and its merchants' money-strength and credits, along with Government measures" that created a strong British iron industry. Svedenstierna objected to British tariffs from two different angles. On the one hand, he had a pragmatic objection, since tariffs raised the price of Swedish iron and hampered its prospects. On the other hand, he objected in principle to state involvement in any market. When he discussed British iron making he regularly invoked the free market, and stated that the main reason for the low prices of British iron was to be found in "the competition ... among those who act within the same industry", so that those who have been successful undersell those who are less fortunate. In this way, Swedish producers were confronted by both a free and a regulated market; free British producers obtained an additional advantage from state enforced tariffs.⁶³

The advantages of "lighter pressure", Svedenstierna explained, were evident during difficult times, since they brought about industriousness as well as "considerations to make smaller losses".⁶⁴ The free market had established the British iron industry as the force placing Swedish iron makers in a difficult situation, together with the gradual adaptation of coal, new technologies, and high tariffs. In 1813, he noted how these factors opened "prospects for a future with almost endless production". Technology was the key to a radically different future and discussion about progress, and the 1760s

was a watershed. The seventeenth century had indeed seen a “happy gift of invention”, but the “imperfections of machinery [...] held back progress”. Instead, Svedenstierna emphasised that “progress belonged to a different age”, that of the later eighteenth century; “English iron making can count its beginning” from the time of the introduction of Watt’s steam engine.⁶⁵

Everything that Svedenstierna wrote must be viewed in the light of the difficulties facing Swedish iron producers, many of whom struggled with declining exports. Here British developments revealed a pattern for survival. Its technology could be copied, and an unregulated market might spur industriousness and betterment. Gustaf Broling, a contemporary to Svedenstierna, wrote that England was “the most industrial country”, and became the first Swedish writer using the adjective “industrial” to describe this process.⁶⁶ Svedenstierna added that one should have faith in development; it was necessary to “tirelessly [follow] the direction of the age and hence the improvements arising”.⁶⁷ It was up to Swedish producers to do the same. His foundation was “discoveries in chemistry, physics and mechanics”, and how they might be put to productive uses. This was to follow “the direction of the age”, based on necessary features for the application of scientific knowledge, such as willingness, monetary resources, considerations, skills, and diligence. A lack of any of these would hamper further progress.⁶⁸

Like Qvist, Svedenstierna was a member of *Vetenskapsakademien*, and in 1810 he delivered his speech “On Swedish Iron Making in Older and Newer Times”. In doing so, he placed himself in the midst of Koselleck’s *Sattelzeit*. The speech began by stressing the long history of Swedish iron making, “since ancient times”; agriculture could not exist without iron, and Sweden had been cultivated since before “Oden”. The country was blessed with “rich deposits of iron ore”, a foundation upon which Swedish society rested. Svedenstierna elaborated a “stadial theory” of history, with development towards a progressive and enlightened present. Some disruption between stages was caused by monarchs, but there were other forces in motion as well. The ties between the market and production remained crucial, beginning with the links between iron and agriculture, but proceeded to an analysis of how rising foreign demand inspired Gustavus Vasa to recruit German artisans. Crisis awaited at the end of the seventeenth century, when producers suffered under the “weight of King Carl XII’s long-lasting and devastating wars”.⁶⁹

Swedish iron making recovered after the Great Northern War, and the period was characterised by “the Ruler’s tireless efforts” to re-establish the iron trade, efforts informed by a “corporative spirit”. Coming back to the free market, Svedenstierna stated that it would have been better if the trade had been left “both unassisted and untouched, with its own forces to work itself forward”. In this way “industriousness would be encouraged”. Despite this, he continued, Swedish iron making had reached a “greater height than ever before.” There was “competition” in the British market, with increasing Russian iron production and that of British makers, “with their unsteady transition from charcoal to mineral coal”. Swedish producers also improved

their knowledge about iron, and Svedenstierna praised Rinman's publications as a source of inspiration, "the best that have come off the printing presses of any country". The final decades of the century were "the most shining period" for domestic iron production, with steady demand, low grain prices, and a stable exchange rate. New production methods grew in importance; and without using the term "technology", Svedenstierna talked about "happy inventions by known *Mechanici*", and heralded improved blowing machines and new ways of managing waterpower. Rising output was a sign of "improvement", and it was caused by "mechanical devices", or, in other words, by technological developments.⁷⁰

The market dimension did not lose its importance, but the situation had changed, and Svedenstierna's main argument was that it would change again. In 1810, he was aware that what happened before the turn of the century would affect what was to come. Recapitulating the results from his 1804 book, he noted that from the 1780s British production rose quickly, with large new ironworks using coal-based technology, coke-fired blast furnaces, puddling, and rolling mills powered by "the famous Mr. WATT'S improved Steam Engine". As a result, Svedenstierna stressed, Swedish iron making balanced "on the outer edge, where it still stands [...] undermined and weakened by foreign industry".⁷¹ According to Svedenstierna, Swedish iron making would be salvaged and the reason for this was related to his way of writing history, "naturally divided into Three great Epochs". The first one began with "new and improved Iron Processes". The second came with the accession of Gustavus Vasa, and yet another wave of new processes. The beginning of the last age came when puddling had "gained enough substance", and with Swedish producers placed on that "outer edge". The same epoch also encapsulated, however, "the improvement of the sciences and their application; common enlightenment and connected consideration, industriousness and thrift", and Svedenstierna had few hesitations about the future. It was only to follow "the direction of the age", and "new ways" to markets being created through "Europe's and other Continents' recreation." He predicted a new society with "an improved oeconomia", without "the oppression" of state regulations, striving for "new ways to generate sales".⁷²

Iron Making in *die Sattelzeit*

Our story began with a speech, delivered by the mining official Bengt Qvist to Sweden's most important scientific association, *Vetenskapsakademien*. The year of this speech, 1776, is memorialised by another, far more important publication, that of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. As we have emphasised these two texts partly deal with the same theme, the relationship between making and markets. 1776 was also the onset of what has been labelled as the Revolutionary Age, with the signing of the *Declaration of Independence* and the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. Moreover, this period has been hailed as the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, which Arnold

Toynbee named and linked to the introduction of the new coal-based technology. Our story ended with yet another speech in the long line of discourses on domestic metal processing, when Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, in 1810, delivered a speech on the history of Swedish iron making. The first decades of the nineteenth century are normally not seen as the end of the Revolutionary Age, but it is obvious that much had happened since the time of Qvist and Smith.

When in 1810 Svedenstierna spoke about “an improved *oeconomia*”, he re-used a term that had been fundamental for eighteenth-century Swedish writers on economic matters. When “hybrid experts” like Qvist and Rinman used the concept of householding during the 1760s and 1770s, they were doing so with a firm belief in the world as a static structure, with interconnected *oeconomic* systems (such as the iron system) that could not generate change in themselves. Rinman spoke about the need for “general improvement”, and Qvist similarly discussed the benefits of simultaneous advancements in the spheres of production and circulation; “industriousness” and an “intrusive spirit” would pave the way for “expansion” in the Swedish metal trades. With extensive experience of both commercial and industrial hot spots in Western Europe, their colleague Westerman added that industry and competition was put into motion through liberty. All the same, none of them could imagine “the direction of the age” that Svedenstierna spoke about. The latter’s “improved *oeconomia*” was, in this way, a new type of improvement, guided not only by changes in the material world but also by viewing them as leaps ahead rather than altered versions of the same. In doing that, he moved from a discourse of improvements to one of progress, with the latter turning into what Koselleck thought of as a “collective singular”. With the words of the French historian Daniel Roche, it could be said that Svedenstierna’s speech placed the focus on “how change became possible in a world that saw itself as stable, changeless, and coherent by virtue of ancestral principles and age-old values”.⁷³

We do not imply that our eighteenth-century travellers were unaware of changes taking place. In the same way as Smith criticised “every system” built upon “extraordinary encouragements [and] extraordinary restraints”, these Swedes also began to question the all-encompassing doctrines of *cameralism*.⁷⁴ Instead of monopolies, they promoted ideas of a liberated trade, and instead of a state-enforced division of labour, they saw the benefits of a changing organisation of labour related to market competition. In one crucial aspect, however, these men remained close to *cameralist* thinking, as they always believed that the solutions to the problems of Swedish economic development were to be found within the realm. There was a consensus among Qvist, Rinman, and Westerman that Sweden was endowed with rich resources below ground, and they agreed that by improving manufacture it would be possible to compete on the international market. To simply export bar iron would not suffice, as other countries had profited from taking metalworking further. Natural endowments, a changing organisation of labour, and a free market were all central pillars of what we now call “Smithian growth”.

Conditions for Swedish bar iron export deteriorated from the beginning of the Napoleonic Wars, and around 1810 it had reached its nadir. Svedenstierna was aware of the difficult situation, but he did not only view what happened in Britain as a threat. The British development, with its innovative uses of new machinery, was also the way ahead for Swedish producers. Svedenstierna dated the beginning of a new age to the 1760s, with the introduction of Watt's steam engine. This, rather than an altered organisation of labour, was to follow "the direction of the age". In essence, he had what we call technological development in mind, and what Svedenstierna saw as "progress" we would now call "Kuznetzian growth".

Svedenstierna belonged to what Koselleck has coined as *die Sattelzeit*, and from a Swedish standpoint, he belonged to its very centre. We have shown that he, in his writings, differed significantly from his predecessors, foremost in the way he viewed time and development. When Svedenstierna used the concept of progress, he did so in a way resembling what Koselleck defined as a "collective singular". Progress to Svedenstierna was open to the future, with a rupture towards the past, and it had a more abstract and ambiguous meaning than the "improvements" described by Qvist and Westerman. Svedenstierna's contemporary, Gustaf Broling, was also an advocate for progress, and an early user of the adjective "industrial", in trying to capture British advances. In doing so, he came close to what Koselleck saw as "the non-simultaneity of the simultaneous", the contemporary existence of features in different stages of development.⁷⁵

Notes

- 1 This chapter has been written as part of the project *Stålmakare och kunskapande: svenskt stål och dess betydelse från militärstatens dagar till den tidiga industrialiseringen*, funded by Jernkontoret (Stiftelsen Marie Nissers fond för bergshistorisk forskning). The authors also wish to thank Keith Tribe and Marten Seppel for valuable comments on earlier versions of this chapter.
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- 3 *Ibid.*, 4–5, 7, 9, 22, 27–28.
- 4 Chris Evans, Göran Rydén, *Baltic Iron in the Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Måns Jansson, *Making Metal Making: Circulation and Workshop Practices in the Swedish Metal Trades, 1730–1775* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2017).
- 5 Lothar Schilling, Jacob Vogel, "State-Related Knowledge: Conceptual Reflections on the Rise of the Modern State", in Lothar Schilling, Jakob Vogel, eds., *Transnational Cultures of Expertise: Circulating State-Related Knowledge in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 3.
- 6 Hjalmar Fors, Jacob Orrje, "Describing the World and Shaping the Self: Knowledge-Gathering, Mobility and Spatial Control at the Swedish Bureau of Mines", in Schilling, Vogel, eds., *Transnational Cultures*, 107–28.
- 7 Bengt Qvist Andersson, "Beskrifning om Gjutståls beredningen", Bergsskolans biblioteks manuskript, E. 12, no. 5, Kungl. Tekniska Högskolans bibliotek, Bengt Qvist Andersson, report to *Jernkontoret*, 1787-04-26, Rinmanska arkivet, S-K:2, Tekniska museets arkiv (TMA); Bertil Boëthius, Åke Kromnow,

- Jernkontorets historia, D.3: Jernkontoret och tekniken före götstålsprocesserna* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1955), 76–84; Ursula Klein, “Introduction: Artisanal-scientific Experts in Eighteenth-century France and Germany”, *Annals of Science* 69 (2012): 303.
- 8 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1976), 13, 31.
 - 9 Joel Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth. The Origins of the Modern Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 16.
 - 10 Johann Beckmann, *Anleitung zur Technologie, oder zur Kentniß der Handwerke, Fabriken und Manufacturen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1777). The English quotation from Jan Sebestik, “The Rise of the Technological Science”, *History and Technology* 1 (1983): 31; Sven Rinman, *Bergwerks lexicon*, Vol. 2 (Stockholm: Johan A. Carlbohm, 1789), 969.
 - 11 Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 6.
 - 12 Quotation from Daniel C.S. Wilson, “Arnold Toynbee and the Industrial Revolution: The Science of History, Political Economy and the Machine Past”, *History and Memory* 26 (2014): 142. See also Göran Rydén, “Provincial Cosmopolitanism: An Introduction”, in Göran Rydén, ed., *Sweden in the Eighteenth-Century World. Provincial Cosmopolitans* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 1–31.
 - 13 Mokyr, *A Culture of Growth*; Jack A. Goldstone, “Efflorescences and Economic Growth in World History: Rethinking the ‘Rise of the West’ and the Industrial Revolution”, *Journal of World History* 13 (2002): 323–89.
 - 14 E.A. Wrigley, *Continuity Chance and Change. The Character of the Industrial Revolution in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); E.A. Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
 - 15 Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 17.
 - 16 Wrigley, *Continuity, Chance and Change*, Ch. 2.
 - 17 Liliane Hilaire-Pérez, “‘What is Technology?’ An Enquiry into the Science of the Arts at the Dawn of Industrialisation”, in Kristine Bruland, Anne Gerritsen, Pat Hudson, Giorgio Riello, eds., *Reinventing the Economic History of Industrialisation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 44–58.
 - 18 Reinhart Koselleck, “Introduction and Prefaces to the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*”, *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 6 (2011): 9–15.
 - 19 Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), quotations at 221 and 229.
 - 20 Keith Tribe, *The Economy of the Word: Language, History, and Economics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 57–61, 73–75; Ere Nokkala makes a similar point in *From Natural Law to Political Economy: J. H. G. von Justi on State, Commerce and International Order* (Wien: LIT Verlag, 2019), 40.
 - 21 The biographical data in this paragraph and the following ones build on earlier accounts of Westerman’s life; see, e.g., Åke W. Essén, *Johan Liljencrantz som handelspolitiker: studier i Sveriges yttre handelspolitik 1773–1780* (Lund: Gleerup, 1928), 63–67; *Svenskt biografiskt lexicon*, Vol. 23 (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 1980–1981), 26–32, “Johan Liljencrants” (article by Kjell Kumlien). Westerman was ennobled in 1768 as Liljencrants.
 - 22 Johan Westerman, “Anteckningar, egenhändigt författade vid slutet af år 1803, icke för att uphöja värdet af egne bedrifter och förrättningar, men för att uplysa åtskillige händelser til deras ursprung, förtsättning och följd, som eljest i en framtid svårigen torde kunna med säkerhet utredas och kännas til deras rätta beskaffenhet”, in Bernhard Taube, ed., *Anteckningar och memorial af Grefve Johan Liljencrantz*, no. 1, 3, *Historiska handlingar* VIII:5 (Stockholm, 1878).

- 23 Göran Rydén, “Balancing the Divine with the Private: The Practices of *Hushållning* in Eighteenth-Century Sweden”, in Marten Seppel, Keith Tribe, eds., *Cameralism in Practice: State Administration and Economy in Early Modern Europe* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2017), 187–95 (quotation at 192 and 193); Eli F. Heckscher, *Sveriges ekonomiska historia från Gustav Vasa 2:2* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1949), 826–40; Tore Frängsmyr, “Den gudomliga ekonomin: Religion och hushållning i 1700-talets Sverige”, *Lychnos* 1971/72 (1972): 217–44; Sven-Eric Liedman, *Den synliga handen: Anders Berch och ekonomiämnena vid 1700-talets svenska universitet* (Stockholm: Arbetarkultur, 1986).
- 24 Lars Magnusson, “Corruption and civic order – natural law and economic discourse in Sweden during the age of freedom”, *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 37 (2011): 83–95, 102 (quotations at 90 and 102).
- 25 Johan Westerman, “Anmärkningar uti Handels- Oeconomie- och Finance-Saker, Sammanfattade i anledning af en åren 1758, 1759 och 1760, på Publique Bekostnad förrättad Utrikes Resa. Första Delen”, (No.) II (memo signed in Amsterdam, 17 November 1758), 45, Manuskriptsamlingen, Vol. 46, Riksarkivet, Stockholm (RA). Available at https://sok.riksarkivet.se/bildvisning/R0000426_00001 (accessed 15 February 2021).
- 26 Anders Berch, *Inledning til almänna hushållningen, innefattande grunden til politie, oeconomie och cameral wetenskaperne* (Stockholm: Lars Salvius, 1747), 219.
- 27 Johan Westerman, “Underdåniga tankar om Rikets närvarande tillstånd i anseende till dess almänna Hushållning och Finance-värk, samt huru en nödig förbättring deruti må vinnas”, in Taube, ed., *Anteckningar och Memorial*, no. II, 97–98.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 98.
- 29 Samuel Schröder, report to the Diet, 1769-04-04, 718, Frihetstidens utskottshandlingar, R. 3494, RA.
- 30 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, IV (memo signed in Paris, 19 March 1759), 67–68.
- 31 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, V (memo signed in Paris, 4 May 1759), 78–79.
- 32 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, IV, 68–69 and V, 107; Essén, *Johan Liljencrantz som handelspolitiker*, 78–85; Leos Müller, *Sveriges första globala århundrade: en 1700-talshistoria* (Stockholm: Dialogos, 2018), 43–84.
- 33 Samuel Schröder, “Dagbok rörande Handel, Näringar och Manufakturerna m.m. Uti Danmark, Holland, England, Frankrike och Tyskland. Under verkstälde resor, åren 1748–1751 förd af Samuel Schröder”, Vol. II, 483–97, Handskriftssamlingen, X.303, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm (KB).
- 34 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, XIV (memo signed in Rome, 8 March 1760), 278–80. He later returned to this matter, when discussing the Levant trade in particular; see Johan Westerman, *Tal, Om Sveriges Utrikes Handel i allmänhet, Och Den Levantiska i synnerhet, Hållet för Kongl. Vetenskaps Akademien, Vid Præsidii nedläggande, Den 31 Januarii 1770. Af Johan Westerman, Commerce-Råd* (Stockholm: Lars Salvius, 1770), 51–52.
- 35 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, III (memo signed in Amsterdam, 23 December 1758), 62.
- 36 Westerman, “Anmärkningar”, XVI (memo signed in Rome, 1 April 1760), 329–31.
- 37 Westerman, *Tal, Om Sveriges Utrikes Handel i allmänhet*, 7–9, 13, 17, 33.
- 38 See also Mathias Persson, *Det villrådiga samhället: Kungliga Vetenskapsakademiens politiska och ekonomiska ideologi, 1739–1792* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2020), 137–40.
- 39 Westerman, *Tal, Om Sveriges Utrikes Handel i allmänhet*, 9.
- 40 Anders Chydenius, *Svar På den af Kgl. Vetenskaps Akademien förestälta Frågan: Hwad kan wara orsaken, at sådan myckenhet Swenskt folk årligen flyttar utur Landet? och genom hwad Författningar det kan bäst förekommas?* (Stockholm: Peter Hesselberg, 1765), 50–51. Available in English translation at <https://chydenius.kootuttekset.fi/en/kirjoituksia/utflytting/> (accessed 15 February 2021).

- 41 Anders Chydenius, *Den Nationnale winsten, Wördsammast öfwerlemnad Til Riksens Höglofliga Ständer, Af en Deras Ledamot* (Stockholm: Lars Salvius, 1765), 26–28. Available in English translation at <https://chydenius.kootutteokset.fi/en/kirjoituksia/den-nationella-vinsten/> (accessed 12 February 2021). By strengthening the position of ironworks-owners and improving the opportunities to organise the iron export nationally, *Jernkontoret* was also intended to have a positive influence on the balance of trade. See also Bertil Boëthius, Åke Kromnow, *Jernkontorets historia, D.1: Grundläggningstiden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1947), 192–220.
- 42 Anders Chydenius, memo to the Diet, 20 March 1766, Prästeståndets arkiv, Prästeståndets enskilda memorial 1765–1766, nr. 1–195, R. 924, nr. 147, RA. Available at <https://chydenius.kootutteokset.fi/sv/kirjoituksia/memorial-om-nedlaggning-av-jernkontoret/> (accessed 15 February 2021).
- 43 Chydenius, *Den Nationnale winsten*, 15 (with quotation), 18.
- 44 Sven Rinman, report to *Bergskollegium*, 1766, in Gösta Malmborg, ed., *Sven Rinmans tjänsteberättelser rörande den grövre järnförädlingen 1761–1770* (Stockholm, 1935), 103–105.
- 45 Westerman, *Tal, Om Sveriges Utrikes Handel i allmänhet*, 10.
- 46 Johan Westerman, report to the Swedish Diet, 1765, 8–11, Frihetstidens utskottshandlingar, R.3338, RA.
- 47 Johan Westerman, *Inträdes-Tal, Om Svenska Näringarnes Undervigt emot de Utländske, förmedelst en trögare Arbets-drift, Hållet uti Kongl. Vetenskaps Akademien, D. 24 Februarii 1768, Af Johan Westerman, Commerce-Råd* (Stockholm: Lars Salvius, 1768), 5–6, 11–12, 23, 28–29.
- 48 Chydenius, *Swar*, 71; Chydenius, *Den Nationnale winsten*, 19; for a discussion of Chydenius’ views on liberty, see Carola Nordbäck, “In Defence of Freedom: Christianity and the Pursuit of Human Happiness in Anders Chydenius’ World”, in Rydén, ed., *Provincial Cosmopolitans*, 177–99.
- 49 Chydenius, *Den Nationnale winsten*, 20–21.
- 50 See also Göran Rydén, “Eskilstuna *Fristad*: The Beginnings of an Urban Experiment”, in Rydén, ed., *Provincial Cosmopolitans*, 142–44 (quotation at 144).
- 51 Johan Westerman, memo to *Jernkontoret*, 16 May 1770, Bergsrådet S. Schröderstiernas papper, Vol. 1:1, 2H, Eskilstuna stadsarkiv. Westerman’s memo was attached to the formal statement (about the creation of a *fristad* in Eskilstuna) that *Jernkontoret* delivered to *Bergskollegium* in November the same year.
- 52 The term “greenhouse plants” (*drivhusblomster*) has been used by Swedish economic historians debating the capacity of eighteenth-century, state-supported, manufactures to expand and grow. See Eli F. Heckscher, “De svenska manufakturerna under 1700-talet”, *Ekonomisk Tidskrift* 39 (1937): 153–221 and Per Nyström, *Stadsindustriens arbetare före 1800-talet* (Stockholm: Tiden, 1955), 146–48, 312–13.
- 53 Westerman, memo to *Jernkontoret*, 16 May 1770.
- 54 *Tanckar om Fri Handel* (Göteborg: Lars Wahlström, 1779), 11–14, n. 7.
- 55 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, *Resa, igenom en del af England och Skottland, åren 1802 och 1803* (Stockholm, 1804). Biographical information from *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 34 (Stockholm: Riksarkivet, 2013–2019), 512–17, “Eric Thomas Svedenstierna” (article by Jörgen Langhof); “Biographie öfver ... Eric Thom. Svedenstjerna”, *Kongl. Vetenskaps-Academiens Handlingar för år 1825* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1825), 461–71; Boëthius, Kromnow, *Jernkontorets Historia, D.3*.
- 56 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, *Ändrings Vinnande, de vid Bergs-Tings-Rätterne Fällande Domar och Utslag* (Uppsala, 1782).
- 57 For a brief history of the British iron industry, see J.R. Harris, *The British Iron Industry 1700–1850* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education, 1988). For the Swedish awareness of the process, see Chris Evans, Göran Rydén, “Tankar om teknik, den svenska järnhanteringen och den brittiska industrialiseringen”, *Med*

- Hammare och Fackla* (2006): 151–80; Rinman, *Bergverks lexicon*, Vol. 2, 413–14, headword “Reverber-ugnar.”
- 58 Svedenstierna, *Resa*, 89–94; Boëthius, Kromnow, *Jernkontorets Historia*, D.3, 110–39.
- 59 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, “Allmän öfversikta af de sedan år 1805 i Svenska Jernhandteringen gjorda förbättringar”, Jernkontorets arkiv, Fullmäktiges arkiv, F III:a, bunt 39, RA.
- 60 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, “Till Herrar Bruks-Ägare”, in *Samlingar i Bergsvetenskapen*, Vol. 1 (Stockholm, 1807), unpaginated. In 1817, he used “technologist” once, together with “metallurgist”, in a kind of supervisory position in a blast furnace; see Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, “Försök till Svar på den af Bruks-Societeten, i Inrikes-Tidningen N:o 12, år 1806 framställda Prisfrågan”, *Jernkontorets Annaler* (1817): 91.
- 61 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, *Några Underrättelser om Engelska Jernhandteringen* (Stockholm: Delén, 1813), 10, 13.
- 62 *Svenska Akademiens ordbok (SAOB)*, “industri” <https://www.saob.se/artikel/?seek=industri&pz=1> (accessed 10 August 2021).
- 63 Svedenstierna, “Till Herrar Bruks-Ägare”; Svedenstierna, *Några Underrättelser*, 60, 62.
- 64 Eric Thomas Svedenstierna, “Historiska upplysningar om Engelska Tackjernstillverkningen”, *Samlingar i Bergsvetenskapen*, Vol. 2 (Stockholm, 1807), 31.
- 65 Svedenstierna, *Några Underrättelser*, 14, 16; Svedenstierna, “Historiska upplysningar”, 27; Svedenstierna, “Till Herrar Bruks-Ägare”.
- 66 See *SAOB*, “industriell” <https://www.saob.se/artikel/?seek=industriell&pz=1> (accessed 10 August 2021).
- 67 Svedenstierna, “Till Herrar Bruks-Ägare.”
- 68 Svedenstierna, “Försök till Svar”, quotations at 88, 100, and 107.
- 69 Svedenstierna, *Tal Om Svenska Jernhandteringen*, quotations at 5, 9, 22, and 35. See also Boëthius, Kromnow, *Jernkontorets Historia*, D.3, 118–19.
- 70 Svedenstierna, *Tal Om Svenska Jernhandteringen*, 37, 41–45.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 47, 52.
- 72 *Ibid.*, 52–55.
- 73 Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 6.
- 74 See Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 687.
- 75 Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 159.

12 National Economics in Sweden

Reform and the Political Economy of Industrial Progress 1800–1850

Lars Magnusson

During the early years of the nineteenth century a new discourse of “national economy” developed in Europe and the United States that owed much to Adam Smith, but was built primarily on Jean-Baptiste Say’s *Traité d’économie politique*, first published in 1803. In 1805 Ludwig Heinrich Jakob published his *Grundsätze der National-Oekonomie oder National-Wirtschaftslehre*, a treatise based on Say’s work; and he then in 1807 published a two-volume German translation of Say’s *Traité*.¹ Jakob was instrumental in substituting “national” for “political” in the new discourse, following on from Say’s separation, in his “Discours préliminaire”, of “political economy” from “politics”, arguing that the proper object of *économie politique* was the formation, distribution and consumption of wealth. This was not a political discourse, Say argued: he thought that a well-administered state would prosper whatever the form of government. Nonetheless, he did believe that a knowledge of political economy was essential to citizenship, and it was in this proselytising, popular sense that his work was widely received. In Europe and the United States, “national economy” was not thought to be an abstract doctrine, as with English political economy, but a discourse linked to the welfare of the nation, a discourse to which all should have access. This idea would in time be picked up during the 1820s by Friedrich List while he was living in Pennsylvania, and later incorporated into the title of his major work, *Das nationale System der politischen Oekonomie* (1841).

Given the importance of Say in the early European reception of political economy, and the general influence of German writings throughout Scandinavia and the Baltic, this linkage of “national economy” to issues of national welfare became commonplace. But in Sweden it gained an additional resonance: political economy became a discourse of national improvement linked to the political crisis associated with the assassination of the king in 1792, and the subsequent search for a constitutional resolution. During the period 1719–1772 Sweden had been widely regarded as a model constitutional monarchy, combining a strong Diet ruled by the Estates with a constitutional monarch lacking power independent of the *Riksdag*. The foundations of this socio-political order had from the later 1760s been challenged by the common estates, who questioned the privileges of the nobility

and demanded broader equality. The freedoms that came with Sweden's "Age of Liberty" were however of lesser importance to the nobility than the danger of losing their privileges, which the commoner estates had demanded. The nobility, long a rival to the King for political power, now recognised its common interest with the monarchy. Gustavus III for his part had been very successful in retaining popular support by promising the Peasant estate freedom from the tyranny of the aristocrats. Coupled with a financial crisis and the conflicts between the estates in *Riksdag*, the ground was prepared for a *coup d'état* in 1772 by Gustavus III, and the Diet's loss of power and influence.²

Given the king's broad popularity this move was at first welcomed, but by the mid-1780s his rule was increasingly regarded as too rigid and heavy-handed. In 1789, coinciding with the meeting in France of the Estates General, the king assumed sole power, alienating the nobility in particular and leading directly to his assassination in 1792 at a masked ball in Stockholm Opera House.³ His son Gustavus IV was aged only 14 at the time, and until 1796 Sweden was ruled as a regency by Gustavus III's brother Charles. In 1805 Gustavus IV joined the Third Coalition against Napoleon, but in 1807 Russia made a separate peace with France at Tilsit and then invaded Sweden's eastern territories, present-day Finland. Faced also with a hostile Denmark, in 1809 Sweden surrendered its eastern provinces to Russia, the territory then becoming an autonomous principality of the Russian Empire. The loss of the eastern lands provoked a military revolt against Gustavus, leading to his abdication and his provisional replacement by the former regent. The re-formed *Riksdag* took the unusual step of disqualifying the entire former royal line from future power, but offered the crown to Charles following his acceptance of a new constitution. As Charles XIII he nominally ruled Sweden until his death in 1818, but his ill-health and senility prompted an early search for a successor unrelated to the former royal lineage. Napoleon's Marshall, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, was selected, and from 1810 Sweden was in effect ruled by Bernadotte as crown prince. Ascending in 1818 to the throne of a Sweden united since 1814 with Norway, Bernadotte took the title Charles IV John and ruled a peaceful Sweden until his death in 1844.

This lengthy political crisis and its eventual resolution coincided with the emergence of the new discourse of national economy, and in this context the broader literature of political economy could become a resource for arguments about national improvement. A "national liberalism" took shape in which liberal principles were combined with dirigiste policy. It was argued that for Sweden to develop into a modern industrial society the state must take an active role, developing an infrastructure that, in the form of canals and later railways, could contribute to a dynamic domestic, but also export-oriented, economy. Strategies of economic and industrial progress assumed that Sweden was a late starter in a race for industrialisation. At the same time there was a general optimism regarding economic growth and the exploitation of Sweden's seemingly endless natural resources: iron-ore

underground, and vast forests covering the land's surface. A heated debate developed over whether Sweden should increase its national debt through borrowing from the international capital market, or instead pursue a domestic strategy of investment. This opened up a form of national economics with Swedish characteristics in which the discourse of political economy provided a medium through which arguments about national improvement could be made.

Constitution and Economy

In 1806 Per Olof von Asp published a pamphlet entitled *A Political Dream. A Theoretical Discourse on Constitution-Matters Applied to the Case of Sweden*. This outlined a plan for a new Swedish constitution, replacing the existing autocratic model established by King Gustavus III in 1772 and 1789, and maintained by his son Gustavus IV until 1809. Asp sought to connect a scheme for a new constitution with an economic programme that in particular emphasised industrial development and increasing trade. His aim was to link the project of a new constitution involving restricted monarchy to a strong, modernising government. The future of Sweden was directly linked to a new constitution and the precepts of political economy. While the country was endowed with ample natural resources, they had been underutilised and maintained “in a dormant condition”. The negative effects of the old political order were attributed to the “intrigues of corporations”, “envy of social rank” and, in particular, the privileges of the nobility.⁴ He did not directly criticise the incumbent monarch, but noted the negative role of censorship, which fostered self-interested corruption. The basis for reform was said to be the introduction of a new constitution built on a mixture of Montesquieu and the English system: a balance of power between a powerful king, a legislative estate-based Diet, and independent jurists interpreting the law. To this should also be added freedom of speech and the right to publish, both to be enshrined in the constitution. Most important of all was the establishment a strong state led by the king,⁵ something that would favour the path of economic development that Asp envisaged. In this way it was argued that the eighteenth-century conflict between “too much democracy” and “too much autocracy” could be overcome.⁶

Asp's scheme was a blueprint of what actually happened three years later, in 1809. A disastrous war with Russia had led to the loss of Finland and near state bankruptcy as well as another *coup d'état* – the “Revolution of 1809” – which forced Gustavus IV and his dynasty from Sweden. Radicals who had hoped that the informal accession of Bernadotte in 1810 would connect Sweden to a Napoleonic France and so assist the recovery of Finland were disappointed. Bernadotte instead adopted a conservative approach to politics, introducing the “policy of 1812” which linked Sweden to its former enemy Russia. During the rule of Bernadotte Sweden was certainly a constitutional monarchy, but with an authoritarian cast. Free

speech and publication was once more restricted. A leading idea of von Asp had been that a new constitution should seek a better balance between the estates, Diet and the king for the sake of the common good. This was only partially achieved. Bernadotte was perhaps not an autocrat in the old sense, but he was strong-willed and too close to the nobility as far as the three other parliamentary estates were concerned.⁷

The new 1809 constitution was mainly drafted by Hans Järta. Legal historians have long debated the extent to which Järta's proposals were home-grown, or inspired by foreign models. This is not a central concern here, but Järta was well read in European constitutional literature from Montesquieu onwards, as well as having a deep understanding of Swedish history and its constitution. There were both internal and external influences in the drafting of the new constitution.⁸ It has been argued that it was formed by a national Swedish legal tradition; or, alternatively, that it resulted from foreign examples and legal discussions. Those arguing for the former position see the constitution of 1809 as a revival of the Constitution of the Age of Liberty (1719–1721). In this view the balance between the *Riksdag* and the King created by the Constitution of 1809 was based on the political practice of the Age of Liberty, and especially of its latter half. By contrast, those who have emphasised the importance of foreign models argue that the constitution of 1809 is a clear break in the Swedish tradition, and that the ideas of balance present in the constitution are appropriations of the ideas of Montesquieu and DeLolme.⁹ Some scholars have suggested that the political balance of the Age of Liberty was relatively similar to that envisaged by Montesquieu, which could explain why both of these explanations could be seen as plausible. In fact, there are contemporary statements from the 1760s suggesting that the Swedish practice worked better than Montesquieu's theory. A third group of scholars have suggested that it is not helpful to divide between external and internal influences as regards the constitution of 1809. After all, Swedish scholars had been involved in international networks since the Middle Ages, so that any strict division of internal from external traditions is overly dualistic.¹⁰ And indeed, this chapter seeks to move beyond this dualism, not by studying the intellectual origins of the constitution of 1809 but by studying the discourse of national economy created during the first 50 years of the newly established (1809) constitutional monarchy of Sweden. Here the focus is the way in which Swedish national economists appropriated foreign ideas and deployed them in rhetorical support for national improvement.

The constitution of 1809 placed economic administration as well as economic policy in the hands of the government, with the aim of modernisation and industrialisation, or as the leading patriotic poet at the time Esaias Tegnér declared in his famous poem "Svea" (1811): "to win back Finland within Sweden's own borders".¹¹ To a number of capable state secretaries, beginning with Hans Järta (1774–1847), followed by Gustaf Fredrik Wirsén (1779–1827) and Carl David Skogman (1786–1856) this meant the growth of industry and trade. The prime change they proposed, after decades of

monetary turmoil, was to base the Swedish monetary system on silver and make its banknotes convertible to bullion – which was eventually achieved in 1834. After 1815 Sweden was badly affected by the post-war depression associated with the termination of the Continental System, and the Swedish agricultural interest was able – with the support of Bernadotte – to secure a strictly protectionist trade policy. During the 1820s Wirsén and Skogman gradually reduced duties on agricultural goods while establishing (rather modest) tariffs on manufactures, in accordance with the idea of the protection of infant industries.¹² This was linked to the idea that national independence derived from self-reliance, or as Carl Adolph Agardh put it: “The goal of national economy is to help the nation to keep its *sjelfständighet*;¹³ promote welfare and increase its wealth”.¹⁴ While individuals might strive to improve their own condition, the improvement of the national economy and of general welfare was subordinate to the need to maintain national independence. And he noted:

The Swedish people, who were harmed neither by the Roman Empire, nor by Charlemagne, nor by Napoleon, shall not provoke the greed of the conquerors with their wealth in money; but it should improve and develop the nature of its country; give it wealth that no other people have. Once England has finished its railways, it can do no more for its country.¹⁵

This idea of the role of the state in national improvement was also implicit in the title of the 1823 Swedish translation of the fourth (1819) edition of Say’s *Traité*, in which *économie* was translated as *hushållning*, hence “householding”, and *politique* as “state”: *Afhandling uti statshushållningsläran, eller Enkel framställning om sättet, huru förmögenhet uppkommer, fördelar sig och förbrukas: jemte ett sammandrag af hufvudgrunderna i statshushållningsläran*.¹⁶ The translator was Carl David Skogman, a state official whose profile rose after the 1809 coup, being promoted to the secretariat of the newly founded office of trade and finance. In 1812 he was sent on an extended visit to England, where he spent a year studying public finance and monetary issues, travelling later to the West Indies and North America, arriving in New York in 1814. In 1821 he was appointed Secretary of State for Trade and Finance, holding many related posts before in 1839 appointment to be President of the Chancery of Commerce.

Skogman’s own travel notes and an exchange of letters with his friend H. W. Gahn show his great interest in contemporary economic debate, and in particular monetary issues. His nearly three years of foreign travel and study of great power rivalry led to his adopting a national stance distinct from the neo-Romanticism that developed in Sweden after 1815. Returning to Sweden during the post-war recession, he joined the customs committee that in 1816 introduced a strongly protectionist tariff. Skogman considered, however, that the long-term development of industry depended on the freest possible competition, and expressed reservations about the Committee’s

proposals, but without success. During the 1820s the gradual reduction of protectionist tariffs can be largely attributed to Skogman's energetic but cautious manoeuvring. He also had success during the period 1826–1838 in concluding bilateral trade agreements with England, Denmark, Prussia, the United States, the Netherlands and Russia.¹⁷

Skogman considered that the state's most important role was to secure stable monetary policy, banks and enterprises being managed according to individual interests, on a commercial basis and without external restrictions. He diverged from the more conservative approach of Järta, while at the same time appreciating the value of a cautious approach to change. By the 1840s Skogman was however expressing a stronger interest in active social measures.

In 1810, the year before Tegnér published his poem *Svea*, work had commenced on the new *Göta* canal between the east and west coasts of Sweden. Linking Stockholm and the Baltic Sea to the North Sea, this was intended to reduce transport costs and connect formerly less developed parts of Sweden more directly to the Atlantic and an international economy. The admiral and later acting governor of Norway, Baltzar von Platen (1766–1829), directed the project, and the state was the main financier. Besides the economic gains it would offer, Sweden would also be able to move troops much more quickly between the two Swedish coasts if a favourable opportunity arose to reconquer Finland. If not, economic development could do the same “within Sweden”, as von Platen and Tegnér argued. The canal was finished very quickly; the western part between Gothenburg and lake Vänern was finished by 1822, and the whole waterway ten years later (in total 390 km, of which 87 km was newly constructed and the remainder incorporated existing lakes and rivers). A great number of locks had to be built, given names such as “Agriculture”, “Iron mining”, “Trade” and “Industry”, highlighting their economic motivation. Some private capital was employed, and this partnership between state and private financial entrepreneurs was also to become a hallmark of further industrial development in Sweden, as well as of the establishment of its private capital market.¹⁸ From the 1820s pragmatic government policy played a part in restoring Swedish economic activity. Especial attention was paid to the agrarian sector, Sweden ceasing to be reliant on imported grain in this period, and developing an exportable surplus. Influential here was land clearance and field reorganisation, as well as the application of new seed types and crop rotations. Progress with regard to industrialisation was more modest during the period, but increased agrarian production promoted greater domestic demand from rural industry for wool, and later cotton.¹⁹

National Economists

During the first half of the nineteenth century political economy was almost universally seen as a point of view rather than a systematic doctrine, consistent with Say's own conception of its public purpose. The outlines

of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* were first developed within the framework of his Glasgow lectures as Professor of Moral Philosophy during the later 1750s and early 1760s, and the clue to his purpose was suggested in the full title as published in 1776: *An Inquiry into the Nature and Origins of the Wealth of Nations*. His object was to identify the factors promoting or hindering the economic development of historical societies. At the same time in the provinces of Northern and Central Europe a more systematic, and profuse, cameralistic tradition had developed that was focused on the principles of happiness and order rather than the general causes of national wealth. This concern with happiness and order naturally lent itself to the work of public administration, whereas argument over the sources of wealth led more naturally into the questions of trade and commerce more characteristic of Adam Smith's writings. The cameralist aspiration that university instruction should provide a pathway into employment in public administration was never realised, failing to displace the established role of legal training as the preparation most suited for public employment. Professorial appointments with responsibilities for teaching cameralist principles generally placed the subject within the Faculty of Philosophy, a faculty mostly dedicated to training schoolteachers rather than lawyers, clerics and physicians, the business of the other three faculties of the European university. France was in the mid-eighteenth century by far the most prolific European centre for the publication of texts and journals dedicated to economic matters, but none of this related to formal structures of education and employment. Later Say himself gave public lectures on political economy, but he was never a university professor.

The early history of the cameralistic sciences in the Northern German states had been linked to practical agricultural matters within a framework of "householding" that could be understood in terms of both individual economic activity and state financial arrangements.²⁰ The existence of university teaching in the subject was justified in terms of a relevance to the improvement of order and welfare, and by the later eighteenth century this was a fixed, if minor, part of the academic landscape. In the early 1800s this established discourse of the cameralistic sciences had quickly morphed into a new "science of the state", *Nationalökonomie*, an eclectic mix of Smith, Natural Law and Critical Philosophy which, importantly, was professed from established university chairs. While "national economy" might be a new subject, it required no new institutional support; in Germany the new discourse was professed from already-existing academic posts. The previous emphasis on the role of the state as the source of order and welfare was displaced by conceptions of human need, consumption and national welfare.

Jakob, the translator of Say, was central to this movement: an early adopter of the new Kantian Critical Philosophy, he had been appointed Professor of Philosophy at Halle in 1791, and in 1795 he published his *Philosophische Rechtslehre oder Naturrecht*. His subsequent transition into the new "national economy" was marked by a greater sense of system that many of his

contemporaries, and his early translations of Thornton and Say suggest that he was well abreast of contemporary developments beyond the German states. Given that his 1805 textbook was translated into Swedish and published in 1813, it is possible to treat Jakob as the primary conduit through which the inflection of cameralist discourse on the state into the new “national economy” would have appeared to Swedish writers who were by no means specialists in the newly developing international literature of political economy.

Sweden had undergone a similar evolutionary development to that of Northern Germany, beginning with teaching on oeconomic subjects that shaded off into technology and agriculture. Oeconomic subjects had been assigned to professorial appointments in Uppsala, Lund and Åbo earlier in the eighteenth century, and a related literature developed. This embedment within a broad conception of oeconomy, most clearly represented by the figure of Carl Linnaeus in Uppsala,²¹ likewise associated the good order and happiness of the state with good government. Then, in the early nineteenth century and as in Germany, established university positions could simply be re-aligned with a discourse of national economy that emphasised national improvement, rather than good order.

This eighteenth-century background was evident in new appointments made early in the nineteenth century. Whereas Jakob came to national economy from a background in natural law, in Sweden it was more typical for candidates to be associated with jurisprudence or the natural sciences. Finland, although a Grand Duchy since 1809, paralleled these developments. In 1811 a new chair in economic law and commercial legislation had been established in Helsinki’s Faculty of Law, and from 1820 the lectures of the appointee, Daniel Myréen, were announced in the university calendar as in “*oeconomia nationalis*”, and not as previously “*political economy*”.²² However, we need to be wary of the assumption that the discourse of political economy is in some way primarily rooted academically; for much of the nineteenth century it was more a public discourse that drew on academic sources for its vocabulary, rather than a “science” that was secondarily “popularised”. As with German universities, academic engagement with political economy was significant primarily as a medium of transmission of ideas and arguments to students entering public employment, a resource for arguments about nation and welfare, not a body of doctrine significant in itself. Swedish “national economy”, the engagement of the vocabulary and arguments of political economy for national aims, exemplifies this. By considering the public and academic connections of those who wrote about national economy at this time we can better appreciate this relationship.

National Economy as Public Discourse

As noted above, Hans Järta played a major part in drafting the 1809 Constitution and was subsequently a government minister. Born in 1774 into the noble Hierta family in the province of Dalecarlia, he studied in Uppsala and

then entered government employment as second secretary for foreign affairs. As a student in Uppsala during the early 1790s he had joined the so-called *Junta*, a group receptive to French revolutionary ideas who were opponents of Gustavus III and influenced by the teaching of Immanuel Kant. In 1800 he renounced his title and changed his name to the more humble Järta. Following his part in the 1809 *coup d'état* he became Secretary for Finance in the new government. He remained an influential writer of political and economic texts close to governmental circles in Stockholm, and in 1822 moved back to Uppsala, where he once more associated himself with a circle of philosophers and *belles lettristes* influenced by German romantic philosophy. In his 20s he had read parts of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* translated into Swedish by his friend Georg Adlersparre in the radical journal *Läsning i blandade ämnen*. Järta never held an academic position, but as a politician and writer he made use of economic arguments to further the development of Sweden.

His first foray into political economy was a short pamphlet criticising protectionist duties on agricultural imports that had been introduced in 1815 in relation to the ongoing agrarian depression.²³ He was strongly critical of government policy – supported by the Crown Prince – of buying up corn at a high price and intervening in the land market to maintain prices for landed estates. He argued that such measures only benefited producers. He was also critical of the introduction of sumptuary laws to offset an unfavourable balance of trade. He argued that this would only lead to increased depression and poverty, especially in the countryside.

During 1823 and 1824 he set out a “state liberal” programme in the journal *The Yeoman (Odalmannen)*, a publication for which he wrote most of the material.²⁴ A central plank of his argument was that political economy had to recognise the role of the state – he emphasised that the “state shall protect the right of the individual with regard to employment and property”; its purpose was to protect the common good, serve “the forces of civilisation” and combat “raw” materialism. With respect to the latter, he suggested that wealth should not be treated as only material property, here diverging from his understanding of Adam Smith. He characterised Smith's distinction between productive and unproductive labour as “ridiculous”.²⁵ A nation's wealth should be measured not only in terms of material goods and money but also in terms of the well-being of its population in a spiritual and intellectual sense. Here we find a critique of welfare as the individual satisfaction of wants, aggregated as the real wealth of a nation. This did not mean that he thought material advancement unimportant.²⁶ On the contrary, he mostly favoured the economic reform programme advanced by national liberals, referring positively to modern writers like Say, Garnier and Lauderdale who, he thought, provided a sound basis for the application of beneficial economic principles.²⁷ Importantly, however, he avoided any suggestion that one should seek to develop a doctrine using principles applicable in all circumstances.

Järta made arguments for economic improvement using general ideas drawn from contemporary political economy, where the latter served the

former – the language of political economy was a resource, not a doctrine that required refinement and elaboration. But such refinement was not even the objective of those academic figures whose appointments were made, in part at least, to teach elements of the new political economy. For example, in 1807 Lars Georg Rabenius (1771–1846) was appointed as Uppsala’s new professor in *jurisprudentiæ, oeconomix et commerciorum* – hence primarily a professor of law as reflected in his academic background, but with a general interest in economic matters. In 1829 he published *Lectures in National Economy*, a work intended primarily for students but also to provide a new basis for the academic study of economic subjects. He recommended “foreign textbooks” written by authors such as “Stewart” (i.e. James Stewart), Smith, Say, Sismondi and von Soden.²⁸ He was critical of them all: he argued that they devoted too much time to basic principles, often overlooking the national dimension. This sets the tone for national economy: rather than a concern with the “principles of political economy”, it was the public purpose of any such principles that was of greater interest.²⁹ Rabenius divided his 1829 book into two parts: “Pure” and “Practical National Economy”. The former is a subject which treats how men can create, preserve and enlarge enjoyable items for consumption.³⁰ He notes that there are important national differences with regard to practices and customs, as well as in relation to climate and natural resources. In this respect, there is also a great difference between a “poor” and a “rich” country, the former having to make good use of policy to preserve and possibly enlarge their endowments. For this reason the state is most important, and he emphasises this in a later chapter where he deals with the doctrinal history of his subject. He argues that national economy only became “a science” with the advent of the “mercantile system”; then came the “Physiocratic” system, and then most recently the “industrial system”, which is the focus of his attention.³¹ He argues that the reason for the superiority of the “industrial system” is that it identifies labour as a source of wealth. Nonetheless, “Smithian” political economy shares with the Physiocratic system the problem that it is too cosmopolitan when denying the impact of different national interests. In drawing a distinction between “cosmopolitan” and “national” systems Rabenius might seem to be echoing Friedrich List, who in 1827 had defined the object of “cosmopolitical economy” as being “...to secure to the whole human race the greatest quantity of the necessities and comforts of life”.³² Correspondingly, List had defined “national economy” as teaching “...by what means a certain nation, in her particular situation, may direct or regulate the economy of individuals, and restrict the economy of mankind, either to prevent foreign restrictions and foreign power, or to increase the productive powers within herself...”.³³ There is no evidence that Rabenius knew of Friedrich List’s *Outlines*, and the only contemporary text by List in Uppsala University Library today is a collection of letters, in German, concerning canals and railways.³⁴ All the same, Rabenius does go on to suggest that a policy of free trade advantages those countries already at a high level of development,

and disadvantages those at a lower. It is then only natural that the English “preach” freedom of trade “since they lead the industrial race”³⁵ – an argument that can also be found in *Outlines*.³⁶ In Part I Rabenius defines concepts such as “natural riches”, “capital” and “wealth” – this last being composed of goods capable of improving the situation of men and women. However, while Smith had associated such goods only with physical objects, Rabenius followed Say in arguing that immaterial goods could also form a part of a nation’s wealth. This was linked to the idea that activity enhancing “productive powers” was important for national self-determination, an argument that runs back to Alexander Hamilton.³⁷ Rabenius was strongly in favour of more division of labour in manufacturing, here following Ch. 1 of *Wealth of Nations* closely in noting how Smith used the example of the pin fabrication to illustrate the advantage of mechanical processes and their sub-division.³⁸ Like Smith too, he warned of the way that carried to their logical conclusion there was a danger that work would become dulling and routine. Rabenius was however an economic optimist, and in his criticism of Malthus’s arguments about population defended the idea that the means of subsistence would increase faster than the demands of consumption.³⁹ Part II, on “Practical National Economy”, repeats much that can be found in Part I. He returns to the discussion of the role of the state and regulation in the advancement of manufacture, as also how “free” free trade should be. While it is the task of the state to secure the common good and public interest, he notes that the state should also protect the freedom and rights of the industrialist and the merchant. The wealth of Great Britain was described as depending to no small degree on such widespread rights, guaranteeing to all individuals the right to enjoy the fruit of their own labour.⁴⁰ Rabenius’s *Lärobok* was a mixture of teaching from classical political economy (particularly Say) and contemporary German work on *Nationalökonomie*. Rabenius named his system national economy (*nationalökonomi*, the term still used in Sweden). For Rabenius the highest economic system was the industrial system, which he associated with Adam Smith. According to Rabenius, the basis of this system was not individual liberty or the benefit of an invisible hand, but an insistence upon industrial production as the major generator of wealth. To support industrial production was the main task of the government. The dominance of German *Nationalökonomie*, mixed with a little Say, was not challenged until the mid-nineteenth century.

Rabenius was a professor whose appointment, at least in part, involved political economy, and his involvement with the subject is demonstrated by the textbook that he wrote. But those academics who wrote about national improvement using the language of political economy did not necessarily hold appointments that would immediately suggest acquaintance with, or interest in, its principles. The reputation of Carl Adolph Agardh (1785–1859) as a prominent Lund academic is today associated with the study of botany, not of political economy. He was however close to government circles, as a young student enjoying the patronage of the diplomat and influential

post-1809 politician Lars von Engeström (1751–1826), who was also chancellor of the university. In 1812 he was appointed to a chair in “Botany and Economy” and was then sent to Berlin to study this subject together with philosophy. It seems clear that his early intention was to become a famous international botanist in the footsteps of his hero Linnaeus; he was mainly concerned with practical matters, including forestry and the cultivation and processing of sugar beet. Only later did he turn to more theoretical issues, inspired by a romantic philosophy of nature on the lines of Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling.⁴¹ The result was his *Lectures in Botany (Lärobok i botanik)*, published in two parts in 1829 and 1832, which was also translated into German. But from the later 1820s he also published works in political economy, and in 1833 a Swedish translation of Magnus Björnstjerna’s pamphlet on English public debt.⁴² In the latter Agardh maintained not only the legality of public debt but also its benefit: “public debt associated with a sensible funding system, produces—as England’s example attests—significant industrial development, sets interest rates, creates individual and universal credit and promotes national prosperity in all directions”.⁴³ He was also practically engaged in the foundation of a savings bank and a mortgage association.

Agardh had become a member of the clergy in 1816 and in 1817 he was elected as a member of the clerical estate to Diet of 1817–1818. During the period leading up to the 1834 currency reform he took an active part in debate on monetary issues,⁴⁴ but also became increasingly active in the general discussion of the development of the Swedish economy, in particular, how to create a functional capital market via the national debt. Even after he had left Lund in 1836 to become bishop of Karlstad he took part in several Diets, engaging in public discussions of economic issues up to his death in 1859. During the 1850s he devoted most of his time to writing and compiling a 1,700-page work in five volumes, *Prospect for a State Economic Statistical Survey of Sweden* (1852–1863). His ambition was to collect relevant statistics in order to show how Sweden had developed economically after 1809. But Agardh’s pioneering work also contained substantial chapters on Swedish political, economic and administrative history as well as providing exact information on climate, topography and natural conditions. He presented himself as a patriot who above everything sought to prove the great potential that lay in “sound” Swedish political institutions (post-1809) and Sweden’s potential material resources. He argued that in the past his native country had devoted itself excessively to war and conquest. Now was the time to direct attention to the hard work of enriching the country.

He defined the core of “state economy” as discipline and science.⁴⁵ He noted the importance of seeking unity and a common interest in order to understand economic development, the unity of the cogs in the wheel. The cosmopolitanism of Adam Smith and John Ramsay McCulloch – of “modern” British political economy – could be true on an abstract level, he suggested; but although it taught how all mankind might grow rich, it did not indicate how individual states could reach this goal. State economy should,

argued Agardh, provide instruction on how the general principles of wealth creation – work, industry and the division of labour – can be employed by states in order to increase their wealth. It was the responsibility of the state to “maintain national economy”, although this can sometimes conflict with an individual’s “wealth instinct”.⁴⁶ Agardh here comes close to arguments also taught by Rabenius in Uppsala:

When we talk about Political Economy, it is clear that this above all means that it should teach how to defend methods as means in order for the nation to preserve its independence and opulence, a goal to which the individual must submit.⁴⁷

As already noted in regard to Rabenius’s textbook of 1829, the kind of state or national economics that Agardh recommends in the 1850s seems to owe a debt to Friedrich List. In 1829, when Rabenius published his textbook, List had yet to return to Europe from the United States, but Agardh was writing after the publication of List’s *National System* in 1841. Two short texts of List were also translated into Swedish in 1840, but these did not bear directly on the issue of protection.⁴⁸ As with Rabenius, there is nothing that suggests that Agardh had read either List’s American pamphlet of 1827, or his *National System*. The ideas he put forward could just as easily been gained from Rabenius, and were most certainly already implicit in an 1829 publication, where he argued that a less developed nation must be allowed to defend itself from a more advanced country through protection.⁴⁹ As with List, there was an ambivalence in their response to the work of Smith. They were ready to defend the “industrial system” – highly preferable to any other available “system” – but emphasised that it remained utopian and cosmopolitan in a world of rival nation states employing economic means in the pursuit of power and wealth.

In 1820 Agardh had received a grant from the University of Lund to travel to Paris to study new developments in botanical research. During his stay he attended Jean-Baptiste Say’s public lectures at the Conservatoire national des arts et métiers. Agardh was impressed, and this led to his publication of the multivolume *Examination of the Basic Teachings of State Economy* in 1829.⁵⁰ This consists of five separate dissertations – all written by Agardh, but each orally defended by a student for their doctoral degrees. This was standard procedure in Swedish universities at the time, demonstrating the candidate’s ability to defend his professor’s text. The first dissertation discusses the emergence of “state economy” as a scholarly and scientific discourse. This was a quite young subject with Adam Smith as a founding father, but “was more cited than actually read”, Agardh writes.⁵¹ The “most brilliant” contribution to contemporary state economy was Say’s *Traité d’économie politique* of 1803, in which he presents the subject in an improved and more “systematic” fashion than Smith. The latter remained however the most important economic philosopher, but he had certain weaknesses.

Above all, he was a theoretician and too little the practical man, which not the least showed itself in his insistence upon free trade as a general principle: "Only the Papal states, Switzerland and Poland follow ... consistently the theoretical proposition that industry should be left to itself and trade be free". All other states have learned the lesson "to be of necessity egoistical"; they cannot trust that "eternal peace will forever dominate the globe".⁵²

In these dissertations Agardh examines what a true "state economy" should be. The state should not only be a means to protect individual safety (as we would today say, "negative liberty"), but also to develop (positive) rights to "happiness" and "refinement" achieved by the action of the collective body of the state serving the common good. Agardh also seeks to distance his definition of "wealth" from contemporary political economy. While it relates to the satisfaction of individual wants, the sum of individual satisfactions cannot be defined as the "wealth of a nation", as with Järta. Nonetheless, he conceived a state's "material strength" in terms of the human ability to increase material and spiritual civilisation. To treat abstract "labour" as "the source of wealth" was not enough. A nation was not the "richer the more it works".⁵³ Instead, a rich country was one that worked less but still consumed a great deal. He concluded that the science of state economy cannot only deal with individual ability or the "art of acquisition" in the market place. This was a task for "private economy", directly translating the contemporary German distinction.⁵⁴ Turning to Agardh's statistical survey of Sweden from the 1850s, he here emphasises the pivotal role of communications for Sweden's long-run economic development. The future was thought to be in a combination of canals and railways. Canals should form the basis of a broad communication system, with railroads to link them. He devoted many pages to the planning of a Swedish communication network, here again following in the footsteps of Friedrich List. Railway construction had begun in Sweden around 1850 as a private initiative – mainly using English capital – but Agardh argued strongly for state intervention, suggesting that if railways were built by foreign interests they would never become Swedish property, and fail to serve Swedish interests. Using the Göta Canal as an example, he maintained that the majority of Swedish railway construction should be financed by the state. This should not however be financed from current expenditure, but through the issue of state bonds that would have a wide appeal, especially for middle-class investors. There was a lively discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of developing a system of national debt for Sweden, as for example in the United States – the work of Alexander Hamilton was well known in Sweden at this time, and Agardh was one of the most important supporters of such a system. However, like most others he emphasised that this could only be based on domestic savings, and not on foreign capital.⁵⁵

Skogman, Järta, Rabenius and Agardh could all be politically aligned in terms of an emergent "state liberalism", rather than the conservatism that marked the immediate circles around the king. Until 1838 Erik Gustaf Geijer did have a reputation as a conservative, not a liberal, although a friend

of Järta in Uppsala from the early 1820s and already recognised as one of Sweden's foremost poets and the leading academic historian.⁵⁶ He had been a younger member of the Junta, and like Järta he was around 1800 strongly influenced by his Philosophy teacher Benjamin Höijer, who was first a radical Kantian introducing romantic philosophy to Uppsala (Herder and especially Schelling). Geijer became increasingly critical of the French Revolution and certain strands of French Enlightenment philosophy (Voltaire, Helvetius, *les encyclopédistes*, Condorcet). He believed that the Enlightenment had been manipulated by demagogues, leading to terror and dictatorship (Robespierre and Napoleon). This had been made possible by a "sterile" or "mechanical" Enlightenment discourse which rendered men and women easy victims of outside forces. His discussion of the distinction between a "false" and "true" Enlightenment influenced many in Sweden at the time, including Järta and Agardh.⁵⁷ Geijer registered as a student in Uppsala in 1799, then becoming tutor to the son of a councillor (*Kommersråd*) at the Collegium of Commerce. He travelled with his tutee on a year-long study visit to England during 1809–1810.⁵⁸ In London Geijer read the writings of Scottish moral philosophers and contemporary political economy, and became a regular reader of the *Edinburgh Review* once back in Uppsala, keeping abreast of recent events and debates in Great Britain. He returned to his university career and was appointed professor of history at Uppsala in 1817.

Before his visit to England Geijer had already maintained that Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society* was his "first most cherished book of study".⁵⁹ His historical writing was clearly influenced by Scottish writers. Geijer's lengthy essay "Republicanism and Feudalism" echoed Robertson and Montesquieu. His argument was historical: that feudalism had a progressive role when held together by personal loyalty to a lord or monarch who supported the common good. Inspired by Hegel, he saw this as impossible in a modern society. Progress inevitably led to republicanism. However, he argued that in a modern society there has to be an instance that defends the common good and that can resist the self-interest between and classes. In later writings he committed himself to ideas of popular rule, but under the auspices of a constitutional monarch.

In the later 1830s he shocked many of his friends and colleagues with his positive support for political economy, freer trade and the positive aspects of the industrial revolution.⁶⁰ When as a young man he had visited Britain he had been shocked by the social impact of the early phases of industrialisation, and in the later 1820s he saw the prospect of factory development as a danger to the social fabric, like many foreign observers of the time. But from his reading of the *Edinburgh Review* and other British journals he concluded that with the onward development of the division of labour productivity would rise and create more wealth, which would in turn benefit the poor. This positive view of the benefits of industrial development he would keep for the rest of his life.

His teaching and writing of history, as well as his other professorial duties, prevented him from returning to these issues until the 1830s. This

decade saw the emergence of the so-called social question, there was talk of *les classes dangereuses* and their challenge to law and social stability. His initial scepticism with respect to industrialisation had two elements: that it created an army of propertyless and poor workers; and that it destroyed the basis for handicrafts, which he saw not only as beneficial from an employment point of view, but also as a stabilising force in society. These were classical social conservative positions at the time. But he gradually changed his mind. In a collection of essays, *Blå boken (The Blue Book)*, he commented in 1835 upon some articles from the *Edinburgh Review* that he had found particularly interesting. Their treatment of the history of the cotton industry was evidence of the tremendous growth of output and income following the mechanisation of industry. Although there had been much complaint regarding the abuse of child labour, he considered that the introduction of machinery and the factory had been on the whole beneficial for poorer workers.⁶¹ It would go too far to say that Geijer changed his social and religious values by reading the *Edinburgh Review*. But in 1839 Geijer did publish a series of articles in *Litteraturbladet* on the need to reform the Swedish poor law system. They were translated into English and published as a book in Stockholm under the title *The Poor Laws and their Bearing on Society*.⁶² Here he presents a long historical narrative of the treatment of the poor in Sweden, closely following the argument of “Feudalism and Republicanism”. He emphasises that there were hitherto two ways of dealing with the poor: either by charity or by penal correction. A third alternative, leaving the poor to fend for themselves, is rejected on account of the trade crises characteristic of modern industrial society and the resulting involuntary unemployment. He favoured an approach in which society assumes a degree of social responsibility: he calls it “the liberation of labour”. This is not only a Swedish matter, in fact the lengthy process of the liberation of labour “is the work of civilisation”.⁶³ In defining this liberation he borrows from political economists, especially McCulloch and Ricardo. He argues that a free labourer will work more diligently than a worker fettered by old regulations. This in turn will “increase both production and the number of producers”. More productive labour will cause prices to fall, which at the same time “is fully compatible with a rise in the value of labour”.⁶⁴ In so doing he rejected what was otherwise considered a fixed principle of contemporary political economy: the so-called iron law of wages. He might have got the idea from Henry Carey’s *Principles of Political Economy* (1837), but this critique of the Ricardo-Malthus model was commonplace both in America and Sweden at this time, emphasising the possibility of increased productivity and the greater availability of land and other resources in industrialising countries.⁶⁵ However, Geijer went further in his discussion of the liberation of labour. He wrote of the “collectivisation of labour” as the consequence of industrialism, upon which nations in the future would have to rely for their livelihood. In this context he writes of reciprocity and the rights of labour; “labour for labour” is “the divine ordinance which through

the law of reciprocal right comes more and more into realisation”.⁶⁶ Moreover, he writes of the “emancipation of labour” and asks whether its emancipation may not also have its dangers. Most certainly, he avers, but these are “the dangers of liberty”. Moreover, he speaks about “the luxurious repose of the Capitalist” being not after all “the purpose of humanity”, referring to “an aristocracy of drones and sluggards”.⁶⁷

A Political Economy of Reform?

In the early summer of 1859 a public festival in Stockholm commemorated the 50-year anniversary of the constitution of 1809. The main speaker was the finance minister Johan August Gripenstedt (1813–1874). Gripenstedt was well known for his liberal economic views (he referred positively to Bastiat), but he was also alert to the use of state intervention, especially in building a Swedish railway system that might promote industrialisation.⁶⁸ He hailed 1809 as a crossroads for Sweden, providing the basis for a “regulated order of society” that included “rule by the people” and a “national spirit”. He was not totally uncritical; he favoured a reform programme of free enterprise and trade that was far more liberal than the “founding fathers” of the 1809 constitution had envisaged. Gripenstedt was no doctrinaire politician, but acknowledged that patriotism and national economic development sometimes was the first priority of a well-regulated nation.

The national economy that emerged in the early nineteenth century, an inflection of argument towards national improvement espoused by both academics and public officials, was closely associated with Jean-Baptiste Say’s aspiration that there be a broad public understanding of the principles of political economy. Rather than the dissemination of principles, however, national economy was a more diffuse discourse that established the aims of national improvement in economic terms. It presumed a political economy that sought to combine the development of industry and markets with the national interest. Not the least aspect of this programme was the view that Sweden had hitherto been underdeveloped, but that the introduction to a “modern” market system made protection and intervention necessary. Say rather than Smith was seen in Sweden as the herald of a positive but at the same time utopian new theory; and both Say and Smith were criticised for being too cosmopolitan, treating England as a “first mover” in the race for industrialisation and ignoring the international context in which this race would take place. For a less developed country it seemed necessary to turn to other strategies. National or state economy during the first half of the nineteenth century was the consequence of such a thinking – and with a formative impact on future ideas.

Notes

- 1 See for details of Jakob’s translation of Say, Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750–1840*, 2nd ed. (Newbury:

- Threshold Press), 240–41. In 1805, von Soden began publication of a multivolume work on *Nazional-Oekonomie* (*Governing Economy*, 242–45), but it was Jakob's text that was translated into Swedish in 1813. Jakob also translated Henry Thornton's *An Enquiry into the Nature and Effects of the Paper Credit of Great Britain* (1802) into German under the title *Der Papier-Credit von Großbritannien* (Halle, 1803).
- 2 On the sudden redirection following the coup d'état of Gustaf III see Hugo Valentin, "Det sociala momentet i historieskrivningen om 1772 års statsvälvning", *Scandia* 14 (1941): 1–26; Stig Hallesvik, "Partimotsättningar vid 1771–1772 års riksdag som bakgrund till Gustav III:s statskupp", *Statsvetenskaplig tidskrift* 65 (1962): 383–405; Jonas Nordin, "Frihetstidens radicalism", in Marie-Christine Skuncke, Henrika Tandefelt, eds., *Riksdag, Kaffehus och Predikstol. Frihetstidens politiska kultur 1766–1772* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2003), 52–72.
 - 3 An event that was then itself turned into an opera by Verdi in 1859, *Un ballo in maschera*.
 - 4 Per Olof von Asp, *Politisk Dröm, eller Theoretisk Afhandling uti Constitutions-ämnen* [1806] published by Georg Landberg (Uppsala: AB Lundequistiska Bokhandeln, 1932), 14. Asp (1745–1808) was an economic writer and envoy in Sweden's foreign service.
 - 5 *Ibid.*, 28.
 - 6 Emma Rönström, "Forskardebatten kring 1809 års regeringsform", *Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* 100 (1997): 448–67.
 - 7 Torvald Höjer, *Carl XIV Johan: Kronprinstiden* (Stockholm: P A Norstedt & söner, 1943), Parts II, III.
 - 8 Sten Carlsson, Jerker Rosén, *Svensk historia*, Part II (Stockholm: Svenska Förlaget, 1970), 243f.
 - 9 See Iain McDaniel, "Jean-Louis DeLolme and the Political Science of the English Empire", *Historical Journal* 55 (2012): 21–44.
 - 10 For a useful historiographical overview of the scholarly discussions on the constitution of 1809, see Anders Sundin, "1809 Års regeringsform i forskningen", in Margareta Brundin, Magnus Isberg, eds., *Maktbalans och kontrollmakt. 1809 års händelser, ideer och författningsverk i ett tvåhundraårigt perspektiv* (Stockholm: Sveriges Riksdag, 2009), 531–39.
 - 11 Esaias Tegnér, "Svea", in *Svenska Akademiens Handlingar Ifrån År 1796*, Part VII (Stockholm: Deleen, 1817), 155–69, 162.
 - 12 Per G. Andreén, *Politik och finansväsen. Från 1815 års riksdag till 1830 års realisationsbeslut* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958, 1961), Part II: 86ff, 184.
 - 13 As in the German *Selbstständigkeit*, a condition of independence based on self-reliance and autonomy.
 - 14 Carl Adolph Agardh, *Försök till Statsekonomisk statistik öfver Sverige*, Vols. I–IV (Stockholm: Samson & Wallén, 1852–1863), Vol. I, Part II, 303.
 - 15 Agardh, *Försök*, Vol. I, Part II, 7.
 - 16 *Treatise on State Householding, or a Simple Presentation of the Way in Which Wealth Arises, Is Distributed and Consumed; Together with a Summary of the Main Principles of State Householding*.
 - 17 Leif Gidlöf, "Carl David Skogman", <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/mobil/Artikel/6025>, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, (accessed 29 September 2021).
 - 18 *Göta kanals historia. På uppdrag av direktionen över Göta Kanalvek och under medverkan av Nils Ahlberg, Herbert Lundh och Nils Tersmeden utgiven av Samuel Bring* (Uppsala, 1922–1930); Magnus J. Crusenstolpe, *Karl Johan och svenskarne* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1881); Lars Magnusson, *An Economic History of Sweden* (London: Routledge, 2000), 70, 98.
 - 19 Andreén, *Politik och finansväsen*, Vol. I, 22–123.
 - 20 Tribe, *Governing Economy*, 58–63.

- 21 Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus. Nature and Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
- 22 Sakari Heikkinen, Visa Heinonen, Antti Kuusterä, Jukka Pekkarinen, *The History of Finnish Economic Thought 1809–1917*, (Ekenäs: Societas scientiarum Fennica, 2000), 54–56.
- 23 Järta, Hans, *Om spannmålspris och spannmålshandeln* (Falun, 1823).
- 24 Järta, Hans, *Valda Skrifter af Hans Järta*, Parts I–II, ed. H. Forsell (Stockholm: P A Nordstedts & Söner, 1882–1883), part I [1882], xliii; see also Järta, Hans, *Valda Skrifter af Hans Järta*, Parts I–II, ed. H. Forsell (Stockholm: P A Nordstedts & Söner, 1882–1883), Part II [1883], 208–28).
- 25 Järta, *Valda Skrifter*, Part II, [1883], 324.
- 26 Järta, *Valda Skrifter*, Part II, [1883], 208.
- 27 Järta, *Valda Skrifter*, Part II, [1883], 324.
- 28 Lars Georg Rabenius, *Lärobok i Nationalekonomien I-II. Försök* (Uppsala: Palmblad & Co., 1829), Preface, II; 23–24.
- 29 Rabenius’s text was used as the main point of reference in Helsinki by Johan Jakob Nordström during the 1830s – Heikkinen, Heinonen, Kuusterä, Pekkarinen, *History of Finnish Economic Thought*, 59–60; and was a significant medium for the reception of German writing, see p. 68.
- 30 Rabenius, *Lärobok*, 3–6.
- 31 Rabenius, *Lärobok*, 15–23.
- 32 Friedrich List, *Outlines of American Political Economy*, in List, ed., *Schriften/Reden/Briefe* Vol. II (Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1931), 103. This was Letter II (12 July 1827) of a series first published in a newspaper addressed to the Vice-President of the Pennsylvania Society, C. J. Ingersoll, and then separately published the same year.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 102–103.
- 34 Friedrich List, *Mittheilungen aus Nord-Amerika, Heft 1: Ueber Canäle und Eisenbahnen* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1829). Here again, while List’s interest in canals and railways paralleled that in Sweden, his publications on the subject postdated Swedish arguments about internal communications.
- 35 Rabenius, *Lärobok*, 24–27.
- 36 List, *Outlines*, 108.
- 37 “And from these causes united, the mere separation of the occupation of the cultivator, from that of the Artificer, has the effect of augmenting the *productive powers* of labour, and with them, the total mass of the produce or revenue of a Country”. Alexander Hamilton, *The Report on the Subject of Manufactures* [1791], in *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Vol. X, ed. H. C. Syrett (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 251. Hamilton made use of Smith’s conception of the “productive powers of labour” (stated in the first sentence of WN Ch. 1) to compare the relative merits of manufacturing and agricultural activity, which again resonates with Swedish debates.
- 38 Rabenius, *Lärobok*, 60.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 65–70.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 144–47.
- 41 Sven-Eric Liedman, *Att förändra världen. Det svenska 1800-talet speglat i C A Agardhs och C J Boströms liv och verk* (Stockholm: Arbetarkultur, 1991).
- 42 Magnus Björnstjerna, *The Public Debt, Its Influence and Its Management Considered in a Different Point of View from Sir Henry Parnell, in His Work on Financial Reform* (London: James Ridgeway 1831), translated as *Engelska statsskulden*, with a preface by C.A. Agardh (Stockholm, 1833). Björnstjerna had been a major figure in the coup of 1809 and later served as a Swedish minister in London.
- 43 A.B. Carlsson, “*Carl Adolph Agardh*”, <https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/5590>, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (profile contributors G. Eneström, K. Nordlund, Edv. Rodhe, and N. Svedelins) (accessed 29 September 2021).

- 44 Eskil Wadensjö, “Carl Adolph Agardh: An Economist in Advance of his Time”, *European Journal of Political Economy* 7 (1991): 216.
- 45 Agardh, *Försök*, Vol. I, Part II, 298–303.
- 46 Wadensjö, “Carl Adolph Agardh”, 220; Agardh, *Försök*, Vol. I, Part II, 303.
- 47 Agardh, *Försök*, Vol. I, Part II, 303.
- 48 *Om vigten och betydelsen af slöjder och manufakturere för ett samhälle* (Stockholm, 1840); *Införselsfrihet och skyddsöförfattningar, betraktade ifrån erfarenhetens och historiens synpunkt* (Stockholm, 1840).
- 49 C. A. Agardh, *Granskning af stats-economiens grundläror, som med den vidtberömda filos. facultetens samtycke, under inseende af dr. C. A. Agardh* (Lund, 1829), 9, 16
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid., 7.
- 52 Ibid., 3–11.
- 53 Ibid., 73.
- 54 Ibid., 62.
- 55 Agardh, *Försök*, II, 222, 251–62.
- 56 Lars Magnusson, “Erik Gustaf Geijer: An Introduction”, in Björn Hasselgren, ed., *Freedom in Sweden. Selected Works of Erik Gustaf Geijer* (Stockholm: Timbro, 2017).
- 57 Erik Gustaf Geijer, *Samlade Skrifter I* (Stockholm: P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1923), 171–237; Magnusson, “Erik Gustaf Geijer”, 39.
- 58 Michael Roberts, “Geijer and England”, *Scandia* 60 (1994): 209–30.
- 59 Magnusson, “Erik Gustaf Geijer”, 10, 41
- 60 Magnusson, “Erik Gustaf Geijer”, 45. Carl-Arvid Hessler, *Geijer som politiker* (Stockholm: Hugo Gebers förlag, 1937–1947), Vol. II, 163–247.
- 61 Hessler, *Geijer*, Vol. II [1947], 105.
- 62 Erik Gustaf Geijer, *The Poor Laws and Their Bearing on Society. A Series of Political and Historical Essays* (Stockholm: Hjerta, 1840).
- 63 Geijer, *Poor Laws*, 134.
- 64 Ibid., 163.
- 65 Magnusson, Lars, “Political Economy in Historical Context. The Case of Malthus and Sweden”, in Hans Joas, Barbro Klein, eds., *The Benefit of Broad Horizons. Intellectual and Institutional Preconditions for a Global Social Science* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 125–42.
- 66 Geijer, *Poor Laws*, 137, 157.
- 67 Ibid., 157.
- 68 Olle Gasslander, *J.A. Gripenstedt. Statsman och företagare* (Lund: Gleerup, 1949).

13 Epilogue

Kari Saastamoinen

In 2021 the Finnish government began, after 15 years of political debate and five failed attempts, to implement a major change in healthcare, social security and rescue services. The government presented the change as an improvement with respect to the prevailing situation in basic healthcare and social security services which, though quite good in global comparison, many citizens found under-resourced and poorly organized (rescue services were included due to a political compromise). There had been attempts to improve these services in a piecemeal fashion, but since Finland is one of the first industrial countries to face the practical problems and increasing expenditure due to ageing population, it was thought that there was a need for a complete overhaul of the existing system. This was to be called a reform.

As in any democratic country, opposition parties claimed from the start that the reform would hardly be an improvement, while all parties agreed that once the reform had been implemented, there would be a need for further improvements. Whatever the outcome of the reform may be, it certainly will not be the restoration of some older state of affairs. On the contrary, it suggests a radical departure from the Finnish tradition of strong municipal self-governance, since services will be now organized by larger administrative counties that had not previously existed. It is worth noting that the forward-looking character of the reform is hard-wired into the Finnish language. While the word *reformi* is part of the Finnish vocabulary, the most common equivalent for “reform”, always used in an official context, is *uudistus*, a noun connected to the adjective *uusi* (new) and the verb *uudistaa* (to renew). *Uudistus* is a project in which an entirely new order is established. Thus it is particularly difficult for Finnish speakers to imagine a reform that would be a revival of some previous condition. When they refer to the Reformation with an original Finnish word (instead of *reformaatio*), they use the backward-looking Lutheran term *uskonpuhdistus* (the purification of faith).

The above is one example of how notions of improvement and reform, explored historically in this collection, are visible in political discourse of today. Reform is not connected to any reformist ideology or idea of progress but is conceived as a pragmatic reaction to new problems and budgetary constraints, and its main function is its assumed ability to increase

efficiency. Of course, this is not always the case. In the United States, for example, many on the left may still see healthcare reform, reform demands connected to racial equality and a more extensive welfare system as elements of a broader progressive agenda. And it seems likely that in the future there will be more demands for reforms motivated not by any conception of progress but by the existential threat associated with climate change, though so far it has been difficult to make such demands politically attractive without a promise that they will somehow improve our lives. Be that as it may, if reflected in terms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideologies that called for a choice between reform and revolution, modern distinctions between improvement and reform easily appear insubstantial. One may think like the Polish social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, perhaps echoing his own communist youth, that whereas “a hundred years ago to be modern” meant to chase “the final state of perfection”, now it means merely “an infinity of improvement, with no ‘final state’ in sight and none desired”.¹ The same applies to historical analysis. What made the study of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European political ideas meaningful for the pioneering historian of the Enlightenment, Franco Venturi, a scholar committed to anti-Fascist reformist ideology, was the possibility of presenting the Enlightenment as an age of reform directly relevant to twentieth-century political concerns (see the chapter by Adriana Luna-Fabritius in this volume). From such a perspective, early modern discourse on improvement appears as something peripheral that only becomes significant when it can be reconceptualized in terms of reform.

This volume has argued that improvement deserves to be studied just as carefully as reform, and when the word “reform” is found in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts, it should not be automatically identified with the connotations the term acquired in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Reform could be a synonym for improvement or correction, or it could indicate a return to some previous condition, but it was hardly ever connected to the idea of progress. Furthermore, the volume has shown that the discourse of improvement was not a speciality of England and Britain, though below you will find a few textual examples that could be seen as supporting the argument that the English were early on particularly fascinated by the word “improvement”. Yet, especially in the eighteenth century, the culture of improvement was a broad European phenomenon, very much visible in German-speaking countries, and it was still influential in the nineteenth century, when new disciplines of national economy presented concrete suggestions for national improvement. These observations are not mere semantic niceties. They affect how we understand the emergence of new ideas and social practices in early modern Europe, and how we conceive the relationship between these ideas and practices and our current historical situation. For example, if one calls the Enlightenment “the age of reform”, this gives it a sense of a forward-looking totality which encourages clichés like “the Enlightenment project”, an eclectic *mélange* of ideas oscillating

between Kant's moral autonomy and Bentham's Panopticon, and which many of today's social theories claim constitutes, for better or for worse, the intellectual and cultural foundation of modern Western societies. If, on the other hand, we observe that there was a widespread culture of improvement in early modern Europe, the participants of which most often did not share any progressive ideology, this liberates us from the need to associate every demand for change encountered in eighteenth-century texts with the Enlightenment. It also helps us avoid treating the Enlightenment as a historical epoch affecting every aspect of culture and society, from philosophy to table manners, and instead to define it in ways that are more restricted and informative. Of course, even this will not save the Enlightenment from being what Frank Ankersmit has called a narrative substance, a notion we need to make sense of the past, but whose boundaries will never be given to us by historical sources and so will be constantly redefined by new studies on the topic.²

I offer here a short contribution to the study of the notion of improvement in early modern Europe. This is inspired by the introduction of this volume, which points out that improvement and reform have not generally been considered as concepts of classical state theory. It is true that in early modern political thought these concepts were not often directly connected to the theory of the state. Yet one could argue that, in the case of improvement, such a connection is to be found in political theories using the conceptual arsenal of natural law. A case in point is perhaps the most widely read natural law theorist of the period, Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694). Pufendorf's massive exposition of natural law, *De jure nature et gentium* (1672), was published numerous times in the eighteenth century and translated into several European languages, while his short non-argumentative compendium of natural law, *De officio hominis et civis* (1673), had even more translations and was widely used in Protestant universities. There may not have been many committed "Pufendorfians" in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe – it was not a theory of that kind. Yet his main work on natural law was studied by educated people from the Urals to the Mississippi as a lexicon of moral, juridical and political ideas,³ and the shorter work made some of his ideas and observations available to an even wider public.

Pufendorf wrote in Latin, and his works included no word which would be a precise equivalent for vernacular terms such as *Verbesserung*, *amelioration* and *improvement*. Nevertheless, the theory of the state he presented in Book VII of *De jure* included a short discussion which was clearly connected to the idea of improvement, and similar remarks were included in *De officio*. Pufendorf's short and very general observations on this topic may not have enjoyed any special authority among the improvers of the period, but one could see them as one widely read textual source which legitimated demands for improvement among the broader reading public. Moreover, the fact that Pufendorf's works were translated into several languages makes visible some differences in the way improvement was conceptualized in

early eighteenth-century Europe. It is not possible here to explore this theme systematically, but I will make a few observations about French, German and English translations.

In *De jure*'s Book VII Pufendorf first explained the reasons for establishing civil society, and then explored the characteristics and various forms of civil sovereignty. He concluded the Book with a discussion of the duties of the sovereign. In Book VII Pufendorf was evidently dissatisfied with the way earlier writers had understood the character of civil society, though he admitted the merits of Hobbes on this issue. But when it came to the duties of the sovereign, Pufendorf was ready to say that these have already been discussed by many writers; hence, it is enough for him to present a mere summary of the main themes.⁴ In this context he also referred to the science of governing (*civitatem regendi scientia*), a discipline distinct from the main topic of the *De jure*, the science of natural law.⁵ We know that Pufendorf's library included the Latin translation of Giovanni Botero's *Della ragioni della stato* (1589), and, most notably, *Teutscher Fürsten Stat* (1656) by Ludwig von Seckendorff, commonly celebrated as the founder of German cameral sciences.⁶ Yet, he did not refer to these works in the chapter on the duties of the sovereign or elsewhere in *De jure*. Instead, Pufendorf picked ideas from numerous classical and contemporary texts, many of them not dedicated to the art of governing. No wonder, therefore, that he characterized the science of governing as a most difficult topic which requires all the abilities of monarchical sovereigns, no matter how gifted they happen to be. Sovereigns should avoid studying any discipline which does not help them to master this science, to say nothing about spending too much time with useless amusements.⁷ In *De officio* Pufendorf added that, in order to draw correct prudential conclusions in state affairs, sovereigns must understand the conditions of their own position and the character of their subjects, and for this purpose they should rid themselves of court flatterers and spend time not only with the wise, but also with people skilled in human affairs.⁸ Andrew Tooke's English translation of *De officio* from 1691 spoke here about men "experienced in Business and skilful in the Ways of the World."⁹

The reason for the establishment of civil societies had been the peace and security of citizens, and Pufendorf started his discussion with the commonplace that the safety (*salus*) of citizens is the highest law of sovereigns.¹⁰ He then generally explained how the sovereign should organize education, legislation, jurisdiction, administration and taxation. Several of Pufendorf's remarks on the character of well-organized civil society would have required considerable changes in seventeenth-century European states. For example, he referred approvingly to the Chinese practice of forbidding magistrates to serve in the place of their birth, since their subjects then included no one they might either particularly love or hate.¹¹ Yet Pufendorf did not suggest, at least explicitly, that there would be a need for constant improvements in the above fields of government. In the case of the material resources of the state and of citizens things were somewhat different.

Pufendorf discussed this topic in paragraph 11, entitled “The wealth of citizens is to be promoted” (*facultates civium promovendi*). Jean Barbeyrac’s French translations of *De jure* from 1706 spoke here about the duty to maintain and increase the goods of citizens (*procurer l’entretien & l’augmentation des biens des Sujets*),¹² whereas in the German translation from 1711 (the translator is not mentioned) the heading stated that the wealth of subjects should be increased as much as possible (*das Vermögen der Unterthanen soll möglichst vermehret werden*).¹³ Compared to these, the corresponding paragraph in Andrew Tooke’s English translation of *De officio* has a somewhat individualist flavour: “Interest of the Subject to be advanced by Princes”.¹⁴ Yet this was not how all Englishmen introduced Pufendorf’s discussion of the topic. When Basil Kennett’s translation of *De jure* was published in 1703, paragraphs had no headings, but the 1712 edition stated that the paragraph explains how the “Wealth of the State is to be advanced”.¹⁵

In fact, the main theme of paragraph 11 was that the wealth of the state and that of the citizens are intimately linked. Pufendorf started by noting that even though the *salus* of citizens is the highest law for sovereigns, they are not obliged to support their subjects, or at least not those who are physically able to take care of themselves. Yet sovereigns should understand that revenues needed for the preservation of their state are collected from the property of their citizens, and that the strength of state relies not only on the bravery (*virtu*) of its citizens but also on their wealth. Therefore it is the duty of the sovereign to do everything in his or her power to further (*promovere*) the increase of their citizens’ fortune. Here Barbeyrac’s French translation used the same formula as in the title of the paragraph, saying that the sovereign should see to the maintenance and increase of possessions.¹⁶ One might argue that if the German translation had been made later in the eighteenth century, it would have used the term *Verbesserung* in this context. But what it stated was that the ruler should take care that their subjects can secure their own prosperity and are sufficiently nourished.¹⁷ The English translations, however, offer further confirmation for the argument that, already by the 1690s, the notion of improvement had become a core element of English culture (see Marten Seppel’s chapter in this volume). Tooke’s translation of *De officiis* explained that it encourages “Princes to use their best Endeavours, that the Fortunes of their Subjects improve and flourish”, while Kennett’s translation of *De jure* from 1703 declared unequivocally that it is the duty of sovereigns to “take care, that Estates and Possessions of their people be well cultivated and improved.”¹⁸

Specific measures to increase the wealth of citizens were not part of the science of natural law, but this did not prevent Pufendorf from making the general point that sovereigns foster the fortunes of their subjects by disposing citizens “to take the richest possible harvest from land and water, to apply their diligence to materials that arise around them”, and by discouraging their “purchase from others labour which they can conveniently perform themselves.” Pufendorf emphasized that to achieve these aims the

sovereign needs to advance commerce and, in maritime countries, navigation, as well as *artes mechanicae*.¹⁹ The last-mentioned term referred to all systematic methods and technical devices used in manual production, and was translated as *Arts Mécaniques* by Barbeyrac, *Manual Arts* by Kennett and *Manufactur* in the German version.²⁰ It should be added that, while Pufendorf regarded increasing wealth as a perquisite for the success of the state, like many of his contemporaries he was worried about the corrupting effects of luxury consumption, especially as this meant that great sums of money were spent on imported goods. Therefore it belonged to the duties of the sovereign to restrict the consumption of luxury goods by sumptuary laws. However, while this was all Pufendorf said on the matter in *De officio*, in *De jure* he qualified his statement as follows:

If the Country abound with Men and Money, it is there convenient to tolerate some unnecessary *Consumption*, and such as may seem to border upon Luxury; that the Common People hence be furnish'd with Opportunities of maintaining themselves, and that the vast Stock of Money may not lie dead and useless.²¹

Pufendorf did not present this idea as a universal principle but as a prudential thing to do if the sovereign was able to take care that “no Encouragement be given to Extravagance and Exes and that the Commodities be not idly wasted at Home which might be exported with Advantage to Forreign Parts.”²²

The above short excursion via Pufendorf’s remarks on the duties of the sovereign shows that they can easily be located within the European discourse of improvement. Moreover, these remarks, together with Pufendorf’s observations regarding money and commerce, dealt with topics we find in numerous eighteenth-century treatises, classified as *Kamerawissenschaften*, “*économie politique*” and the like, which were part of the discussion on how to better organize state and society, together with the living conditions of the people. As was proposed in the Introduction to this volume, there are good reasons to hold that Adam Smith’s multifaceted argumentation for the system of natural liberty was a contribution to the same conversation, not a poorly organized attempt to present principles of political economy à la David Ricardo. Thus, in one respect, celebration of Pufendorf as a predecessor of Smith is correct, as Pufendorf “anticipated” Smith just as he anticipated many other eighteenth-century authors writing on economic topics. If, however, what is meant is that Pufendorf was, through to his assumed influence on Smith, a grandfather for nineteenth-century political economy, this misses the mark.²³ As for Smith, one could argue that for him, the implementation of the system of natural liberty in Britain would not have meant merely an improvement but also a major reform of the prevailing social order. This may be the case, but then he might not have understood reform as a progressive step towards something entirely new, but as a return to some previously existing condition (see Keith Tribe’s chapter in this volume).

In the *Wealth of Nations* Smith remarked that due to the prejudices of the public and the interests of “master manufacturers”, to “expect that the freedom of trade should ever be entirely *restored* in Great Britain, is as absurd as to expect that and Oceana or Utopia should ever be established in it”.²⁴

Notes

- 1 Zygmunt Bauman, “Foreword to the 2012 Edition”, in *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), viii.
- 2 Frank Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantic Analysis of the Historian’s Language* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1983).
- 3 I here modify the observation in Richard Tuck’s *The Rights of War and Peace. Political Thought and the International Order from Grotius to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 165.
- 4 Samuel Pufendorf, *De jure naturae et gentium*, ed. Gerald Hartung (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), Book VIII ch. 9 §1.
- 5 The distinction between the art of prudential governing and the demonstrative science of natural law is articulated in Pufendorf, *De jure*, Book I, ch. 2 §4. See also Kari Saastamoinen, “Pufendorf on the Law of Sociality and the Law of Nations”, in *The Law of Nations and Natural Law 1625–1800*, ed. Simone Zurbu-chen (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 107–31.
- 6 Fiammetta Palladini, *La Biblioteca di Samuel Pufendorf. Catalogo dell’asta de Berlin del settembre 1697* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 1999), 69, 362.
- 7 Pufendorf, *De jure*, Book VII, ch. 11 § 2.
- 8 Samuel Pufendorf, *De officio*, ed. Gerald Hartung (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997), Book II, ch. 1 § 2.
- 9 Samuel Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man According to the Law of Nature*, Trans. Andrew Tooke (1691), eds. Ian Hunter, David Saunders (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2003), 215.
- 10 Pufendorf, *De jure*, Book VII, ch. 11 § 2.
- 11 Pufendorf, *De jure*, Book VII, ch. 11 § 9.
- 12 Samuel Pufendorf, *Les droit de la nature et de gens*, trans. Jean Barbeyrac (Amsterdam, 1706), 319.
- 13 Samuel Pufendorf, *Acht Bücher vom Natur- und Völker-Rechte* (Frankfurt am Main, 1711), 690.
- 14 Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man*, 219.
- 15 Samuel Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Basil Kennett (Amsterdam, 1712), 564.
- 16 Pufendorf, *Les droit de la nature*, 319.
- 17 Pufendorf, *Acht Bücher*, 709: “Es soll aber doch hohe Obrigkeit allerdings Sorge tragen/daß Unterthanen zu gutem Vermögen kommen und Außertragliche Nahrung haben mögen.”
- 18 Pufendorf, *The Whole Duty of Man*, 219. Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, trans. Basil Kennett (Oxford, 1703), Book VII, ch. 9 § 11, p. 230.
- 19 Pufendorf, *De jure*, VII.9.11. The translation is from Samuel Pufendorf, *Political Writings*, ed. Craig L. Cair, trans. Michael Seidler (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 243.
- 20 On *artes mechanicae* in the seventeenth century, see Marcus Popplow, “Diskurse über Technik in der Frühen Neuzeit”, in Herbert Jaumann, Gideon Stiening, eds., *Neue Diskurse der Gelehrtenkultur in der Frühen Neuzeit. Ein Handbuch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 739–64, see pp. 752–54.
- 21 Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature* (1703), Book VII, ch. 9 § 11, p. 230.

22 Ibid.

23 Cf. Arild Saether, *Natural Law and the Origin of Political Economy. Samuel Pufendorf and the History of Economics* (London: Routledge, 2017).

24 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, eds. R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 471. Emphasis KS.

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