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The Legacy of the Enlightenment Rights, Constitutions, Equality

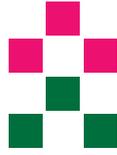
Edited by

VINCENZO FERRONE, VALENTINA ALTOPIEDI,
and GIUSEPPE GRIECO



Leo S. Olschki Editore
MMXXV

Book cover: EUGÈNE DELACROIX, *Les Natchez*, oil on canvas,
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The series collects and promotes research developed under the Turin Humanities Programme - THP, of Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura.

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The essays by Vincenzo Ferrone, Gerardo Tocchini and Antonio Trampus have been translated from the Italian by Martin McLaughlin and Elisabetta Tarantino

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Quaderni del Turin Humanities Programme

1

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50126 Firenze
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Versione cartacea - Printed version
ISBN 978 88 222 6974 4

Versione digitale - Digital PDF
ISBN 978 88 222 8660 4

DOI: 10.82026/9788822286604



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THE TURIN HUMANITIES PROGRAMME

Arnaldo Momigliano, a Roman History professor at the University of Turin, was forced to flee to England because of the 1938 Fascist racial laws. On 24 November 1972, he published an article in the «Times Literary Supplement» with the curious title *A Piedmontese View of the History of Ideas*. In reality, this piece dealt primarily with the English and German roots of the modern history of ideas, starting with the pioneering contributions of R.G. Collingwood, Lewis Namier, and the *Ideengeschichte* of Friedrich Meinecke (Federico Chabod's teacher in Berlin). However, it also noted the significant role played by Italian thinkers, particularly in Turin, where thanks to the works of Franco Venturi the history of ideas was enriched by new, more ambitious perspectives of research that finally went beyond the narrow historiographical nationalism of the Fascist regime, engaging with specific and methodological issues with their international peers as intellectual equals, including the historiographical approaches then prominent in the United States, such as those of A.O. Lovejoy.

At the University of Turin, after WWII, this powerful process of historiographical innovation, imbued with liberal, cosmopolitan, and neo-Enlightenment values, was the wellspring of the rebirth of a community of humanistic studies of an international calibre. It fuelled the activities of prestigious publishing houses such as Einaudi, and spawned the fertile academic and amicable collaboration of distinguished figures such as Franco Venturi, Nicola Abbagnano, Norberto Bobbio, Giovanni Tabacco, Alessandro Galante Garrone, Giovanni Getto, and many others.

Today, the exponents of this humanistic tradition, particularly the heirs to the so-called 'Piedmontese View of the History of Ideas', are confronted primarily with international developments in the new, globally-oriented *Intellectual History*, set in motion by the Anglo-American world over the past two decades. Here, once again, they are relevant players, working with a civic passion as public intellectuals, also building upon the results achieved by Turin scholars of social history, and in the fields of economic, institutional, philosophical, and literary studies.

The global landscape of this new intellectual adventure, however, is profoundly different from the climate of confidence and high hopes of the decades following World War II. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 (a date as symbolic and epochal as 1789) radically changed world history, politics, society, and economics, and, as a result, the intellectual life of the planet. And not always for the better. On the contrary, in the field of the *Humanities*, a subtle, insidious sense of crisis is brewing vis-a-vis the exponential growth of the STEM disciplines. The undeniable fact that this is a widespread crisis can be seen on both sides of the Atlantic through the steady decline in enrolment, and the decrease in professorships in the humanities in the most prestigious American universities, faced with growing interest and investments in their science and technology departments. Concerned editorials about this crisis, and about the need to rethink the very epistemological bases and social functions of the humanities in the new globalised world have appeared more and more often in the culture pages of the «New York Times», the «Times Higher Education», «The Philosophers' Magazine», all the way to the somewhat exaggerated suggestions regarding the 'imminent extinction of the humanities' in the 23 August 2018 issue of «The Atlantic». In reality, the best way of calmly defining the problem is still probably Martha Nussbaum's short 2010 book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*.

Nussbaum clearly explains that the critical thinking, imagination, creativity, and reflection on values ensured by the existence of the humanities in universities around the world are indispensable for freedom and democracy. Most of all, they are essential for safeguarding the human dimension of the sciences, themselves not immune from crises and changes of heart regarding their development – yet to be adequately interpreted, particularly in the face of the digital revolution and of the problematic irruption on the scene of Artificial Intelligence and its possible applications to the Humanities.

The *Turin Humanities Programme*, launched by the *Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura* in 2021, hopes to contribute to finding some viable answers to this crisis, which has definitely reached the Italian and local scene. It is striving to do so with a strategy based primarily on the University of Turin's solid traditions in the Humanities, taking advantage of its valuable epistemological heritage, methodologies, and intellectual results, as well as of the international relationships developed over time, as testified by the wealth of Turin-based seminars and discussions with scholars from all over the world. It is clear that our task is not limited to investing significant resources on the innovative updating of libraries, methods, and research

tools, such as the indispensable Digital Humanities. We need to go further, openly accepting the problematic challenges that have become so relevant in our times, abandoning old pathways and paradigms that have become obsolete and are no longer suited to global public discourses and current needs. This has led to the decision to create a *THP* ‘scientific committee’ composed of respected national and (mostly) international scholars. The goal is to formulate a series of two-year research projects devoted to challenging intellectual questions and historic problems of global significance, that can tap upon the humanities tradition at large, but with a precise aim that, first and foremost, focusses on two aspects:

1. the contributions of history and the humanities to the understanding of the cultural, political, and socio-economic challenges of our time;
2. *Global Intellectual History* as a new priority for studying the history of ideas and the history of Europe from a global point of view.

To these ends, the Turin-based *Fondazione 1563* has launched an annual competition for the awarding of four post-doctoral research scholarships, open to both Italian and foreign researchers, who would be hosted in Turin. Housed in the splendid headquarters of the Palazzo d’Azeglio, the research group – supervised by the Director of Studies of the programme and by the Senior Fellows and visiting scholars especially invited during the course of the two-year period – has, since its very inception, also been open to graduate students, researchers and professors of the University of Turin. The group members have the University and city libraries, as well as the rich bibliographical resources of the Fondazione Luigi Einaudi and the Fondazione Luigi Firpo at their disposal, while their facilities are available for organising and hosting conferences, seminars, and meetings with major scholars interested in the themes of each two-year research cycle. The first cycles have covered a rich range of global themes, including: *Political Thought and the Body: Europe and East Asia, ca. 1100-1650* (2022-2024), under the direction of Serena Ferente; *Slavery, Ethnicity, and Race in the Mediterranean: Ideas and Attitudes from Homer to Columbus* (2023-2025), supervised by Nino Luraghi; and *Slavery and Serfdom in Europe and the New World: Debates in the Early Modern Period* (2024-2026), under the direction of Nicholas Cronk. The very first two-year cycle was devoted to the *Enlightenment Legacy: The Rights of Man in a Global Perspective* (2021-2023) under the supervision of Vincenzo Ferrone. Its results are presented in the present volume, which inaugurates the *Quaderni del Turin Humanities Programme* series, devoted to the presentation of the research output of every cycle.

We are confident that the following pages of the *Quaderni* will succeed in illustrating the significant results of this first session, which took place despite the obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first section, *New Research*, includes contributions of the utmost importance deemed worthy of publication by the Scientific Committee of THP. Alongside the space allotted to the most interesting work by some of the young postdoctoral researchers chosen for the first cycle (the first four awarded scholarships, Graham Clure, Ariane Viktoria Fichtl, Brynne McBryde, Tom Pye, alongside Italian researchers Valentina Altopiedi, Guglielmo Gabbiadini, Giuseppe Grieco, and Alessandro Maurini), we are presenting further research works by the group of distinguished scholars who participated in the seminars and conferences organised in Palazzo d'Azeglio in the context of the first cycle, all of them relevant to the definition of the historiographic paradigms that the THP aims to develop. It includes the following essays: *Do Books Make Revolutions? Political Uses of Eighteenth-century Philosophical Literature in Restoration France*, by Veronica Granata (University of Liège, Belgium); *The Historical Canon of Political Economy between Reason of State and Enlightenment*, by Sophus A. Reinert (Harvard Business School) and Robert Fredona (Harvard Business School); and *Enlightened Constitutionalism: The Rise and Fall of Its Political Vocabulary from the Late Enlightenment to the Napoleonic Era*, by Antonio Trampus (Università Ca' Foscari, Venice).

Many pages of the *Quaderni* were devoted to the *Enlightenment Lectures*, presented and discussed in the programme's *Summer School* sessions that took place in Palazzo Carignano from 1 to 3 September 2022. The *Lectures* became valuable resources for future research into the legacy of the Enlightenment, and for the history of human rights. From the searingly topical theme proposed by Vincenzo Ferrone (University of Turin), *The Legacy of the Enlightenment: the Rights of the Individual and the Rights of the Community*; to the penetrating reflections of Céline Spector (Sorbonne, Paris), *What is Left of the Enlightenment? The Postcolonial Critique of Human Rights*; to contributions by two of the most important scholars in the field of human rights, Lynn Hunt (UCLA): *Writing the History of Human Rights: Some Personal Reflections* and Dan Edelstein (Stanford University): *A Hidden Legacy: Enlightenment Rights Talk, Nineteenth-century Constitutions, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; all the way to Giovanni Bietti's evocative essay, *Music of Light. How the Great Musicians Helped to Shape and Represent the Enlightenment*. This last work provides clear evidence of how the legacy of the Enlightenment developed over the course of the centuries, not only through the circulation of the most famous works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Herder, Kant, Beccaria, and Filangieri, but also, and perhaps mostly, through poetry and fiction, the visual arts and music.

These disciplines ignited the souls of those who desired to protect human rights, drawing positive energy from Schiller's 'Ode to Joy', written in 1785 and reintroduced by Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony to encourage cosmopolitanism and brotherhood in the face of the tragic results of the Napoleonic Wars.

As a final confirmation of the generous spirit that animates the THP, a specific area was designated as a section devoted to the *New Voices on the Enlightenment and the Rights of Man*. Among the papers presented by the fourteen young scholars selected and hosted by the Fondazione 1563 during the *Summer School* session, those of Vanessa Massuchetto, Luis De la Peña, Gabriel Darriulat, Camilla Froio, and Jesper Lundsby Skov have been included.

Finally, the concluding pages of *Quaderni* could not possibly find a more worthy theme than that of the iconographic essay by Gerardo Tocchini (Università Ca' Foscari, Venice), which successfully summarises the concepts and problems of a cultural revolution such as the Enlightenment, experienced by the West during the Eighteenth century, but still reverberating across the centuries until our time by means of all the languages and modes of representation available to humanity.

VINCENZO FERRONE
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VINCENZO FERRONE

THE LEGACY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT:
A NEW HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PARADIGM FOR OUR TIMES

*The legacy of the Enlightenment represents a complex issue that can be approached from different points of view. Starting from the necessary distinction between history and historiography, the objective of this essay is to claim the need to study the legacy of the Enlightenment by adopting the historical point of view and therefore to contribute to the construction of a new historiographical paradigm.*¹

There are many and complex ways of addressing the legacy of the Enlightenment in our own times. It is therefore necessary to have quite clear in our minds the distinction between *history* and *historiography*, *legacy* and *relevance to today*, and the divergence between the *historical* and *philosophical views of the Enlightenment*.

At times, the idea of the legacy of the Enlightenment might bring sympathetically to mind the street urchin Gavroche from Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and the defiant song he is singing as he is killed on the barricades in the 1832 popular uprising in Paris. It is a song that satirises the way in which the Enlightenment had been described as the source of all evils:

*On est laid à Nanterre,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;
Et bête à Palaiseau,
C'est la faute à Rousseau;
Je suis tombé par terre,
C'est la faute à Voltaire;*

¹ This essay has been published in Italian as *L'eredità dell'Illuminismo. Fra attualità e nuovo paradigma storiografico*, «Rivista storica italiana», CXXXVI, 1, 2024, pp. 43-58; in French as *L'héritage des Lumières. Entre actualité et nouveau paradigme historiographique*, in R. KULESSA – V. DE SENARCLÉS – S. STOCKHORST (eds.) *Das Erbe der Aufklärung. Aktualität, Historiographie und Re-Lektüren. L'héritage des Lumières. Actualités, historiographies et relectures*, Hannover, Wehrhahn Verlag, 2024, pp. 25-43.

*Le nez dans le ruisseau,
C'est la faute à ...*²

[Men are ugly at Nanterre,
'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
And dull at Palaiseau,
'Tis the fault of Rousseau.
I have fallen to the earth,
'Tis the fault of Voltaire;
With my nose in the gutter,
'Tis the fault of ...
(Tr. Isabel F. Hapgood)]

From the very beginning, the legacy of the Enlightenment has been seen both as negative and positive: it was elusive, hard to define and to handle; it was always controversial, ambivalent, tragic. Already in the thought of early-nineteenth-century political, literary, historical, and philosophical writers this legacy came to be identified on the one hand with the glorious principles of the 1789 Revolution – the emancipation of man, the discovery of liberty and the rights of man – and on the other with the Jacobin Terror, the horrors of the Napoleonic wars and the nostalgic restoration of the privileges of the Ancien Régime. In fact – as I shall argue in this study – this legacy deserves to be finally investigated first and foremost as an autonomous historical entity. Only in this way will we be able to truly understand why it is so persistently relevant to our own times. We need to build a new paradigm, capable of describing the true historical meaning of this legacy through the different contexts and periods in which it held a predominant position, rather than as just another topic in the history of historiography.

First, however, a few necessary premisses. We know that Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment,³ an inevitable concept in any discussion of the legacy of the Enlightenment, has its origins already in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, the real critique of the Enlightenment and its legacy began at the very same time as its political triumph, with the *panthéonisation* in Paris of Voltaire in 1791 and Rousseau in 1794, both of them hailed as the true 'Pères de la Revolution'.⁴ Albeit with very different motivations, for both

² V. HUGO, *Les Misérables*, Paris, Émile Testard, 1890, vol. 5, pp. 81-82.

³ I. BERLIN, *The Counter-Enlightenment*, in P. WIENER (ed.), *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, New York, Macmillan, 1973, vol. 2, pp. 100-112.

⁴ See V. FERRONE, *The Enlightenment. The History of an Idea*, Translated by Elisabetta Tarantino. Updated edition with a new afterword by the author, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.

the revolutionary left and the reactionary right that ceremony consecrated once and for all the Enlightenment-Revolution nexus. A powerful and unassailable new historiographical paradigm was born, destined to enjoy enormous success not only because it gave France its modern national identity together with its myth of origins but also because of the fundamental role assumed by that nexus in the birth of the modern historical conscience throughout the western world. The autonomy of the Enlightenment as a major historical phenomenon, its authentic and original traits, its obvious – though much contested – Europe-wide historical dimension, that extended far beyond France, were thus obscured for large periods of time by the teleological shadow of the great revolution, and of all the historical questions that this momentous event was beginning to raise, resulting in a complete epistemological impasse. So much so that, in the twentieth century still, research could confine itself, without any serious objections, to ranging between Daniel Mornet's discussion of the intellectual origins of the French Revolution and the study of its cultural origins by Robert Darnton and Roger Chartier, while keeping unmovably at its centre the reductive idea of the ancillary, preparatory function of the Enlightenment.⁵

More than the work of Edmund Burke, Augustin Barruel, Madame de Staël or the first tentative historical reconstructions at the start of the century, it was the philosophers who established the unchallenged primacy of that paradigm: in particular, Hegel's critique of the reply that Kant had given in 1784 to his own question *Was ist Aufklärung?*⁶ in an issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* – a reply that designated a subject-based philosophy of reflection, alongside the individual's free and public deployment of reason in every field, as the driving force for progress and man's emancipation through man.

In fact, it was Hegel who invented the so-called *Dialektik der Aufklärung* through a mixture of history and philosophy, creating a paradoxical beast – a kind of centaur or Aristotelian 'goat-stag' – that shackled the *Aufklärung* to the tragic, as well as inevitable, consequences of its own dialectical nature. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*,⁷ Hegel maintained that, in the course

⁵ See D. MORNET, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française, 1715-1787*, Paris, Tallandier, 1933; R. CHARTIER, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, Translated by L.G. Cochrane, Durham, Duke University Press, 1991 (Bicentennial reflections on the French Revolution); R. DARNTON, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, London, W.W. Norton, 1996.

⁶ I. KANT, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, «Berlinische Monatsschrift», XII, 1784, pp. 481-494.

⁷ G.W.F. HEGEL, *System der Wissenschaft. Erster Theil, die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Bamberg and Würzburg, Goebhardt, 1807.

of the eighteenth century, the despotic rule of abstract reason, the process of secularisation, the primacy and hard-won autonomy of the thinking subject – incapable of distinguishing between reality and thought, in his boundless freedom and will – all led, inevitably, to the Revolution and the deadly excesses of the Jacobin Terror. With the French Revolution, a result of the alienation of pure intellect and the absolute self from the spirit, the latter had, according to Hegel, reached a stage where man must find his true contents within himself. This was the position that was called the Enlightenment, whose fundamental principle was the rule of reason, to the exclusion of any other authority. ‘Reason’ included the universal laws established by the intellect, based on consciousness of the present, which concerned the laws of nature and the core of what is right and good; and the realm of these laws came to be called ‘Enlightenment’. Never did any words have such a great influence on conditioning the legacy of the Enlightenment in subsequent centuries as these stipulations by Hegel.

The influence of this Hegelian ‘centaur’ was consolidated by Marx who, in numerous texts, implacably exposed the legacy of the Enlightenment as a bourgeois ideology that was to be *superseded* by Communism. This time, the core of the dialectical mechanism was occupied by society and the economy, and by the relationship between structure and superstructure, and the exclusively ‘political’ Enlightenment of the revolutionaries was accused of attempting to ‘supersede itself’ with its anachronistic exaltation of ancient republican virtue and its exclusive focus on the individual’s political emancipation. This had resulted in modern civil society, which was characterised by the division of the public and private spheres as a consequence of the autonomy of the State and the struggle against Ancien Régime communitarianism. It was, however, a society dominated by a crude scientific materialism and by the utilitarian concerns of the *philosophes*, which had led to modern individualism, social atomism, and a false rhetoric of the rights of man which served as a clever smokescreen for the selfish claims of the bourgeois.⁸ As depicted by Marx, this was, then, a chequered legacy, which needed to be exposed and superseded. In this way, at the very least, Marx unwittingly added a new weapon to the modern anti-Enlightenment arsenal: the powerful and disturbing archetype of the

⁸ Concerning Marx’s sharp critique of human rights as an instrument of class society and bourgeois ideology, see the essays *Zur Judenfrage* (1843), published in 1844 in the «Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbüchern», in K. MARX – F. ENGELS, *Werke*, vol. 1, Berlin, Edition of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism, 1957, pp. 370-377.

perpetual denunciation of the ‘good intentions’ of the Enlightenment and their inevitably negative outcome, whatever their emancipatory purposes might have been – as shall later emerge, most forcefully, in the writings of Michel Foucault.⁹

One of the first philosophers to break away from the Enlightenment-Revolution paradigm was Friedrich Nietzsche. His philosophy involved abandoning the erroneous path of western rationalist metaphysics and the constant sway of ‘logical Socratism’¹⁰ from Plato to Hegel, as Nietzsche focused on the historical discontinuities caused first by Christianity and later by the Enlightenment. In his reflections on the characteristics of the subject in Kant and on man’s will to power led him not only to celebrate the autonomy of the Enlightenment and its ‘spirit of progressive evolution’,¹¹ represented by the iconic figures of Petrarch, Erasmus, and Voltaire, but also to denounce publicly the enemies of that momentous and underestimated legacy. Such enemies went from Martin Luther, who, with his somber ‘medieval’ Reformation, had sadly delayed the ‘dawn’ of the Enlightenment, through Robespierre, who had halted its glorious progress with his populism and the Jacobin Terror, to the incredible way in which the Enlightenment had been misunderstood – and immediately demonised – by German romantic culture. In this respect Nietzsche stated: ‘The whole great tendency of the Germans was against the Enlightenment and against the revolution in society, which was crudely misunderstood as its consequence’.¹² This *Neue Aufklärung* wished for by Nietzsche had obviously very little to do with the historical point of view, given its radical denial of the emancipatory component in the rationalism of the *Encyclopédie* and its followers, his transvaluation of Enlightenment values, and his focus on the will to power. Indeed, it had no lasting influence. In Italy in 1938, giving rise to the first significant historical research on the Enlightenment, Benedetto Croce revived the Hegelian ‘centaur’ with his definition of the Enlightenment as, at the same time, an ideal and eternal category of the spirit and a major era in European history, stating that ‘the triumph and the catastrophe of the Enlightenment both resided in the French Revolution;

⁹ See M. FOUCAULT, *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975.

¹⁰ F. NIETZSCHE, *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin (1967-1977), vol. I, 1980, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik*, Kap. 15, p. 98.

¹¹ F. NIETZSCHE, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*, edited by G. Colli and M. Montinari, vol. II, 1980, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I.*, § 26, *Die Reaktion als Fortschritt*, p. 47.

¹² *Ibid.*, § 197.

and the latter was, at one and the same time, the catastrophe and the catharsis of its historiography'.¹³

In 1989 the dozens of conferences that took place for the bicentenary of the Revolution only reiterated the powerful fascination of the old paradigm and the way in which it had conditioned from the beginning the perception of the legacy of the Enlightenment. Only very few voices spoke up against this view among the historians of the Enlightenment.¹⁴ In fact, the paradigm itself had slowly and sadly been sidelined and forgotten. Far more urgent questions were now being asked of the past, in an attempt to understand the true legacy of the Enlightenment, following the tragic realities of the twentieth century: the October Revolution; fascism, nazism and all manner of blood-thirsty totalitarianisms; world-wide war; the Holocaust.

Once again, it is to what we have termed 'the philosophers' point of view' that we need to look in order to understand the fundamental traits of the next phase of research on this subject, exemplified especially by Ernst Cassirer's 1932 book *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, which aimed at identifying the specific unifying characteristics of the Enlightenment. In opposition to the irrationalist and anti-scientific stance that dominated Europe in those years, Cassirer radically reversed Hegel's negative judgement on the Enlightenment, modern science and Kant's philosophy of reflection, defining these currents as a momentous and positive stage of the modern philosophical spirit in its constant development. In this context, Cassirer went so far as to describe the eighteenth century as the epoch that first «saw and respected in reason and science the supreme power of man»,¹⁵ and the Enlightenment as a philosophy capable of discovering and valuing the autonomy and immutability of reason, and its emancipatory virtues: a reason that was «the same for every thinking subject, every nation, every epoch, every civilisation»,¹⁶ capable not only of apprehending the world but also of transforming it. However, it was to the Scientific Revolution, modern science, and, in particular, 'the paradigm of Newton's

¹³ B. CROCE, *La storia come pensiero e come azione*, Bari, Laterza, 1938, p. 123.

¹⁴ See the scarce resonance, outside Italy, of the question in the *Dizionario* edited by Daniel Roche and myself, which, only a few years later, attempted to finally go beyond that limiting paradigm. V. FERRONE – D. ROCHE (eds.), *L'Illuminismo. Dizionario storico*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1997 (Storia e società); in Spanish: *Diccionario histórico de la Ilustración*, Madrid, 1998 (Alianza diccionarios); in French: *Le monde des Lumières*, Paris, 1999; in Russian: Мир Просвещения Исторический словарь., translated by Nadezhda Plavinskaya, Moscow, 2003.

¹⁵ E. CASSIRER, *La philosophie des Lumières*, Paris, Fayard, 1970, p. 37.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

physics' that Cassirer pointed as the true core and unifying characteristic of Enlightenment philosophy. In his view, «by the middle of the century this concept was undoubtedly victorious. However divergent individual thinkers and schools might be in their outcomes, they all agree on these gnoseological premisses».¹⁷

After Cassirer's re-evaluation, rather than with the French Revolution paradigm the legacy of the Enlightenment came to be indissolubly linked with the history of western rationalism (with Max Weber moving pretty much along the same lines, with his reflection on nature and the rise of capitalism in the West), with Kant's critical reason and Galileo's and Newton's modern science. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that those themes take centre stage in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, written in 1944 and published in 1947.¹⁸

The authors' influential critique, in the wake of Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche, once again put the Enlightenment and its legacy on trial very successfully, this time for giving rise not to the Jacobin Reign of Terror but to twentieth-century totalitarianisms, unbridled individualism and utilitarianism, and the worst excesses of capitalism, from consumerism to the commodification of everything, generating, at one and the same time, both the modern world and its crisis. As evidence of this the authors cited the consequences of that nexus between Enlightenment philosophy and modern science highlighted by Cassirer; they adduced the words of Francis Bacon, the prophet and ideologue of the Scientific Revolution – celebrated as such in the *Discours préliminaire* to the *Encyclopédie* – that extolled the scientist's unstoppable will to power, in his role as minister and interpreter of nature. Thus, the Enlightenment's emancipatory project, its efforts to go beyond myth and free mankind from fear and superstition, establishing man as the master of nature, had been turned dialectically upside down: its results were the techno-sciences and the positivists' instrumental reason; it had undergone a process of dehumanisation, giving rise to a tragic totalitarianism that revealed its underlying logics of domination and subjection. The ideological nature and dire costs of this inevitable dialectical reversal are particularly obvious in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of De Sade's *Philosophie dans le boudoir*, in which man, once he had achieved absolute mastery over his own destiny, inevitably gave free rein also to his dark side, his will to power, his tendency

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See M. HORKHEIMER – T.W. ADORNO, *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, Amsterdam, S. Fischer, 1947.

to fierce domination and boundless violence. Equally revealing was their analysis of the American industry of mass-culture, which reduced art to entertainment and to propaganda commodities in line with the utilitarian nature of the capitalist system.

With Adorno and Horkheimer the new arsenal of weaponry to unmask the mendacious and crime-inducing legacy of the Enlightenment was finally ready and well stocked. But this veritable black book of the anti-Enlightenment was not the only product of those murky and disturbing years in which western civilisation had descended into a profound crisis, with World War II and the horror of the Holocaust. Amongst the first important interpreters of this new period were two volumes that we must mention in particular, both published in 1959: their authors were Lester G. Crocker and Reinhard Koselleck.

In *An Age of Crisis: Man and World in Eighteenth-Century French Thought*¹⁹ Crocker, an American historian of literature, replied specifically to Cassirer, again overturning the value judgements of the latter and denouncing the responsibility of the Enlightenment, and consequently of its legacy, in causing the moral crisis of the modern world by giving rise to nihilism and totalitarianisms with its project to emancipate man through man, doing away with the traditional philosophical foundation provided by God. Koselleck's book, entitled *Kritik und Krise. Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*,²⁰ was at least as controversial as it was brilliant and influential. Koselleck yet again unveiled new and crucial historical elements in the dialectic of Enlightenment that supposedly demonstrated the role of the latter in bringing about the crisis of the modern world: from the toxic conjunction of critique and crisis to its hypocritical moralism, contrasted with the political realism of his own mentor, Carl Schmitt, and to the redefinition of the relationship between the public and the private following the rise of a public opinion disturbingly liable to be manipulated, to the utopian social gamble, the construction of new philosophies of history as weapons in the political and ideological struggle, and the political fallout of the Enlightenment use of masonic secrets. All of this caused that legacy to be still dramatically active in fostering not only the unstoppable 'permanent revolution'²¹ of the western world, but, above all, the final crisis of the modern world.

¹⁹ L.G. CROCKER, *An Age of Crisis: Man and World in Eighteenth Century French Thought*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959 (The Goucher College Series).

²⁰ R. KOSELLECK, *Kritik und Krise. Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt*, Munich and Freiburg, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959 (Orbis academicus).

²¹ *Ibid.*

Inevitably, in the decades following the publication of the volumes by Cassirer and Adorno-Horkheimer, the philosophical study of the Enlightenment and its legacy focused more and more exclusively on its relationship with *Modernity* and with the crisis and end of the modern world as a historical period: a modernity that came under fierce attack with the emergence of the influential *post-modern* movement and the *linguistic turn*.

With his 1985 book *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne*,²² Jürgen Habermas made a major contribution to the new paradigm. Habermas surveyed the main aspects of the question, tracing its historical genesis in particular to Koselleck's work on the emergence, in the eighteenth century and thanks to the Enlightenment, of the temporal conscience of modernity: a '*nova aetas*', modern times characterised, for the first time, by the projection into the future.

In this critical rethinking of the definition of modernity, Habermas was not primarily concerned with responding to post-modern sociological research by relaunching Weber's traditional historical line based on western rationalism, secularisation and disenchantment, or with revisiting the aesthetic line established by Baudelaire²³ in the middle of the nineteenth century with his invention of the very word 'modernity'. Habermas's main interest was in attempting to define the philosophical nature of modernity in its intersection with the Enlightenment. He achieved this – inevitably – by tracing this line of enquiry from Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche down to our own day in order to bring to the fore what these authors had established as the original traits and points of contact between modernity and the Enlightenment: a connection that has reacquired great relevance for our own time, to be read especially as a major historical self-awareness issue and, at the same time, in terms of the philosophical self-foundation of a modernity that can only define itself by its own rules. This is exactly what Hegel did when he had drawn on the Enlightenment in order to critique the Enlightenment itself, thus creating the 'dialectic of Enlightenment'.

Thanks to Habermas's impassioned reflections (in 1980 he publicly stated: «this much-discussed, multifaceted subject has never stopped worrying me»)²⁴ the Enlightenment was identified as a major unavoidable philosophical issue linked with the very definition of modernity and its

²² J. HABERMAS, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. Zwölf Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1985.

²³ C. BAUDELAIRE, *Le peintre de la vie moderne* (first published in «Le Figaro» on November 26-29, 1863), see ID., *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 2017, vol. I, pp. 1414-1415.

²⁴ HABERMAS 1985, p. VII.

original traits. Moreover, we are now better aware of the contents and genesis of the arsenal of arguments established by the most important philosophers in the western world in their centuries-long investigation of the Enlightenment and its legacy. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that these thoughts in particular are either fiercely rejected or proudly asserted in the heated debates on political and cultural matters that are currently taking place in the international public arena. For instance, when Merkel and Macron drew on the legacy of the Enlightenment, and on values such as liberty, toleration, democracy, the free market and, above all, the discoveries of modern science, they were surely more or less directly influenced by the results of the work of Cassirer and, especially, Habermas in defining modernity and the Enlightenment as an ‘unfinished project’²⁵ whose emancipatory potential is still partially unexplored. On the other hand, the ‘universalistic pretensions’²⁶ of the Enlightenment have been the object of supposed ideological unmasking by recent post-colonial and post-modern research, which, with blatant anachronism, has accused Kant of racism and Voltaire of antisemitism; but isn’t all this an offshoot of the theses propounded by Marx, Adorno and Horkheimer or Foucault about the dialectical nature and the dark and disturbing side of the Enlightenment and its legacy?

There is no doubt, therefore, that the ‘philosophical discourse of modernity’²⁷ and its inextricable connection with the Enlightenment and its legacy has been instrumental in conditioning both academic research and current political debate. Nevertheless, going forward, the – of course, entirely legitimate – primacy of this discourse risks obfuscating more and more the study of the Enlightenment and, especially, of its legacy. Above and beyond the results of that research and its ideological positions, mostly destined to turn into veritable philosophies of history, what has caused major doubts and reservations among historians is the specific character of this philosophical reflection: in particular, its reductionist tendency to synthesise and conceptualise; the summary, one-size-fits-all labelling of historical processes and their destined outcome over time, mostly within a philosophy-of-spirit dialectic. For instance, in the Trevelyan Lectures delivered in Cambridge in 1969, Franco Venturi voiced an early denunciation of how «[f]rom Kant to Cassirer and beyond, our understanding of the European Enlightenment has been dominated by the philosophical interpretation of the German

²⁵ J. HABERMAS, *Sauver le projet des Lumières*, in Y. FAUCHOIS – T. GRILLET – T. TODOROV (eds.), *Lumières! Un héritage pour demain*, Paris, BNE, 2006, p. 26.

²⁶ HABERMAS 1985.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Aufklärung», adding that Cassirer at least «was sincere and entitled his book *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*»,²⁸ as if to admit that he did not intend to give a full account of every aspect of this major and necessarily contradictory historical phenomenon.

In fact, the *philosophical* point of view on the Enlightenment up to now has always ended up asking yet again Kant's question, *Was ist Aufklärung?* Perhaps this was to be expected. However, it has led to constant confusion between the history of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and that of its presumed legacy in the following centuries – a dialectically determined legacy that can as a matter of fact be interpreted only in a sort of perpetual logical present. By contrast, the question asked by the *historical* point of view is 'What *was* the Enlightenment?' and the answers that it invites are determined by a definite spatial and temporal context, taking rigorously into account the contradictions and peculiarities, even of an irrational kind, that apply to human events and a great variety of protagonists. This clear distinction has always been obvious to scholars, especially, in Germany and Italy, where, with the so-called historicism being constantly practised from the time of Droysen through Benedetto Croce down to our day, there has been a constant awareness of the difference between history and historiography, between *res gestae* and *historia rerum gestarum*, and therefore, since we are talking about 'legacy', between legacy as historical and as historiographical subject, i.e. as the history of its different interpretations. It should be obvious, therefore, that, these being the theoretical premisses of our current reflections, only by bearing this distinction clearly in mind can we fully understand the discourse on the significance and renewed relevance of the Enlightenment today.

If this is the overall theoretical framework to the question in hand, how has the historical point of view been dealing, in the past few years, with the issue of legacy in relation to the new paradigm of modernity? For the past twenty years, in Italy²⁹ in particular, this has only been done from historiographical, not the historical, point of view: i.e. by studying the interpretations of the Enlightenment given by great historians who were influenced by the Enlightenment-Revolution paradigm. However, since 1989 and the definitive demise of the communist utopia, the overall scenario has been rapidly changing.

With the departures of the great scholars international historiography began to peter out, after its successful struggle against totalitarianism,

²⁸ F. VENTURI, *Utopia e riforma nell'Illuminismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 1970, p. 9.

²⁹ G. RICUPERATI (ed.), *Historiographie et usages des Lumières*, Berlin, Berlin Verlag Arno Spitz, 2002.

achieved by calling attention to the inalienability of freedom, and the importance of political discussion and of the reforms carried out by the Enlightenment as a Europe-wide intellectual movement, which, for the first time, had been capable, in the eighteenth century of confronting the Ancien Régime with new ideas and values. At the same time, historians were increasingly challenged by the new ‘philosophical discourse of modernity’ and the significant results that it achieved. Important new work on social and cultural history has appeared, which, while it still aims to present a mostly univocal view of the Enlightenment, takes into account those of its characteristics that specifically related to modernity in the fields of politics, literature, the arts and institutions, and especially, after the publication of Kuhn’s 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*,³⁰ of the history of eighteenth-century science. Scholars have critiqued and gone beyond Cassirer’s great work, revealing how the Enlightenment harboured different views of science, and how this movement had, from the beginning, aimed to achieve man’s emancipation by historicising the very origins and foundations of the Scientific Revolution, so as to highlight the social, political, and economic consequences of the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the European academic system that it brought about. In particular, once again in opposition to Cassirer, scholars focused on the *Encyclopédie*’s critical and epistemological review of all forms of knowledge, with its Baconian ‘tree’, which centred no longer on rationalism, Newton’s physical and mathematical mechanicism, and the absolute primacy of *reason*, but rather on the crucial interaction between reason and the other, no less important human faculties, such as the *imagination* and *memory*, without which we would never have seen the rise of the modern sciences of man, which are the true scientific legacy that the Enlightenment bequeathed to modernity:³¹ a rich and problematic legacy, in fact, which included numerous other aspects, such as the curiously post-modern-sounding critique by Rousseau or Vittorio Alfieri of the potential for scientific rationalism to descend into a logic of domination if it was not bridled by principles of virtue and equality.

Thus, with the new period of research that started after 1989 we have finally begun to understand how we have been addressing the same question asked by Enlightenment circles in every corner of Europe: questions such as What is science? What are its limits and potentials? What is man?

³⁰ T.S. KUHN, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962.

³¹ See V. FERRONE, *Il mondo dell’Illuminismo. Storia di una rivoluzione culturale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019.

How can we defend man and lead to his emancipation by establishing a new language of rights, a new politics *ex parte civium*, new disciplines, from anthropology to political economy and aesthetics? What exactly is this ‘humanity’ that is the common trait of mankind above and beyond the great variety of peoples on earth, as Herder, in particular, would ask in his reading of Buffon? Different European national cultures have provided different, and sometimes contradictory, answers to these questions. All these replies, however, were inspired by a common new humanism of the moderns, a new scientific empiricism that was pursued with singularity of mind and was capable of critiquing and going far beyond the presumed centrality of the reductive Newtonian paradigm to which Cassirer had pointed.

In this new research the cultural revolution of the Enlightenment, which changed the history of the western world, appears not just as a movement of men and ideas, but especially as an attempt to redefine the purpose and the very nature of human knowledge: an experiment in transforming reality, between utopia and reformation. It appears as a cultural practice involving every field, which with the radical shift from traditional philosophy to scientific empiricism, or to an ‘experimental philosophy’,³² which, as propounded by Diderot, can really be thought of, *iuxta propria principia* and taking fully on the challenge issued by the ‘philosophical discourse of modernity’, as a veritable laboratory of modernity. In this laboratory, all answers and all social, political, and artistic experiments are constantly being reformulated, obviously producing results whose meaning can be ambivalent, divergent, and even contradictory, but which are subject to constant critique and revision in a common and programmatic effort – and this, besides its unique epistemological model, is the true unifying trait of the Enlightenment – to lead to the emancipation of man through man, and to the rise of a new humanism of the moderns.

This major research effort that has taken place in the last few decades must be the starting point for any future investigation into the legacy of the Enlightenment in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a specific and autonomous historical issue and a new paradigm to be contextualised and defined by formulating appropriate research questions.

We should remember at all times that, if correctly applied, the historiographical method is a powerful epistemological tool to help define and effectively pose new historical problems, and certainly not to solve them. Of course, this method can be and has been legitimately applied to the historical study of legacy (and my own earlier research provides one of the first

³² [ANON.] [D. DIDEROT], *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature*, Amsterdam, 1753.

instances of this), but is unlikely to produce major results in this respect. It can become a sort of shortcut that exonerates us, and keeps us away from archival research; it can produce brilliantly astute historical reviews that can finally engage, among other things, with the important and stimulating work carried out by post-colonial critics on the contradictions intrinsic in Enlightenment universalism or in the polysemic, ambivalent, and even dialectical character of the cultural and political application of the ideas put forward in its main texts. However, it will hardly lead to new and original conclusions on the overall historical profile, on the original features and unified nature of the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment or its subsequent historical legacy; and neither does it help us truly understand the authentic relevance of the Enlightenment today.

The recent tendency to study the legacy of this movement within the framework of the so-called *Global Enlightenment*³³ is likely to be equally unproductive. It is one thing to take as a starting point the legitimate critique of the old reactionary and Eurocentric colonial and imperialist attitudes, to take up the invitation to ‘provincialise Europe’,³⁴ acknowledge the link with and debt towards the whole world of knowledge as reformulated and rearranged in the *Encyclopédie*, or finally query the universalism of the Late Enlightenment, which came into existence with the Seven Years’ War, in the light of *Global History*. It is an entirely different thing to invent a vague and generic *Global Enlightenment* as a new historical category:³⁵ a category, artificially extended in space and time as a long-term, even centuries-long phenomenon, whose eighteenth-century phase was no more than a stage in the asymmetrical temporal interaction among the different civilisations as they gave rise to a common modernity based on Enlightenment principles, entirely centred on rationalism, technical and scientific progress, capitalism, a free market, and liberalism. The latter inevitably results in an impoverished kind of historical reconstruction that is not only woefully generic and reductive but even false in historical terms, compared to what can be achieved through the study of the global legacy of the Enlightenment along traditional diffusionist lines, the analysis of the processes of appropriation and reinterpretation of the, in fact, far more complex themes raised by the European Enlightenment in different contexts, from China

³³ S. CONRAD, *Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique*, «American Historical Review», 117, 4, 2012, pp. 999-1027.

³⁴ See D. CHAKRABARTY, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

³⁵ For a critique of Conrad’s theses, see also A. LILTI, *L’héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, Paris, Points, 2019, pp. 58-59.

to India and the Islamic world.³⁶ One need only think, for instance, of the dramatic relevance, today still, of the language of the rights of man – the truest moral legacy of Beccaria, Diderot, Condorcet, and Paine, though it is now largely ignored in discussions of the fortune and globalisation of the world-wide legacy of the European Enlightenment.

We now know that the Enlightenment's momentous effort to build a universal morality founded on the powerful ethical tenet of the equality of rights for all human beings (as illustrated by Condorcet in his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*) not only paved the way for a new idea of politics, but also faced and critiqued the most disturbing results of a Scientific Revolution that seemed to be straying far from the task of helping bring about the emancipation of man and turning instead to supporting more or less openly avowed logics of domination, even going so far as legitimising slavery with the invention of scientific racism.³⁷

In fact, like it or not, the Enlightenment remains, first and foremost, a European eighteenth-century phenomenon, whose legacy, rights included, spread out and interacted with the rest of the world, in the course of the following centuries, resulting in still unexplored situations and clashes. In order to trace the history of that legacy, therefore, it is necessary to start from the history of the old continent, revisiting it from a global point of view. However, one must go through the archives, reconstructing contexts and developing a new historiographical paradigm capable of formulating new research questions and identifying new issues.

In fact, we have been aware, for a considerable time now, of some useful research questions and outcomes. Let me list some of them by way of conclusion:

A crucial issue in the political history of Europe and beyond is how the legacy of the Enlightenment was received between the Revolution and the Napoleonic empire. This aspect needs to be re-examined in the light of what we now know about the foundation of the sciences of man, and the universalism and republicanism of the *philosophes*: revisiting the doomed attempt by their Parisian followers, the *idéologues*, to oppose Napoleon's modern military dictatorship, with its mixture of republicanism, popular sovereignty, new imperialism and the survival of slavery into the early dec-

³⁶ See F. SALAÜN – J.P. SCHANDELER (eds.), *Enquête sur la construction des Lumières*, Ferney-Voltaire, Centre International d'Études du XVIII^e siècle, 2018.

³⁷ Regarding this perspective, see. L. HUNT, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2007; V. FERRONE, *The Enlightenment and the Rights of Man*, translated by E. Tarantino, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2019; D. EDELSTEIN, *On the Spirit of Rights*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019.

ades of the nineteenth century; investigating, that is, the European resonance of this eighteenth-century legacy's desperate struggle for survival.

No less important is the question of the modalities and channels of transmission to European public opinion of a legacy constituted by the Enlightenment's emancipatory values, such as liberty, toleration, happiness, rights, through literature, painting, music, and all forms of art, in polemical contrast with Romanticism and the traditional interpretations of that clash, which had profound effects not only on European artistic culture but on the history of politics and ideology throughout the Continent, which was then beginning to refer to the very categories of Enlightenment and Romanticism. To this effect, unexpectedly illuminating new interpretative scenarios may be opening up thanks to recent studies on the cognitive function of genius and imagination, the latter – we should never stop reminding ourselves – having been finally placed on the same level as reason and memory by the epistemological project of the *Encyclopédie*. A case in point is the unwavering persistence of Enlightenment values in the development of a new musical language from Mozart to Beethoven, as documented in a 2021 study by Giovanni Bietti evocatively entitled *La musica della luce. Dal flauto magico alla nona sinfonia*.³⁸

And what about the political subject *par excellence*, i.e. the drafting of constitutions all over the world alongside the development of different forms of constitutionalism in connection with the legacy of the Enlightenment? Witness the so-called 'Enlightenment constitutionalism' of Filangieri, Condorcet, and Paine, which aimed at creating a modern juridical system, at establishing the 'rule of law', in order to constitutionalise and defend the rights of man by having them inscribed into a political constitution, so as to guarantee his emancipation: a project that met everywhere with fierce opposition by those who, instead, wanted to update the ancient idea of the 'government of men', formalising the hierarchies and privileges of the Ancien Régime, denying the universal ethical principle of the equality of rights and giving rise to constitutional projects of a colonial and imperialistic character. In addition, a history of the legacy of the Enlightenment in the nineteenth century will have the task of throwing light on the crucial moments in the clash between the rights of individuals and those of communities and nations: a clash that soon degenerated into rigid nationalism, scientific racism, and the rise of great nation States and movements of independence totally devoid of Enlightenment input,

³⁸ G. BIETTI, *La musica della luce. Dal flauto magico alla Nona Sinfonia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2021.

as in Germany or Italy, who defined their modern historical identity and memory in terms of the neglect and even hatred of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism and humanism.

To conclude, one could no doubt list many more problems and questions that clearly reveal how important and urgent it now is to study the legacy of the Enlightenment as an autonomous subject: a historical paradigm capable of radically transforming our understanding of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is all the more necessary as we are now faced with dramatic social and political developments that appear to be rekindling the same fears and anxieties beneath Gavroche's defiant *C'est la faute à Rousseau ... c'est la faute à Voltaire!*³⁹ The intangible legacy that the urchin claimed with ironic pride as he fought on the barricades is still for us, today as much as in the past, a precious possession that we must claim as our own, to be defended and scrutinised with a critical spirit, devoid of any easy illusions.



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³⁹ Hugo 1890, p. 82.

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VALENTINA ALTOPIEDI

«WOMAN IS BORN FREE AND REMAINS
EQUAL TO MAN IN RIGHTS». OLYMPE DE GOUGES,
THINKER OF THE LATE ENLIGHTENMENT

On the morning of 3rd November 1793, Olympe de Gouges left the Conciergerie where she had spent the previous two nights and climbed onto the cart that would take her to Place de la Révolution, now known as Place de la Concorde, where she was guillotined. Just four days earlier, the Convention had decreed the closure of all political clubs reserved for women only and three days prior to that most of the Girondin deputies arrested in June 1793 had suffered the same fate.

The death sentence of Olympe de Gouges marks certainly a sudden halt in the history of women's rights, but at the same time it fits into one of the most significant turning points of the French Revolution, namely the elimination of political opposition following the fall of the Girondins in the summer of 1793. The trial that de Gouges faced in the autumn of 1793 was not simply against the author of the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman*, but it was primarily aimed at suppressing the freedom of thought of a woman who had continued to defend pluralism even after the coup d'état of the Committee of Public Safety. In fact, de Gouges was close to the same environment in which Brissot, Condorcet, and the other deputies moved.

The elements that link the trial of de Gouges to that of the 21 Girondin deputies are diverse. The very cause of de Gouges' arrest is significant in this regard: the playwright was, in fact, arrested on 20th July 1793, because she had printed and was posting in the streets of Paris a manifesto titled *Les trois urnes ou le salut de la patrie*¹ (The Three Urns or the Salvation of the Fatherland), in which she proposed a government referendum

¹ O. DE GOUGES, *Écrits politiques*, préface d'O. Blanc, 2 voll., Paris, Côté-femmes, 1993, vol. 2, pp. 243-248.



Fig. 1. Portrait of Olympe de Gouges.

to resolve the crisis of the French Republic: French citizens would be called upon to choose between monarchy, the unitary republic in force since the previous September, or the federal republic supported by the Brissot party and by de Gouges herself. Behind the referendum proposal was concealed, not very subtly, de Gouges's support for Brissot's republicanism.

The indictment against the playwright was drafted in the same days as the trial against the Girondins was unfolding, and de Gouges was brought to the bar of the accused two days after the death sentence of Brissot and his comrades. Yet, the trial that de Gouges faced at the Revolutionary Tribunal was very different; of course, it would be very naive to overlook the differ-

ence between a trial of deputies and that of a woman who held no political office. However, at the same time, the documents of de Gouges's trial, freely accessible in the French National Archives,² show an attempt to model the case of the Occitan playwright on the archetype of the counter-revolutionary woman, simultaneously devoid of virtue and reason. The description echoed by the periodical press highlights how de Gouges' biography diverged from the ideal image of the typical mother and wife to which French women were expected to aspire.³

² ANF W 293, dossier 210, Olympe de Gouges.

³ In an article titled *To Republican Women* published in the «Feuille du salut public» on 17th November 1793, it was recalled that de Gouges had been condemned because «she wanted to be a statesman, forgetting the virtues appropriate to her sex» (p. 3). In the conclusion, the editor addressed French women, inviting them to exercise republican virtue within the intimacy of their homes: «Women! Do you want to be republicans? Love and teach the laws that remind your husbands and children of their rights: be proud of the brilliant actions they may undertake for the country, because they reflect well on you; be modest in your attire, diligent in your household duties, never attend public assemblies with the desire to speak there; but let your presence sometimes encourage your children; then the homeland will bless you because you will have truly done for it what it rightfully expects from you».

And it is precisely the image painted by the Revolutionary Tribunal that has weighed heavily on the posthumous fate of Olympe de Gouges, whose reception is, in fact, one of the most interesting cases in underlining how the present affects the reconstruction of the past. Today her name evokes the struggle for women's rights because of her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*,⁴ published in 1791, but this is a relatively recent consequence of the birth and spread of feminist movements in the second half of the twentieth century. A brief reconstruction of the historiographical reception of de Gouges clearly shows a huge bias in studies on this figure since the nineteenth century and beyond.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the French publishing market was taken over by the spread of the memoirs of revolutionaries or counterrevolutionaries and the increasing interest, often anecdotal and prurient, in the experience of women during the Revolution. In this context the name of de Gouges was often presented along with the so-called legions of amazons and what today we would define as the gender protagonism of women. In 1840 Edmund Lairtullier⁵ was the first to introduce into de Gouges's biography a brief analysis of her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen* and curiously he linked the action of the eighteenth-century playwright with the 'femmes du progrès'⁶ movement of his century. The French historian suggested that de Gouges had an even more radical approach than the early feminist movement. However, at the same time Lairtullier reinforced a series of negative stereotypes against de Gouges: he emphasised the passions typical of southern France and above all her immorality. In Lairtullier's opinion she was one of the stars of an erotic game called *Décampativos*⁷ played at the Palais Royal in the eighteenth century. Lairtullier's biography is particularly relevant because it contains the main elements which explain why de Gouges did not represent a reference point for women's rights and for the nascent movement of French feminism during the nineteenth century.

Several obstacles prevented de Gouges from being the mother of the early French feminist movement: first, the death sentence by the Revolu-

⁴ O. DE GOUGES, *Les Droits de la femme*, Paris, 1791.

⁵ E. LAIRTULLIER, *Les Femmes célèbres de 1789 à 1795, et leur influence dans la Révolution, pour servir de suite et de complément à toutes les histoires de la Révolution française*, Paris, à la librairie politique, 1840.

⁶ Cf. A. PRIMI, *Femmes de progrès: Françaises et Allemandes engagées dans leur siècle, 1848-1870*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010.

⁷ This is a supposed form of entertainment in which, at the mention of the cabalistic term, couples newly formed by the so-called 'king of the fern' (*roi de la fougère*), had to consummate the just-sealed union.

tionary Tribunal, which saw her condemned in November 1793 as a counter-revolutionary writer. In particular, the trial began a process of *damnatio memoriae* which denied that her actions or reflection had been inspired by true political understanding. Furthermore, the trial emphasised her theoretical inconsistency and counter-revolutionary attitude. Secondly, de Gouges could not serve as a symbol for the movement for women's rights during the French Third Republic (and beyond) because of her alleged immorality: Restif de la Bretonne numbered her among the Parisian prostitutes, and other historians described her participation in the parties of the French aristocracy, as well as the rich income provided by her several lovers. Lastly the illiteracy of de Gouges, who was unable to write without a secretary, was certainly used to minimise both her political reflection and also her theoretical contribution to the movement for women's rights.

Throughout the nineteenth and the first part of the twentieth century, Condorcet and Mary Wollstonecraft were recognized as the main promoters of women's rights during the French Revolution.⁸ In the early twentieth century, in fact, with the progress of medicine, de Gouges was also diagnosed by the French doctor Alfred Guillois⁹ as suffering from «delusional paranoia», which clearly denied any political relevance to her actions and writings. In his study, conducted for a professional qualification, Guillois highlighted a certain disorder in her judgement and reasoning faculties and thus demonstrated how her feminist ideas were «the imprints of excessive eccentricity and served as a bond between reason and madness».¹⁰ The diagnosis is that Olympe de Gouges suffered from a form of «herostratism», the anxiety to remain known to posterity, accompanied by a paranoid delusion of the category «paranoia reformatoria».¹¹

The seventies marked an inevitable turnaround: the French feminist movement fully accepted the figure of Olympe de Gouges. The elements that opposed the choice of the Occitan thinker as the mother of the movement in the second half of the nineteenth century had disappeared: on the one hand, the accusations of immorality, which no longer constituted a problem, actually contributed to her image of an *ante litteram* feminist, of an unconventional and subversive woman, which in part still persists to

⁸ In November 1897, the «Journal des débats politiques et littéraires» paid tribute to Mary Wollstonecraft as the founder of French feminism (4th November 1897, p. 3).

⁹ A. GUILLOIS, *Étude médico-psychologique sur Olympe de Gouges*, thèse présentée à la Faculté de Médecine et Pharmacie de Lyon, 1904.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

day; on the other hand it could no longer be left to a man, like Condorcet, to be the point of reference for the battle to improve women's conditions during the eighteenth century.

In recent decades there has been an authentic rediscovery of Olympe de Gouges,¹² accompanied by a strong determination to request her inclusion in the French Panthéon (still unrealised for the moment).¹³ The aim of this paper is to claim the philosophical dimension of Olympe de Gouges's thought and to place her ideas within the context of the late French Enlightenment. The arguments that support this hypothesis can be found in the themes and forms of her political action and literary production.

The debut of the Occitan playwright, who moved to Paris in order to secure for her son the education that she did not receive when she was young, testifies how Olympe de Gouges's theatre should be interpreted as a tool to spread her fight against the prejudices of the Old Regime. She fully contributed to the politicisation of literature promoted by the Late Enlightenment. Furthermore, as a woman she found in literature a way to convey new social and political content, openly contesting the dominant political and social order.¹⁴ Within eighteenth-century literature, the novels and plays of the revolutionary decade preserve, in fact, the traces of a culture of emancipation which had to confront a historical practice of exclusion. Indeed, even though the Revolution had provided French female citizens with some strategies for claiming rights,¹⁵ studies of the history of literature have pointed out how the novel continued to be one of the most widespread and successful literary genres for the French *femmes de lettres*.¹⁶ Taking advantage of an editorial market that was open to the reception of novelistic literature, some female authors such as de Gouges managed to attain considerable

¹² These studies mainly address four different demands in publishing: the feminist interest, local history, academic and popular works; cf. O. RITZ, *Le sacre retardé d'une écrivaine: Olympe de Gouges*, «La Révolution française», 20, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.4000/lrf.5014>.

¹³ The petition relaunched in «Le Monde» in January 2023 is freely accessible and can be signed at this address: <https://olympedegougesaupantheon.org/accueil/olympede-gouges-au-pantheon/>.

¹⁴ I. TREMBLAY, *La fiction des romancières des Lumières ou l'art de la contestation*, «Dix-huitième siècle», 48, I, 2016, pp. 387-404. H. KRIEF, *Entre terreur et vertu: et la fiction se fit politique (1789-1800)*, Paris, Champion éditeur, 2010. C. HESSE, *The Other Enlightenment. How French Women Became Modern*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2001.

¹⁵ Ch. FAURÉ, *Doléances, déclarations et pétitions, trois formes de la parole publique des femmes sous la Révolution*, «Annales historiques de la Révolution française», 344, 2006, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ahrf.5823>. 1789, *cahiers de doléances des femmes: Et autres textes*, introduction de P.-M. DUHET, préface de M. Rebérioux, Paris, Editions des femmes, 1989.

¹⁶ H. KRIEF (ed.), *Vivre libre et écrire. Anthologie des romancières de la période révolutionnaire (1789-1800)*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2005.

economic success and at the same time nurture the reflection on the female condition in revolutionary France.¹⁷

The case of de Gouges is also particularly interesting for having managed to combine in practice and in literature the defence of her idea of humanity. In particular, we have to point out how the dramatic production of Olympe de Gouges addresses the question of the equality of human beings beyond any differences of class, gender, and ethnicity.

Olympe de Gouges consciously participates in the «great aesthetic revolution of the late Enlightenment»:¹⁸ her dramatic production fits fully into the theatre reform advocated by Diderot and successfully put into practice by Louis-Sébastien Mercier, with whom the playwright shared a long friendship and the battle against the *Comédie française* and its theatrical privilege. De Gouges, who claimed to acknowledge only the language of nature, considered the theatre a tool with which to fight the despotism of the Old Regime. In agreement with Diderot's theories and Mercier's dramaturgy, in her dramas de Gouges portrayed contemporary society in order to highlight its distortions and to defend the equality of all human beings, fighting against the privileges of the aristocracy and against slavery, for which she was also acclaimed by the founder of the *Société des Amis des Noirs*, Jacques-Pierre Brissot.

1. WRITING AGAINST THE OLD REGIME: OLYMPE DE GOUGES AGAINST CLASS PRIVILEGES

The claimed equality of all human beings against the privileges of the aristocracy is probably one of the most successfully represented themes in the literature and theatre of the late Enlightenment. Starting from the 1770s, the *mésalliance*, that is a marriage between spouses of different social classes, had begun to challenge the values and hierarchical culture of the Old Regime through plays, novels, and the collection of so-called *causes célèbres*¹⁹ that were progressively gaining ground in the French publishing

¹⁷ C. MARIETTE-CLOT – D. ZANONE (eds.), *La Tradition des romans des femmes XVIII^e-XIX^e*, Honoré Champion, Paris 2012; S. VAN DIJK, *Écrits de femmes: retrouver et réinterpréter les réactions contemporaines (XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles)*, «Nouvelles Questions Féministes», XXII, 2, 2003, pp. 122-131.

¹⁸ V. FERRONE, *The Enlightenment and the Rights of Man*, translated by E. Tarantino, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2019; G. TOCCHINI, *Diderot, Rousseau and the politics of the Arts in the Enlightenment*, translated by E. Tarantino, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2023.

¹⁹ S. MAZA, *Private Lives and Public Affairs. The Causes Célèbres of Pre-Revolutionary France*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993.

market. Olympe de Gouges, who claimed to be the illegitimate daughter of Jean-Jacques Lefranc, Marquis of Pompidon, was particularly sensitive to the theme.

The first work to address the issue was her *Le mariage inattendu du Chérubin*,²⁰ first published in 1786 and placed at the beginning of her literary collection of 1788. While fully belonging to the *Figaromania*²¹ of the eighteenth century, the comedy also contains an important reflection on the recognition of illegitimate children and especially on the natural equality of human beings. As specified by de Gouges herself in the preface,²² the play has an explicit moral purpose and touches on crucial issues for eighteenth-century society.

The story takes place in Spain at the castle that once belonged to the Count of Almaviva and is now owned by Cherubino: indeed, years have passed since the marriage of Figaro and Suzanne, and Cherubino is no longer the count's head page, but has acquired the title of marquis and has become captain of the guards of the King of Spain. While Beaumarchais's audience was accustomed to the libertine attitude of the page, Olympe de Gouges's Cherubino is instead in love with the gardener Antonio's daughter, Fanchette, whose humble origins prevent her from marrying him. The first act of the comedy revolves around the social prejudice that Cherubino rails against because it impedes his marriage to Fanchette, who is instead destined by her father to marry a coarse and ignorant man.

In this comedy, the central issue is the claimed equality of human beings despite their social class. Cherubino is the first to denounce the prejudice «which harms men»,²³ while Figaro reminds the Count of the inconsistency of class privileges: «I am a man like you, and I know my rights. There is a million times more merit in having reached the position I occupy all by myself, without anyone's help. Your Excellency cannot say the same».²⁴

The social critique in the play is nonetheless significantly toned down by the tradition of Beaumarchais and the desire to abandon a caricatured representation of the Count's nobility, which is evident in the ending of

²⁰ O. DE GOUGES, *Le Mariage inattendu du Chérubin. Comédie en trois acts et prose*, in *Œuvres de Madame de Gouges*, Paris, chez Cailleau, 1788.

²¹ V. YVERNAULT, *Figaromania. Beaumarchais tricolore, de monarchies en républiques (XVIII^e-XIX^e siècle)*, Paris, Hermann, 2020.

²² DE GOUGES, *Le Mariage inattendu du Chérubin*, p. 6.

²³ «Qui fait le malheur des hommes», *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁴ «Je suis un homme comme vous, et je connois mes droits. Il y a un million de fois plus de mérite à être parvenu moi seul, sans l'aide de personne, à la place que j'occupe. Votre Excellence n'en peut pas dire autant», *ibid.*, p. 20.

the work. Instead, it is the comedies *Le philosophe corrigé, ou le cocu supposé*²⁵ and *L'homme généreux*²⁶ that are more indicative of Olympe de Gouges's struggle against class privileges in defence of the natural equality of men and women.

Unlike *Le mariage inattendu du Chérubin*, these plays are more deeply embedded in the contemporary society of the author, embracing more fully the anti-poetic style of Diderot and Mercier. *Le philosophe corrigé, ou le cocu supposé* shows a strong connection with Diderot's *Le fils naturel*.²⁷ The play revolves around a wife's desire to correct her husband's excessive philosophical rationality.

Madame de Clainville decides to deceive her husband by engaging in a clandestine relationship with him without him realizing her identity. Upon returning from a long journey and discovering that his wife has given birth to a baby girl, the protagonist fears he has been betrayed, while the audience is aware that the child is indeed his daughter. The comedy revolves around the character of the philosopher, who hesitates to make a decision regarding his wife, whom he believes to be adulterous but still feels affection for, and her daughter. The man seems to let himself be convinced by society to punish severely his adulterous wife and daughter, but when he finds himself facing the child, he is moved and, like Diderot's Dorval, decides to follow his natural instinct by welcoming the infant, and becoming her protector. Through the actions of the philosopher, de Gouges calls for reflection on the issue of fatherhood, against the mere transmission of titles and fortunes. The issue of recognizing natural children is indeed central in the biography of de Gouges herself, as she did not fail to mention in her semi-autobiographical works.²⁸ She considered herself the illegitimate daughter of Jean-Jacques Lefranc de Pompignan. This issue also featured prominently in her more strictly political commitment. In the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, de Gouges advocated surpassing the institution of marriage with a free contract between man and woman, which would allow for the recognition of children conceived even outside of the couple.

²⁵ DE GOUGES, *Le Philosophe corrigé, ou le cocu supposé. Comédie en cinq acts et prose*, in DE GOUGES 1788.

²⁶ EAD., *L'Homme généreux. Drame en cinq actes et en prose*, Paris, chez l'auteur, rue du Condé, no 5, chez Knapen et fils, 1786.

²⁷ D. DIDEROT, *Le Fils naturel, ou les Epreuves de la vertu, comédie en 5 actes et en prose. Avec l'histoire véritable de la pièce*, Amsterdam, M.M. Rey, 1757.

²⁸ DE GOUGES 1786; EAD., *Mémoire de Madame de Valmont, contre l'ingratitude et la cruauté de la famille de Flaucourt*, in DE GOUGES 1788, vol. 2.

The natural equality of all human beings and the fight against class prejudices are also central themes in the play *L'homme généreux*,²⁹ a play in five acts, published in 1786 after the failure of *Le mariage inattendu du Chérubin*. The story unfolds in Paris: the count is madly in love with the young Marianne, of humble origins, who is also admired by the formidable antagonist of the play. The issue of equality is central and is found both in the *mésalliance* represented by the Count and the humble Marianne, and in the events of de Gouges' alter ego, Madame de Valmont, whose unfortunate biographical story shows the audience the disastrous consequences of hierarchical society and class privileges.³⁰ The play concludes with the count's declaration of love for Marianne, during which it is the Count himself who kneels at the feet of the young woman, defying all prejudices and vain honours and paying homage to genuine virtue. The humility of the count and the public recognition of the virtues of Madame de Valmont's virtues, who had been rejected by her own family as an adulterous daughter, clearly demonstrate the inconsistency of class prejudices, fought against by Olympe de Gouges from the beginning of her literary career.

2. ZAMORE AND MIRZA, SLAVES ON STAGE

The contested play *Zamore et Mirza ou l'heureux naufrage*³¹ clearly shows the commitment of de Gouges in the battle against social injustices, supporting the rights of minorities.

It is a play that combines reflection on the problems of French society, such as the recognition of illegitimate children and the *mésalliance*, discussed above, with the theme of slavery and the struggle for the recognition of the equality of all human beings. The issue of slavery was undoubtedly one of the two main subjects of the politicisation of literature, along with the fight

²⁹ DE GOUGES 1786.

³⁰ In the monologue, Madame de Valmont underscores the injustice of her situation: «Victim of prejudice, my father forgot me at the cradle, and time completed the weakening of his paternal tenderness. My brother possesses his fortune, his name; all I have left of this great man, who gave us both life, is the elevation of his soul and a few sparks of his genius», de GOUGES, *L'homme généreux*, p. 22.

³¹ Three editions of the work are available: *Zamore et Mirza, ou l'heureux naufrage*, published in the collection *Oeuvres de Madame de Gouges* in 1788; *L'esclavage des Nègres, ou l'heureux naufrage*, performed at the *Comédie Française* in December 1789, which remained unpublished; and *L'esclavage des Noirs, ou l'heureux naufrage*, published in 1792. For a specific analysis of the text of the version performed in the theatre and for a comparison among the three editions, please refer to O. DE GOUGES, *L'esclavage des Nègres. Version inédite du 28 décembre 1789, étude et présentation de S. Chalaye – J. Razgonnikoff*, Paris, L'Harmattan Autrement mêmes, 2006.



against the old judicial regime, but, as Chalaye and Razgonnikoff³² have shown, with Olympe de Gouges slaves were represented on stage for the first time, abandoning the usual attire of the exotic domestic or the noble savage. De Gouges supported the proposal for the gradual abolition of slavery supported by the *Société des amis des noirs*, which, in fact, on two occasions, applauded the literary and political commitment of the playwright from Montauban.³³

Among Brissot's personal papers, deposited in the national Archives in Paris, it is by no chance that we find an unpublished eulogy of de Gouges, recognised first of all for having devoted her first literary endeavours to those people whom the French antislavery movement was unable to wrest from slavery and, in the second place, for having known how to attract the attention of the public to the theme by creating a touching portrayal of the condition of those who lived in the colonies.³⁴

De Gouges mentioned on several occasions the attempts at sabotage carried out against her play:³⁵ in the preface to *Le philosophe corrigé*, she lamented that the actors had refused to paint their faces black to increase the mimetic effect and the audience's empathy towards the sad fate of the enchained humanity overseas. The play was heavily contested because it staged a couple of enslaved people fleeing from the arrest warrant issued against them for killing the master's intendant. Zamore, in fact, had killed the governor's collaborator to defend Mirza from an attempted rape. It should be remembered that the *Code noir*, which regulated life in the French colonies, threatened with the death penalty any slave who even simply injured a French person.³⁶ However, in the last act of the play Zamore and Mirza are pardoned by the governor because, during their escape, they

³² DE GOUGES, *L'esclavage des Nègres. Version inédite du 28 décembre 1789, étude et présentation* de S. Chalaye – J. Razgonnikoff.

³³ [CONDORCET], *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres. Par M. Schwartz, pasteur du Saint-Evangile à Bienne, membre de la Société économique de B...*, Neuchâtel 1781. M. DORIGNY – B. GAINOT, *La Société des Amis des Noirs. Contribution à l'histoire de l'abolition de l'esclavage*, Paris, Editions Unesco, 1998.

³⁴ *Archives Nationales de France* 446 AP-15, folio 15.

³⁵ Regarding the clash with the *Comédie Française*, see T. WYSŁOOCKI, *Olympe de Gouges à la Comédie-Française: un naufrage dramatique*, «Fabula. Théâtre et scandale», I, 2018, <http://www.fabula.org/colloques/document5884.php>. For a more precise analysis of the work and its staging see V. ALTOPIEDI, *La rivoluzione incompiuta di Olympe de Gouges. I diritti della donna dai Lumi alla ghigliottina*, Rome, Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2023, pp. 125-145.

³⁶ P. DELPIANO, *La schiavitù in età moderna*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009, p. 44. For further analysis, cf. G. PATISSO, *Codici neri. La legislazione schiavista nelle colonie d'oltremare (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, Rome, Carocci, 2019; J.-F. SCHAUB – S. SEBASTIANI, *Race et histoire dans les sociétés occidentales (XV-XVIII siècle)*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2021.

had saved the young woman who turns out to be the natural child of the Frenchman in charge of the colony.

There are several passages in which de Gouges emphasises the humanity of black slaves: in the first act, Zamore explains to his companion, who in her innocence represents the imprint of uncorrupted nature, the reason for European dominance in the colonies:

This difference is very insignificant; it only exists in color, but the advantages they have over us are immense. Art has placed them above nature; education has made them into gods, while we remain mere mortals. They use us in these climates as they use animals in theirs. They came to our lands, seized our wealth, and made slaves of us as a reward for the riches they have taken from us; it is our own fields they harvest, and these harvests are watered by our sweat and tears.³⁷

In the 1788 version, the play concludes with the celebrations for the wedding of Zamore and Mirza, followed by a significant postface entitled *Réflexions sur les hommes nègres*, which deliberately echoes the title of Condorcet's anonymous anti-slavery pamphlet.³⁸ In these pages the author invites us to reflect on the moral and political theme of slavery, warning the colonists of the danger of revolts overseas. When the disorders erupted in Santo Domingo and de Gouges was accused of having incited the revolt with her drama, she responded by modifying the play and urging the slaves to peace, embracing the logic of gradual and progressive emancipation supported by the *Société des Amis des Noirs*.³⁹

3. A LIFE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The most important and heartfelt battle of Olympe de Gouges is undoubtedly that for the recognition of women's rights. Even before writing her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*, de Gouges

³⁷ «Cette différence est bien peu de chose, elle n'existe que dans la couleur; mais les avantages qu'ils ont sur nous sont immenses. L'art les a mis au-dessus de la nature; l'instruction en a fait des Dieux, et nous ne sommes que des hommes. Ils se servent de nous dans ces climats comme il se servent des animaux dans les leurs. Ils sont venus chez nous, se sont emparés de nos terres, de nos fortunes, et nous ont fait esclaves pour récompense des richesses qu'ils nous ont ravies; ce sont nos propres champs qu'ils moissonnent, et ces moissons sont arrosées de nos sueurs et de nos larmes», DE GOUGES, *Zamore et Mirza, ou l'heureux naufrage*, p. 6.

³⁸ CONDORCET 1781.

³⁹ On the limits of slave representation in the play see L. MILAZZO, *Olympe a Saint-Domingue. Note critiche a partire da L'Esclavage des Noirs*, in T. CASADEI – L. MILAZZO (eds.), *Un dialogo su Olympe de Gouges*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2021, pp. 101-124.

used her plays to highlight the limits of French society and to envisage a reform plan that would guarantee French women their rights. Then in her plays, like *Zamore et Mirza ou l'heureux naufrage*, or *Le mariage inattendu du Chérubin*, de Gouges denounced racist and aristocratic privileges, stating that there were no rights stronger than those of nature; at the same time, she protested against the exclusion of women from any processes of economic and social emancipation that were open, even in the Old Regime society, to men.

Furthermore, in *Le bonheur primitif de l'homme*,⁴⁰ a work inspired by Rousseau, the playwright presented her project for the regeneration of France through the formation of a «second French theatre or National Theatre»⁴¹ reserved for women. In de Gouges' opinion, women's theatre would replace the official one of the *Comédie française*.

Trusting in the touching effect that theatre could guarantee, de Gouges represented on the stage women who, through their actions, demolished those same prejudices of fickleness and cowardice which the revolutionaries themselves had applied by excluding more than half of the population from the enjoyment of citizenship rights. De Gouges painted a different society from the contemporary one: a society in which divorce was established, in which the rights of natural children were guaranteed, in which a woman like Ninon de Lenclos constituted a model for all French women for her freedom and independence of judgement.

*Molière chez Ninon ou le siècle des grands hommes*⁴² is, in fact, a particularly evocative play in promoting the representation of women as subjects bearing rights. The play represents the famous seventeenth-century female poet and courtesan Ninon de Lenclos. In this work de Gouges fights «the power and the prejudices of society» against intellectual women.

Unlike what the title might suggest, the protagonist of the play is Ninon, and Molière is simply her confidant, as the actors of the *Comédie française* quickly and provocatively pointed out refusing to act in the work. The play was never staged in a theatre but was published as a printed work in 1788. The intelligence, kindness, and courage of the woman are the common threads running through the play, which celebrates Ninon de Lenclos as a role model for women. It was Molière himself who invited the women of France to imitate her.

⁴⁰ O. DE GOUGES, *Le bonheur primitif de l'homme, ou les rêveries patriotiques*, Paris, chez Royer, chez Bailly, 1789.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴² O. DE GOUGES, *Molière chez Ninon ou le siècle des grands hommes*, Paris, chez Cailleau, 1788.

The play relies entirely on the contrast between the prejudices regarding Ninon de Lenclos, behind which it is not difficult to recognise the profile of a free woman dedicated to writing like Olympe de Gouges, and the true identity of the poet. The character of Ninon de Lenclos portrayed by Olympe de Gouges is a woman faithful to her promises, careful in managing her assets and witty in responding to the constant provocations that men of dubious esteem aim at her. The praise of the woman is in fact constructed by characters from different classes who, knowing the true qualities of the courtesan, reject the negative judgment of French society. The woman is exalted by her maid and by Molière, who turns to her «enlightened genius» («*génie éclairé*») and «delicate taste» to paint the character of the Misanthrope in love that he intends to stage; finally, she is greeted by Queen Christina of Sweden who, amazed by Ninon's intelligence and in admiration of «the qualities that put her above her sex»,⁴³ asks the woman to accompany her on her journey to Rome.

The lead story is accompanied by a second one, destined to seal the fate of Ninon de Lenclos. A young girl named Olimpe arrives at Ninon's home and asks Molière to be admitted to his theatre company because she intends to ruin her own reputation in order to escape the marriage arranged by her father. Ninon agrees to hide the girl but at the same time asks Molière to arrange a meeting with the girl's father to convince him not to hinder the wishes of her daughter, condemning her to an unhappy life. The play ends with an unexpected acknowledgment that not only allows the young Olimpe to marry her true beloved, who turns out to be the son of Ninon de Lenclos herself, but also to bring to the scene themes which were both particularly dear to de Gouges and significant for eighteenth-century society, such as the harsh criticism of arranged marriages and the abolition of the differences between the rights of legitimate and illegitimate children (we must not forget that de Gouges herself claimed to be the illegitimate daughter of the marquis Lefranc de Pompignan). Ninon de Lenclos's discussion with Olimpe's father, who refuses to accept that his daughter should marry a natural child, composes a heartfelt eulogy of education against the privileges of birth: «what are birth and titles to the man who does not uphold their honor? The first man in society is the estimable man who has no other principles than those of well-born souls, and whose sentiment and education have raised above the vulgar».⁴⁴ At the end Ninon decides to retire to a convent

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

denouncing the enormous disparity of conditions between men and women in eighteenth-century society:

My natural disposition towards reflection has made me painfully aware of the unequal sharing of qualities that we have agreed to require of the two sexes. I feel its injustice, and cannot sustain it. I see that we have been charged of what is most frivolous, and that men have reserved the right to some essential qualities. From this moment, I become a man.⁴⁵

The most significant of Olympe de Gouges's works for analysing the politicisation of literature and the battle for rights through literature is the Oriental story *Le prince philosophe*.⁴⁶

Le prince philosophe, published in Paris in 1792, deals with the debate sparked by the Revolution on the political rights of women. Modelling her work on Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, de Gouge describes the Oriental kingdom of Siam in order to speak the truth about the kingdom of France. To quote the most striking example, at a time when de Gouges was siding with Louis XVI against the trial in the Convention, putting herself forward to defend him and stating that there should be no other consequences than his deposition, in her story she depicted how, after leaving his crown to his son, the philosopher prince goes back to living as a private citizen in the countryside, just as de Gouges requested Louis Capet should be allowed to do. More than anything, the novel is important for its reflection on the rights of women: Queen Idamée, wife of the philosopher prince, wants to lift women from the state of idleness in which they find themselves, crushed under the weight of the law of the strongest. The queen expresses the wish that «in future centuries, the names of women be placed at the level of those of the greatest men»;⁴⁷ she wants them to cultivate letters and the arts, and to be suitable to take their place in the courts, in litigation, in the administration of matters of taste. Persuaded by his wife of the usefulness of publicly employing women's capacities in all fields, and diminishing at the same time the power which they despotically exercised in secret (according to rhetoric typical of the eighteenth-century, also criticised by Mary Wollstonecraft), the philosopher prince agrees to organise a public debate around three questions:

The first question was to know if we must give young ladies an education stronger than their constitution; the second was to decide whether women would

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁴⁶ DE GOUGES, *Le prince philosophe, conte oriental*, 2 vols., Paris, Indigo, 1995 [1792].

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 10-11.

have enough courage and strength of spirit to be inflexible and constant in their opinion; finally, the third, whether, at certain turning points of women's experience, such as when they become of marriageable age, or when they become mothers, they do not ask to be spared and if this sparing them is not incompatible with the duties that men are obliged to fulfil.⁴⁸

The first argument concerning the theme of education is won by a girl who, educated to physical exercise from a very young age, beats her opponent. King Almondin is forced to admit that «education makes all the difference» but at the same time he states that it would be too dangerous to educate all girls like the little horsewoman. The second question, concerning the courage and strength of spirit necessary to be inflexible and constant in one's opinion, is discussed by two twenty-five year olds of either sex: the contest is won this time by the man. Chance dictates that a pair of lovers are chosen for the debate, and the woman is unable to resist the homage of the man who loves her; it is recognised therefore that women are weaker than men in love. The third question, debated by a pair of elderly subjects, concerns women's independence of judgement: while the old man believes that «women, in their own words, are only well placed in their own homes» as they do not have «either enough constancy, ability, or composure to conduct important affairs»,⁴⁹ his adversary denies women's inadequacy, stating on the contrary that female charm could serve as a precious advantage in diplomatic affairs. At the end of the three trials, the king allows Queen Idamée to establish a female academy in order to judge the cases that involve women. He leaves to Idamée the task of choosing the president, councillors, lawyers, and procurators.

This is the only concession that the king allows, however, because the queen's plan fails with the queen herself, when she is discovered betraying her husband with a functionary of the kingdom. Many people have wondered why de Gouges made the plan fail because, in the fiction of the story, it would have guaranteed the women of Siam the same opportunities as men: according to Huguette Krief,⁵⁰ the triumph of passion over rationality, and hence the queen's betrayal, can be explained by the Oriental setting; but, more generally, we can maintain that it is the umpteenth confirmation of the negative effects of the exclusion of women from political power on the public, but also private, sphere. Queen Idamée ends up betraying her husband because she has to exercise her power secretly and surreptitiously.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁵⁰ KRIEF 2010.

Despite the conclusion, it cannot be denied that de Gouges' goal in this novel is to demonstrate that women can play a public role along with men and that they have the same rights as their husbands, fathers, and brothers. In this regard we must not forget that the questions debated in the 'battle between the sexes' portrayed by de Gouges (education, independence of judgement, sensibility) were central not only to the debate on the female condition in the eighteenth century but also particularly so to the revolutionary decade.

The criticism of arranged marriages, the struggle to erase the differences between natural and legitimate children, and the denunciation of sexual assault, which de Gouges refused to define through the lexicon of seduction, clearly show how much the dramatic production of the thinker of Montauban, with its struggle against the canon of the Old Regime, paved the way for her further political activity and the claim of natural equality for men and women.

The struggle against female inferiority did not remain something theoretical but was witnessed first-hand by de Gouges from the dawn of the French Revolution; in fact, the playwright went beyond the claim to a literary ambition equal to the male one, which already constituted a significant transgression of the private space reserved for women, as she supported the need and the usefulness of accepting the contribution that all citizens – both men and women – could offer to the Revolution. With the convocation of the Estates General and the opening of the public space determined by the de facto abolition of royal censure through the appeal to the wise men of the king, de Gouges found in political writing a new tool to participate in the public debate. Her political itinerary followed a moderate trajectory close to the Brissottin front; but, even more, it is important to underline the constant calls for the opportunity to involve women in the political (and social) regeneration of France.

De Gouges wanted to demonstrate with her own example that women could exercise the right of citizenship on an equal footing with their husbands, fathers, and brothers. Similarly to Condorcet, who in 1790 had shown that there were no reasons to exclude female citizens from the enjoyment of the right to vote,⁵¹ de Gouges, in her *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*⁵² of September 1791, exhorted women to seek their own emancipation. At the same time, she denounced the discriminatory attitude of the deputies that had deprived the term 'homme' of its hyperonymic

⁵¹ CONDORCET, *Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité*, in *Œuvres*, edited by A. O'Connor and F. Arago, Paris, Didot Frères, 1847, vol. X, pp. 121-130.

⁵² DE GOUGES 1791.

nature and effectively barred the French from the enjoyment of those rights solemnly proclaimed on 26th August 1789. The vindication of women's rights was accompanied by the demonstration of the natural equality of men and women, which for de Gouges manifested itself in the capacity of women to play a public role like their fathers or husbands.

As determined by the tenth article of her declaration,⁵³ having the right to mount the scaffold, women must also have the right to mount the speaker's rostrum. With perseverance, the playwright fought to reclaim the rights of citizenship of women by demonstrating that, just like men, women could play a public role and sacrifice their own lives for their country. Her political commitment did not fail her, in fact, not even when her own life was threatened. When she was arrested in July 1793, she did not back down; indeed, she continued to defend and claim her role as a patriotic author.

The revolution of the rights of women claimed by de Gouges was, as we know, brutally interrupted by the French Revolution. Three days before de Gouges climbed the scaffold in the square of the Revolution, the same one trodden by Louis XVI ten months before, the Convention decreed the closure of all political clubs attended by women only. The Amar decree, caused by the so-called war of the cockades (when the club of the citizens republican women wanted to make the women of the Les Halles market wear the symbol of citizenship), showed a clear break in the history of women's participation in the Revolution. A break that had been anticipated by the departure of all women from the French army, and therefore from the possibility of getting weapons – and so to boast one of the most significant attributes of citizenship – and it was followed by the ban on gathering in greater numbers than five in May 1795 and on participating as an audience in the French assemblies, exercising what could be defined as passive citizenship. But the real closure of this movement was undoubtedly the Napoleonic code of 1804, which, by sanctioning the return of marital and paternal power, determined a radical change in the civil condition of women.

⁵³ «No one should be disturbed for his fundamental opinions; woman has the right to mount the scaffold, so she should have the right equally to mount the rostrum, provided that these manifestations do not trouble public order as established by law».

Casa Editrice
Leo S. Olschki
Firenze



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GUGLIELMO GABBIADINI

WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT «UNDER THE TREE
OF GERNIKA». CONSTITUTIONAL DISCOURSE,
LITERARY ANTHROPOLOGY AND ENLIGHTENMENT
LEGACY IN THE TIME OF THE CONSULATE*

1. PRELIMINARY REMARKS ON THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Year VIII of the First French Republic was a time of major upheavals and profound change. On 9 November 1799 (18 Brumaire), Napoleon's *coup d'état* led, as well known, to a general restructuring of the French revolutionary institutions. This resulted, barely a month later, in a new constitution which entrusted him with the role of First Consul.¹ As he wished, the new constitution was «short and obscure».² It consisted of ninety-five articles and was the first to not have a Declaration of Rights (and Duties). In this way it broke with what was beginning to be an important French constitutional tradition.

* This paper is a revised version of two earlier drafts presented at the workshop *Enlightenment Legacy. The Rights of Man in a Global Perspective* held at the Interdisciplinary Centre for Enlightenment Studies of the University Halle-Wittenberg on 17 June 2022, organised by Prof. Elisabeth Décultot, Prof. Vincenzo Ferrone, and Dr Laura Fornara, and at the postdoctoral symposium *Legacies of Enlightenment* held at New College, University of Oxford, on 21-22 June 2023, organised by Prof. Nino Luraghi and Prof. Nicholas Cronk. I wish to express my thanks to the organisers for their hospitality and inspiring comments. I am particularly thankful to Prof. Vincenzo Ferrone, who invited me, for his generous support and helpful suggestions. To Prof. Elena Agazzi I owe my warmest thanks for her valuable advice and unrelenting encouragement. To Mr Christopher Baumann and Mrs Jillian Smith I send my gratitude for checking my translations and providing much needed suggestions on style. Many thanks to the Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura.

¹ D. RICHEL, *Coups d'État*, in F. FURET – M. OZOUF (eds.), *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*, Paris, Flammarion 1988, pp. 34-41. This constitutional text, mainly written by Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1748-1836) for Bonaparte and voted in the plebiscite of Nivôse (December 1799 – January 1800), was modified by the Constitutions of the Years X and XII in order to strengthen a power which eventually became imperial.

² D. LINOTTE, *Les constitutions françaises*, Paris, MA Éditions, 1985, pp. 20-23.

The three provisional Consuls (Napoleon Bonaparte, Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, Roger Ducos) kept announcing all the way through that their new constitution would put an end to the governmental uncertainty of the *Directoire* years. Furthermore, the new constitution would purportedly safeguard «the rights of citizens and the interests of the State»: the «sacred rights of property, equality, and liberty» were solemnly proclaimed, but there was no real question of equality or freedom in the content of the constitutional text.³ In fact, Napoleon used repression and centralisation to eradicate the counterrevolution with the same ferocity as the terrorist government. Yet, unlike the Jacobins, he used it to benefit the wealthy classes: the financial situation was restored by subjecting the popular masses to indirect taxation and slavery was reintroduced in the colonies in 1802. Any insurrection whatsoever was crushingly defeated and centralised order was imposed by jaw-dropping violence.⁴

Despite this gloomy scenario, it has been effectively argued that the «fundamental question of how to protect the rights of man as an individual remained at the core of the political thought of the Enlightenment throughout Europe».⁵ Among those who «never gave up on the idea of the *universal, inalienable and imprescriptible* character of the rights of the individual»⁶ was Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), who played an outstanding role as an observer and commentator. A Prussian freeman, he first of all devoted himself to a life of study and public service. As an esteemed representative of German-speaking neo-humanist movement around 1800,⁷ Humboldt searched «for the original traits of the *Humanität* of modern man», stressing the relevance of *Bildung* «in the project of emancipation that would lead to a modern society of citizens who are all free and equal before the law».⁸

For those who, like Humboldt, endeavoured to keep the legacy of the Enlightenment alive, new challenges were appearing on the horizon,

³ LINOTTE 1985, p. 22.

⁴ P. MCPHEE, *Liberty or Death. The French Revolution*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2017, p. 339.

⁵ V. FERRONE, *The Legacy of the Enlightenment: The Rights of the Individual and the Rights of the Community*, in V. FERRONE – V. ALTOPIEDI – A. MAURINI – G. GRIECO (eds.), *Enlightenment Legacy: The Rights of Man in a Global Perspective*, Turin, Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura della Compagnia di San Paolo, 2022, pp. 7-17: 16.

⁶ FERRONE 2022, p. 16.

⁷ T. BERGER, *Der Humanitätsgedanke in der Literatur der deutschen Spätaufklärung*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008, pp. 379-401.

⁸ FERRONE 2022, p. 16.

such as the constitutional issues posed by «nations that had acquired new strength through the revolutionary political principle of popular sovereignty against the divine right of kings; or the new nation-states as opposed to the old multi-ethnicity continental empires».⁹ To take part in the constitutional discourse of the time was arguably the best way to nourish the Enlightenment language of rights and rekindle their legacy in hard times.¹⁰ Therefore, the Humboldtian experience seems to be particularly interesting as it opens up a perspective on the legacy of the Enlightenment in the aftermath of the French Revolution that still deserves attention.

2. WILHELM VON HUMBOLDT'S VIEWPOINT

After the Peace of Basel in 1795 Prussia was taken into neutrality until 1806.¹¹ Throughout this decade, which broadly coincides with the heyday of Weimar Classicism,¹² many German observers kept on sharing the common view that the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire, better than any other, could safeguard the rights of the individuals preserving the precarious balance between individuals and collective entities.¹³ «Here», it was confidently claimed, «the individual has lost less of his natural freedom, less of his political freedom than anywhere else and none of his civil freedom».¹⁴

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. On Humboldt's viewpoint: J. ROUSSEAU, *La place de la nation dans la théorie linguistique de Humboldt*, in U. TINTEMANN – J. TRABANT (eds.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt: Universalität und Individualität*, München, Fink, 2012, pp. 209-234.

¹⁰ D. EDELSTEIN, *A Hidden Legacy: Enlightenment Rights Talk, Nineteenth-Century Constitutions, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, in FERRONE – ALTOPIEDI – MAURINI – GRIECO (eds.) 2022, pp. 29-39. See R. COBB, *Reactions to the French Revolution*, London-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1972, pp. 1-18.

¹¹ T.C.W. BLANNING, *The French Revolutionary Wars 1787-1802*, London, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 128-136. On Prussia: C.F. ROMAN, *The revolutionary and Napoleonic wars in the Prussian political imaginary: a politico-anthropological genealogy of the 'special' German-French relations*, «Journal of International Relations and Development», XXI, 2018, pp. 322-345. After the summer of 1794 it became clear that the war against France could not be won quickly, so Prussia and Spain entered into negotiations to abandon the first anti-French coalition, and in fact signed separate peace treaties the following year.

¹² See G. BAIONI, *Goethe. Classicismo e Rivoluzione*, Turin, Einaudi, 1998, pp. 102-117 and H.-J. SCHINGS, *Klassik in Zeiten der Revolution*, Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2017, p. 7.

¹³ J. WHALEY, *Germany and the Holy Roman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013, vol. 2, pp. 592-601.

¹⁴ This statement made by Franz Wilhelm von Spiegel (1753-1815) in 1789 is quoted from J. WHALEY, *The Holy Roman Empire. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 117.

It was a widespread opinion even within the ranks of writers in the very last years of the eighteenth century that, as Christoph Martin Wieland (1733-1813) put it, «despite its undeniable shortcomings and failings, the present constitution of the German Reich is on the whole endlessly more conducive to inner peace and welfare of the nation and more appropriate to its character and the level of culture upon which it rests».¹⁵

At the latest after the turning point of 1799, the question of civil liberty, understood as a set of fundamental human rights that a free state must claim to be upholding, came to occupy a remarkably central place in Humboldt's reflections. For him, who had always been concerned with the limits to be placed on state action and government interference,¹⁶ the concept of liberty is the core concept about the worth and dignity of the individual. If anything, Humboldt seems particularly interested in studying the compatibility of civil liberty with regulated forms of monarchical government. Any understanding of what it means for an individual citizen to possess or lose their liberty must be embedded, he urges, within an account of what it means for a civil association to be free.¹⁷

All the more significant is then a letter that Humboldt sent to his father-in-law on 22 April 1800,¹⁸ when he and his wife Caroline had just completed a stimulating trip to Spain and returned to Paris, the city where the Humboldts had decided to stay for a few months for study and research purposes.¹⁹ Referring to the recent events of Brumaire, Wilhelm wrote:

¹⁵ WHALEY 2013, p. 600.

¹⁶ This is particularly evident if we consider Humboldt's early essay entitled *Ideen zu einem Versuch die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen* (Ideas for an attempt to determine the limits of state action), which was largely written around 1792, but published in full posthumously no sooner than 1851. A few parts of it had circulated in the form of private manuscripts and journal articles in the early 1790s. See W. VON HUMBOLDT, *The Limits of State Action*, edited and translated from the German with an introduction and notes by J.W. Burrow, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969. See also M. LALATTA COSTERBOSA, *Prefazione*, in W. VON HUMBOLDT, *Stato e società. Scritti sulla libertà*, Milan, Edizioni Società Aperta, 2023, pp. I-XII.

¹⁷ F. KNOPPER, *Constitution et constitutionnalité selon le jeune W. von Humboldt: Les constitutions politiques, un «mal nécessaire»?», in O. AGARD – F. LARTILLOT (eds.), *Le libéralisme de Wilhelm von Humboldt. Autour de l'Essai sur les limites de l'action de l'État*, Paris, Harmattan, 2015, pp. 189-207. F. TESSITORE, *I fondamenti della filosofia politica di Humboldt*, con un saggio di C. Cesa, Naples, Liguori, 2013², pp. 47-56.*

¹⁸ Humboldt's letters addressed to his wife's family in the period 1799-1800 have been published in: *Gabriele von Bülow, Tochter Wilhelm von Humboldts. Ein Lebensbild. Aus den Familienpapieren Wilhelm von Humboldts und seiner Kinder 1791-1887*, Berlin, Mittler, 1896⁷, pp. 1-25: 16-18.

¹⁹ É. BEYER, *Le journal parisien de Wilhelm von Humboldt (1797-1799) ou la mise à l'épreuve de son anthropologie comparée*, in B. SAVOY – D. BLANKENSTEIN (eds.), *Les frères Humboldt, l'Europe de l'Esprit*, Paris, PSL Research University, Jean-Pierre de Monza, 2014, pp. 39-47. See G. IZTUETA,

I encountered France not only with a different constitution, but also in a very different form. [...] Since the 18 Brumaire [...] industry and everything that goes with it has been very much at a standstill. There is a lack of money and credit. Last year's upheavals have paralysed everything. Until peace is reached, it will be impossible to think of a real revival of domestic industriousness, no matter how actively the government works towards it.²⁰

The industriousness of the people is for Humboldt an eloquent sign of the state a political organisation is in. It is no coincidence that he emphasises this very aspect of contemporary history after having wandered through western France and Spain and, in particular, after meeting the Basque communities for the first time in 1799. At that time, Humboldt was chiefly engaged in the exercise of elucidating the multi-faceted notion of civil liberty and the ways in which the value of civil liberty could be upheld within the frame of modern constitutional systems. In Humboldt's eyes, the industriousness of the Basque communities was a direct consequence of the civil liberty they had traditionally been enjoying and which was jealously guarded in the texts of their local constitutions. As Humboldt would put it a few years later (1812), announcing a monograph entirely devoted to the Basques and their language, the study of those communities was not due to mere curiosity, but was expected to significantly contribute as a case in point to furthering reflection upon constitutional issues of epochal significance:

it is [...] interesting in its own right to transfer oneself right into the middle of an industrious nation full of courage and talent, one that inhabits the north of a southern country and the mountains of a coast, thus likewise mountain and sea folk. Moreover, this nation's character unites a multitude of traits that one encounters one at a time, a nation that when I came to see it still had a free constitution and a federal state divided into many small localities yet again divided

El viajero Wilhelm von Humboldt y sus sucesores: caracterización cultural del país vasco en las descripciones de viaje del siglo XIX, in B. RAPOSO FERNÁNDEZ – I. GARCÍA WISTÄDT (eds.), *Viajes y viajeros entre ficción y realidad*, València, Univer. De València, 2009, pp. 93-105 and W.L. BERNECKER, *Der Blick deutscher Reisender des 19. Jahrhunderts auf das Baskenland: ein etwas 'anderes' Spanien*, in B. RAPOSO – W.L. BERNECKER (eds.), *Spanische Städte und Landschaften in der deutschen (Reise) literatur*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang, 2017, pp. 31-48.

²⁰ Gabriele von Bülow 1896, p. 17. Original: «Frankreich habe ich nicht nur mit einer anderen Konstitution, sondern überhaupt in durchaus verschiedener Gestalt angetroffen. [...] Seit dem 18. Brumaire [...] stockt Industrie und Alles, was dahin gehört, noch sehr, und es fehlt an Geld und Kredit. Die Schläge des vorigen Jahres haben Alles zu sehr gelähmt, und vor der Schließung des Friedens ist an ein eigentliches Aufleben des inneren Fleißes nicht zu denken, so thätig auch das Gouvernement darauf hinarbeitet» (in this and all subsequent quotations from Humboldt's pieces of prose, translations are mine unless otherwise stated).

according to individual local customs. In this way, they often reminded me of the small free states in ancient Greece.²¹

For Humboldt, the Basques are a living example of a polycentric ‘free state’ (he employs the term *Freistaat*) organised on a federal-type constitutional basis that maintains its traditional autonomy and independence within a monarchical regime. The Basque communities maintain unity in diversity and appear in Humboldt’s eyes as a political laboratory of ideas to be recovered and kept in mind. The Basque country, to put it in other words, «was an exotic world in familiar surroundings; what was quite different was within easy reach».²² So let us now turn to the origins and the intellectual motives of this encounter.

3. HUMBOLDT’S ENCOUNTER WITH THE BASQUES

In September 1799 we find the Humboldt family on their way from Paris over the Pyrenees to Madrid. The desire to get to know a more southerly environment was strong. Italy, although an extremely desirable destination for the Humboldts, was not eligible due to the upheavals of the war linked to Napoleon’s Italian campaigns. Spain appeared as an equally attractive alternative, so a journey took place between the end of 1799 and the very first months of 1800. Caroline von Dacheröden (1766-1829), Humboldt’s wife, wrote enthusiastic letters to her father and other rela-

²¹ W. VON HUMBOLDT, *Announcement of a Treatise on the Basque Language and Nation, Amid an Outline of the Perspective and Content of the Same*, in ID., *Selected Basque Writings*, with an Introduction by I. Zabaleta Gorrotxategi, translated by A. Corcoran, Reno, Center for Basque Studies, University of Nevada, 2013, pp. 165-174 (p. 169, slightly modified). Original: «es ist [...] an sich interessant, sich in die Mitte einer emsigen muth- und talentvollen Nation zu versetzen, die den Norden eines südlichen Landes, und Gebirge an einer Küste bewohnt, mithin zugleich Berg- und Seevolk ist, und vieles in ihrem Charakter vereinigt, was man sonst nur einzeln antrifft, die ferner zu der Zeit, als ich sie sah, noch eine freie Verfassung besaß, einen in viele kleine, wieder durch einzelne Localgebräuche getrennte Ortschaften getheilten Föderativstaat bildete, und so durch Lage, Verfassung und Lebendigkeit des Charakters mich nicht selten an sie kleinen Freistaaten des alten Griechenlands erinnerte», in ID., *Schriften zur Anthropologie der Basken*, mit einer Einleitung und Kommentar hrsg. von Bernhard Hurch unter editorischer Mitarbeit von D. El Zarka, Paderborn [et al.], Schöningh, 2010, pp. 49-57 (p. 53). On Humboldt’s linguistic project: J. TRABANT, *Weltansichten. Wilhelm von Humboldts Sprachprojekt*, München, Fink, 2012, pp. 94-97.

²² L. MICHELENA, *Guillaume de Humboldt et la Langue Basque*, in L. HEILMANN (ed.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt nella cultura contemporanea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1976, pp. 113-131 (p. 115, «C’était un monde exotique dans un environnement familial; ce qui était tout autre se trouvait à portée de la main»). See I. ZABALETA GORROTXATEGI, *Wilhelm von Humboldt and the Basques*, in HUMBOLDT 2013, pp. IX-XLIII: XI-XIII.

tives about their Spanish journey, which, after a longer stay in Madrid, took them to Cadiz, Seville, Valencia, Barcelona and then back to Paris via the Pyrenees. For the first time on the way to Madrid, Humboldt encountered the Basque communities straddling France and Spain. It was indeed a brief encounter, nonetheless destined to leave a lasting mark on his thinking for decades to come.

Once returned to Paris in early 1800, Humboldt immersed himself in language studies. After the Spanish journey, his interest in the Basque language and cultural history came to the fore. Yet, however rich the research material in the Parisian libraries could be, Humboldt still felt the need to go and search for the remains of oral traditions and political customs in the Basque country itself. This is the main reason why he crossed the Pyrenees once again in April 1801 in order to spend some weeks in the Basque countries. In the meantime, the Humboldt family had grown. Caroline decided to remain in Paris with the children whereas Humboldt embarked on this second journey with a Hamburg merchant, Georg Wilhelm Bokelmann (1779-1847), a family friend who was on his way from Paris to Cadiz. Together they travelled through the French Basque territory of Lapurdi, visiting Bayonne and St. Jean de Luz. Once in the Spanish Basque Country, the two companions separated: Bokelmann continued on to Castile, while Humboldt first explored several locations in three Spanish Basque provinces (Gipuzkoa, Araba, Bizkaia).²³ In the last week of May, he travelled through Nafarroa and returned to France where he visited the Basque provinces of Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa. He then headed again for the coastal towns of St. Jean de Luz and Bayonne, and finally returned to Paris in mid-June 1801 after some two months of intense and exciting anthropological fieldwork.

Humboldt's second «Basque experience», as he called it, was carefully prepared in every detail, not only with regard to logistical matters, but especially with regard to the study of the language, history and constitution of the territories that interested him so much. From the very beginning, Humboldt's interest in the Basques combined intellectual curiosity, a spirit of anthropological adventure, and a gift for literary expression inherited from Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803).²⁴ In Paris, it was above all Dominique-Joseph Garat (1749-1833) who played a key role in his preparations. Basque

²³ For Basque place names I follow the criteria presented *ibid.*, p. vii.

²⁴ E. AGAZZI, *L'Illuminismo di Herder. Dal problema dell'essere alla scoperta dell'esistente*, in J.G. HERDER, *Saggi del primo periodo (1767-1781)*, edited by E. Agazzi and G. Gabbiadini, Milan, Bompiani, 2023, pp. 11-30.

by origin, Garat was a well-known figure at the time for several reasons.²⁵ As a journalist, he had been for many years a contributor to influential newspapers, including the «Journal de Paris» and the «Mercure de France». For a short time, he taught philosophy at the *Ecole Normale* in Paris and was a member or collaborator of several scientific academies. But it was especially in the realm of politics that Garat exercised the most remarkable influence. As early as 1789 he was elected member of the Estates General where he represented the Basque territory of Lapurdi, his homeland.

A friend of Robespierre but distrustful of all forms of religious thought, Garat later became Minister of Justice under Danton and a member of the National Assembly. It can be said with some certainty that he represented the political voice of the Basque territories at the centre of Parisian power. Napoleon himself held him in high regard: he entrusted him with the direction of a project that envisaged the creation of a buffer state in the Basque territories to be strategically inserted between France and Spain. The project did not come to fruition.

Garat's specific influence on Humboldt in 1799-1800 can be traced back to two main aspects: on the one hand, Garat was resolutely against the idea of state centralisation advocated by most of the leading figures of the Revolution. He declared himself against the new subdivisions into *Départements* that would have ended up erasing every instance of autonomy and self-government also on the part of the Basque minorities. Garat advocated universalism while remaining constantly concerned about the well-being of his Basque fellow-citizens as well as the preservation of their language and culture. Furthermore, he was at the very centre of a network of contacts with the Spanish Basques, especially with the *Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País*. Thanks to Garat, Humboldt was able to get to know many members of this learned Society, which under the leadership of the Count of Peñafiorida had become one of the most active and effective organs of the Enlightenment in the Spanish territories promoting modernisation works in the fields of agriculture and industry, commerce, and above all public education.

Humboldt's effort for adequate *intellectual* preparation was equally intense. In the light of recent philological research,²⁶ it can be stated that before and after his voyage Humboldt was able to study fundamental historical-philological and lexicographical works on Basque by Arnaut

²⁵ M. DUHART, *Dominique-Joseph Garat (1749-1833)*, Biarritz, Atlantica, 2009, pp. 33-79, and M. KASPER, *Baskische Geschichte*, Darmstadt, WGB, 2008², pp. 82-87.

²⁶ B. HURCH, *Das baskologische Beschaffungsprogramm Wilhelm von Humboldts*, «Anuario del Seminario de Filología Vasca 'Julio de Urquijo' (ASJU)», XL, 2006, pp. 471-486.

d'Oihenart,²⁷ Martin Harriet,²⁸ and Manuel de Larramendi.²⁹ He could also read detailed travel reports which were based on anthropological and political evidence such as, to give just one example, Baron de Bourgoing's *Nouveau Voyage en Espagne*,³⁰ translated into German in 1800.³¹ Humboldt also read modern geographical works such as Louis François Ramond's *Observations faites dans les Pyrénées*,³² William Bowles' *Introduccion á la historia natural y la geografia fisica de España*,³³ and Christian August Fischer's *Voyage en Espagne, aux années 1797 et 1798*.³⁴

4. HUMBOLDT'S TRAVEL ACCOUNT *DIE VASKEN* AND ITS INFLUENTIAL MODELS

In the making of Humboldt's exploration of the Basque microcosm, one cannot emphasise enough the crucial importance of August Ludwig Schlözer (1735-1809), a professor of universal history, public law and political science at the University of Göttingen whom Humboldt had met and frequented during his semester of study at the Georgia Augusta back in 1788-1790.³⁵

²⁷ A. D'OIHENART, *Notitia utriusque Vasconiae, tum ibericae, tum aquitanicae, qua, praeter situm regionis et alia scitū digna, Navarrae regum, Gasconiae principum, caeterarumque, in iis, insignium vetustate & dignitate familiarum stemmata ex probatis authoribus & vetustis monumentis exhibentur*, Paris, Sébastien Cramoisy, 1656.

²⁸ M. HARRIET, *Gramatica Escuaraz eta Francesez composatua francez hitzkuñca ikhasi nahi dutenen faboretan*, Bayona, [s.n.], 1741.

²⁹ M. DE LARRAMENDI, *Diccionario trilingüe del Castellano, Bascuence y Latin*, 2 vols., San Sebastian, 1745. ID., *El imposible vencido. Arte de Lengua Bascongada*, Salamanca, Riesgo y Montero, 1729.

³⁰ J. DE BOURGOING, *Nouveau voyage en Espagne ou tableau de l'état actuel de cette monarchie contenant les details les plus récents [...] sur la Constitution politique [...]*, 3 vols., Paris, Chez Regnault, 1789.

³¹ *Bourgoing's Neue Reise durch Spanien in den Jahren 1782-1793 oder vollständige Uebersicht des gegenwärtigen Zustandes dieser Monarchie in allen ihren verschiedenen Zweigen [...]* aus dem Französischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen begleitet von Christian August Fischer, 3 vols., Jena, Mauke, 1800.

³² L.F. RAMOND, *Observations faites dans les Pyrénées pour servir de suite à des observations sur les Alpes, insérées dans une traduction des lettres de W. Coxe, sur la Suisse*, Paris, Belin, 1789.

³³ W. BOWLES, *Introduccion á la historia natural y Geografia fisica de España*, Madrid, de Mena, 1775.

³⁴ CH. A. FISCHER, *Voyage en Espagne, aux années 1797 et 1798; faisant suite au Voyage en Espagne, du citoyen Bourgoing*, Paris, Duchesne [et al.], 1801 (this is an expanded translation of Fischer's *Reise von Amsterdam über Madrid und Cadix nach Genua, nebst einem Anhang über das Reisen in Spanien*, Berlin, Unger, 1799).

³⁵ H.F. VERMEULEN, *Before Boas. The Genesis of Ethnography and Ethnology in the German Enlightenment*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2015, p. 349. (I am grateful to Prof.

In the second chapter of his celebrated *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* (General Nordic History), published in Halle in 1771,³⁶ Schlözer discusses at length the so-called «Stammvölker» (literally, ‘stem people’), meaning (in the wake of Leibniz) all those peoples «for whom it is not possible to indicate a precedent who historically inhabited the same territory before them».³⁷ Mainly drawing on Caesar’s *Bellum Gallicum*, Schlözer mentions the *Vasken*, the Basques, and writes:

[...] in France, Spain and Great Britain, apart from the more recent languages derived from Latin and German, there are still three original languages which are completely different from each other and from all the other European languages: 1. the Biscayan, on the Pyrenean mountains, on both sides, i.e. as well in France as in Spain: in France, namely, in the kingdom of Lower Navarre, in the region of Labour, of which Bayonne is the capital [...] 2. the Cymric [...] 3. the Gallic.³⁸

Furthermore, Schlözer claimed to have been the first to introduce the name *Vasken* into the anthropological discourse of his time.³⁹ The direct influence of his terminology on Humboldt is evident even in the title of the travel account that Humboldt wrote between 1801 and 1804: *Die Vasken oder Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch Biscaya und das französische Basquenland im Frühling des Jahrs 1801* (The Basques or Notes on a Journey through Biscay and the French Basque Country in the Spring of 1801). Humboldt aimed at providing a complete description, a «real monograph on the

Vermeulen for having provided me with this reference). See M. SCATTOLA, *La nascita delle scienze dello Stato. August Ludwig Schlözer (1735-1809) e le discipline politiche del Settecento tedesco*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 1994, pp. 127-130.

³⁶ A.L. SCHLÖZER (Hg.), *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte. Aus den neuesten und besten Nordischen Schriftstellern und nach eigenen Untersuchungen beschrieben, und als eine Geographische und Historische Einleitung zur richtigen Kenntniß aller Skandinavischen, Finnischen, Slavischen, Lettischen und Sibirischen Völker, besonders in alten und mittleren Zeiten*, Halle, Gebauer, 1771. See VERMEULEN 2015, p. 349: «Having studied at Göttingen in 1788-90, Wilhelm von Humboldt read Schlözer’s *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* in 1800 before undertaking his seminal journey to Basque country in the spring of 1801».

³⁷ SCHLÖZER 1771, p. 264. Original: «[...] Spuren, daß die Nation, von der die Rede ist, vormals in einem andern Lande gewohnt, und dasjenige, welches sie nachher bezogen, nicht mehr wüste und leer, sondern bereits von einem älteren Volke besessen, vorgefunden habe».

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 340-342. Original: «in Frankreich, Spanien, Großbritannien, leben, ausser den neuern aus dem Lateinischen und Deutschen verdorbenen Sprachen noch heut zu Tage 3 Ursprachen, die so wol unter sich, als von allen andern Europäischen Sprachen, gänzlich verschieden sind. I. Die Biscayische, auf den Pyrenäischen Gebirgen, und dies und jenseits derselben so wol in Frankreich als Spanien: in Frankreich nämlich in dem Königreiche Nieder Navarra, in dem Gebiete von Labour, wovon Bayonne die Hauptstadt ist [...] II. Die Kymrische [...] III. Die Galische [...]».

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 342-343.

Basque tribe», as he would define it barely a decade later: «In this first part», he wrote, «I shall convey the remarks that I recorded during my sojourn [...] and I should like to make an effort to provide the reader with a vivid understanding of this little land and its inhabitants». ⁴⁰ Indeed, his travel account entitled *Die Vasken* was meant to be the first part of a comprehensive monograph that was never completed.

Humboldt's *Die Vasken* was published more than a century after it was written, i.e. in 1920, by Albert Leitzmann in his edition of Humboldt's *Gesammelte Schriften* (Collected Works). ⁴¹ In 2010, *Die Vasken* have been re-published in a new historical-critical edition provided by Bernhard Hurch and Dina El Zarka. ⁴² The famous beginning of Humboldt's travelogue, a truly remarkable piece of prose, reads as follows:

Concealed between mountains, on both sides of the western Pyrenees, there dwells a tribe of peoples who, for many centuries, have preserved their original language, and for the most part their former constitution and customs; according to the felicitous expression of a recent writer, they have eluded both the eye of the observer and the sword of the conquerors – it is the tribe of the Basques or Biscayans. ⁴³

What is bound to be investigated is Basque moral, economical, and political traditions. Their culture is presented as a treasure to be gradually unveiled and offered to view. Its preciousness lies first and foremost in its unique character as an almost intact reality, which has faithfully preserved centuries-old political and constitutional patterns of thought:

⁴⁰ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 169. Original: «In dem ersten werde ich die Bemerkungen mittheilen, die ich bei meinem Aufenthalte in dem Spanischen und Französischen Vaskenlande niedergeschrieben habe, und mich bemühen, dem Leser dadurch einen anschaulichen Begriff des Ländchens und seiner Bewohner zu verschaffen», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 53.

⁴¹ W. VON HUMBOLDT, *Die Vasken oder Bemerkungen auf einer Reise durch Biscaya und das französische Basquenland im Frühling des Jahrs 1801*, in *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin, Behr, 1920, vol. XIII, pp. 1-196.

⁴² The scholarly edition of Humboldt's Basque studies has been recently completed and it consists of three volumes: VON HUMBOLDT 2010; Id., *Baskische Wortstudien und Grammatiken*, mit einer Einleitung und Kommentar hrsg. von Bernhard Hurch, Paderborn [et al.], Schöningh 2012; Id., *Schriften zur Geschichte und Frühgeschichte der Basken und des Baskischen*, mit einer Einleitung und Kommentar hrsg. von B. Hurch unter editorischer Mitarbeit von D. El Zarka, Paderborn [et al.], Schöningh, 2022.

⁴³ Original: «Versteckt zwischen Gebirgen, wohnt zu beiden Seiten der WestPyrenaeen ein Völkerstamm, der eine lange Reihe von Jahrhunderten hindurch seine ursprüngliche Sprache, und grossentheils seine ehemalige Verfassung und Sitten erhalten und sich, nach dem glücklichen Ausdruck eines neueren Schriftstellers, ebensowohl dem Auge des Beobachters, als dem Schwerdt der Erobrer entzogen hat – der Stamm der Vasken oder Biscayer», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 111. Note that for this quote I have made my own translation. See HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 5.

Not intermingling with their neighbours, regardless of all the advances in luxury and refinement that have taken place around them, they have remained in a state of original moral integrity and have always preserved the distinctive singularity of their national character; above all, they have preserved the old spirit of freedom and independence that Greek and Roman writers praise about them.⁴⁴

Such historical and intellectual uniqueness reveals itself only to patient observers, who spare no effort because they are animated by a burning desire for knowledge. It is clear from these few lines that the general attitude with which Humboldt approached the Basque journey once again depends upon Schlözer's unparalleled influence. In a series of lectures regularly held at the University of Göttingen until 1795, he had established a model of travelling derived from his own experience, that was taken as an example by many of his students.⁴⁵ Beyond mere antiquarian erudition and aristocratic entertainment, Humboldt's detailed description of natural landscapes is magisterially interwoven with historical and philosophical reflections. He learned from Schlözer a way of travelling through space and time in search of the cultural distinctiveness of the regions visited. Considering any single detail shines a light that can illuminate vast cultural landscapes. How does this relate to the constitutional issues at stake in 1799/1800? We now need to turn to a close analysis of some pivotal passages in Humboldt's text itself.

5. SURVIVING FORMS OF REPUBLICANISM

Humboldt undertook the second journey to the Basque regions in order to study the complex relationship between the liberty of individuals and the liberty of the whole community. The Basques offered the van-

⁴⁴ Original: «Wie die Häupter der Berge, deren waldigte Abhänge sie umwohnt, sich aus den Revolutionen des Erdkörpers, so hat sich diese kleine Völkerschaar aus den gewaltigen Stürmen gerettet, welche seit dem Sinken der Römischen Herrschaft das südwestliche Frankreich und Spanien heimsuchten. Selbst in neueren Zeiten in zwei sehr ungleiche Theile zerissen und zwei grossen und mächtigen Nationen untergeordnet, haben die Vasken dennoch keineswegs ihre Selbstständigkeit aufgegeben», in HUMBOLDT 2010, pp. 111-112. Note that also for this quote I have made my own translation. See HUMBOLDT 2013, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁵ Schlözer's manuscripts are not preserved, except for some student's notes taken during Schlözer's last lecture (winter semester 1795/96): *Vorlesung über Land- und Seereisen gehalten von Professor Schlözer. Nach dem Kolleg-Heft des stud.jur. E.F. Haupt*, edited by W. Ebel, Göttingen, Musterschmidt, 1962. See A. ESCH, *Sul viaggio. Lezioni all'università di Göttingen sulla prassi del viaggiare: August Ludwig Schlözer sul viaggio in Italia ed in altri Paesi (1772-1795)*, «Rivista storica italiana», CXVIII, 3, 2006, pp. 901-911: 902.

tage point of historical communities that had been practising forms of self-government for centuries which had almost everywhere disappeared in the rest of Europe. Observation of the self-governing institutions of the Basque provinces could help, Humboldt hoped, to trace developments of thinking about free states, civil liberty, and communal rights in general.

This becomes even more evident when Humboldt notes that «in geographical and historical terms, the Basques constitute an almost closed, separate entity». The original reads: «ein fast geschlossenes, abgesondertes Ganzes».⁴⁶ He is fascinated by the very idea of a unitary constitution that does not suppress but rather secures the individuality of the single local components and their rights. Revolutionary France had proclaimed the idea of unity (*unité*) and indivisibility (*indivisibilité*) as indispensable principles of the nation state.⁴⁷ The political constitution of the Basque communities refers, instead, to a completely different institutional set-up. The Basques, therefore, serve as a model or political laboratory in which it is possible to observe – by way of analogy – contrasting phenomena of global significance on a small scale. In times in which the general ruling tenor was centripetal in character, i.e. centralising and opposed to the existence of anomalies and regional legal particularisms, the Basque communities of the late eighteenth century embody, in political and historical terms, a way of life which secured forms of local self-government and freedom from the central control of the Crown without threatening the unity of Spain.⁴⁸ Furthermore, they are characterised by a specific form of cultural energy or tenacity by virtue of which they had been able to resist both cultural assimilation and the desire to establish a nation-state.⁴⁹

Humboldt is keen to emphasise that the idea of Enlightenment, understood as the «emancipation of human beings through their own energies»,⁵⁰ was enhanced by such specific political-cultural context:

The Basques, in particular those of the Spanish side, are not simply poor mountain shepherds or even oppressed serfs. They are a people who pursue agriculture, shipping, and commerce; they do not lack physical wealth without which no ethical improvement would be possible. They have a free constitution and pub-

⁴⁶ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 168; HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 52.

⁴⁷ SCHINGS 2017, p. 12.

⁴⁸ R. COLLINS, *The Basques*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990², pp. 266-269.

⁴⁹ J.W. FRIEND, *Stateless Nations. Western European Regional Nationalisms and the Old Nations*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 108-122.

⁵⁰ V. FERRONE, *The Enlightenment. History of an Idea*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015.

lic debates, which are mainly held in their own vernacular, and thus have a common interest that affects everyone and to which everyone can contribute. [...] [E]ven the more wealthy Basques, including those who receive honours and titles in Castile or hold prestigious offices, remain devoted to their home country. Here they live in very close relation with the vast masses of the people as they cannot cut themselves off from the prevailing custom and language. In this way, parts of the newer *Enlightenment and education* [*Aufklärung und Bildung*] flows into the people's vernacular and their terminology, and dissociation between the classes is less obvious; in fact, in the eyes of a true Basque these differences are entirely negligible.⁵¹

To Humboldt, the Basque communities appear as a small reality heroically resisting the tendencies of neighbouring state powers that wanted to encompass and radically redefine traditional power relations. This kind of tension was particularly evident at the time of Napoleon's Consulate and affected the whole of Europe. One can think of two striking cases, i.e. the Batavian and the Helvetic Republic: as *Républiques sœurs*, they both lost the federal character that they had defended for centuries. Humboldt's gaze is twofold: on the one hand, he thinks about contemporary events, but on the other hand, he establishes analogies with eras of the past. He scrutinises, as it were, the intriguing world of the Basques under the anthropologist's microscope while following the political events in France and the rest of Europe with the politician's telescope. Following the succession of chapters in Schlözer's *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*,⁵² he recalls that:

Also in other parts of Europe there are individual clusters of peoples who, forced to retreat into lonely valleys or to barren and inhospitable shores by the urge of violent revolutions, have rescued their ancestors' language and customs from the whirl of general devastation with a defiance that misfortune makes venerable, and now, partly out of habit, partly out of noble national pride, tenaciously refuse any merging with their foreign neighbours. Thus stand, and some

⁵¹ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 10 (emphasis added). Original: «Die Vasken, vorzüglich die Spanischen, sind nicht bloss arme Gebirgshirten oder gar unterdrückte Leibeigne. Sie sind ein Ackerbau, Schiffarth [!] und Handlung treibendes Volk und ermangeln des körperlichen Wohlstandes nicht, ohne den alles sittliche Gedeihen unmöglich ist. Sie haben eine freie Verfassung, öffentliche Berathschlagungen grossentheils in ihrer Landessprache, also ein gemeinschaftliches Interesse, das jeden angeht und für das jeder thätig seyn kann. [...] die Begüterten, auch die, welche Ehrentitel in Castilien empfangen, oder angesehene Aemter bekleidet haben, [bleiben] gern ihrer Heimath getreu, und in dieser leben sie nothwendig in einer sogar sehr grossen Gemeinschaft mit der Masse des Volks, da sie sich ebensowenig von den Sitten als der Sprache desselben ausschliessen können. So geht immer ein gewisser Theil neuerer Aufklärung und Bildung in die Volkssprache und die Volksbegriffe über, und es giebt eine minder sichtbare Absonderung der Stände, deren Verschiedenheit in den Augen des ächten Vizkayers sogar gänzlich hinwegfällt», in HUMBOLDT 2010, pp. 117-118.

⁵² SCHLÖZER 1771, pp. 263-346.

of them perhaps not for a long amount of time, the Lower Britons in France, their brethren in England, the inhabitants of Wales, the Highlanders in Scotland, in Southern and Northern Germany the individually scattered Wendish peoples, in Sweden the brave Dalecarlians, on the shores of the Baltic the Estonians and the Livonians, and some other still more insignificant tribes in Italy and on the Italian islands, like living ruins of as many formerly powerful and widespread nations.⁵³

Humboldt refers to these peoples as «living ruins», they are the vestiges of a past that survives, precious traces of threatened worlds. Yet, in his words there is no tone of melancholic elegy for the «decay» and «decline» (*Verfall* and *Untergang*) of these communities, but rather a desire to revive their legacy for the present, to draw lessons from their way of living and organising political life. Against this multifarious historical background, the Basques stand out like an ‘island’ that cannot be washed away by the sea of events.⁵⁴ No other people, Humboldt remarks,

has succeeded as much as the Basques in establishing an independent political constitution and a flourishing prosperity, none more than them have succeeded in transplanting many of the most beneficial fruits of the European Enlightenment into the heart of their wastelands, without giving up their specificity and their original simplicity.⁵⁵

The sense of egalitarian participation of all citizens in the fortunes of their commonwealth suggests a number of comparisons. By way of analogy, Humboldt makes connections with the city-states of «ancient Greek

⁵³ Original: «Auch in andern Theilen Europens giebt es einzelne Völkerhaufen, die, durch den Drang gewaltsamer Revolutionen in einsame Bergthäler oder an dürre und unwirthbare Seeküsten zurückgetrieben, mit einem Trotz, den das Unglück ehrwürdig macht, ihre väterliche Sprache und Sitten aus dem Strome der allgemeinen Verwüstung gerettet haben, und nun theils aus Gewohnheit, theils aus edlerem Nationalstolz jedes Zusammenschmelzen mit ihren fremden Nachbarn hartnäckig verweigern. So stehen, und einige unter ihnen vielleicht nicht mehr auf lange Zeit, die NiederBretagner in Frankreich, in England ihre Brüder, die Bewohner von Wales, in Schottland die Hochländer, in Süd- und NordDeutschland die einzeln zerstreuten Wendischen Völkerschaften, in Schweden die tapfern Dalecarlier, an den Busen der Ostsee die Esten und Liven, und einige andre noch unbedeutendere Stämme in Italien und auf den Italiänischen Inseln, gleichsam als lebendige Ruinen von ebensoviele ehemals mächtigen und weitverbreiteten Nationen da», in HUMBOLDT 2010, pp. 112-113. For this quote I have made my own translation. See HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 6.

⁵⁴ M. KURLANSKY, *The Basque History of the World*, New York, Walker, 1999, pp. 1-8.

⁵⁵ Original: «keinem unter allen diesen Stämmen ist es so sehr, als den Vasken, gelingen sich noch bis auf den heutigen Tag eine selbstständige politische Verfassung und einen blühenden Wohlstand zu verschaffen, keinem so als ihnen, viele der wohlthätigsten Früchte Europäischer Aufklärung glücklich mitten in ihre Einöde zu verpflanzen, ohne darum doch ihre Eigenthümlichkeit und ihre ursprüngliche Einfachheit aufzugeben», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 113 (translation mine). See HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 6.

maritime republics» and the «small cantons» of Switzerland.⁵⁶ The parallel with ancient Greece and modern Switzerland figures indeed as a running theme of his descriptions. In Humboldt's mind, Basques, Swiss and ancient Greeks tend to overlap as a sort of anthropological model despite all historical differences. This overlapping is demonstrated even by the terminology used: Humboldt speaks of the Basque communities using the typically Swiss term «cantons», while referring to the entire Basque Country using the term «Freistaat» (free state), with which he used to define the political reality of classical Greece.

What is the ultimate task, we may ask, of the travelling observer according to Humboldt? Firstly, not to resign to accepting ways of thinking inherited from the historical mainstream of the era in which one lives. On the contrary, Humboldt considers it appropriate to value different traditions and frameworks of thought. This implies that at every given epoch the constitutional forms embodied in the present way of life are the result of choices made between different possible options. Humboldt's take reminds us of a contemporary thinker, Melchiorre Delfico (1744-1835), one of Antonio Genovesi's pupils, who had conceived a similar plan with regard to the Republic of San Marino, a small republican reality that was fighting not to be annexed in Napoleon's political-military operations.⁵⁷ In the Preface to Delfico's *Memorie storiche della Repubblica di San Marino*, we find expressions and adjectives that correspond exactly to Humboldt's own lexical choices. Delfico reminds his readers that

the Republic of San Marino fortunately remained unharmed in the general upheaval of Republics and Empires. Free, peaceful, unconquered and independent for a long series of centuries, it shows us not only that it has solved the problem of how a very small state can maintain its independence or its ancient and favourite government, but similarly, that it has created within itself a truly humane type of government.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 118. See B. VICK, *Of Basques, Greeks, and Germans: Liberalism, Nationalism, and the Ancient Republican Tradition in the Thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt*, «Central European History», XL, 2007, pp. 653-681.

⁵⁷ I am grateful to Dr Giuseppe Grieco for this reference. I am also grateful to Dr Valentina Altopiedi for inspiring conversations about the French Revolution.

⁵⁸ *Memorie storiche della Repubblica di San Marino raccolte dal Cav. Melchiorre Delfico cittadino della stessa*, Milan, 1804, p. 10. Original: «[la] Repubblica di San Marino [è] rimasta fortunatamente illesa nel generale sconvolgimento di Repubbliche e d'Imperi. Libera, tranquilla, incossa ed indipendente per una lunga serie di secoli, mostra non solo di aver risolto il problema, come un piccolissimo Stato possa conservare la sua indipendenza, o il proprio antico e prediletto governo, ma similmente, che in essa sia felicemente adombrato un tipo dei veramente umani governi».

The preservation of the idea of humanity is the yardstick by which political institutions are measured. Delfico emphasises that the Republic of San Marino, which had granted him citizenship to protect him from the revolutionary whirlwinds in the Kingdom of Naples, is an outstanding «example worthy of imitation» due to a constitutional form that is founded on the «blessings of liberty». Both Humboldt and Delfico provide their readers with valuable information concerning neglected riches of history and display them to view. In both cases, the value of freedom is not the name of an abstract concept, but the anthropological expression of a «benevolent people who cherish their own laws». ⁵⁹ The anthropological perspective offers a clue to the tangled destinies of history and politics that allows the observer to study how these free forms of self-government have survived despite enormous historical difficulties. This is probably the reason why, in his travel account, Humboldt proceeds both anthropologically and historically.

6. THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology is for Humboldt both *empirical* (field-research) ⁶⁰ and *literary*, i.e., it is based on the dialogue with texts. Drawing on his own experience but also on ancient literary sources (Theocritus, Strabo, Livy, Virgil, Plinius the Elder, Juvenal, Apollonius Rhodius, etc.) Humboldt sets out to outline what we might call an ‘anthropology of civil liberty’. He champions, in particular, the figure of the independent countryman and the figure of the brave fisherman as the leading repositories of moral dignity and worth in modern Basque society. The figures he wishes to hold out for admiration are described again and again. The countryman, for instance, is plain and plain-hearted; he is upright and full of integrity; the fisherman, and above all the fisherwomen he encountered during his journey are persons of dependable valour and fortitude, just like the fishermen, he added, described in Theocritus’ *Idyll* 21 (Ἀλιεῖς). ⁶¹ Frugal living is portrayed there as an incentive to industriousness. The interplay between the direct

⁵⁹ M. DELFICO, *To the reader*, in DELFICO 1804, p. 6. Original: «popolo benevolo e sommente amante delle sue leggi».

⁶⁰ See R. MATTIG, *Wilhelm von Humboldt als Ethnolog. Bildungsforschung im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Weinheim, Juventa Verlag, 2019, pp. 52-90 and 207-297. A. MOOK, *Die freie Entwicklung innerlicher Kraft. Die Grenze der Anthropologie in den frühen Schriften der Brüder von Humboldt*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012, pp. 344-346.

⁶¹ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 22. Humboldt could read the following edition: *Theokrits Idyllen und Epigramme*, aus dem Griechischen metrisch übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen von E.C. Binde-mann, Berlin, Franke, 1793 («Die Fischer», pp. 217-224).

observation along the Basque coastline and the ongoing comparison with literary sources produces an interesting example of literary anthropology in which the dialogue with literary traditions becomes a key to reading and interpreting the present. The fishermen's virtues are repeatedly contrasted with the vices characteristic of the modern commercial age, which views them not as plain-hearted but as rude and boorish.

Both these anthropological models (the countryman and the fisherman) are iconic figures who embody the very ideals of Humboldt's Enlightenment, as they are able to stand upright by means of one's own strength without depending on the will of anyone else. Humboldt turns consistently to Livy in order to describe the Basque denial of any form of servitude. In Book III (Chapter 28) of Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, the yoke (*iugum*) is depicted as the symbol of subjection: «a yoke with three poles was set up [...] and under this yoke the dictator made the Equi pass». In Humboldt's text the intertextual reference is reversed: in order to escape the yoke of the conquerors (and thus maintain their freedom), the Basques, «unwilling to be yoked [*des Jochs unwilligen*], flocked close to the ocean and the Pyrenees». ⁶²

The anthropological portrait of these figures serves, furthermore, to delineate the individual basis on which the liberty of entire communities is founded. The clue to understanding what Humboldt means by speaking of freedom of entire communities lies perhaps in recognising that he treats as seriously as possible the historical metaphor of the *body politic*. Just as individual human bodies are free, he argues, if and only if they are able to act at will, so the bodies of nations and states are likewise free if and only if they are unconstrained from using their powers in pursuit of their envisaged ends. Free states, like free persons, are thus defined by their capacity for self-government. A 'free state' (*Freistaat*) is therefore a community in which the actions of the body politic are determined by the will of the members as a whole. To explain this point Humboldt turns his attention to the actual workings of the Biscayan Constitution as a point in case, and he now proceeds *historically*.

7. «UNDER THE TREE OF GERNIKA»

The place where Humboldt thinks he can best observe the workings of the Basque constitution is the village of Gernika, which is the vanishing-

⁶² HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 7. Original: «desto mehr drängten sich die des Jochs unwilligen Urbewohner in die Nähe des Weltmeers und der Pyrenaeen zusammen», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 114.

point of his travel account. «The Biscayan constitution», he writes, «has its seat and centre point in Gernika as all public hearings commence with the words: *so el arbol de Guernica*, under Gernika's tree». ⁶³ Humboldt's sources are mainly historical documents, such as the *Fueros, franquezas, libertades, buenos usos y costumbres del muy noble y muy leal señorío de Vizcaya, confirmados por el Rey Don Phelipe Quinto nuestro señor y por los señores reyes sus predecesores* (1704) that «serve as the nation's code of law». ⁶⁴ He also draws on Gabriel de Henao's *Averiguaciones de las antigüedades de Cantabria* (1689) ⁶⁵ remarking that the delegates «still to this day congregate underneath the tree of Gernika, even though they hold their meetings not right here anymore, but in a chapel erected right next to it. Nonetheless, they hand over their authority and always begin their festive ceremony underneath that tree». ⁶⁶ What follows is a brief genealogy of Bizkaia's civil liberty:

Bizkaia was originally, and is still for the most part, a true free state of land ownership. Inasmuch as there existed a feudal constitution in France and Germany, they here had a free peasants' constitution [...] everyone (just as today) took part in the election of the delegates that decided on the general matters of the land. ⁶⁷

The Bizkaian landowner's true spirit of liberty becomes even more evident when Humboldt describes the land's General Assembly called *junta*. They gather every two years, in June or July, and the purpose of the Assem-

⁶³ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 131. Original: «[die Vizcayische Verfassung], die in Guernica ihren eigentlichen Sitz und Mittelpunkt hat, da alle öffentliche Verhandlungen immer mit den Worten: *so el arbol de Guernica*, unter dem Baum von Guernica, anheben», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 235.

⁶⁴ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 138. On the early developments: R. COLLINS, *Spain: The Northern Kingdoms and the Basques*, in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. II, edited by R. McKitterick, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 272-289 and J. ALLIÈRES, *Les Basques*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1987², pp. 24-48.

⁶⁵ G. DE HENAO, *Averiguaciones de las antigüedades de Cantabria, enderezadas principalmente a descubrir las de Guipuzcoa, Vizcaya y Alaba, provincias contenidas en ella* [...], 2 vols., Salamanca, Garcia, 1689, p. 340 and 353. The importance of this source was unveiled thanks to the editorial works of Bernhard Hurch and Dina El Zarka in VON HUMBOLDT 2022, p. 297.

⁶⁶ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 131. Original: «so versammeln sich noch bis auf den heutigen Tag die Deputirten von Vizcaya unter dem Baum von Guernica, und wenn sie auch jetzt nicht mehr dort, sondern in der dabei erbauten Kapelle ihre Berathschlagungen halten, so übergeben sie doch hier unter freiem Himmel ihre Vollmachten, und fangen allemal unter dem Baume selbst die Feierlichkeit an», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 235.

⁶⁷ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 133. Original: «Vizcaya war ursprünglich und ist grossentheils noch jetzt ein wahrer Freistaat von Landeigenthümern. So wie es in Deutschland und Frankreich eine feudale Ritterverfassung gab, so bestand hier eine freie Bauernverfassung; [...] jeder nahm (wie auch noch heutige[n] Tages) an der Wahl der Deputirten Theil, welche die allgemeinen Landesangelegenheiten besorgten», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 237.

bly is twofold: the ordering of the communal matters of the land and the election of the chief delegates and that of other people for government. The General Assembly is characterised by «an almost unrestricted freedom and a true sense of independence. The presence of a *Corregidor* does not hinder anyone from speaking his mind freely». ⁶⁸ This freedom of thought and expression implies the free choice of the language: whereas Spanish is the official language of the records, the local idiom, that is the Basque language, is treasured as well: «At times it happens that the *Corregidor* absences himself and often Basque is spoken. [...] At times he even dictates that the petitions are to be read aloud in both languages when the debates are of general interest». ⁶⁹ Humboldt concludes: «To refrain from curtailing the freedom of expression is a prudent and wholesome politics». ⁷⁰ He probably has in mind the restrictions of free press and speech in contemporary France, but also in Prussia.

Among the documents that have been preserved, there is the so-called *Journal (Tagebuch)*, a text that Humboldt probably wrote during his research trip and revised once back in Paris. The notes dedicated to Gernika contain a sketch ⁷¹ depicting the original building of Gernika's popular assembly, which is flanked by the chapel that still hosts the sessions of the local assembly. Behind the architectural elements (the raised seats, the columns, the fence, etc.) «[y]ou can see», Humboldt observes, «a pretty large, yet not so picturesque holly oak with a cracked up trunk twisted by the wind and some desiccated branches». ⁷² The oak stands on the spot where, back in 1476, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, the founders of the Spanish state, pledged to respect the rights of the Basque communities, first of all their liberty.

The vision of the oak immediately conjures up a symbolic horizon: the image of the tree turns out to be a moral and political emblem of all things

⁶⁸ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 137. Original: «In der GeneralVersammlung selbst herrscht jedoch eine fast unbeschränkte Freiheit, und ein wahrer Geist der Unabhängigkeit, und die Gegenwart des Corregidors hindert nicht, dass jeder frei seine Meynung sagt», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 241.

⁶⁹ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 137. Original: «Manchmal entfernt er sich auch, und oft wird Vaskisch gesprochen [...]. Er selbst lässt sogar, bei allgemein interessierenden Verhandlungen, die Eingaben manchmal in beiden Sprachen verlesen», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 241.

⁷⁰ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 137. Original: «Dieser Freiheit der Aeusserungen keine Fesseln anzulegen, ist eine wohlverstandene und heilsame Politik», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 241.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁷² HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 131. Original: «man findet eine zwar ziemlich grosse, aber nichts weniger als mahlerische Steineiche, mit einem vom Winde gewundenen aufgeborstenen Stamm, und einigen vertrockneten Aesten», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 236.

Basque. The oak, Humboldt goes on to note, is «an image [*Bild*] of the constitution itself» or «the figurative representation [*bildlicher Repräsentant*] of the entire constitution»,⁷³ the guardian of Bizkaia's ancient liberty. In fact, the image of the oak is still the emblem that stands out in the blazon of Bizkaia. As an emblem, Humboldt reads the image of the oak tree as a symbol of resistance or resiliency. Drawing on classical literary sources, especially Virgil (*Georgics* II, v. 292 f.; *Aeneid* IV, v. 446 f.), he first of all highlights the oak's ability to resist the assaults of time. As he puts it, the oak, i.e., the constitution «has defied several storms». Furthermore, in order to ensure continuity in change «younger oaks have been planted next to the actual one to take its place as soon as the old one dies».⁷⁴ This is precisely what one can still see today in Gernika.

There is perhaps a further literary reminiscence implied here. It is the image of the oak that we can find in Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Loix* (1748).⁷⁵ Yet, with at least one notable difference: Montesquieu employs the image of the oak (Book III, Chapter 1) not to depict a self-governing state but as a symbol of feudalism. «C'est un beau spectacle», he writes, «que celui des lois féodales. Un chêne antique s'élève; l'œil en voit de loin des feuillages; il approche, il en voit la tige; mais il n'en aperçoit point les racines: il faut percer la terre pour les trouver».⁷⁶ When commenting on Gernika's oak tree, Humboldt is indirectly reminding his readers of Montesquieu's claim (the oak as an emblem of feudalism), while at the same time questioning that very claim. He does so by recalling the Basque interpretation of the oak as an emblem of a self-governing free state. In fact, as Humboldt puts it, «no kind of feudal constitution has ever crept into this happy corner of Europe».⁷⁷

Humboldt is thereby showing how the very same political imagery can be made to signify differently. As for us, we may interpret Humboldt's passage as a complex intervention in a specific constitutional debate of the time by means of subtle intertextual references to influential sources. According to Humboldt's account, the Basques live in self-governing communities that manage their own affairs by means of biennially elected mag-

⁷³ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 133.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132. Original: «Neben den eigentlichen Baum sind einige jüngere gepflanzt, um jenen, wenn er aussehen sollte, sogleich zu ersetzen», in HUMBOLDT 2010, p. 236.

⁷⁵ For this reference and further discussions, I am grateful to Dr Tom Pye.

⁷⁶ MONTESQUIEU, *Œuvres complètes*, texte présenté et annoté par R. Caillois, Paris, Gallimard, 1951, vol. 2, pp. 883-884.

⁷⁷ HUMBOLDT 2013, p. 98. Original: «Keine Art der Feudalverfassung hat sich in diesen glücklichen Winkel Europas eingeschlichen», *ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

istrates chosen from among themselves. In Book IX of *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Montesquieu discusses the case of the «federal republics» defining them as a form of government «par laquelle plusieurs Corps politiques consentent à devenir citoyens d'un État plus grand qu'ils veulent former. C'est une société de sociétés, qui en font une nouvelle». ⁷⁸ Among the examples he provides (Chapters 1-3) there are the ancient republics of the Lycians and the Greeks, modern Switzerland, the United Provinces of Holland, but also the «German constitution» of the Holy Roman Empire. In Montesquieu's chapters there are no references to the Basque communities whatsoever, although many aspects of their constitution closely resemble his notion of a federative republic: the laws that govern the Basque free state must be enacted with the consent of all its citizens, the members of the body politic as a whole; to prevent arbitrariness and secure individual liberty no laws can be imposed upon them without a consent first had in the people's *juntas*; this seems to imply that it is only possible to enjoy civil liberty to the full if one lives as a citizen of a free state.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Far from considering his anthropological occupation as a mere exercise in antiquarianism, Humboldt viewed his study of the Basque communities as a vital part of a vast enterprise in world history, *Weltgeschichte*: «I was led», he admits, «by the demands that in my opinion have to be put to a certain, most necessary treatment of world history», i.e., to try and single out how «new forms of humanity [*Formen der Menschheit*] emerge in continuation» and keep «benefiting each other». After all, «it is the duty of world history [...]», he adds, to explore «each of the grand events and moral transformations that are geared toward the unification [...] of all humankind to ever-more elevated ends». ⁷⁹

⁷⁸ MONTESQUIEU 1951, p. 369. On Montesquieu's viewpoint: C. SPECTOR, *Liberty in Montesquieu*, in K. CALLANAN – S.R. KRAUSE (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Montesquieu*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 147-161. I am thankful to Professor Spector for the reference.

⁷⁹ HUMBOLDT 2013, pp. 165-166. Original: «habe ich vorzüglich die Forderungen vor Augen gehabt, welche, meiner Ueberzeugung nach, an eine gewisse und höchst nothwendige Bearbeitung der Weltgeschichte [...] gemacht werden müssen. [...] [Es] ist nicht weniger Pflicht der Weltgeschichte, als die einzelnen großen Begebenheiten und moralischen Umwälzungen zu verfolgen, die auf *Vereinigung* der kleineren Massen gerichtet sind, und das moralische Daseyn der ganzen Menschheit Einem immer höher gesteckten Ziele zuzuführen streben», in HUMBOLDT 2010, pp. 49-50.



Humboldt's Basque experience ought therefore to be considered not only as an interesting foray in a fascinating terrain, but also (and perhaps above all) as an exploration of how to preserve civil liberty through constitutional means. Thinking about Napoleon's France and Hohenzollern Prussia, Humboldt has scrutinised alternative models in the aftermath of the Revolution, trying to study the anthropological conditions that would make any constitutional reform lasting and viable. Many of his remarks may have gone unheard in the history of German constitutionalism. Still, he has always kept on reflecting upon the Basque free state trying to re-appraise current assumptions and beliefs. Equipped with a broader sense of constitutional possibility, he could thereby stand back from the cultural traditions he had inherited as a Prussian nobleman and ask himself in a frank spirit of enquiry what he should think of them.



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VERONICA GRANATA

DO BOOKS MAKE REVOLUTIONS?
POLITICAL USES OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY
PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE IN RESTORATION FRANCE*

BETWEEN TWO REVOLUTIONS

The publication of Daniel Mornet's *Les Origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française* in 1933 renewed interest in exploring connections between eighteenth-century philosophical literature and the collapse of the Ancien Régime.¹ Fifty years later, questions such as «Did books fuel the French Revolution?» and «Do books make revolutions?» were once again pressing issues in European and Anglo-Saxon historiography. One contributing factor to this development was the growing importance of the history of books and reading practices as an object of study in its own right. Consequently, possible correlations between the different activities of the *philosophes* and the coming of the Revolution were variously disputed, affirmed, or problematised by a wealth of historiography.²

* Translated from the Italian by Frank Gordon.

¹ D. MORNET, *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1933.

² The debate on this issue has produced an extremely rich bibliography. Here are just a few essential references: F. BARBIER – C. JOLLY – S. JURATIC (eds.), *Livre et Révolution*, Paris, Aux amateurs de livres, 1988, in particular the article by R. Chartier and D. Roche; R. CHARTIER, *Cultures, Lumières, doléances: les cahiers de 1789*, «Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine», XXVIII, 1, 1981, pp. 68-93; ID., *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française*, Paris, Seuil, 2000 [1990]; R. DARNTON, *Édition et sédition. L'univers de la littérature clandestine au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991; ID., *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1995; ID., *Bohème littéraire et Révolution: le monde des livres au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Gallimard, 2010 [1983]; T. TACKETT, *Par la volonté du peuple. Comment les députés de 1789 sont-ils devenus révolutionnaires*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1997; P. GRATEAU, *Les cahiers de doléances, une lecture culturelle*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2001; J. ISRAEL, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; ID., *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790*, Oxford, Oxford University Press,

One area that has received far less attention is the relationship between the spread of eighteenth-century philosophical literature and the revolution of July 1830, which triggered the second fall of the Bourbon dynasty in France, the last political power attached to the memory of the Ancien Régime. Yet, under the restored monarchy there was a heated public debate on the socio-political consequences of the distribution of works by the *philosophes*. This dispute partly concerned the past, examining possible links – variously celebrated, condemned, or even denied – between the eighteenth-century philosophical movement and the revolutionary dynamics of 1789-1799. However, the main focus was on a future perceived as relatively close, if not imminent.

The prospect of change in the balance established by the French Charter of 1814 was a constant throughout the Restoration period, sparking fears and ambitions among those still bound to the legacy of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic ages, as well as hardline royalists. The representative regime introduced in 1814 immediately served as a stage for political clashes over different interpretations of the *Charte octroyée*, various understandings of the guarantees and rights therein established, and contrasting ideas about which interests the restored monarchy should safeguard and support. All political groups repeatedly expressed concern over the danger of possible sudden upheaval in the political and social order or the escalation of civil conflict.³

Far from being excluded, the possible outbreak of a second revolution became an increasingly common idea in parliamentary rhetoric and in all forms of printed texts, especially after 1820. Internal administrative documents also raised the spectre of impending revolution. The threat took on even more fearsome overtones when Europe was swept by fresh insurrectionary turmoil and new republic states were formed in the Americas.⁴

2011; Id., *Revolutionary Ideas. An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from the Rights of Man to Robespierre*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014. For contextualisation of relations between the Enlightenment and the Revolution see V. FERRONE, *Il paradigma Lumi-Rivoluzione francese: tra mito politico e blocco epistemologico*, in *Lezioni illuministiche*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2010, pp. 101-110 and J.-C. MARTIN, *La Révolution à l'œuvre. Perspectives actuelles dans l'histoire de la Révolution française*, Rennes, PUR, 2005, pp. 9-20.

³ For an overview of the period of Restoration France see. G. DE BERTIER DE SAUVIGNY, *La Restauration*, Paris, Flammarion, 1974 [1955]; E. DE WARESQUIEL – B. YVERT, *Histoire de la Restauration: 1814-1830: naissance de la France moderne*, Paris, Perrin, 2002.

⁴ On the work of the different administrative branches that observed and analysed the political contestation of monarchical authority, see C. CHRISTEN-LÉCUYER – E. FUREIX (eds.), *La Restauration revisitée. Les formes de la protestation. Une histoire de l'État*, monographic issue of «Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle», 35, 2007; P. KARILA-COHEN, *L'état des esprits. L'invention de l'enquête politique en France, 1814-1848*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2008; S. KROEN,

Revolution had become an integral part of forecasts and was sometimes almost taken for granted. Many observers, both inside and outside the institutional system, even tried to predict the dynamics of the uprising by outlining how it would develop. Supporters of the reigning dynasty repeatedly raised the alarm. Some envisaged fresh popular tyranny or, in one case, «a more terrible revolution, more frightful anarchy, an even deeper abyss».⁵ Others described a revolution that differed from the previous manifestation. Chateaubriand adopted his customary polemical verve in 1825 to imagine a less brutal form of insurrection securely led by the bourgeoisie, who would limit themselves to promulgating «a new edition of the *Charte octroyée* in which only two or three words would be changed».⁶

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, champions of the civil achievements of the Revolution and the glories of the *Grande Nation* gradually readopted the revolutionary lexicon in the chambers of parliament and in publications. Collectively labelled as liberals after 1817-1818,⁷ they did not openly call for revolution but supported, for example, the constitutional and independence movements that emerged outside France in the early 1820s and injected new life into the rhetoric of resistance to oppression.

Political debate during the Restoration generated a long and spectacular critical examination of the past monarchical regime and the Revolution, whose legacy was ever-present in discussions. This is the context in which the clash over the role and legacy of the Enlightenment reached the height of its intensity, entering political battles in full swing.

OLD BOOKS FOR A NEW AUDIENCE

The dispute over eighteenth-century ‘innovators’ and ‘modern philosophy’ was already well established. Indeed, the intellectual movement earned detractors as soon as it emerged into the public arena. With the outbreak of

Politics and theater: the crisis of legitimacy in Restoration France, 1815-1830, Los Angeles, London, University of California Press, 2000, especially Chapter 4; V. GRANATA, *Politica del teatro e teatro della politica. Censura, partiti e opinione pubblica a Parigi nel primo Ottocento*, Milan, Edizioni Unicopli, 2008.

⁵ J.-P.-F. THÉARD, *Tableau des trois époques, ou les philosophes avant, pendant et après la Révolution*, Paris, Librairie ecclésiastique de Rusand, 1829, p. 290.

⁶ «Journal des débats politiques et littéraires», 25 October 1825.

⁷ On the liberal movement see R. ALEXANDER, *Re-writing the French Revolutionary Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003 and P. TRIOMPHE, *Un moment crucial dans la constitution du parti libéral. Les élections de 1818*, «Histoire, économie & société», 1, 2014, pp. 37-54.

the Revolution, the debate focused on possible links between the work of the *philosophes*, the rapid crumbling of a centuries-old monarchical system, and the construction of the ‘new regime’. These issues were still talking points during the Restoration. A wealth of literature documents the vehement conflict of views between defenders and accusers of the Enlightenment and the Revolution.⁸

The interpretative quarrel about the influence of the Enlightenment on the outbreak and development of the 1789 Revolution was heightened by further controversy between 1817 and 1830. This new polemic was caused by the frenzied pace at which re-editions of works from the «century of Philosophy»⁹ were published under the restored Bourbon monarchy. The texts of the *philosophes*, some of which were now more than a hundred years old, were reissued mainly to cater to a new generation of readers born during the Revolution or under Napoleonic rule. The Empire, in particular, had brought the publication of philosophical works from the previous century to a virtual standstill. By contrast, the revolutionary period had been propitious for such texts, chiefly because they satisfied the educational needs of the Republic.¹⁰ This resulted in a partially saturated market at the end of the century. Aside from purely commercial aspects, though, new editions were discouraged after 1804 by the Napoleonic regime.

First the Consulate government and then the imperial administration effectively ordained the closure of the ‘laboratory’ of the Enlightenment. Napoleon felt that the historical function of eighteenth-century philosophy had ended with the collapse of the Ancien Régime, a moribund monarchical system whose flaws and abuses had been denounced by the *philosophes*. He himself claimed the legacy of the Enlightenment so that he alone could manage it, perceiving the need to discard any elements that might undermine the internal peace of France, the stability of the new institutions, and

⁸ For a critical approach to the notion of «*anti-Lumières*», currently much used in historiography, see J.-L. CHAPPEY, *Les «anti-Lumières» et les oppositions intellectuelles à la révolution*, in MARTIN 2005, pp. 165-180. See also: D. MCMAHON, *Enemies of the Enlightenment. The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001; D. MASSEAU, *Les ennemis des philosophes: l'antiphilosophie au temps des Lumières*, Paris, A. Michel, 2000; ID. (ed.), *Dictionnaire des anti-Lumières et des antiphilosophes: France, 1715-1815*, Paris, Honoré Champion, 2017.

⁹ The expression is taken from J.-P. RABAUT SAINT-ÉTIENNE, *Précis historique de la Révolution française. Assemblée constituante. Suivi de réflexions politiques sur les circonstances présentes*, Paris, Didot jeune, 1807 [1792], p. 15.

¹⁰ See C. HESSE, *Economic upheavals in publishing*, in R. DARNTON – D. ROCHE (eds.), *Revolution in print. The press in France, 1775-1800*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, University of California Press, 1989, pp. 69-98: 95.



Fig. 1. «Minerva protecting J.J. and Voltaire against fanaticism», Paris, Plancher, 1817, colored etching, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, département estampes et photographie, RESERVE QB-370 (80)-FT 4.

the sacralisation of a newly founded imperial dynasty. For Napoleon, these processes could not coexist with «critical interrogation on the present» mentioned by Michel Foucault in his definition of the Enlightenment.¹¹ The construction of his Empire required a single uniform «view» among «scholars, printers, soldiers, and citizens».¹² This led the Napoleonic gov-

¹¹ M. FOUCAULT, *What Is Enlightenment?*, in *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, I, *Ethics*, edited by P. Rabinow, New York, Penguin, 2000, pp. 303-319: 319.

¹² Archives nationales, Paris (AN), AF IV 990, «Note dictée en 1810 par l'empereur au ministre secrétaire d'État. Idées sur l'Imprimerie et la Librairie et sur la Police et les autres ministères». The Napoleonic government essentially attempted to break up the «intellectual power» that had become established in the eighteenth century. On the formation of an élite made up of *écrivains philosophes* and *savants* and on the political 'laboratory' of the Enlightenment, see, in addition to the volume by P. BÉNICHOU, *Le sacre de l'écrivain (1750-1830). Essai sur l'avènement d'un pouvoir spirituel laïque dans la France moderne*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996 [1973]; V. FERRONE, *Il mondo dell'Illuminismo. Storia di una rivoluzione culturale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019, in particular pp. 87-114; ID., *Storia dei diritti dell'uomo. L'Illuminismo e la costruzione del linguaggio politico dei moderni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2014, in particular pp. 359-415; L. SOZZI (ed.), *Il principe e il filosofo. Intellettuali e potere in Francia dai philosophes all'affaire Drey-*

ernment to be suspicious, if not openly hostile, towards intellectual initiatives that allowed writers and *savants* to act in various capacities: judges or advisers to those in power, proponents of alternative policies to government strategies, or founders of a general science of humankind that aimed to improve society and enrich individual moral fibre.¹³ By contrast, the Napoleonic government embraced another aspect of the legacy of the Enlightenment: «the dissemination of the *lumières*».¹⁴ This referred to the spread of knowledge that could advance the scientific, economic, technical, administrative, and cultural progress of the Empire.

The considerable drop in new editions of eighteenth-century philosophical texts during the Napoleonic age made the reversal of the trend during the second Restoration even more striking. During this Enlightenment revival, printers and publishers targeted readers who were too young to have discovered past literary riches. They also adapted the format, price, and content of works by «major writers»¹⁵ of the 1700s for another group of readers who were also often new but not for reasons of age; various editions were specifically aimed at the salaried ‘working classes’ or the merchants and skilled tradesmen of the *petite bourgeoisie*. The most affordable editions were designed for artisans and labourers in environments where the more educated individuals would read aloud to their illiterate peers.¹⁶

fus, Naples, Guida, 1988, especially the introduction by P. Alatri and the essay by L. Sozzi, pp. 45-98.

¹³ On these points see J.-L. CHAPPEY, *Les Idéologies face au coup d'État du 18 brumaire an VIII. Des illusions aux désillusions*, «Politix. Revue des sciences sociales du politique», 56, 2001, pp. 55-75; Id., *Héritages républicains et résistances à "l'organisation impériale des savoirs"*, in *Les héritages républicains sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, monographic issue of «Annales historiques de la Révolution française», 346, 2006, pp. 97-120; Id., *Questions sur le "pouvoir des intellectuels" en France dans le moment 1800*, in A. BAILLOT – A. YUVA (eds.), *France-Allemagne. Figures de l'intellectuel entre révolution et réaction, 1780-1848*, Villeneuve-d'Ascq, Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2014, pp. 65-85; D. RIBARD, *Philosophe ou écrivain? Problèmes de délimitation entre histoire littéraire et histoire de la philosophie en France, 1650-1850*, «Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales», LV, 2, 2000, pp. 355-388.

¹⁴ The Council of State met several times between 1808 and 1810 to discuss the creation of a new system to monitor non-periodical publications. Evident in the discussion was the government's intention to protect itself against writings that could harm its interests and, at the same time, the desire not to «stifle the *lumières*»: see J.-G. LOCRÉ, *Discussions sur la liberté de la presse, la censure, la propriété littéraire, l'imprimerie et la librairie qui ont eu lieu dans le Conseil d'État pendant les années 1808, 1809, 1810 et 1811*, Paris, Garnery, 1819, pp. 19, 46, 53, 93, 95.

¹⁵ The expression comes from S.-R.-N. DE CHAMFORT, *Cœuvres complètes de Chamfort [...]*, Paris, Maradan, 1812, troisième éd., t. 1, *Combien le génie des grands écrivains influe sur l'esprit de leur siècle* (1767), pp. 69-87.

¹⁶ The accounts in *Un ouvrier en 1820, manuscrit inédit de Jacques Étienne Bédé* (R. Gossez ed., Presses universitaires de France, 1984), show that the circles frequented by skilled labour-

The search for a broader readership had already been a feature of eighteenth-century ‘modern *philosophie*’. Several *écrivains philosophes* entertained the desire to reach a popular audience, but in almost all cases it was expressed as a plan for the near future rather than a precise communication strategy. In fact, the divulgation of the *lumières* in the pre-revolutionary period mainly targeted educated and affluent readers – the social groups that were best placed to implement or foster modernisation processes for institutions, the economy, culture, and society at the time.¹⁷

Publishers who reissued eighteenth-century philosophical works during the Restoration also recognised the importance of a wealthy readership willing to make significant investments in often costly books. For instance, true connoisseurs were offered more complete editions than those previously available, sometimes accompanied by comprehensive commentaries or previously unpublished texts. There were even writings hitherto published anonymously or under a pseudonym, now finally attributed to leading eighteenth-century *philosophes*.

Re-éditions of texts by the *philosophes* were one of the most dynamic elements of the book trade in Restoration France. Only a few years before, during the Empire, the inspectors of the *Direction générale de l'imprimerie et de la librairie* (The General Direction of the Printing and Book Trades)¹⁸ had condemned readers’ general disenchantment with the «works of the great masters». ¹⁹ By contrast, there was a dramatic rise in the fortunes of the novel, especially thanks to the clientele of *cabinets de lecture*, reading rooms where books could be borrowed for a modest fee. The groups that embraced the new reading practices most enthusiastically were young people and women, either well-off or of more humble status, and less impoverished members of the «working classes». ²⁰

ers included not only some individuals who could read but also some who could write memoirs. On the distribution of political writings among artisans and skilled workers in Paris, see N. JAKOBOWICZ, *1830, Le Peuple de Paris*, Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2009, especially Chapter 3.

¹⁷ See A. LILTI, *L'Héritage des Lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*, Paris, EHESS, Gallimard, Seuil, 2019, pp. 269-296; M. YAMASHITA, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau face au public. Problèmes d'identité*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2017, pp. 1-33.

¹⁸ This was an administrative body entirely dedicated to monitoring activities and professions connected with the production and distribution of books. It was established by an imperial decree on 5 February 1810 that set forth its duties and operating principles.

¹⁹ AN, *F18 30*, report drafted by Quesney, inspector of the *Librairie* in Rouen, 5 December 1810.

²⁰ On «book borrowers» and the evolution of reading practices in France at the beginning of the nineteenth century, see F. PARENT-LARDEUR, *Lire à Paris au temps de Balzac: les cabinets de*

The proliferation of novels under the constitutional monarchy continued to be one of the most discussed phenomena in the fields of culture and publishing. The new editions of eighteenth-century philosophical texts triggered an equally lively debate in around 1817. Suddenly, an increasing number of works by some of the «great masters» of literature were reprinted to meet the needs of a readership whose social cross-section was as broad as that of novel readers.

The idea of a potentially imminent revolution directly triggered by the widespread influence of eighteenth-century philosophical literature gained credence among supporters of the reigning dynasty in the 1820s. Some felt that this would be the first revolution with largely intellectual roots. Although an array of royalist authors and publicists had long and assiduously blamed the *philosophes* for the collapse of the Ancien Régime, various observers during the Restoration wondered to what extent philosophical works had infiltrated the ranks of the masses that had overthrown Louis XVI. Many were aware that the combination of innovative printing techniques (such as the stereotype) and the collapse of the pre-revolutionary «legal and institutional infrastructure of publishing»²¹ had created new conditions for the distribution of Enlightenment philosophy.

The Napoleonic government took measures to regulate the publishing and book trade sectors after the flood of printed texts and deregulation during the revolutionary period. However, this imperial attempt to restore conditions akin to those in the Ancien Régime through centralised control of the book trade and the recreation of a select group of authorised printers only yielded partial results.²² As a consequence, there were still clear traces of the post-1789 publishing boom during the Restoration period, especially in Paris.

The capital had just under 714,000 inhabitants in 1820,²³ along with 80 printers, almost double the figure for 1788 (44, when the population

lecture à Paris, 1815-1830, Paris, EHESS, 1999 [1981]; *Sociétés et cabinets de lecture entre Lumières et Romantisme*, actes du colloque (Genève, 1993), Genève, Société de Lecture, 1995; M. LYONS, *Le triomphe du livre. Une histoire sociologique de la lecture dans la France du XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Promodis, 1987 and Id., *Readers and Society in nineteenth-century France: workers, women, peasants*, Basingstoke, New York, Palgrave, 2001.

²¹ See C. HESSE 1989, p. 82. See also EAD., *Publishing and cultural politics in revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, University of California Press, 1991.

²² The decree of 11 February 1811 established that a maximum of 80 printers were allowed in Paris. The imperial decree of 5 February 1810 established that a maximum number of printers also had to be fixed for each *département*. The restored monarchy maintained these restrictions.

²³ *Extraits des recherches statistiques sur la ville de Paris et le département de la Seine [...]*, Paris, au Bureau du Bulletin, Treuttel et Wurtz, 1824, p. 10.

was around 680,000).²⁴ Similarly, there were 348 booksellers in 1820 compared to 241 in pre-revolutionary Paris, without considering the horde of *bouquinistes* and hawkers of books and pamphlets.²⁵ As works by the eighteenth-century *philosophes* were no longer protected by printing privileges and rights, they could be reproduced by any publisher during the Restoration.²⁶ Moreover, pre-publication censorship was no longer an issue as it had been abolished in 1815.

The most important changes, though, concerned readers. There was a gradual increase in literacy, albeit unevenly distributed, but the main development was the way in which society had become intensely politicised during the decade of revolution.²⁷ The Napoleonic government endeavoured to end inter-factional clashes. However, the combination of attempts to legitimise the new imperial dynasty and the sustained war effort led the regime to maintain society in a permanent state of ideological mobilisation.

The enactment of the *Charte octroyée* in 1814 flouted the imperial project to establish a «public opinion» that was as unique «as the Crown».²⁸ Elections and parliamentary debate, allowed a variety of political leanings to re-emerge after the Napoleonic departyisation of the political sphere and society. Against the wishes of the monarchy, structured movements formed with leaders, newspapers, associations, and other official or secret offshoots. In this way, political ‘proselytism’ re-entered the realm of a dialectical system of ideological rivalry.

The census criteria under the Restoration limited the right to vote to around 100,000 out of a population of nearly 30 million. An even more restricted number of individuals were eligible for election to the Chamber of Deputies. However, political communication, was never the sole

²⁴ See P. DELALAIN, *L'imprimerie et la librairie à Paris de 1789 à 1813*, Paris, Delalain frères, 1899, pp. LI-LX. Other sources mention 37 printers in business on the eve of the Revolution and a total of 213 individuals (booksellers and printers) in 1788: see C. HESSE 1991, Chapter 1, note 13 and Chapter 2, p. 60.

²⁵ With regard to 1820 see *Almanach du commerce de Paris, des départemens de la France et des principales villes du monde, année 1820*, Paris, au Bureau de l'Almanach, 1820, pp. 391-394 and 386-387.

²⁶ The imperial decree of 5 February 1810 established an author's right of ownership of works and inheritance rights, which expired twenty years after the death of the author and his wife, if any. This legislation remained in force during the Restoration.

²⁷ On this issue see M. VOVELLE, *La découverte de la politique: géopolitique de la révolution française*, Paris, Éd. la Découverte, 1993 and L. HUNT, *Relire l'histoire du politique*, in MARTIN 2005, pp. 117-124.

²⁸ AN, AF IV 990, «Note dictée en 1810 par l'empereur au ministre secrétaire d'État», cit.

prerogative of the inner circle of electors and the elected. Indeed, the abundance of literature produced by cultural historians in the last few decades has confirmed the picture of a heavily politicised society during the Restoration. Research conducted by Sheryl Kroen, Emmanuel Fureix, and Nathalie Jakobowicz has shown the widespread use of informal or indirect political practices that bypassed the limits of property qualification for the right to vote or be elected and influenced both the public and private spheres. Iconoclasm, street demonstrations, and attendance at funerals of political figures were a dual expression of loyalty and ideological tension. The political and social interpersonal violence that had exploded during the Hundred Days never disappeared completely in the ensuing years, just as the symbolic stigmatisation of certain groups and individuals remained in place. For example, the liberals re-embraced the revolutionary rhetoric against aristocrats and priests, while the authorities monitored or discriminated against individuals known for their revolutionary past or for their devotion to the regime of the ‘usurper’.²⁹

During the Restoration, political persuasions were also expressed through possession of emblems and public or private cults of martyrs of the Revolution and the Empire, or their counterparts, the heroes of the Republic and the Napoleonic age. Both newspapers and reports by police agents and spies tell of political discourse overheard in social environments like cafés, taverns, workshops in working-class areas, university faculties, and theatres.³⁰ Lastly, political engagement and education also included activities like purchasing and borrowing texts, silent reading, and listening to readings.

THE *RAPPORT GÉNÉRAL SUR LA PRESSE* OF 1825

In February 1825 a handwritten document entitled *Rapport général sur la presse* (General Report on the Press) provided an initial quantitative as-

²⁹ E. FUREIX, *L'œil blessé. Politiques de l'iconoclasme après la Révolution française*, Ceyzérieu, Champ Vallon, 2019; ID., *La France des larmes. Deuils politiques à l'âge romantique (1814-1840)*, Seyssel, Champ Vallon, 2009; ID., *Une transmission discontinuée. Présences sensibles de la Révolution française, de la Restauration aux années 1830*, in S. WAHNICH (ed.), *Histoire d'un trésor perdu. Transmettre la Révolution française*, Paris, Les Prairies ordinaires, 2013, pp. 149-193. On the purging of court staff see O. TORT, *La magistrature française face aux deux Restaurations (1814-1815)*, in E. FUREIX – J. LYON-CAEN (eds.), *1814-1815. Expériences de la discontinuité*, «Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle», 49, 2014, pp. 93-107.

³⁰ In addition to the works mentioned in note 4 see J.-C. CARON, *Généralisations romantiques, les étudiants de Paris et le quartier Latin. 1814-1851*, Paris, Colin, 1991; A.B. SPITZER, *The French generation of 1820*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1987; and JAKOBOWICZ 2009.

assessment of the trend of publishing new editions of works by the *philosophes*, an issue which had long provoked controversy. Written for Joseph de Villèle's ultra-royalist government by an employee at the Ministry of the Interior, the report specified that 2,379,400 volumes of philosophical literature had been published between January 1817 and December 1824, mostly in the capital.³¹ This figure was calculated from the *Librairie* registers, which included advance statements submitted by printers. The legislation in force obliged the latter to furnish the authorities with various details whenever a text was about to be printed: the title, the number of volumes in each edition, the size of the print run, and the format. A certain number of copies also had to be submitted to the offices of various institutions, including the Ministry of the Interior in Paris, before an edition could be published.³²

The author of the report was Jean Mutin (1765-1837), a publicist and fiercely loyal monarchist who had played an active role in the royal censorship system since the early days of the Restoration.³³ Mutin consulted official documentation on the work of printers with the explicit intention of removing any ambivalence about the scale of the new 'philosophical upsurge'.³⁴ As a result, though, his method ignored statistical inaccuracies due to illegal publishing. Furthermore, the report did not claim to include all texts by eighteenth-century *philosophes* that had been reprinted over the previous few years; Mutin only included those that he deemed a danger to the monarchy and the government, works which he described as «impious and seditious».

Although the report had been written for members of the royal government, its content was soon leaked to the press in the spring of 1825, appearing first in Catholic newspapers and then in other periodicals.³⁵ Jean-

³¹ AN, F18 261, «Rapport général sur la presse», 12 February 1825. For analysis of the content of the document see V. GRANATA, *La monarchia impossibile: un rapporto sulla stampa di opposizione nella Francia di Carlo X*, «Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica», 2, 2005, pp. 109-153.

³² Law of 21 October 1814, and decrees of 24 October 1814 and 9 January 1828. Copies were submitted to prefectures in the *départements*.

³³ For a biography of this figure see GRANATA 2005, pp. 108-109.

³⁴ The editions mentioned in the report were also mentioned in the *Bibliographie de la France: ou Journal général de l'imprimerie et de la librairie* between 1817 and 1824. Published by the Parisian printer-publisher Pilet, the *Journal* featured weekly updates on recently and soon-to-be published editions.

³⁵ *Mémorial catholique* was the first journal that disclosed the tables in which Jean Mutin listed new editions of texts written by the eighteenth-century *philosophes* (*Extrait du Mémorial catholique de mai 1825*, Paris, de l'imprimerie de Lachevardière fils, 1825). The article in *Mémorial* was reproduced in several collections of Catholic periodicals, as well as texts published by members of the French episcopate. The May 1825 issue of *Les Tablettes du clergé* and the edition of *L'Ami de la religion et du roi* published on 4 June 1825 only included the general data about new editions.

Gaston de Pins, Apostolic Administrator of Lyon, alerted the pope in July about the «flood» of philosophical texts on French soil, signalling «fresh calamity» for Church and Crown alike.³⁶

The figures reported by Mutin have been cited in various research on the cultural, political, and religious history of the Restoration. The authors of these studies have drawn data from journals and other publications in the 1820s that featured the results of Mutin's work.³⁷ Yet, the fifty-five-page document drafted in the Ministry of the Interior was more than just a statistical presentation. Jean Mutin examined re-editions of philosophical works as part of a comprehensive analysis of texts published under the aegis of the 'liberal party'. Mutin thus described a complex political communication system with four interlinked elements: eighteenth-century philosophical works, journals produced by the liberal movement, new historiography developed by authors with the same political leanings, and memoirs expressing the hopes and glories of the revolutionary period and the Napoleonic age. The interweaving of these threads produced a unique pattern of values, maxims, and principles.

In keeping with its title, the 1825 *Rapport général sur la presse* outlines a sociology of the circulation of philosophical works in Restoration France. A similar approach is adopted in the reports and correspondence of those who were appointed to monitor the book trade during the same period. These sources should in turn be contextualised within the development of political life between the reigns of Louis XVIII and Charles X. Indeed, it was during this transition period that the new political role of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was defined.

THE TURNING POINT OF 1817

The market for the works of Voltaire and Rousseau lay stagnant during the Consulate and the Empire. The few publishers that ventured to issue the complete works of 'the patriarch of Ferney' never managed to

³⁶ Archivio storico Segreteria di Stato, *Sezione per i rapporti con gli Stati. Fondo Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari, Periodo I, Francia*, pos. 330, fasc. 236, letter of 22 July 1825.

³⁷ See for example CARON 1991, p. 273, McMAHON 2001, p. 172 and above all M. LYONS, *Reading culture and writing practices in nineteenth-century France*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2008, pp. 78-82, which includes the general data in Mutin's report, taken from G. CHOLVY – Y.-M. HILAIRE, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine*, I, 1800-1880, Toulouse, Privat, 1990, p. 75 and from the issue of the periodical *L'Ami de la Religion et du Roi* published on 4 June 1825. Lyons comments that the information in the report did not take account of significant aspects for determining the social composition of the readership such as the format and price of editions. These elements are instead present in Mutin's handwritten document.

conclude their projects.³⁸ Two editions of the *Dictionnaire philosophique* were published in 1809 and 1813, but Voltaire's ongoing success at the time was mainly determined by his poetry and plays. As regards Rousseau, there were no follow-ups to the three editions of his complete works published between 1801 and the beginning of the Empire. The only works by Rousseau reissued during the imperial age were *Les Confessions*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Émile*, and *Lettres sur la botanique*. Similarly, the only two editions of the complete works of Montesquieu during the Napoleonic age were published in 1803 and 1805. As far as d'Holbach is concerned, a new edition of *La Contagion sacré* was printed in 1807, but there were not more. Raynal, on the other hand, seems to have faded into almost total oblivion.

A few new reprints of works by eighteenth-century *philosophes* were published during the early years of the Restoration but to little fanfare. In 1817, though, re-éditions became a central issue in public opinion. In September 1816 the king had taken the decision to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies elected after the Hundred Days, an assembly dominated by *ultraroyalistes*. Disappointed by the policies of Louis XVIII, these intransigent monarchists had claimed the supremacy of parliamentary powers over royal authority. The dissolution of the rebellious Chamber was recommended by Élie Decazes, the Minister of Police. Like the rest of the government, he was determined to curb reactionary forces and seek support from more moderate political factions that were loyal to the spirit of the *Charte octroyée* rather than to an abstract monarchical ideal.

Suitably 'oiled' by the intervention of the prefects, the electoral machine produced a majority that favoured the executive in October 1816. However, the resolute royalists still held significant influence in the lower chamber of parliament. Decazes used every available means to manipulate the press, consolidating the general image of an ultraroyalist faction that threatened both the social peace and the dynasty. In reply, the new opposition accused the ministers of wanting to nullify the only genuine supporters of the legitimate monarchy.

Three new editions of the complete works of Voltaire were announced by the Parisian booksellers Desoër and Plancher, and the printer Perronneau in early 1817. Although they included some writings that had not been in Kehl's edition, Desoër specified on a flyer that there were only twelve volumes in his edition. Compared to the seventy or ninety tomes of previous releases, this was described as a printing exploit by the «Journal général de France» on 22 January.

³⁸ *Œuvres de Voltaire, avec préfaces, avertissements, notes etc. par M. Beuchot*, vol. 1, *Biographie*, Paris, Chez Lefèvre et Firmin Didot frères, 1834, p. xxi.

As the biggest political newspaper that defended the interests of the constitutional monarchy and the civil achievements of the Revolution, «Le Constitutionnel» featured these new editions prominently from the start. The issue of 18 January 1817 commented ironically: «This accursed philosophy is clearly making extremely rapid and alarming progress on a daily basis, given that booksellers are barely managing to cope with demand for the works in which its tenets are conveyed». The same newspaper once again applauded the new editions on 21 February, stressing that «The many truths [that Voltaire] spread [in his writings] will pass through all the veins of the social body and will finally make France ripe for liberty».³⁹ Only a few weeks beforehand, on 27 January, «Le Constitutionnel» welcomed the imminent publication of the complete works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau by the Parisian publisher Belin, who guaranteed a maximum of seven volumes.

The royalist press spoke out against the new editions of the works of Voltaire and Rousseau during the same few months. On 26 February 1817 «La Gazette de France» blamed Voltaire for the worst excesses of the Revolution: «What we are sure of, because we saw it with our own eyes, is that priests were drowned and nobles were hanged with the fine reasoning spawned and spread by Voltaire». Strong condemnation also came from the pen of Louis de Bonald in the «Journal des Débats». As one of the leading exponents of the *côté droit*, the viscount pointed out that the civil and religious authorities had denounced the writer's works on several occasions during his lifetime. In de Bonald's eyes, the experience of the French Revolution irrefutably confirmed the soundness of these judgements, an aspect that should have led the government to prohibit new editions of this author's works.⁴⁰

This opinion was shared by Georges Masson, the author of a pamphlet entitled *Deux mots au Constitutionnel et un mot au Mercure au sujet des nouvelles éditions des Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, published by Le Clère in 1817. Masson replied to Étienne de Jouy, the journalist who had condemned the enemies of *philosophie* in «Le Mercure», accusing them of wanting to reawaken civil conflict and the scourge of fanaticism. Jouy was thus lambasted for demonstrating the same intolerance that Voltaire had shown towards his detractors and the same ruthless hatred that the revolutionaries had directed at their political opponents:

³⁹ Non-periodical publications were not subject to preventive censorship. Such measures were instead established for periodicals by a decree passed on 8 August 1815.

⁴⁰ Issue of 15 March 1817.

You, who pass yourselves off [...] as “friends of humanity and tolerance”, with what “tolerance” do you treat French citizens who do not have the pleasure of sharing your opinion about the mistakes made by the great man? And with what “humanity” do you prepare the accusations against them? Fouquier-Tinville [...] would not have been able to do any better.⁴¹

In another pamphlet entitled *Questions importantes sur les nouvelles éditions des œuvres complètes de Voltaire et de J.J. Rousseau*,⁴² Claude Hippolyte Clausel de Montals claimed that article 8 of the *Charte octroyée*, which guaranteed French people the right to publish and have printed their opinions, did not apply to re-editions. He felt that it protected free expression of the views of the time, those which might help create informed public opinion in line with the new representative regime. Voltaire and Rousseau, by contrast, had long been dead and their ideas referred to a bygone era.⁴³

In 1817 the clash over re-editions of eighteenth-century philosophical works intensified during Lent. The vicars-general of the diocese of Paris issued a pastoral letter in February to warn the faithful against such publications.⁴⁴ During Easter week, in April, a group of Catholic missionaries publicly burned texts by Voltaire and Rousseau during a trip to Bourges. Similar bonfires soon became an integral part of the rituals adopted by French Catholic missions, who journeyed the length and breadth of the country until the end of the Restoration period.⁴⁵

In April 1817 twelve out of twenty-nine issues of «Le Constitutionnel» contained passages on the works and personalities of Voltaire and Rousseau. Together with this daily newspaper, the «Journal du Commerce» and «Le Censeur», the self-proclaimed voice of industrious and liberal France, also described the rapid process of democratisation of Enlightenment culture. On 29 April «Le Constitutionnel» depicted Voltaire in the guise of an immanent king of France and nineteenth-century Europe:

A great writer is truly a power. However, this special breed of sovereign does not lose his power when he loses his life. Indeed, even after his death he continues

⁴¹ P. 32.

⁴² The text was published in 1817 by Adrien Egron in Paris.

⁴³ Pp. 6, 21, 28.

⁴⁴ See *Des abus de la liberté de la presse depuis la Restauration, ou considérations sur la propagation des mauvais livres*, Paris, Au bureau de la Bibliothèque catholique, 1826.

⁴⁵ On the missions see P. BOUTRY, *Les missions catholiques de la Restauration: réflexions historiographiques*, in P. D'HOLLANDER (ed.), *L'Église dans la rue: les cérémonies extérieures du culte en France au XIX^e siècle*, Limoges, PULIM, 2001, pp. 31-56. On the book burnings see LYONS 2008, pp. 65-91, but also Chapter 2, which provides quantitative data about the success of novels and eighteenth-century philosophical literature during the Restoration; KROEN 2000, pp. 83-89.

to reign authoritatively over the nation that has been enlightened by his works. But this is not all; he also leads foreign nations to the truth by giving them opinions, changing their customs, and transforming their governments. His writings contain certain precepts that are transformed into law by politics [...]. The works of the patriarch of *philosophie* [...] now constitute the tenets of our time.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL UPSURGE

Liberal representation in the lower Chamber of parliament grew between 1818 and 1819. With its increasingly distinctive political identity, the *côté gauche* not only supported the constitutional monarchy but also actively defended any remnants of the Revolution and the Empire in institutions and legislation, as well as in the social and economic dynamics of the Restoration. Counteracting ultra-royalism continued to be a priority for royal governments between 1817 and 1820; after being appointed President of the Council of Ministers in 1819, Decazes was a steadfast advocate of this policy.

The only member of the royal family that would have been able to secure a future for the dynasty – the Duke of Berry – was assassinated in February 1820 by a «child of the Republic» who was obsessed with the figure of Napoleon. Accusations flew both inside and outside the parliamentary Chambers; ultra-royalists blamed the government for effectively arming the assassin by enabling the growth of political forces rooted in the revolutionary tradition. Decazes was forced to resign, and the ultra-royalists managed to push through a set of exceptional laws in March. One of these laws reimposed preventive surveillance of newspaper articles, a measure previously adopted after the Hundred Days and abolished in 1819. Ever pugnacious, «Le Courier» and «Le Constitutionnel» spoke out against the interference of censorship using printing stratagems: ellipsis where sentences had been removed and blank space to show where articles had been rejected. On 13 April 1820 «Le Courier» published a suggestion to fill these gaps with passages «taken from the works of Rousseau, Mably, Voltaire, Fénelon, and Massillon».

While reverberations from the uprisings and constitutional movements in nearby countries reached France in early summer, the Chambers of parliament started debating a new electoral law. The ultra-royalists and moderate centre supported the measure, thereby isolating the liberals. Paris became a scene of turmoil for days on end, with hordes of university students and workers applauding the deputies of the *côté gauche* and singing the praises of the *Charte octroyée*. There were even cries in favour of the emperor. During this period the working-class areas of the city became breeding grounds

for social protest and proto-trade-union action, which continued over the following years too. One insurrectional attempt to overthrow the monarchy was discovered and thwarted in August, while others were foiled between 1821 and 1822. These plots drew inspiration from *Carbonari* organisations and saw the involvement of army regiments, senior, and junior officers discharged after the collapse of the Empire, and a branch of the liberal movement that advocated subversive methods.⁴⁶ At the 1820 elections, after the approval of a law that gave «major taxpayers» the right to vote twice, the hardline monarchists established themselves as the majority power. An entirely ultra-royalist executive was formed for the first time a year later.

The *côté droit* continued to dominate the Chambers of parliament and leadership of the government until 1828. Tighter controls were imposed on periodicals during these years. A law of 17 March 1822 threatened to suspend or close newspapers whose *esprit* (an extremely vague term) seemed to go against the religion of state or the authority of the king. Another law, promulgated on 25 March, imposed heavy prison sentences for anyone using any means of publication to foster hatred or disrespect of the government; question the order of succession to the throne; or insult the religion of the State. At the same time, university faculties were purged of staff that professed liberal beliefs. In 1824 Monsignor Frayssinous, known for his conferences of Saint-Sulpice against eighteenth-century *philosophie*, was appointed head of a new ministry that tellingly blended religion and teaching: the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs and Public Instruction.

The legislative arsenal deployed against «seditious» writings by the ultra-royalist majority meant that re-editions of Enlightenment works assumed crucial importance in the liberal communication strategy, inasmuch as it was easier to circumvent the law of 25 March with these texts than with others. Indeed, as Mutin's report underlined, the magistracy tended not to apply these measures to re-editions of older publications. Furthermore, in many cases re-editions were ultimately protected by the slow reaction time of judicial censors, given that texts were exempt from legal action six months after their date of publication.

With the criminal courts cracking down mainly on writings inspired by the political debate of the time, the number of re-editions of works by the

⁴⁶ On these insurrectionary plans see J.-O. BOUDON, *Les quatre sergents de La Rochelle. Le dernier crime de la monarchie*, Paris, Passés Composés, 2021; P.A. LAMBERT, *La charbonnerie française: 1821-1823. Du secret en politique*, Lyon, Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1995; B. GAINOT – P. SERNA (eds.), *Secret et République: 1795-1840*, Clermont-Ferrand, Presses universitaires Blaise-Pascal, 2003; A.B. SPITZER, *Old hatred and young hopes, the French carbonari against the Bourbon restoration*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971.

philosophes increased. In February 1825 Mutin reviewed twelve editions of the complete works of Voltaire published between the beginning of 1817 and December 1824, as well as thirteen editions of the complete works of Rousseau, making a total of 2,090,500 volumes. This trend revealed by the *Rapport général sur la presse* was destined to continue unbroken until the end of the decade: twenty more editions of Voltaire's works and ten editions of Rousseau's works would be started between 1825 and 1830.⁴⁷

The censor stressed that publishers of «complete works» had now adapted their sales methods to include new categories of readers. For example, an edition was released gradually at a rate of one or two volumes (or instalments) a month, or one a week. Payments were also divided into instalments in order to help those who could not afford to purchase all the volumes at once. Furthermore, thanks to subscriptions, customers undertook to purchase a complete works before the books were even printed, thereby benefitting from a particularly favourable price.

The new reprints of the complete works of Voltaire and Rousseau were often sold at two or three francs a volume, sometimes even at 42 *sous*.⁴⁸ Mutin commented on the matter thus: «What young man at our *grandes écoles*, what industrious worker is unable to put aside three or even only two francs?». ⁴⁹ When personal savings did not suffice, the censor added, collections were made, especially among manual workers. Some publishers were also quick to adapt their offer to customer needs. The Parisian printer and bookseller Touquet, for instance, had the foresight to publish four different editions of the works of Voltaire on a rising price scale: the budget version, known as «*des chaumières*» (intended for those of modest means), the mid-range edition «*du commerce*» (for merchants), and top-of-the-range publications «*de la moyenne et grande propriété*» (for small and large proprietors). Another emblematic publishing case was Taillard, who put Diderot's *La Religieuse* and *Jacques le fataliste* on sale at 3 francs in 1822 but offered a special price of 20 *sous* to young customers.⁵⁰

Mutin felt that such prices would definitely not cover printing costs. Some publishers were only able to offer them, he claimed, because they could count on the main financial backers of the printing industry and the

⁴⁷ The figures on the editions of the years 1825-1830 are taken from *Bibliographie de la France*.

⁴⁸ «Le Constitutionnel» of 11 March 1821 quoted this price for each 500-page volume of «*Voltaire complet*» issued by the Parisian publisher Touquet on a weekly basis.

⁴⁹ The wages of skilled labourers and artisans were generally between two and five francs a day. See BERTIER DE SAUVIGNY 1974, pp. 236-237.

⁵⁰ One *sou* was worth roughly five centimes during the Restoration.

liberal movement: bankers Jacques Laffitte and Casimir Perier. In addition to booksellers, stallholders also sold texts like Diderot's *La Religieuse* and *Jacques le fataliste*, or Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* at attractive prices. Some simply took advantage of books that had come back into fashion, but others, according to the authorities, were driven by political aims. This was the case, for example, with numerous *bouquinistes* formerly from the ranks of the imperial army who had been furloughed after the restoration of the Bourbon dynasty.⁵¹ Furthermore, as Mutin pointed out, the works of the *philosophes* could easily be borrowed from *cabinets de lecture*, at the price of 2 *sous* a volume.⁵²

Although the censor focused on new editions of the complete works of Voltaire and Rousseau, other authors were also considered in the *Rapport général sur la presse*. Indeed, Mutin's survey of «impious and seditious» eighteenth-century texts reprinted between 1817 and 1824 also included the complete works of Helvétius (one edition), Diderot and Saint-Lambert (two editions of each). There were even more editions of single texts. The censor calculated a total of 288,900 volumes, in addition to those of the complete works of Voltaire and Rousseau (2,090,500). Some of the most frequently published works were Rousseau's *Contrat social* and *Émile* (nine and six editions respectively), Dupuis's *Origine de tous les cultes* (eight), and d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* (four). Later writings like Condorcet's *Esquisses d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain* and Volney's *Ruines* were republished in four and ten editions respectively. Two editions of both Raynal's *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes* and Destutt de Tracy's *Éléments d'idéologie* were issued, while four different editions of *Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne*, published under the name of Fréret, rolled off the press. The other texts examined by Mutin included four editions of the *Lettres persanes*, but not the nine editions of the complete works of Montesquieu issued during this period, to which a further six were added between 1826 and 1828.

⁵¹ See AN, *F18 551*, «État de bouquinistes étalagistes anciennement autorisés qui sollicitent le renouvellement de leurs permissions»; *F18 581*: «Lettres du préfet de Police au ministre de l'Intérieur», 27 and 29 October 1823; 3 and 13 November 1823; 22 March 1824; and 25 October 1829.

⁵² In 1825 the police prohibited booksellers from lending a series of texts of eighteenth-century philosophy, duly listed in a notice. See F. DRUJON, *Catalogue des ouvrages, écrits et dessins de toute nature poursuivis, supprimés ou condamnés depuis le 21 octobre 1814 jusqu'au 13 juillet 1877*, Paris, Rouveyre, 1879, p. 277. The measure was taken to compensate for the hesitation of the Royal Courts, which had condemned some re-editions of works by the *philosophes* but without systematically banning such publications. In 1825 and 1826 the Royal Courts proved to be one of the hubs of monarchical opposition to the reactionary shift by the Villèle government. The irremovability of the judges effectively made the magistracy less subject to the political momentum originating from the executive.

Mutin felt duty bound, though, to mention the 1822 reprint of the two most iconic pamphlets of the eighteenth-century revolutions. The first of these was Thomas Paine's anti-monarchical tirade *Common Sense*, whose previous French edition dated back to the time of the National Convention. The second was *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?* by Sieyès. The distribution of this text, never republished after 1789, received widespread coverage in the press. On 31 May 1822, writing in the royalist newspaper «Le Drapeau Blanc», Jacques-Barthélemy Salgues expressed his dismay at the rehabilitation of a pamphlet that had played an instrumental role in launching the revolutionary process. The publicist noted that the recent historiographical work by the liberal author Guizot had subtly attempted to endorse an idea first set forth by Sieyès, namely that anyone outside the Third Estate was an enemy of the nation. Indeed, he argued, Guizot's distinction between Gauls and Franks in early French history drew a clear parallel to the situation previously outlined by the eighteenth-century author. This implied, Salgues argued, that «the plebeian people» had to complete the unfinished business of the Revolution and proceed «philosophically» with the eradication of the aristocracy.⁵³

Many reprints of eighteenth-century philosophical texts differed considerably from previous editions, first and foremost in material terms. The same edition was often printed on two or three different types of paper with tiered pricing. There was also competition among publishers to fit texts by the *philosophes* into an increasingly small number of volumes. Even the formats became more compact: 8vo and 12mo were common sizes, but there was an increasing number of 18mo editions and even a few 32mo volumes.

The new editions also stood apart from the eighteenth-century originals due to their content; publishers and printers supplemented the texts with new features like explanations for readers, prefaces, biographies, indexes, and footnotes. Mutin noted, though, that paratextual elements were often taken from editions published during the revolutionary age. One such example was the introductory note added to the edition of d'Holbach's *Essai sur les préjugés* published by Niogret in 1822. Written by L.J.J Daube in 1792, this introduction featured out-and-out republican rhetoric like: «Priests [...] have distorted moral ideas to such an extent that the worst of crimes in their eyes are what the Greeks and Romans deemed [...] a duty, namely the assassination of tyrants».⁵⁴

⁵³ Issue of 31 May 1822.

⁵⁴ P. 11 of the Niogret edition, which reproduced Desray's 1792 edition.

While some editions were augmented compared to previous releases, others were specially adapted for those with little time for reading or with only a cursory education. It was sometimes apparent that they were supposed to be read aloud. In some cases, «maxims» were first selected from long complex essays and then, as Mutin put it, «ordered in such a way as to constitute a series of lessons». The results were effectively lists of slogans, like the one published by Pollantrou in 1822 based on the *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes*.⁵⁵

The fact that some texts were given several reprints in a short space of time shows that publishers expected the demand to continue. In this respect, the newspapers of the 'liberal party' played a crucial role in stimulating the appetite of readers with adverts, reviews, and frequent references to the *philosophes* and their works, promoting them as must-reads of benefit to all. In 1825 «Le Constitutionnel» alone had more subscriptions (18,000) than the six newspapers funded by the ultra-royalist government put together (15,250), while two other papers with liberal leanings – «Le Courier» and «Le Journal du Commerce» – had a combined subscription of 5,525.⁵⁶ As Mutin perceptively noted in his report, the limited readership of royalist papers was connected to their reputation as official or semi-official outlets of the executive. By contrast, the editorial team of «Le Constitutionnel» devised a successful formula by expressing moderate opposition, a stance that allowed them to gain an aura of credibility and win over royalist readers too. The censor went on to point out another distinctive feature of the paper: as many of its subscribers managed establishments open to the public, it was also available to their customers, generally free of charge.

What café, what *cabinet de lecture* in Paris and throughout France does not have a copy of *Le Constitutionnel*? Which of these places, even if extremely popular, does not have several copies to meet the needs of their clientele?

While the liberal press publicised re-editions of Enlightenment works, the world of the theatre also attempted to ride the 'philosophical upsurge'. Some Parisian theatrical companies planned to stage comedies or vaudeville plays like *Une journée de Voltaire* or *Jean-Jacques dans son ermitage* in 1822. However, the censors prevented them from doing so, fearing that such performances would highlight the works of the two *philosophes* «for

⁵⁵ Such practices were not new. See, for example, H.-J. LÜSEBRINK, *L'Histoire des Deux Indes et ses extraits: un mode de dispersion textuelle au XVIII^e siècle*, «Littérature», 69, 1988, pp. 28-41.

⁵⁶ These data are included in Mutin's report, AN, *F18 261*.

the appreciation of audiences, in which there are always many young people of both sexes». ⁵⁷

RETURNING TO THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION

The 'liberal party' was experiencing one of its most difficult moments when Jean Mutin drafted his report. The assassination of the Duke of Berry triggered a reaction which led to a loss of votes, as did the involvement of some party members in the insurrectionary tactics deployed between 1820 and 1822. The entire liberal group thus became associated in ultra-royalist rhetoric with the «Jacobins» who were threatening the monarchies of other European countries. ⁵⁸ At the same time, the Villèle government took the credit for renewed economic prosperity and France's military victory against the Spanish revolutionaries in 1823. Now reduced to a meagre handful of deputies, the liberals were prompted to step up the political fight outside the parliamentary arena. In this way, the conspiracy approach based on the initiative of a few plotters was replaced by a major mobilisation campaign for all social groups interested in defending the positions, identities, rights, and economic interests created by the Revolution and the Empire.

The liberal lexicon made an increasing distinction in this respect between the monarchy and the ultra-royalist parliamentary majority, on one hand, and a rival political force to which various names were given: France, the nation, public opinion, and the «general will». On 10 August 1825 «Le Constitutionnel» stated that «The opposition [...] is in the entire nation», repeating an expression frequently used at the time in liberal newspapers. When commenting on the new edition of the pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État?* two years previously, «Le Journal du commerce» had argued that the descendants of those criticised by Sieyès were still hostile to civil equality: «Violence and deception attack this right enshrined by the constitutional charter to no avail [...], this crime of *lèse-nation* signals a new struggle, whose success can be presumed». ⁵⁹

The opposition championed talent, education, and industry as the only truly deserving titles of merit and criticised every political attempt to rein-

⁵⁷ Bibliothèque nationale de France, 3032. Report by the censor Jacques-Corentin Royou on the *opéra-comique La Vallée de Montmorency ou Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans son ermitage* (1798), 25 June 1822.

⁵⁸ The «Gazette de France» claimed on 2 September 1820: «For the French royalists, there are no longer any liberals but Bonapartists and revolutionaries».

⁵⁹ Issue of 14 March 1823.

state birthright privileges or restore a powerful landed aristocracy. There was an even more relentless liberal campaign against the reactionary clergy, Catholic missions, the *Congrégation*,⁶⁰ and the Jesuits. The latter had secretly returned to the country after their expulsion in 1764 and had become active again thanks to the tacit agreement of the authorities. In response to the clerical onslaught, the opposition staunchly defended freedoms of speech, conscience, and religion.

The causes sponsored by the liberal movement became particularly burning issues in 1825, firstly with the discussion of a bill to compensate former owners of nationalised property and then with the approval of laws to facilitate the creation of new religious congregations and to punish the desecration of sacred vessels and consecrated hosts with forced labour for life or the death penalty. The liberals were enshrined a year later as the guardians of civil equality when there was a parliamentary battle over re-establishing the right of primogeniture.

In these circumstances, the opposition publicly celebrated the first fundamental achievements of the Revolution, defining them as the common and permanent heritage of the French. The Revolution was thus distanced from the Terror, dispelling an association frequently made by uncompromising legitimists. Similar objections were levelled at the absolutist assumptions of the *Charte octroyée*, whose rights and freedoms had been presented as the result of the reformist tradition of the monarchy. The Revolution reappeared in liberal prose as the generator of now indispensable progress that the «nation» demanded and was willing to defend.

RADICAL USES OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

A great deal of counter-revolutionary literature and discourse had already demonised *philosophie* and the *philosophes* as a whole by the end of the eighteenth century. Whether written by lay or clerical authors, texts inspired by the most orthodox form of legitimism endorsed the idea of a coherent body of complementary philosophical doctrines and a group of writers jointly responsible for destroying a social and political order prescribed by God, nature, and history. The pluralistic character of the Enlightenment was first overlooked and then completely disregarded,

⁶⁰ On this religious association see M. LEROY, *Le mythe jésuite. De Béranger à Michelet*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1992, pp. 11-64; J.-O. BOUDON, *L'influence de la Congrégation sur les nominations épiscopales dans la première moitié du XIX^e siècle*, «Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France», 78, 1992, pp. 21-34; M.B. DE LAVERGNÉE, *Mythes politiques et analyse de réseaux. La Congrégation à Paris sous la Restauration*, «Histoire & mesure» (online), XXIV, 1, 2009.

replaced by an interpretation based on the trauma of the Revolution. In other words, the 'radical' rejection of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment stemmed from the perception that 'modern philosophy' was altogether a 'radically' subversive and destructive phenomenon.

Voltaire and Rousseau were by far the most frequently cited authors in critiques of *philosophie*, as if they embodied an entire intellectual movement. The special animosity reserved for these two writers was the very antithesis of the honours that had been bestowed on them by the Revolution at a time when they were celebrated as creators and inspirers of the revolutionary events.⁶¹ During the Empire and the Restoration, the legitimist clergy and the opponents of the Revolution singled out Voltaire as the «leader of the impious in the eighteenth century».⁶² They blamed him for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the September massacres, and the de-Christianisation of 1793. Classed as the «first author» of the Revolution while it was still in progress,⁶³ the *philosophe* attracted royalist ire for supposedly spreading damaging material that undermined the authority of the traditional powers. While Voltaire was considered the main culprit of the Revolution, Rousseau was accused of being its «legislator».⁶⁴ In the legitimist perspective, Rousseau's paradigms of popular sovereignty and general will paved the way for the new forms of revolutionary tyranny exercised by the Assemblies, the committees, the factions, and the most brutal and dangerous social classes.

The accusations levelled against the two *philosophes* were not based, however, solely on their theoretical work but also on the ways in which they expressed and spread their ideas. These «men of genius» epitomised one of the most disruptive aspects of 'modern philosophy' by spreading philosophical thought outside learned circles and academic institutes, using a variety of channels to convey their ideas.⁶⁵ While Voltaire contributed massively to

⁶¹ The progress of the Revolution precluded any 'aristocratic', conservative, or counter-revolutionary usage of the works of Voltaire and Rousseau, even though such uses had emerged in the first revolutionary Assemblies. See J.A. LEITH, *Les trois apothéoses de Voltaire*, «Annales historiques de la Révolution française», LI, 236, 1979, pp. 161-209 and R. BARNY, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau dans la Révolution*, «Dix-huitième Siècle», 6, 1974, pp. 59-98; Id., *Rousseau dans la Révolution: le personnage de Jean-Jacques et les débuts du culte révolutionnaire, 1787-1791*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 1986.

⁶² T.-F. DE JOLLY, *Mémorial sur la Révolution française [...]*, Paris, Beaucé-Rusand, 1824, p. 230.

⁶³ «Mercure de France», 7 August 1790, p. 27.

⁶⁴ J.-B. DUVOISIN, *Défense de l'ordre social contre les principes de la Révolution française*, Leipsick, 1801 [1798], p. 74.

⁶⁵ This expression is also taken from CHAMFORT 1812, vol. I, p. 73.

the introduction of the questions and language of *philosophie* into worldly environments and courts, Rousseau did the same in the personal, private sphere. In order to disseminate their philosophical writing, both forged styles that were used as models for more than half a century. They were also masterly users of different literary genres, successfully accommodating the tastes of various categories of reader. Furthermore, they managed their public images more extensively and effectively than other authors, also achieving iconic status outside the ranks of their readers.⁶⁶

The recognised greatness of Voltaire and Rousseau in the literary realm served as a basis for the political authoritativeness of their thinking during the Revolution. However, the historian Jonathan Israel excludes them from the most ideologically radical branch of the Enlightenment. He describes Voltaire's tendencies as conservative and compares Rousseau's stance to that of the *anti-Lumières* after 1754.⁶⁷ In fact, the reason why the two *philosophes* established themselves in the counter-revolutionary imaginary partly transcended their ideas: the effectiveness of their philosophical discourse was also connected to the effectiveness of their texts in terms of literary quality and style. In his work *Louis XVI détrôné avant d'être roi, ou tableau des causes nécessitantes de la Révolution française* (1800), Abbot Liévin-Bonaventure Proyart noted Voltaire's «prolific writing [...] eager to excel in all genres», underlining that he had elevated the ability of *philosophisme* to «beguile minds» to new heights. Rousseau, on the other hand, had been a master at «covering over old mistakes with dazzling colours and conferring them with the appeal of the new through the elegance of form».⁶⁸ Abbot Jean-Baptiste Duvoisin was of the same opinion in his pamphlet *Défense de l'ordre social contre les principes de la Révolution française*, published on the eve of the Consulate: «the principle of the sovereignty of the people [...] has acquired new splendour thanks to Rousseau's eloquent style».⁶⁹ Having become common observations, these comments were also reiterated in 1824 in Toussaint de Jolly's *Mémorial de la Révolution française*, a popular work that bemoaned the harmful effects of Voltaire's literary genius and his «writing that is as versatile as it is beguiling».⁷⁰

⁶⁶ On this point see FERRONE 2014, pp. 359-415 and FERRONE 2019, Chapters 5 and 6; A. LILTI, *Figures publiques. L'invention de la célébrité (1750-1850)*, Paris, Fayard, 2014, Chapters 1-5 and RIBARD 2000.

⁶⁷ J. ISRAEL, *Enlightenment contested: philosophy, modernity, and the emancipation of man: 1670-1752*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Pp. 60 and 65. Hamburg was given as the place of publication of the text.

⁶⁹ DUVOISIN 1801 [1798], p. 74.

⁷⁰ JOLLY 1824, p. 231.

Mutin's research confirms that the Enlightenment revival started from the works of Voltaire and Rousseau but then expanded rapidly to include other authors, supported by much of the Parisian publishing world and opposition political groups. While the most stubborn opponents of the revolutionary legacy rejected *philosophie* outright, the liberals salvaged a huge composite philosophical legacy developed over approximately eighty years. Just as royalist author Vincent Lombard de Langres outlined the general lineage «of the families of sophist men of letters from 1760 onwards»,⁷¹ only identifying successive generations of philosophers without distinguishing between ideological movements, Restoration reprints generally reinstated the multiple voices of 'modern philosophy' but as part of a single harmonious system.

In order to make *philosophie* politically operative in the new context of the Restoration, the liberal press strove to reconcile the various positions expressed in the Enlightenment debate. Voltaire's warnings against obscurantism and intolerance, and Rousseau's concept of general will were the perfect match for the political needs of liberals in the 1820s, which involved challenging clerical interference in State affairs and delegitimising a government that promoted the interests of a minority group. Nevertheless, the liberal sector also embraced the atheism and materialism of d'Holbach, Helvétius, and Diderot. Most notably, «Le Constitutionnel» repeatedly dismissed allegations that Voltaire was an atheist and accused the royalist press of calumny against him. At the same time, though, the newspaper defended the right to religious indifference and lack of religiosity with equal steadfastness.

In a similar way, the opposition harnessed the full spectrum of the political and social utopias and ideas developed in the Enlightenment 'laboratory', ranging from Montesquieu's Ancien Régime constitutionalism to Thomas Paine's republicanism. In those same years, the opposition to ultra-royalism exploited any memoir or historical reconstruction of the nation's past that could help to legitimise the legacy of the French Revolution. For this purpose, similar publishing strategies were adopted to those employed to distribute the works of the *philosophes*. In one approach, authors like Guizot, Thiers, Thierry, Mignet, and Barante used their works to highlight the long-standing battle of the «middle classes» against the despotic tendencies of the monarchy and the abuses of the privileged classes. In another tactic, a series of historical summaries and economic texts by other liberal authors

⁷¹ V. LOMBARD DE LANGRES, *Des Jacobins, depuis 1789 jusqu'à ce jour, ou État de l'Europe en janvier 1822*, Paris, Chez les marchands de nouveautés, 1822, pp. 123-124.

popularised accounts of the different forms of oppression and injustice that an entire «people» had traditionally been subjected to in France and elsewhere.⁷² Other concurrent works revisited the battles against the established monarchy during the Revolution and the Empire, celebrating the heroic deeds of a nation and a populace up in arms.

In December 1826 the government attempted to stem the flood of philosophical, historical, polemical, and periodical texts mentioned by Mutin in his *Rapport général sur la presse*. The bill drafted for this purpose by the executive was, however, withdrawn in April 1827 after a stormy passage through the Chambers of parliament. Liberals, printing house workers, the Académie Française, numerous ultra-royalist members of parliament, journalists, and writers were all strongly opposed to a law that implicitly introduced administrative censorship before publication and forced printers to exercise rigorous self-censorship. The political and intellectual battle triggered by the bill ended in failure for the Villèle government, which fell a few months afterwards.

CONCLUSIONS

The royal censors and the royalist press expressed strong concern over the popularisation of liberal historiography and Enlightenment works among certain sections of the population whose loyalty and devotion to the Bourbon dynasty could not be taken for granted. The danger was that such readers might develop expectations and plans that far exceeded the official objective of the 'liberal party', namely simply defending the 1814 Charter.

Fears of fresh political and social upheaval escalated during the last few years of the Villèle government. When the latter collapsed in 1828, the *côté gauche* once again became the most influential political force in parliament. After the short-lived Martignac administration, liberal propaganda became even more audacious in 1829 with the appointment of an executive politically opposed to the new parliamentary majority. The roll call of ministers alone sounded like an affront to the memory of the Revolution and the Empire: Polignac, Bourmont, and La Bourdonnaye.

The future appeared more uncertain than ever. In his 1825 report Mutin referred with some concern to the inter-referential dynamic between the liberal non-periodical press and newspapers of the same political persuasion:

⁷² See for example *Histoire de l'esprit révolutionnaire des nobles en France sous les soixante-huit rois de la monarchie* (1818), the *Dictionnaire féodal* by Collin de Plancy (1819), the text *Ligue des Nobles et de prêtres contre les peuples et les rois depuis le commencement de l'ère chrétienne jusqu'à nos jours* (1820), and the various historical summaries written by Félix Bodin or Alphonse Rabbe.

Young people, in the way that *Le Constitutionnel* is moulding them, [...] are just waiting for the moment when they will have a majority say in State affairs so that they can create a President of the United States of the French Republic in place of the King of France.⁷³

Some of Mutin's colleagues were more sceptical. One censor of theatrical works wrote in a report:

It must not be thought that the liberals of 1826 can be likened to the revolutionaries of 1792 in terms of principles and conduct. The only thing that connects them to the latter is their hostility towards the Bourbons. Yet, they do not profess and do not wish for absolute equality. They fear popular excesses at least as much as the royalists but might attempt to trigger such excessiveness again in order to achieve their goals.⁷⁴

Aiming to create widespread social mobilisation against both ultra-royalism and the kingship of Charles X, the 'liberal party', which was fundamentally 'bourgeois', adopted increasingly radical political positions in its communication channels for both young readers and the 'popular classes'. Through re-editions of Enlightenment works and celebration of this intellectual heritage, the liberal movement endowed the debates and battles of the *philosophes* with a validity that transcended the age in which these writers had lived. The concerns that had haunted these authors returned to affect anyone in a situation where liberty, rights, and condemnation of fanaticism were questioned by governments and reactionary parties, as was the case in France, or denied altogether, like in Ferdinand VII's Spain or Greece under Ottoman rule.

In addition to philosophical thinking about rights, there were also reflections on the historical implementation of various forms of government. These were transmitted by the other major field of writing exploited by liberalism: historiography. Most notably, texts on the nation's past spread the image of a Revolution that had created liberty, rights, and progress despite certain limits and the ensuing degeneration of that chapter in history. To this end, Félix Bodin's *Résumé de l'Histoire de France*, which was sold at two francs fifty and reprinted several times, claimed that «enlightened» peoples would be incapable of repeating the excesses and mistakes of the first revolutionaries.⁷⁵

⁷³ From an article in «Le Constitutionnel», 15 January 1825.

⁷⁴ AN, *AJ XIII 1050*. Report by the censor Delaforest on the tragedy *Marcel* by Balisson de Rougemont, 9 August 1826.

⁷⁵ Fifth edition published in Paris by Leconte and Durey, 1823, p. 257.

The themes, vocabulary, and intellectual references used by liberalism in the 1820s healed the rift between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which had existed since the revolutionary decade. This rupture was personified by figures such as Raynal, Condorcet, La Harpe, Morellet, and Delisle de Sales, the last exponents of the eighteenth-century philosophical battle. They were all deeply scarred by the discrepancy between their ideas of political, civil, moral, and cultural regeneration, and the work of the revolutionary legislators.⁷⁶ Liberal propaganda retrospectively bridged these gaps, establishing a harmonious relationship between *philosophie* and the French Revolution. Paradoxically, this was achieved partly by simplifying and distorting the works of the *philosophes*, or by extracting soundbites. This same process of decontextualisation was criticised by Raynal, Delisle de Sales and, later, Morellet as practices implemented by the Assemblies and the revolutionary authorities to trigger the uprising of the popular masses and to justify measures that were anything but «philosophical».⁷⁷

In the years leading up to the 1830 Revolution, the liberal movement focused on a blend of contrasting principles, ideals, and ambitions, conflating republican and even democratic doctrines with nostalgia for the Empire and positions that were anti-Bourbon and anti-aristocratic, but not anti-monarchical. With their flair for analysing words and discourse, those appointed to monitor printed output and theatre scripts were quick to grasp the potential of this ideological syncretism, along with the possible implications of a form of communication that targeted unlimited numbers of readers and theatregoers regardless of their social status. The architects of liberal propaganda employed the right lexicon for each audience subgroup. They thus expressed political ideas in accordance with the social sectors they wished to reach and used powerful words like liberty, rights, tyranny, and abuse, often without clarifying boundaries and connotations of meaning.

The multitudes that rose up against monarchical power in July 1830 came from precisely those social groups previously targeted by liberal propaganda.⁷⁸ Reading and theatregoing were undoubtedly important factors in politicisation and political mobilisation in the 1820s, especially in the

⁷⁶ On the disintegration and betrayal of the Enlightenment project during the Revolution see FERRONE 2014, pp. 491-513.

⁷⁷ A. MORELLET, *Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Lepetit, 1818, t. 4, pp. 329-331 and G.T. RAYNAL, *Lettre de M. l'abbé Raynal lue à l'Assemblée nationale, le 31 mai, [1791]*, p. 2. See also V. GRANATA, *La censura napoleonica e la storiografia della Rivoluzione francese. Gli scritti proibiti di Delisle de Sales e le politiche di controllo della memoria collettiva fra Consolato e Impero*, «Società e Storia», 162, 2018, pp. 723-776, 736-738.

⁷⁸ See D.H. PINKNEY, *La Révolution de 1830 en France*, Paris, PUF, 1988 [1972], p. 300.

capital. It is difficult, however, to ascertain whether they had more influence than other factors on the expectations and ideas of the insurgents and, more generally, on anti-Bourbon public opinion. The only certainty is that reports written by censors and police during the last decade of the Restoration frequently referred to the spread of liberal writing among the «middle» and «lower classes», also highlighting the various ways in which such works were interpreted by different social groups.

During the 1830 Revolution, the leaders of the 'liberal party' only allowed «three glorious days» for the explosion of political passions and contradictory social demands that had been fuelled and validated by a flood of publications and speeches for more than a decade. The parliamentary and liberal intellectual élite responded by guiding the Parisian uprising towards a constitutional and censitary monarchy purged of the memory of the Ancien Régime. Unanswered social grievances and betrayed political hopes remained, though, even within the liberal camp itself.



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Casa Editrice
Leo S. Olschki
Firenze

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AFTER 1799: RIGHTS, LIBERALISM, AND THE LEGACY
OF THE NEAPOLITAN ENLIGHTENMENT

INTRODUCTION

Songo state li libre politiche tanto de l'ordramontane quanto dell'alletterate e feluosefe nuoste. Te pare poco tutto chello nce hanno lassato scritto e Filangieri, e Genovese, e Parmieri, e ... Chiste hanno allumenato l'aute co i lummi lloro superiure, e hanno semmenato morde du sti masseme politeche, fatte commune pe a tutta l'Auropa. E nun buliv aspittà che chelle firmentassero, sbucciassero, generassero, e purtassero lu frutto? Mo è benuto lu tiempo de la raccorda, essenose ammaturatione la messe.¹

In July 1820, a liberal popular movement promoted by the army and the secret society of *Carboneria* in Naples and the Two Sicilies forced the Bourbon king Ferdinand I to establish a representative government, modelled after the Spanish constitution of Cadiz (1812). Soon, constitutional patriots edited newspapers, pedagogical materials, political catechisms, and dialogues (often in the Neapolitan dialect) to educate the people on the constitution and win their support for the new government. The passage quoted above – an extract from a dialogue published at the time – staged the constitutional pedagogy. The fictitious character of *Colamuzio*, law professor, lectured the storyteller *Tribuzio* on rights, freedom, and represent-

¹ *Passiate pe lu muolo nfra duje amici zoè lo poveta D. Tribuzio Panzarotonna strangia nomme lu canta Rinardo; e lu si dottore D. Colamuzio Panzarotonna catedratico primario de legge nella rispettabile univertzità mandracchiana*, Naples, 1820, p. 74. An English translation would read as: «The political works of thinkers beyond the Alps as well as of our scholars and philosophers [brought about the revolution]. Is not the legacy left by Filangieri, Genovesi, Palmieri, and [all the other Neapolitan thinkers] not enough for us? They enlightened us with their superior brilliance and they sparked many of these political ideas – now common throughout Europe. Do you not want to wait until they fermented, blossomed, and brought forth their fruit? The time of harvest has come, since their crop is now ripe».

ative government. While doing so, *Colamuzio* argued that the writings of Neapolitan Enlightenment thinkers such as Antonio Genovesi (1713-69), Gaetano Filangieri (1752-88), and Giuseppe Palmieri (1721-1793) had enlightened the nation with their political doctrines («hanno alluminato l'aute co i lummi lloro») and paved the way to the revolution of 1820. Why did a pedagogical pamphlet in the Neapolitan dialect mention Enlightenment philosophers? Why was their intellectual legacy relevant? What was the connection between their ideas and liberalism?

By answering these questions, I aim to shed light on the Neapolitan Enlightenment's intellectual contribution to the making of liberalism and the culture of human rights in Southern Europe. I will argue that Duo-Sicilian liberals developed a peculiar current of liberalism that drew on the Neapolitan 'Enlightenment constitutionalism' and school of natural law. By so doing, I will also make a case for the study of 'low theory' texts, such as catechisms, dialectal dialogues, and polemical pamphlets to broaden current understandings of the history of rights and the legacy of the Enlightenment in the age of revolutions.

After achieving independence from Spain (1734), the Two Sicilies embarked upon reforms to strengthen the state at the expense of the Church and aristocracy and bolster the economic might of the kingdom.² This context encouraged Southern philosophers' projects to escape backwardness and build a just and equitable society. The abbè and professor Antonio Genovesi promoted the Enlightenment in Naples and a new intellectual beginning for the kingdom from his chair of political economy, the first in Europe (1754). Genovesi's *Discorso sopra il vero fine delle lettere e delle scienze* (1753) and his *Lessons in commerce or civil economy* (1765) formulated an intellectual and educational project to establish the study of commerce and promote the material and moral progress of poor countries like Naples who were falling behind northern European nations.³

The quest for a just society led Neapolitan intellectuals to develop an 'Enlightenment constitutionalism' which aimed to promote legislation on the equality of rights sanctioned by natural law, and constitutionalise the

² A.M. RAO, *Il regno di Napoli nel Settecento*, Naples, Guida, 1984; J.A. DAVIS, *Naples and Napoleon. Southern Italy and the European Revolutions 1780-1860*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 14-70.

³ S. REINERT, *Translating Empire. Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2011, pp. 187-232; J. ROBERTSON, *Enlightenment and Revolution in Naples*, «Transactions of the Royal Historical Society», X, 2000, pp. 27-29; Id., *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples 1680-1760*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 347-360.

rights of man.⁴ Genovesi himself considered political economy to be part of the ‘moral sciences’. These, according to Genovesi, focused on pursuing public happiness as the science of man in society and his rights. His idea of a just society owed much to the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico and his historical approach to the study of natural law. In his *Principles of a New Science* (1744) Vico theorised a ‘natural law of nations’ to reconnect legislation with universal principles of natural law. To do so Vico criticised previous theories of natural law for being built on abstract principles, instead of studying human societies through history, and refused to sever legislation from universal morality. Natural law of nations, in his view, evolved according to societies’ needs, but always descended from universal ideas of the ‘good’ and the ‘just’ which it progressively revealed in the history of peoples. Vico identified this universal law with the equal partition of rights (*aequum bonum*) among all members of human society, as well as among different nations.

Vico’s idea of a universal law of nature prescribing the equilibrium of rights among men and nations, and their unity in a common ‘humanity’, left a profound legacy among Neapolitan *illuministi* and inspired their rights theory. In Vico’s wake, Genovesi’s *Diceosina* (1767) theorised the natural moral equality of men and their equality of rights and duties, Gaetano Filangieri’s *Science of legislation* (1780-84) outlined the universal principles for a system of legislation based upon the rights of man, and Francesco Mario Pagano developed a philosophy of history that outlined the progress of nations toward a «regular government» sanctioning «equality of rights» and the «rights of man» in a «code of fundamental law».⁵ Drawing on this intellectual legacy, Pagano’s constitutional draft for the Neapolitan republic – established by pro-French patriots and armies in 1799 – declared equality of rights as the general principle of legislation and the «foundation» of the rights of man.⁶

After 1799, European imperial ambitions in the Mediterranean dragged the Two Sicilies into global conflicts, eroded its sovereignty, and precipita-

⁴ A. TRAMPUS, *Storia del costituzionalismo italiano nell’età dei Lumi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009, p. 149 and ff. See also, ID., *Un modèle pour le constitutionnalisme des Lumières: la culture napolitaine et les droits de l’homme*, «Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos», 7, 2007. Available online at <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/3479>.

⁵ V. FERRONE, *Storia dei diritti dell’uomo. L’illuminismo e la costruzione del linguaggio politico dei moderni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2014, pp. 278-348. On Vico, see also W. RECH, *History and Normativity: Vico’s Natural Law of Nation*, «Journal of the History of International Law», 17, 2015, pp. 147-169.

⁶ *Progetto di costituzione della repubblica napoletana presentato al governo provvisorio dal comitato di legislazione*, edited by F. Morelli and A. Trampus, Venice, Edizioni della Laguna, 2008, pp. 122-124.

ted civil wars between Naples and Sicily. In 1806, French armies occupied Naples again and established a satellite monarchy, while Britain promoted a protectorate in Sicily. Despite international turmoil, Neapolitan reformers continued to develop constitutional projects inspired by the Enlightenment ‘rights tradition’.

After the restoration of the Bourbon sovereign, liberal patriots forced the king to proclaim the constitution of Cadiz in July 1820 under the example of Spanish revolutionaries. The Neapolitan liberal movement, soon spilling over to encompass Sicily, Portugal, Piedmont, and Greece, was the consequence of an interconnected «crisis of sovereignty» produced by the Napoleonic wars, and part of a global constitutional wave that swept through the Ibero-Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Indian Ocean.⁷ Liberals endorsed the constitution of Cadiz, drafted by the Spanish *Cortes* in 1810-12, as a model for a new constitutional pact with their monarchs, based on national sovereignty, representative government, and resistance against the centralised state structures inherited by Napoleonic regimes.

By focusing on Naples in 1820, I explore the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment on Duo-Sicilian liberalism. Neapolitan liberals put forward visions of constitutional government modelled on the Enlightenment theories of natural law and science of legislation centred on the rights of man and equality of rights. By so doing, Neapolitan revolutionaries theorised a ‘republic of the moderns’ that combined freedom with monarchy, and individual rights with national sovereignty and stood opposed to the post-Napoleonic Europe of imperial powers and counter-revolutionary security.

In this essay, I draw on the recent historiography of Enlightenment and rights. Scholars have shown how late eighteenth-century political thought transformed natural law doctrines into a modern theory of ‘human rights’ as inalienable rights that men preserved in society and defined the legitimacy of government. Dan Edelstein has focused on the transformation of natural rights into the rights of the nation in France and on their constitutionalisation through the lens of English common law in revolutionary America. Meanwhile, Vincenzo Ferrone and Antonio Trampus have unveiled an Italian, and specifically Neapolitan, ‘Enlightenment constitutionalism’ that based its theory on the constitutionalisation of human rights

⁷ M. ISABELLA, *Southern Europe in the Age of Revolutions*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2023. See also C.A. BAYLY, *Rammohan Roy and the Advent of Constitutional Liberalism in India, 1800-30*, «Modern Intellectual History», 4, 1, 2007, pp. 25-41; M. ISABELLA, *Risorgimento in esilio. L'internazionale liberale e l'età delle rivoluzioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011, pp. 29-42.

founded on the principle of equality and universal principles of morality common to humanity.⁸

Moreover, this essay draws on the ways in which intellectual historians have revised and broadened our understanding of nineteenth-century liberalism by focusing on the Mediterranean in the age of revolutions. Once dismissed as a derivative and backward periphery, the Mediterranean now appears as a «place of intellectual communication» and a region «at the heart of global intellectual production» where liberalism emerged as a popular political force and promoted constitutional cultures alternative to British and French ideas.⁹ Maurizio Isabella has showed that the events of the 1820s in Southern Europe led to an unprecedented «popular participation in revolutionary politics» and to «widespread political awareness among the populations». Southern European societies – as shown by Isabella – produced a «popular constitutional culture» that was «hybrid» in nature and supported individual rights and the sovereignty of the people as well as the rights of local communities, territorial self-rule, corporate privileges, and the religious unity of the nation.¹⁰

Building on the work of these scholars, this essay highlights the influence of the Neapolitan ‘Enlightenment rights tradition’ on liberalism and constitutionalism in the age of revolutions. First, this article shows the nineteenth-century legacy of an Enlightenment language of rights as complementary but distinctive to American and French ‘rights talk’. Duo-Sicilian liberals did not centre their rights theories on national sovereignty nor constitutional precedent, but on cosmopolitan and egalitarian ethics based on the equality of rights in domestic and international

⁸ D. EDELSTEIN, *On the Spirit of Rights*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2019; FERRONE 2014; TRAMPUS 2009; V. FERRONE, *The Politics of Enlightenment. Republicanism, Constitutionalism, and the Rights of Man in Gaetano Filangieri*, London-New York, Anthem Press, 2012 (or. ed. *La società giusta ed equa. Repubblicanesimo e diritti dell'uomo in Gaetano Filangieri*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2003). As Edelstein argues, the attributes of ‘human’, ‘mankind’ or ‘natural’ were closely related. In English, ‘rights of man’ and ‘human rights’ «were used in almost equal measure in the nineteenth century», while in French the expression ‘droits de l’homme’ became dominant by the end of the eighteenth century (p. 24). In this essay, I will use the concepts of ‘rights of man’, or ‘humanity’ since these were the predominant expressions used by Neapolitan liberals in the early nineteenth century.

⁹ ISABELLA 2023; M. ISABELLA – K. ZANOU (eds.), *Mediterranean Diasporas. Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016; K. ZANOU, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean. Stammering the Nation, 1800-1850*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018; J. INNES and M. PHILP (eds.), *Re-imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean, 1780-1860*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018; M. SOTIROPOULOS, *Liberalism After the Revolution. The Intellectual Foundations of the Greek State, c. 1830-1880*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

¹⁰ ISABELLA 2023, pp. 1-32.

society. The line of transmissions of this ‘rights tradition’ was preserved not only by constitutional documents but also by a broader discourse of constitutionalism that drew on the philosophical and political treaties of Enlightenment authors. Moreover, the essay’s focus on the legacy of the Enlightenment draws attention to the peculiarity of 1820’s Southern European ‘popular liberalism’ and the richness of its culture of rights. Enlightenment rights doctrines, as I will show, offered to Duo-Sicilian thinkers an intellectual framework to articulate the discourse of constitutionalism and theorise liberalism.

Finally, this essay complements current literature on the Neapolitan Enlightenment, by showing the continuity of eighteenth-century debates beyond 1799. Scholars have often described the collapse of the pro-French republic, the popular counter-revolutionary violence that followed, and the execution of Neapolitan legislators, including Pagano, as the defeat of Enlightenment culture.¹¹ Instead, this essay challenges the idea that the events of 1799 marked the ‘end of Enlightenment’ in Naples and contributes to revising current literature on the Two Sicilies as a ‘failed nation’ and intellectually stagnant periphery in the nineteenth century.

In this essay, I will show how Duo-Sicilian liberals drew on Enlightenment authors to theorise the foundations of constitutional government and educate the citizens on freedom. Then, I will demonstrate that they adapted the Neapolitan Enlightenment rights theory to promote constitution-making upon the equality of rights of man. Finally, I will show how the study of the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment could broaden current understanding of nineteenth-century liberalism.

NAPLES AND THE GLOBAL CONSTITUTIONAL MOMENT OF 1820S

In Naples and across Southern Europe, the constitutional wave of the 1820s opened a political season of ‘popular liberalism’, free press, parliamentary elections based on quasi-universal male suffrage, and political mobilisation. The revolutions also led to conflicts between old and new ideas of citizenship, local, and national rights.¹² In the Two Sicilies, a civil war erupted between Naples and Palermo in August 1820. In this polarised context, Duo-Sicilian patriots embraced the intellectual legacy of the Enlightenment to build a consensual doctrine of the constitution.

¹¹ G. IMBRUGLIA (ed.), *Naples in the Eighteenth Century. The Birth and Death of a Nation State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

¹² ISABELLA 2023, pp. 255-379.

Duo-Sicilian patriots admired Cadiz constitutionalism, participated in the transnational networks of the European and Atlantic ‘liberal international’, and acknowledged contemporary British and French liberal theorists. At the same time, they reinterpreted the Neapolitan Enlightenment school of natural law to develop a language to communicate the constitution, shape public opinion and educate citizens on the principles of representative government.

The references to Neapolitan Enlightenment philosophers in 1820 were not just a formal act of devotion or a political tactic. Duo-Sicilian liberals used the Neapolitan Enlightenment to shape a national political tradition and ideology that showed the cultural particularity of the Two Sicilies and offered a language to claim political freedom. Since the late Enlightenment, Neapolitan thinkers tried to raise awareness of the specificity of Neapolitan political theory. Pagano’s revival of Vico and his praise of the Neapolitan historical method in the study of natural law in the *Saggi Politici* were signs of these efforts.¹³

In 1820, the liberals’ ‘Enlightenment talk’ promoted a coherent educational programme centred on the Neapolitan intellectual tradition. By so doing, liberal patriots aimed to show that the constitution was the historical product of the kingdom’s political progress rather than a change imposed from outside. They used the Enlightenment tradition not only to build a «Neapolitan cultural awareness» but also to educate citizens on freedom. Duo-Sicilian understanding of legislation was firmly rooted in Vico’s historicism, according to which law and institutions reflected historical evolution of natural law based on the nations’ needs and customs. Likewise, Filangieri’s *Science of legislation* had argued that legislation followed «immutable principles» but was also conditioned by historical context.¹⁴ This historicism drove the Neapolitan approach to constitution-making and constitutional education in 1820. Most of the liberal thinkers argued that the democratic institutions («very liberal principles») and republican ideal of citizenship («the prescription of virtues») prescribed by the Spanish text were not enough to establish constitutional government in the Two Sicilies.¹⁵ Instead, the new constitution of the Two Sicilies, as the former republican patriot Gioacchino Olivier-Poli remarked, had to reflect

¹³ M. CALARESU, *The patriots and the people in late eighteenth-century Naples*, «History of European Ideas», 20, 1-3, 1995, pp. 203-209.

¹⁴ FERRONE 2012, pp. 42-43.

¹⁵ *Parere sulle costituzioni in generale ed in particolare sulle modificazioni da farsi alla costituzione spagnuola*, Naples, Tipografia Francese, 1820, pp. 14-15.

the «moral» and «territorial» situation of the nation since not «all constitutional project[s were] equally good for a people».¹⁶

Liberal patriots believed that the Enlightenment culture had made the Two Sicilies more politically advanced than Spain. According to the criminal lawyer Nicola Nicolini, a pupil of Pagano and supporter of the republic of 1799, Neapolitan legislation was more refined than Spanish constitutionalism since it was inspired by the ideas of Enlightenment philosophers.¹⁷ Members of the *Carboneria* shared this understanding, despite their attachment to the democratic features of the constitution of Cadiz. Angelo Lanzellotti, a jurist from Apulia and supporter of the republic in 1799, praised Neapolitan eighteenth-century reformers and argued that a cultural «gap» existed between Duo-Sicilian and Spanish political culture. He recommended the Neapolitan parliament reject all those Spanish constitutional principles (such as art. 12) that revealed the «intolerance» and «hesitation» of a nation that had been under «despotism» for too long.¹⁸ Likewise, an anonymous essay on constitutions vigorously remarked that Spain and Naples possessed different characters, customs, and opinions. The pamphlet concluded that the Neapolitans could not accept backward «principles such as religious intolerance, citizenship rights based on wealth, and the royal veto on legislation».¹⁹

The Neapolitan Enlightenment empowered Duo-Sicilian reformers with a political tradition that testified to the cultural maturity of the nation, even though it had adopted a foreign constitution. Liberal thinkers established a direct intellectual connection between the constitutional moment of 1820 and Enlightenment political thought. The idea that eighteenth-century philosophers paved the way for the freedom of the Two Sicilies – presented in the dialogue *Passiate pe lo molo* and quoted in the opening paragraph – was common knowledge across the revolutionary public sphere in Naples and the provinces. The «Minerva napoletana» praised Vico, Genovesi, and Filangieri for starting the «civil restoration» of the kingdom.²⁰ In a similar tone, the constitutional catechism of the geographer Luigi Galanti recalled the efforts of Pietro Giannone against the

¹⁶ G.M. OLIVIER-POLI, *Saggio politico-critico su le varie costituzioni date alla Francia, dal 1789 sino alla restaurazione della monarchia nel 1814*, Naples, Tipografia della Società Filomatica, 1820, pp. XIII-XVI.

¹⁷ N. NICOLINI, *La Spagna e le Due Sicilie*, «La Minerva napoletana», I, 1820, pp. 400-401.

¹⁸ [A. LANZELLOTTI], *Osservazioni sopra alcuni articoli principali della costituzione spagnuola*, Naples, 1820, pp. 4-6.

¹⁹ *Parere sulle costituzioni 1820*, pp. 6, 9-10.

²⁰ NICOLINI 1820, pp. 406-409.

power of the Church, Genovesi and Filangieri's teaching of the «good principles» of legislation and political economy, and his elder brother Giuseppe Maria's fight for the reform of administration against feudalism (*Della Descrizione politica e geografica delle Due Sicilie*, 1786-1790).²¹ In a petition to the parliament, the citizens of Cerignola, an Apulian town, described the «political regeneration» as the «natural product» of the «lumi» in the country that gave birth to Vico, Genovesi, and Filangieri.²²

Duo-Sicilian liberals built on the Neapolitan Enlightenment theory of natural law to justify the progress of society and legislation towards constitutional government.²³ The constitution, according to this vision, was not just the expression of a social pact moderating royal power but was the outcome of universal laws guiding the progress of society. Duo-Sicilian liberals adapted Vico's cyclical philosophy of history centred on a natural law of nations guiding the evolution of legislation and customs toward the age of 'reason' and 'right'. They also drew on Pagano's *Saggi Politici* and his outline of the progress of nations from barbarism and feudalism towards civil society ('*società colte e polite*') and regular government. The «Giornale della Lucania Orientale», organ of the provincial *Carboneria*, drew on Vico to claim that the revolution represented the last state of the kingdom's *corsi e ricorsi storici*, and the advent of a society based on «right».²⁴ Likewise, according to the philosopher Pasquale Galluppi, the Two Sicilies had gradually evolved from barbarism to civilisation («*dallo stato di barbarie a quello di coltura*») thanks to the «true philosophy» and «liberal principles» of government preached by the works of Genovesi and Filangieri.²⁵

Enlightenment thinkers, according to Duo-Sicilian liberals, had laid the foundations of constitutional monarchy and political emancipation by theorising a government based on written laws and civil liberties (*governo regolare*) and opposed to feudalism. The «Minerva napoletana» praised Filangieri's «principles of legislation» for promoting the «destruction of arbitrary power». Nicola Nicolini celebrated the Enlightenment reformers for giving Neapolitan people an «organic body» of «public law» that emancipated

²¹ L. GALANTI, *Catechismo costituzionale per uso del regno unito delle Due Sicilie*, Naples, Domenico Sangiacomo, 1820, p. 15.

²² *Indirizzo del comune di Cerignola al parlamento nazionale* (16 December 1820), «Giornale costituzionale delle Due Sicilie», 12 December 1820, p. 583.

²³ FERRONE 2014, pp. 278-292.

²⁴ *Corso delle nazioni*, «Giornale patriottico della Lucania Orientale», 10 October 1820.

²⁵ P. GALLUPPI, *Lo sguardo d'Europa sul regno di Napoli* (1820), in *Opuscoli politico-filosofici sulla libertà*, edited by G. Oldrini, Naples, Morano, 1977, pp. 85-93.

them from the abuses of feudal barons.²⁶ Neapolitan liberals also recalled Giuseppe Palmieri's critique of feudalism in *Riflessioni sulla pubblica felicità* (1788) and the efforts of republican legislators in 1799 against «inhuman feudal rights».²⁷

Duo-Sicilian liberals did not describe constitutional government merely as a temperate or moderate monarchy, but rather as the Neapolitan Enlightenment's ideal of a monarchy limited by the rule of law, established on a republican ethics and civic virtue, alternative to both democracy and despotism.²⁸ This model of government, described by Duo-Sicilian patriots as «a mix of republic and monarchy».²⁹ Luigi Galanti's catechism exemplified this Enlightenment ideal of a 'patriotic monarchy', that combined republican ethics with modern civil liberties. The geographer presented the constitution as a «mixed government» that «shared the elements of a monarchy and a republic» and was equally distant from «pure monarchy» and «democracy». According to Galanti, both these forms of government promoted «arbitrary and irregular» institutions leading to «absolute power».³⁰ Instead, popular monarchy would transform the sovereign into a patriot king, establish the government of the laws opposed to that of men, destroy aristocracy, promote the education of the people and a national army of citizen-soldiers. Overall, Galanti claimed that constitutional government was centred on the principle of «virtue» opposed to that of «servitude».

When talking about civic virtue, Neapolitan liberals had in mind the ancient liberty of pre-Roman people in Southern Italy. Since the Enlightenment, these communities had become a symbol of republican virtue and were pointed to as a model of political regeneration for the Neapolitans.³¹ Several thinkers from Vico to Giuseppe Maria Galanti (*Descrizione del contado di Molise*, 1781) had forged this distinctive intellectual tradition, by tracing the history of the ancient inhabitants of Southern Italy, who were organised in small and independent republics and had resisted Roman expansion. Italic peoples, as claimed by Matteo Galdi, president of the parliament in 1820 and pupil of Filangieri, had offered to Europe one of the first forms of civilisation founded on civic virtues and

²⁶ «La Minerva napoletana», I, 1820, pp. 312-313; NICOLINI 1820, pp. 402-408.

²⁷ «La Minerva napoletana», I, 1820, p. 53.

²⁸ TRAMPUS 2009, pp. 232-238; A.M. RAO, *Repubblicanesimo e idee repubblicane nel Settecento italiano: Giuseppe Maria Galanti fra antico e moderno*, «Studi Storici», LIII, 4, 2012, pp. 883-904.

²⁹ «L'Amico della costituzione», 31 July 1820, p. 4.

³⁰ GALANTI 1820, pp. 12-14, 19, 54.

³¹ M. CALARESU, *Images of Ancient Rome in Late Eighteenth-Century Neapolitan Historiography*, «Journal of the History of the Ideas», 58, 4, 1997, pp. 641-661.

patriotism. This ancient tradition of liberty, according to Galdi, was being reborn in Southern Italy, thanks to the establishment of a constitutional government.³²

Duo-Sicilian liberals endeavoured to restore ancient republican virtues among the moderns. Civic virtue, as the Neapolitan Enlightenment taught them, was not merely a question of martial valour but involved the education of citizens on freedom and common good through public instruction and free press. Drawing on Filangieri's *Science of legislation*, constitutional patriots promoted education to build an informed public sphere and public opinion as expression of popular participation and sovereignty.³³

Neapolitan liberals theorised political pedagogy and freedom of the press as essential instruments to restore civic virtues in the new constitutional monarchy. Enlightenment philosophers such as Vico and Genovesi, in their view, had paved the way for the regeneration of the nation through the study and teaching of moral and political sciences («*politici pensamenti e filosofiche dottrine*»)³⁴ It was up to the new generation of liberal thinkers to complete that intellectual project. Liberals endorsed Genovesi's pedagogical commitment to increase the kingdom's middle class (*ceto mezzano*) required to establish an informed body of public opinion. As they argued, «classi mezzane» were the «backbone of the constitution», since they preserved «patriotism and civic virtues» («*l' amor di patria e le virtù cittadine*»)³⁵ They emulated Genovesi's *Discorso* and his appeal to the «*studiosa gioventù*» (studious youth) to take up the study of letters and sciences. In Genovesi's wake, Costantino della Marra published a «political manual» that he dedicated to the «gioventù studiosa» of the Two Sicilies, while Galanti's catechism addressed the «*giovannetti studiosi*» to guide them in the «moral and political studies».³⁶

Like Neapolitan eighteenth-century reformers, liberal writers advocated to themselves the role to enlighten citizens, increasing popular access to citizenship and political knowledge, and shape government through public opinion. The «most learned citizens», as the author of *Passiate pe lu molo* claimed, were educating common people as well as legislators on «political theories» and the principles of the «new system» of government. In doing

³² Parliamentary session of 13th February 1821, in *Atti del parlamento delle Due Sicilie*, edited by A. Alberti, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1924-31, vol. II, pp. 373-374.

³³ FERRONE 2014, pp. 340-342.

³⁴ «La Minerva Napolitana», I, 1820, pp. 361-362.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 29, 54-55.

³⁶ C. DELLA MARRA, *Manuale politico per i Siculo-Napoletani, ovvero principi di diritto pubblico particolare pel regno delle Due Sicilie*, Naples, Chianese, 1820, p. VII; GALANTI 1820, p. 3.

so, they were guided by the «political science» of eighteenth-century thinkers.³⁷

Why was the Neapolitan Enlightenment relevant to the education of Duo-Sicilian citizens? What was the idea of civic virtue that liberals wanted to teach their fellow citizens? Why did it matter to constitutional government?

Duo-Sicilian patriots embraced Antonio Genovesi's definition of virtue as the respect for the rights of man and the equality of rights.³⁸ In his notes to Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws*, re-published in 1820, Genovesi criticised the French author for claiming that virtue was the principle of only republican governments, and that civic patriotism could not exist among modern commercial societies.³⁹ Genovesi rebuked at Montesquieu that monarchies too could be founded on political virtue. For him – and Neapolitan liberals too – virtue was not a synonym of republican patriotism but rather the «non-invasion or violation of other men's rights», and without it 'civil society' could not exist. Virtue, according to Neapolitan thinkers, described a society based on the respect of rights, and their equal partition among citizens. As Galanti's catechism argued, the education of citizens on their «rights» and «duties» would promote «common good».⁴⁰

The Neapolitan Enlightenment mattered to Duo-Sicilian liberals because it offered them a theory of legislation centred on rights. The 'just' and 'equal' society theorised by the Neapolitan Enlightenment 'school of natural law' represented a government built on the equality of rights. Duo-Sicilian liberals turned to this 'Enlightenment rights tradition' to shape a constitutional monarchy founded upon the rights of man.

THE CASE FOR THE RIGHTS OF MAN

Duo-Sicilian 'popular liberalism' drew on the Neapolitan Enlightenment to develop a constitutional theory centred on the equality of rights and the constitutionalisation of the rights of man. The constitution, according to this vision, was not just centred on the balance among powers and representative government but established a society built on rights. According to the Neapolitan school, rights were neither based on a tradition of con-

³⁷ *Passiate pe lu molo* 1820, pp. 3-5, 33-34.

³⁸ FERRONE 2014, pp. 302-303.

³⁹ C. DE SECONDAT, BARON DE MONTESQUIEU, *Spirito delle leggi, con le note dell'abate Antonio Genovesi*, Naples, 1820, p. 122.

⁴⁰ GALANTI 1820, pp. 8, 36.

stitutional liberties nor on popular sovereignty. Instead, they were founded on universal principles of natural law, centred on the common humanity of men and the equality of their rights. This tradition of ‘Enlightenment constitutionalism’ can be summed up in four connected ideas:

- Positive legislation is based on universal principles of morality (Vico’s ‘natural law of nations’). Natural law reveals these universal ideas of the ‘good’ and the ‘just’ in the history of peoples. These are centred on the idea that every society tends towards an equal partition of good (*aequum bonum*) among its members.⁴¹
- Natural law shows that men share the same humanity and moral nature. They are all born to pursue happiness and are endowed with ‘faculties’ (or rights) to achieve that (Genovesi, *Diceosina*). Moral equality is not the product of a social contract or the general will but descends from their common humanity.⁴²
- The study of morality contains a theory of rights and politics belongs to ‘moral sciences’ (Genovesi, *Lezioni di commercio*). They investigate the principles of a ‘just and honest’ society, namely how to promote an equal repartition of rights and duties in society.
- Legislation must guarantee the equality of rights in society (Filangieri, *Scienza della legislazione*). To this end, legislators must constitutionalise the rights of man (Pagano, *Saggi Politici*).⁴³

Duo-Sicilian liberals credited Neapolitan Enlightenment thinkers for unveiling these cosmopolitan and egalitarian principles of legislation centred on rights. Neapolitan philosophers and lawgivers, according to liberal patriots, had shed light on the «immortal doctrines of the rights of man». Their ‘rights talk’ had to guide the revolution of 1820 to constitutionalise natural rights and turn them into positive legislation, as outlined by Filangieri’s *Science of legislation*. The «Giornale Costituzionale» praised the «immortal works of Vico and Genovesi, Grimaldi, Palmieri, Pagano» and that of «Gaetano Filangieri, the supreme avenger of the rights of mankind». These philosophers, according to the newspaper, attacked feudality

⁴¹ FERRONE 2014, pp. 282-292.

⁴² N. GUASTI, *Antonio Genovesi’s Diceosina: Source of the Neapolitan enlightenment*, «History of European Ideas», 32, 4, 2006, pp. 385-405; Id., *Un caso editoriale la Diceosina di Antonio Genovesi*, in A. GENOVESI, *Della diceosina o sia filosofia del giusto e dell’onesto*, edited by N. Guasti, Venice, Edizioni della Laguna 2008, pp. XIX-XXIX.

⁴³ According to Pagano, written legislation should sanction the «rights of man» in a «code of fundamental law». See F.M. PAGANO, *Saggi politici*, Naples, Vincenzo Flauto, 1785, vol. 2, pp. 124-143.

and disordered administration, initiated the Neapolitan «political reform», and «laid the foundations of a better government». Their culture of rights and legislation promoted «freedom», instead of the «spirit of conquest» and «despotism» brought by the French revolution's general will.⁴⁴

Drawing on Vico's 'natural law of nations', Neapolitan liberals theorised moral equality as the universal principle of justice (or natural law) and prescribed the equality of rights (*aequum bonum*) as the means to achieve happiness in society. In his 'essays on individual freedom', the philosopher Galluppi claimed the existence of immutable «universal laws» that guided man towards the «moral good» and their «improvement». Rights, or what Galluppi called man's «moral freedom», were not founded on a rational or metaphysical natural law but on the common moral nature of humanity, that pushed every man to pursue the «development of his faculties». Expanding upon the idea of the moral equality of men, Galluppi established «equality of rights» as the founding principle of every legitimate government.⁴⁵

The foundation of the 'rights talk' on the science of morality allowed Neapolitan liberals to build an egalitarian theory of rights that did not require theorising a social covenant or a pre-social state of nature. Drawing on Genovesi's *Diceosina*, the science of 'just' and 'honest', Neapolitan patriots claimed that men had the same rights since they shared the same nature. Costantino della Marra's *Manuale politico* based the idea of «primitive» and «inviolable rights» on the moral equality of men. He argued that human beings had been endowed with the same moral and physical faculties (although in different quantities) to pursue their happiness and were guided by a common sense of the «just» and the «honest».⁴⁶ According to Francesco Paolo Bozzelli, lawyer and former Napoleonic civil servant, nature placed men in the same situation of «primitive equality» and endowed them with the same «needs» and «faculties» to preserve their individual existence («*autoconservazione dell'individuo*»). In his view, equality of rights was necessary to fulfil the moral nature of man.⁴⁷ Likewise, according to the writer Nicola Calcaterra, the moral nature of man «constantly strives for equality» through the different epochs of history and societies.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ «Giornale Costituzionale del Regno delle Due Sicilie», 1 February 1821, p. 107.

⁴⁵ P. GALLUPPI, *Della libertà di stampa* (1820), in *Opuscoli* 1977, pp. 32-34.

⁴⁶ DELLA MARRA 1820, pp. 9-13.

⁴⁷ F.P. BOZZELLI, *Origine de' dritti e de' doveri dell'uomo*, «Liceo Costituzionale», 1820, pp. 6-13.

⁴⁸ N. CALCATERRA, *Importanza de' cittadini costituenti*, Naples, 1820, pp. 3-6.

Once they established this understanding of rights based on equality, Neapolitan liberals argued that the purpose of constitutional government was to promote equality of rights through the balancing of rights and duties in society, as Genovesi's *Diceosina* identified. As a matter of fact, Bozzelli argued that the science of rights was based on a «relationship of equality among men» and that the purpose of government was to acknowledge and guarantee this equilibrium of rights and duties through civil legislation, so that man could pursue his happiness.⁴⁹ The «social pact», according to Bozzelli, did not create rights but merely ensured their natural equilibrium. Likewise, both a dialectal dialogue as *La Scuola costituzionale* and the 'high theory' philosophical texts of Pasquale Galluppi presented constitutional government as the «guardian» of the equality of rights and duties.⁵⁰

To achieve such equilibrium, Neapolitan liberals argued that positive laws had to be modelled after natural law. Indeed, they viewed constitution-writing as fulfilling the new science of legislation theorised by the Neapolitan Enlightenment and centred on the equality of rights. Nicolini, claimed in the «Minerva Napolitana» that Vico, Genovesi, and Filangieri had theorised «principles of civil legislation» that rested on the «equality of rights» among citizens, «intolerance against privileges» and «feudal power», and had encouraged codification guided by these ideals. Building on their effort, the revolution of 1820 would constitutionalise those principles and transform them into the general «rule» and «basis» of legislation.⁵¹

Liberal patriots did not merely wish to incorporate a rights claim or a declaration of rights into the constitution. Drawing on Filangieri's *Science of legislation* and the constitutional project of 1799, they aimed at transforming the constitution of Cadiz into a document centred on the constitutionalisation of the rights of man. The principle of the «equality of rights», as constitutional projects claimed both in 1799 and 1820, was the foundation of every other right and the constitution itself.⁵² Coeval drafts of reforms argued that the constitution must include not «vague and general» declarations of rights, but «clear and specific laws» determining the «rights and duties of the citizens» to guarantee their «equality». Indeed,

⁴⁹ F.P. BOZZELLI, *Patto sociale. Poteri e forme di governo che ne risultano*, «Liceo costituzionale», 1820, pp. 49-60.

⁵⁰ S. GRASSO, *La scuola custezionale pe li piccirilli*, Naples, 1820, pp. 6-7; GALLUPPI (1820), in *Opuscoli* 1977, pp. 36-37.

⁵¹ NICOLINI 1820, pp. 407-411.

⁵² V.L. FERRARO, *La dottrina del popolo costituzionale*, Naples, Tipografia di Nunzio Pasca, 1820, pp. 13-16; B. FIORILLI, *La migliore costituzione politica per tutte le genti sul calcolo di ragione*, Naples, Tipografia Francese, 1820, pp. v-vi.

they claimed that the goal of the constitution was to establish «an equal distribution of rights and duties» to promote «public and private happiness». ⁵³ Likewise, another constitutional draft opened with a declaration of the «equality of civil and political rights» of the citizens. ⁵⁴

The importance attached to the moral and legal principle of equality led Neapolitan liberals to develop a constitutional theory that balanced individual rights and national/popular sovereignty and asserted the primacy of the rights of man over legislation and constituted powers. To put it in the words of the minister of justice Francesco Ricciardi, the «sovereignty of the people» must be limited by the respect for «individual rights». Moreover, as Filippo Maria Pagano (nephew of the reformer Francesco Mario) claimed, institutional mechanisms had to prevent the transformation of the legislative assembly into a new «more legitimate and legal» tyrannical power. ⁵⁵

First, liberals advocated the principle of equality to oppose any reform that could jeopardise the Enlightenment notion of virtue, legislation, and balance of rights and duties that shaped constitutional government and a just and equal society. Thus, they opposed any attempt at introducing hierarchies or privileges among citizens, such as the establishment of an aristocratic senate or the restriction of suffrage. Angelo Lanzellotti argued that wealth and property could not be the criteria for the right to vote and be elected member of parliament, otherwise the new assembly would establish an «aristocracy» and exclude «sublime intellects» such as Vico, Genovesi, Pagano only because they lacked an adequate income. He also argued that the new council of state should not be based on «class divisions» but rather on a «proportioned combination» of expertise, including lawyers and political economists. ⁵⁶ As a matter of fact, Neapolitan liberals blocked attempts at introducing a second chamber composed by peers appointed by the sovereign, which they judged to be a «political monster». ⁵⁷ Instead of an aristocratic institution, they imagined a senate that reflected the Enlightenment republican ethics and that would be «composed by citizens of every class» and «opened to talents and virtue». This institution,

⁵³ *Parere sulle costituzioni* 1820, pp. 46-47, 78-79.

⁵⁴ *Progetto di modificazioni da farsi alla costituzione delle Spagne presentato alla nazione napoletana da un veterano della libertà*, 6 Ottobre 1820, Naples, Tipografia Francese, 1820, p. 51.

⁵⁵ F. RICCIARDI, *Sovranità della nazione. Diritti politici de' cittadini. Poteri dello stato*, «L'Amico della costituzione», 18 August 1820, p. 4; F.M. PAGANO, *Osservazioni critiche sulla Costituzione della monarchia spagnuola*, Tipografia dell'Intendenza del Principato Citeriore, 1820, p. 10.

⁵⁶ A. LANZELLOTTI (ed.), *Costituzione politica del regno delle Due Sicilie del 1821. Sotto Ferdinando I. Con documenti e note*, Naples, 1821, pp. 38, 89-90.

⁵⁷ GALANTI 1820, p. 58.

as an anonymous pamphlet argued, would be a celebration of «equality» rather than «nobility».⁵⁸

Moreover, Duo-Sicilian patriots drew on the Neapolitan ‘Enlightenment constitutionalism’ to criticise constitutional principles that restricted fundamental human rights such as the freedom of thought, press, and religion. This was the case of art. 12 of the constitution of Cadiz, which established Catholicism as the religion of the nation and did not tolerate any other. As shown by Isabella, most Neapolitan liberals and many Southern European reformers, praised religious uniformity, defined the nation in religious terms, and believed that «constitutional government required religiously homogeneous community to survive».⁵⁹ However, Duo-Sicilian patriots tried to find an accommodation between national religious identity and individual rights, and modify art. 12 without sacrificing the civic value of religion. Building on Filangieri’s *Science of legislation* (book V, *Delle leggi che riguardano la religione*), Neapolitan liberals aimed at transforming Catholicism into a civic religion that opposed fanaticism, superstition, and the power of the clergy and that promoted instead social bonds, «virtue and happiness».⁶⁰ Both radical and moderate liberals such as Lanzellotti and Galanti believed that the constitution should protect the national cult since religion was the foundation of «civil orders» and a «powerful social bond». Yet, they also stood opposed to «fanaticism and intolerance».⁶¹

Liberals knew that intolerance would jeopardise the Enlightenment educational project centred on freedom of conscience and press. Voicing these concerns, the Neapolitan parliament proposed a reform of art. 12 to restrict only the «public practice of other cults». This reform, as argued by Galanti in parliament, would confirm the role of religion as «basis of social virtues» while still preserving freedom of thought.⁶² Likewise, Galluppi praised the civic role of religion but drew on Filangieri’s opinion to defend freedom of press and thought as an essential «right of man» based on the «right to self-improvement» aimed at achieving the diffusion of *lumi* and «social virtues» against «ignorance» and «superstition».⁶³

⁵⁸ *Progetto di modificazioni* 1820, p. 22.

⁵⁹ ISABELLA 2023, pp. 487-509, 559-564. See also, M. ISABELLA, *Religion, Revolution, Popular Mobilization*, in INNES – PHILIP 2018, pp. 231-251.

⁶⁰ FERRONE 2012, pp. 93-99.

⁶¹ LANZELLOTTI 1820, pp. 6-8; GALANTI 1820, pp. 21-22.

⁶² Galanti presented a motion in parliament on January 18, 1821, to defend the reform, see A. ALBERTI (ed.), *Atti del parlamento*, vol. III, pp. 68-71. In defence of the reform, see also Lanzellotti’s comment on art. 12 in *Costituzione politica*, p. 13.

⁶³ GALLUPPI (1820), in *Opuscoli* 1977, pp. 44-56.

Finally, to consolidate the constitutionalisation of rights of man and its place above positive legislation, Neapolitan liberals proposed the introduction of constitutional guarantees against any usurpation of powers. In doing so, they built on Pagano's *magistratura degli Efori*, introduced in the constitutional draft of 1799. This supreme tribunal had neither legislative, judicial, or executive functions but instead had the task of holding the balance of powers and enclosing them within their spheres to protect the primacy of constitutional principles.⁶⁴ In the annotated re-edition of Pagano's draft, Lanzellotti praised the *Eforato* as the «most beautiful part of the project» and «*senato conservatore* of the sovereignty of the people».⁶⁵ Likewise, Bartolomeo Fiorilli's draft of a constitution, introduced a «senate of seniors» that would balance every constitutional power and «preserve» the constitution as «sacred depot» of rights.⁶⁶ This *senato conservatore* had to «invigilate on the respect of the constitution» and ensure that the legislation passed by the national assembly respected the principles of the constitutional code. Similarly, other patriots proposed a «supreme tribunal», neither subordinate to government, nor parliament, that would stop «abuses» and laws opposed to the «equality of rights among citizens».⁶⁷

The intellectual influence of the Neapolitan Enlightenment 'rights tradition' on liberals was not limited to the constitutional discourse. Duo-Sicilian liberals shared with Enlightenment thinkers a cosmopolitan vision of the rights of man. The constitution, as Francesco Bozzelli claimed, declared but did not limit the geographical scope of rights to the national sphere, since these were by nature universal, inalienable, and made no «differences» among peoples. As he claimed, the rights of a «savage from austral lands» were as much valid as those of a Duo-Sicilian citizen.⁶⁸ Indeed, as Costantino Della Marra noted, Neapolitan citizens must stand against slavery and any other form of feudal vassalage that violated the «primitive rights» of man and vilified «human nature».⁶⁹

⁶⁴ FERRONE 2012, pp. 148-152; F. MORELLI, *La costituzione*, in MORELLI and TRAMPUS 2008, pp. 112-118.

⁶⁵ LANZELLOTTI (ed.), *Progetto di costituzione*, pp. 136-144. Lanzellotti paraphrased or copied most of Vincenzo Cuoco's notes on Pagano's project, and endorsed some of his observations, published in the *Fragments of Letters to Vincenzo Russo*, in the *Saggio Storico*. On Cuoco's democratic critique of Pagano's project, see A. DE FRANCESCO, *How not to finish a revolution*, in *Naples in the Eighteenth Century*, edited by G. Imbruglia, pp. 167-182.

⁶⁶ FIORILLI 1820, pp. xxviii-xxix, 104-105.

⁶⁷ *Parere sulle costituzioni* 1820, pp. 108-109, 113-114.

⁶⁸ F.P. BOZZELLI, *Sul mandato di cui devono munirsi i deputati alle prossime Corti legislative*, «Liceo Costituzionale», 1820, p. 37.

⁶⁹ DELLA MARRA 1820, pp. 43-44.

Neapolitan liberals did not confine the rights of man to the national constitution but used them to advocate a cosmopolitan system of international relations built on the equality of nations. This system would be alternative to the European ‘Congress system’ established at Vienna in 1814-15 and led by a directorate of great powers in charge of preserving counter-revolutionary peace and security in the continent.⁷⁰ Neapolitan liberals built on the ‘Enlightenment rights talk’ to defend the rights of the nation at a time in which the great powers’ conferences of Troppau (1820) and Laybach (1821) placed the revolutionary government of the Two Sicilies outside the European states-system and sanctioned an Austrian armed intervention to restore the rule of Ferdinand I.⁷¹

Duo-Sicilian liberals held that a new law of nations (or European public law), with written and secure laws centred on justice and equality, should replace the current system based the rule of a council of great powers over weak states.⁷² The «law of nations», as stated by the periodical «Amico della costituzione», had to be turned into a «science» as the definition of its rules could no longer be left to brute force and conquest.⁷³ Recalling Vico’s re-foundation of natural law on new principles, the «Minerva napoletana» argued that the «*new science*» of public law should also be codified upon the «natural right» of nations to independence.⁷⁴

Neapolitan legislators theorised an international society founded upon the equality of rights among nations. While proclaiming national rights, they reconnected the principle of national independence/sovereignty with the ‘Enlightenment constitutionalism’. The rights of nations, as Bozzelli argued, were based on the same universal principles of justice and morality that established the rights of man (*giustizia primitiva degli uomini and delle genti*).⁷⁵ First, this meant the illegitimacy of any distinction between nations. Even a small and lesser power at the «extremity of Europe», claimed

⁷⁰ B. DE GRAAF – I. DE HAAN – B. VICK (eds.), *Securing Europe after Napoleon. 1815 and the New Culture of Security*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

⁷¹ M. JARRETT, *The Congress of Vienna and its Legacy. War and Great Power Diplomacy after Napoleon*, London-New York, I.B. Tauris, 2013, pp. 270-284. On Neapolitan international thought and its critique of the principle of intervention in 1821, see G. GRIECO, *British imperialism and Southern liberalism: reshaping the Mediterranean space, c. 1817-1823*, «Global Intellectual History», 3, 2, 2018, pp. 202-230.

⁷² «La Voce del Secolo», 30th January 1821, p. 217.

⁷³ «L’Amico della costituzione», 8th February 1821, pp. 2-3, and 4th September 1820, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁴ «La Minerva napoletana», I, 1820, pp. 184-192.

⁷⁵ F.P. BOZZELLI, *Rapporti generali di popolo a popolo*, «Liceo costituzionale», 1820, pp. 111-117.

the «Amico della costituzione», had the same rights as other peoples.⁷⁶ As the deputy Giuseppe Poerio declared, the universal principle of «equality» sanctioned the incompatibility of the «any foreign supremacy» with the «law of nations» since nations «necessarily have equal rights». Moreover, Poerio linked the language of the law of nations and national sovereignty with that of constitutional rights. Indeed, the equality of nations was associated with their right for political freedom («*libertà politica*») and the rights of the peoples («*diritti de' popoli*») against «*despotismo*» and «*servitù*».⁷⁷

Duo-Sicilian constitutional debates revived a distinctive Enlightenment 'rights tradition'. Neapolitan liberals defended the ideal of a just and equal society centred on the rights of man against the post-Napoleonic Europe of empires and great powers based on the principle of legitimacy and counter-revolutionary security. They also showed capacity to build on the Neapolitan 'Enlightenment constitutionalism' and adapt its language of rights to nation-building without sacrificing its cosmopolitan principles.

CONCLUSION

The Austrian intervention in March 1821 brought an end to the brief constitutional experiment in Naples. Yet, the intellectual legacy of the Neapolitan school of natural law did not come to an end with the restoration of Ferdinand's absolute monarchy. Duo-Sicilian reformers continued to uphold a theory of liberalism and legislation centred on equality, the rights of man, and the quest for justice in domestic and international society. Still in 1848, the Neapolitan constitution of 1799 was re-published by the jurist Giovanni Manna as part of a collection of the most important European constitutional law documents to guide the new Neapolitan parliament.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, from the first Italian chair of international law in Turin, the Neapolitan lawyer Pasquale Stanislao Mancini drew on Vico's 'natural law of nations' to theorise international law upon the equality of rights and self-determination of nations (1851).⁷⁹

This focus on Neapolitan political thought has illustrated how Enlightenment 'rights talk' continued to shape nineteenth-century lib-

⁷⁶ «L'Amico della costituzione», XI, 1820, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Parliamentary session of 15th February 1821, in *Atti del parlamento*, vol. 3, pp. 406-407.

⁷⁸ G. MANNA (ed.), *Il diritto costituzionale d'Europa ossia raccolta delle principali costituzioni politiche d'Europa dal 1791 fino a' giorni nostri*, Naples, Tipografia di Porcelli, 1848.

⁷⁹ G. GRIECO, *A Legal Theory for the Nation State. Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, Hegelianism and Piedmontese Liberalism after 1848*, «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», 24, 2, 2018, pp. 266-292.

eralism. The brief constitutional episode of 1820-21, is part of a broader Duo-Sicilian nineteenth-century intellectual story,⁸⁰ shows how the Enlightenment continued to inspire at the margins of the European states-system alternative understandings of rights, constitution, and law of nations. The legacy of the Enlightenment, as I have shown, did not end in Naples with the brutal repression of the republic of 1799. Instead, the writings and political theory of Enlightenment philosophers contributed to develop in Two Sicilies a current of liberalism alternative to the coeval Anglo-French liberal ‘turn to empire’⁸¹ as well as to post-Napoleonic European counter-revolutionary projects of moderate liberalism in the shadow of the Holy Alliance,⁸² and conservative declinations of ‘liberty without equality’.⁸³

The legacy of the Enlightenment in the Two Sicilies also offers a new viewpoint on the global history of the «re-articulation and reinvention» of the Enlightenment in the nineteenth-century beyond the non-Western world.⁸⁴ Duo-Sicilian liberals, as I have shown, drew upon the Enlightenment language of rights to promote a cosmopolitan society established on equality and justice, and the right of lesser states to prosper in a world of great powers. Their intellectual effort shows that also lesser powers at the ‘margins’ of Europe re-appropriated the Enlightenment culture to reclaim rights and develop emancipatory projects in the age of empires.

This essay has revealed the ways in which the study of the connections between liberal political thought and the Enlightenment reaffirms liberalism in the present as a cosmopolitan and egalitarian theory of rights. The legacy of Enlightenment ‘rights talk’ can still offer a language to reimagine liberalism as a cosmopolitan theory centred on the moral equality of humanity and the equilibrium between individual and national rights.

⁸⁰ I will deal at length with this in a forthcoming volume on *Empires and the Two Sicilies. Re-imagining the Mediterranean in the Age of Revolutions*.

⁸¹ J. PITTS, *A Turn to Empire. The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005; D. BELL, *Reordering the World. Essays on Liberalism and Empire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016.

⁸² I. NAKHIMOVSKY, *The Holy Alliance. Liberalism and the Politics of Federation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2024.

⁸³ A. DE DIJN, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville. Liberty in a Levelled Society?*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; A. KAHAN, *Aristocratic Liberalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.

⁸⁴ S. CONRAD, *Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique*, «American Historical Review», 117, 4, 2012, pp. 999-1027.

Casa Editrice
Leo S. Olschki
Firenze



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Fondazione
1563
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A PYRRHIC VICTORY AND DEFINITIVE DEFEAT:
FROM SLAVERY TO RACE, OR THE LOST LEGACY
OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

1. WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE?

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, two of the most important figures in the foundation of the United States of America, died on the same day. The year was 1826 and the day, by the inscrutable design of fate, was not just any day: it was the 4th of July. This date fell exactly fifty years after the proclamation of the Declaration of Independence, the founding document of the American Revolution to which Jefferson and Adams both contributed on different levels but equally decisively.

Twenty days after their deaths, John Sergeant – who had already been a member of Congress for several terms and went on to serve for many more – delivered a public speech in Philadelphia to commemorate two of the United States’ greatest founding fathers.

The same venerated instrument that declared our separation from Great Britain, contained also the memorable assertion, that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed”.¹

Why did Sergeant, half a century later, feel the need to remind the citizenry that the Declaration of Independence had enshrined not only the right to independence, but also the principle that human beings are ‘created equal’ and possess of ‘unalienable rights’?

¹ E.L. CAREY – A. HART (eds.), *Select Speeches of John Sergeant, of Pennsylvania (1818-1828)*, Philadelphia, Chesnut, 1832, p. 25.

In other words, what had been happening to that principle and those rights in the intervening fifty years?

This question does not stand alone. More than thirty years later, in 1858, Abraham Lincoln, at that point not yet President of the United States, delivered a public speech in Lewistown using even more peremptory, and perhaps authoritative, words:

Now, my countrymen, if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great landmarks of the Declaration of Independence; if you have listened to suggestions which would take away from its grandeur, and mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions; if you have been inclined to believe that all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart of liberty, let me entreat you to come back. Return to the fountain whose waters spring close by the blood of the Revolution. Think nothing of me – take no thought for the political fate of any man whomsoever – but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence.²

Why, almost a century later, did Lincoln feel the need to ‘come back’ to the Declaration of Independence? What were the ‘suggestions’ that citizens were to glean from its ‘grandeur’ and the ‘fair symmetry of its proportions’? What had happened, up to that point, to the ‘truths’ it contained, such as the idea of being ‘created equal’ and those ‘unalienable rights’ held up as ‘the great landmarks of the Declaration’?

On closer inspection, answering these questions is the most direct way to address the difficulties, obstacles, enemies, and battles won and lost in the American institutional debate and public space around the Enlightenment political project based on the principle of human equality and the Enlightenment language of human rights. Delving into these questions helps us develop an overall historical assessment of the legacy of that project and language in the century following the Declaration of Independence, the guiding star of Enlightenment constitutionalism.

2. SO MUCH MORE THAN A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The premise underlying this analysis is a historiographic interpretation of the Declaration of Independence as the most fully realized manifesto of the Enlightenment revolutionary constitutional and political project

² A. LINCOLN, *From a Speech at Lewistown, Illinois, August 17, 1858*, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by R.P. Basler, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 1953, vol. 2, p. 547.

founded in the principle of human equality and individual's unalienable rights. I have provided such an interpretation in past work, showing the constitutional project enshrined in the founding document of the United States and how it lay at the heart of Enlightenment constitutionalism in the Atlantic space; I have likewise demonstrated the individual, universal, political, and inalienable value of human rights contained therein, and addressed their relevance for contemporary human rights.³

However, that interpretation can be reinvented here through a brief analysis of Lincoln's above-cited speech at Lewistown. This speech inevitably refers back to such an interpretation of the Declaration of Independence and indeed some passages of his would otherwise remain somewhat obscure without it. What did Lincoln mean when he spoke of the 'fair symmetry of its proportions'? What symmetry and proportions are contained in the Declaration?

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.⁴

To begin with, there is certainly symmetry between the first paragraph, which enshrines the right to independence, and the second, which enshrines the principle that human beings are equal and have unaliena-

³ See A. MAURINI, *CREATED EQUAL. La rivoluzione mancante alle origini degli Stati Uniti d'America*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2020 (regarding an interpretation of the Declaration as a manifesto of the Enlightenment project and its language, see pp. 17-26; for the Declaration as the basis of Enlightenment constitutionalism, see pp. 26-64; concerning the human rights values underpinning the Declaration and Enlightenment constitutionalism that have been claimed for contemporary human rights, see pp. 152-161).

⁴ *The Declaration of Independence*, July 4, 1776, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVMAN-1996-05-31/pdf/GOVMAN-1996-05-31-Pg1.pdf> (October, 2023).

ble rights. The proportional relationship between the first right (of the people) and the subsequent (individual) rights are specified in the second paragraph, in which the people's right to independence is justified, so to speak: 'all men are created equal' and have unalienable and natural rights (all men 'are endowed by their Creator' with these rights). This is the foundation.

The purpose of governments, whose power derives from 'the consent of the governed', is to guarantee these rights, rights which are patently individual and universal because they belong to 'all men'. If a government 'becomes destructive of these ends', therefore, it is 'the Right of the People' 'to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government' – which brings us back to the independence solemnly sanctioned in the first paragraph.

Here lie the symmetry and proportions: the natural and unalienable, individual and universal rights of all men constitute the foundation for the right of the people to independence. They are *the* foundation: this is the revolutionary Enlightenment political project enshrined in the Declaration.

There is also symmetry between the 'self-evident truths': the first is the principle of the equality of human beings ('all men are created equal'), while the second is their rights ('Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'). The proportions are clear: it is only in the principle of equality that these rights are preserved and, by virtue of being natural and unalienable, they must necessarily belong to all men. First the principle, then the rights: if these rights do not belong to all men, for example in the absence of the principle of equality, they would only belong to some and hence would be privileges rather than rights. The Declaration is a 'chart of liberty', as Lincoln says, but the liberty in this case depends on equality: first equality (principle) then liberty (right), because liberty in conditions of inequality would transform a natural and unalienable right into a privilege.

There is also symmetry between these first two 'self-evident truths' and the other two – that 'to secure these rights' is the purpose of governments, deriving power from 'the consent of the governed', and that it is 'the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government' if 'it becomes destructive for these ends'. The first two truths are established by human nature, so to speak, in the sense that they are posited by 'the Creator': 'all men are created equal', 'they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights'. The second are established by men: they concern governments 'deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed' and 'the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to insti-

tute new Government' if 'any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends' which is 'to secure these rights'.⁵

The symmetry between the first two truths representing 'the absolute goodness of laws', and the second two representing 'the relative goodness of laws', reflects the distinction between constitution and legislation, between constituent and legislative work: the proportion derives from the choice to subordinate legislation to the constitution.⁶

And it is here that we find the Enlightenment revolutionary constitutional project of the Declaration.

3. A PYRRHIC VICTORY AND DEFINITIVE DEFEAT

It goes without saying that, inscribed in the principle of equality, the main antagonist of the Enlightenment language of rights is a language inscribed in the principle of inequality. And it is clear that, in the period under consideration in my analysis, the principle of human inequality in the United States underpinned not only but above all two sworn enemies of the Declaration: slavery and racial inequality. These are quite likely the 'suggestions' that, according to Lincoln, might lead citizens away from the 'grandeur' of the Declaration and 'mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions': they are based on the belief that 'all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart of liberty'.

Regarding the Declaration's sworn enemies, to proceed with this historical analysis we need, at the very least, to make a lexical and conceptual clarification that inevitably becomes methodological too.

Slavery is an institution; it is indeed one of the oldest of all institutions, «almost as widespread in time and space as marriage». Race, on the other hand, is an idea or conceptual construct, a fiction that scientific racism went on to transform into an institution: the 'Negro'⁷ question we address

⁵ For the reading of the symmetries below, see BASLER 1953, p. 547.

⁶ The expressions are borrowed from the lexicon Gaetano Filangieri used to differentiate «the absolute goodness of laws», corresponding to natural law, from «the relative goodness of laws», corresponding to positive law: see G. FILANGIERI, *La scienza della legislazione* (1780-1791); English translation *The Science of Legislation*, edited by Emery and Adams, Bristol, Thomas Ostell, 1806, pp. 12, 39. Concerning the difference between and subordination of legislation to the constitution, see also T. PAINE, *Four Letters on Interesting Subjects*, Philadelphia, Styner and Cist, 1776, pp. 3-22; ID., *The Forrester's Letters*, in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, edited by M.D. Conway, vol. I («1774-1777»), Whitefish, Kesinger Legacy, 2010, pp. 232-258.

⁷ The term 'Negro' is used in this context solely to reflect historical sources and language as they appeared in the original documents. It is not intended to be discriminatory or offensive in any way.

here far precedes the question of race, and the «absolutely constructed nature» of racism, instrumental to maintaining «domination» and without any basis in biological data, was maintained by scientific racism but also destined to outlast this system of thought.⁸

In short, the lexical, conceptual, and methodological prerequisite for this historical analysis is eliminating the metonymy according to which ‘slave’ means ‘Negro.’ Indeed, slavery per se is «neither black nor specifically African».⁹

It is true that, for the natives and Europeans living in America, it was precisely this context in which the two concepts came to overlap almost completely from the seventeenth century onward, so much so that the metonymy became commonplace. However, this was a result of the fact that, «after the prohibition of Indian slavery in the Spanish Empire», almost all slaves were taken from sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰

A ‘fiction’ was certainly created around the figure of the ‘Negro’ in the eighteenth century to justify the Atlantic slave trade, namely the «fiction of the Negro» that cast black Africans as beings who are human but are not to be considered human. This idea was not based on any theory of race – to be clear, neither Linnaeus in his *Systema naturae* (1735-1758) nor Buffon in his *Histoire naturelle* (1753) address the question of ‘Negroes’.¹¹

It is equally true, however, that race did not predate slavery. The idea of race intersected with slavery for a limited period, as a ‘fiction’ used to justify slaveholding. With the advent of scientific racism, on the other hand, the idea of race regained its autonomy and began to enjoy an authoritativeness that gave rise to a paradigm which not only survived the institution of slavery as such, but also replaced it: the theory of race, which evolved in direct proportion to the crisis of slavery as an institution, went on to meet the new needs of the plantation-based colonial labor-system.

The democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century, which in the Atlantic space were triggered in particular by the Declaration of Independence, brought about a crisis in slave trafficking and the institution of slavery. Faced with this crisis, the European and American elites of the colonial system, the planters and their financiers, proved unwilling to rethink the forms of colonial labor: as their access to new ‘slaves’ was restricted but

⁸ A. MICHEL, *Il bianco e il negro* (2020), Turin, Einaudi, 2021, pp. 3, 15. Here, as in all the citations from sources for which there is no English language edition, the translation is my own.

⁹ MICHEL 2021, p. 29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 116-118.

their (perceived) need remained as great as ever, they began to depend on ‘Negroes’ to ensure their plantations’ survival.¹²

In short, while it is impossible to conduct a history of race without a history of slavery,¹³ it is likewise impossible to understand (the emergence of) the theory of race without breaking the metonymy between ‘slave’ and ‘Negro’: it would otherwise be difficult to understand a question dear to contemporary historiography on this subject, namely «why racism flourished precisely in the era of emancipation».¹⁴

In other words and directly germane to this historical analysis, from the perspective of the Enlightenment project based on the principle of equality and inalienable rights, defeating slavery would not mean doing away with race.

And this is exactly what occurred: the abolition of slavery represented a Pyrrhic victory against the Declaration’s sworn enemies, and the institutionalization of racism represented the lost legacy of the political and constitutional project underpinning the Declaration. If the Declaration’s language of natural rights of man represented the cultural background for the abolition of slavery, race represented its lethal enemy, undermining its principle of equality: «as a nation, we began by declaring that “all men are created equal”. We now practically read it “all men are created equal, except negroes”».¹⁵

To study the legacy of the Enlightenment is thus to study the phenomenon of race, that is, how the Enlightenment project and language of equality and rights for all was pushed aside in favor of a project and language based on inequality and rights for the few, eventually sealing the defeat of Enlightenment principles and erasing their legacy.

4. TOWARDS A GLOBAL INTELLECTUAL APPROACH TO RACE (AND THE RELIGIOUS DIMENSION OF RACISM)

‘Scientific racism’ has so far been used to refer to the institution of the race paradigm. In reality, a historical approach to racism requires we not

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148, 186.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ R. BLACKBURN, *The American Crucible. Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*, London, Verso, 2011, p. 11.

¹⁵ A. LINCOLN, *Letter to Joshua Speed, August 24, 1855*, in BASLER 1953, p. 543. See J. ISRAEL, *The Expanding Blaze. How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775-1848*, Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2017, p. 614.

identify the institution of the phenomenon exclusively with the scientific component, although that component did provide crucial support.

As a historical phenomenon, race is a conceptual construct based on domination by ‘Whites’ – with consequent discrimination against ‘Negros’ – that has become a paradigm and ‘institution’ supported by science, manipulated by political actors, and exploited by the economy.¹⁶ From a historical perspective, racism feeds on the convergence of these axes.

The «fiction of Whiteness» i.e., the conceptual construct of ‘White’ superiority functional to racial domination, offers the economic system an easy and immediate solution to the crisis of the institution of slavery: instead of rethinking forms of labor, the figure of ‘Negro’ allowed colonial elites to «replace their slaves» as rapidly as possible and maintain the capitalist decoupling of property from labor, of «labor for oneself» from «labor for others», of free from unfree – a decoupling that slavery could no longer guarantee.¹⁷

At the same time, «after the Negro experience, it is difficult, if not impossible, to engage planters and enfranchised [people] in a common society»: for politicians, who with the crisis of slavery had been grappling with the problem of ‘free Negroes’ for decades, the fiction of ‘White’ domination offered a way to resolve this issue by excluding ‘Negroes’ from citizenship in the name, by association, of a dominant ‘nation’ – that is, a «domi-nation». ‘Race’ became a «portmanteau word» that went on to intersect and mingle until it became conflated with a concept, that of nation, whose role in history was steadily ascending as the twentieth century dawned.¹⁸

This convenient means politicians saw of resolving the problem of citizenship would not have been sufficient without science: the sciences of race – in a vast and diverse arena ranging from natural history to comparative anatomy, ethnology to biology, anthropometry to craniometry, genealogy to eugenics¹⁹ – or, more accurately, the political use of race science, provided politicians with unquestionable substance to bolster the ideological element.

All the elements were in place: the paradigm of race was ‘institutable’ and ‘institutionalizeable,’ and so it was ‘instituted’ and ‘institutionalized’.

Using a global approach to intellectual history to grapple with race as a historical phenomenon means wading between political and economic

¹⁶ See MICHEL 2021, p. 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-186, 172, 188.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 151-171, 187.

¹⁹ See D. PESTRE (ed.), *Histoire des Sciences et des Savoirs*, edited by K. Raj and H.O. Sibum, Paris, Seuil, 2015, vol. 2 («Modernité et globalization»), pp. 258, 392, 395, 400.

history, between modern history and the history of science; it entails delving into and considering economic, political, and scientific factors in their convergence as a whole.

And let us not forget the religious factor: the religious dimension of racism contains confluences, interconnections, and convergences with its political, economic, and scientific dimensions, offering interesting interpretive keys for understanding them in more depth.

Moreover, the religious factor – particularly biblical justifications of American racism – is one of the most telling elements for understanding the country’s historical pathway from slavery to racism, within the phenomenon of race.

In American racial discourse, Noah’s curse on Ham, which played a prominent role in justifications of slavery, was no longer sufficient or suitable.²⁰ In conservative Protestant America, religious justification of racial theories instead invoked the three generations of the sons of Noah, namely Japheth, Ham, and Sem and identified them with Europe and America, Africa, and Asia respectively – that is, ‘White’, ‘Black’, and ‘Red’-skinned people: race theories were rooted in the racial stereotypes of biblical figures. And since «by these were the nations divided on the earth after the flood» the term ‘nation’ was replaced with the term ‘race’, and order, division, separation, and segregation became a regulatory and determining principle derived from the letter of the Holy Bible.²¹

However, this attempt to find a biblical justification for racial destiny was not enough to justify racial hierarchy and discrimination or the idea of maintaining racial purity. For these latter constructs, advocates instead referenced the destruction of the unity of speech:²² God dispersed the human

²⁰ «“Cursed be Chanaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren”. And he said: “Blessed be the Lord God of Sem, be Chanaan his servant. May God enlarge Japheth, and may he dwell in the tents of Sem, and Chanaan be his servant”» (*The Holy Bible*, Book of Genesis, Chapter 9, vv. 25-27). Concerning its prominent role for the proslavery intellectuals and antebellum slavery advocates, as well as its iconic popularity and effectiveness at the level of propaganda and mass consciousness, see T.V. PETERSON, *Ham and Japheth in America. The Mythic World of Whites in the Antebellum South*, Metuchen, American Theological Library Association, 1978; E.D. GENOVESE, *A Consuming Fire: The Fall of the Confederacy in the Mind of the White Christian South*, Athen and London, University of Georgia Press, 1998; S.R. HAYNES, *Noah’s Curse. The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002.

²¹ *The Holy Bible*, Book of Genesis, Chapter 10, v. 32. Concerning this interpretation in the conservative Protestant America of the *Bible Belt*, with particular reference to the Southern presbyterian Benjamin Morgan Palmer, see HAYNES 2002, p. 136.

²² «Come ye, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another’s speech. And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands, and they ceased to build the city. And therefore the name thereof was called Babel, because there the language of the whole earth was confounded: and from thence the Lord

family not to ensure societal order in a world where each nation possessed a unique character and mission, but as a hedge against humanity's sinful tendencies. He broke the human family into sections, and the end of the unity of speech separated people according to a rationale for racial purity – and racial amalgamation, the interbreeding of discordant races and the attempt to force them to mingle, share the same aim as Nimrod's rebellion and are therefore equally wrong.²³

In short, the destruction of the unity of speech at Babel represented «a stronger argument, more so in the era after the Civil War when segregation, propped by violence, increasingly became the central mechanism in sustaining racial subjugation».²⁴

In conclusion, in facing race as a historical phenomenon with a global approach to intellectual history, we should not underestimate the role played by religion in all its confluences, interconnections, and convergences with political, economic, and scientific factors: during a transition in the social and political culture of the Southern States involving an identification between 'Nimrod's rebellion' and the U.S. government's aggression against the South, the biblical dimension of racism – albeit mostly confined to the South – was extremely indicative in American racial discourse both before and after the civil war. It illuminates conceptual developments and links which are essential for understanding the phenomenon of race: the transition from slavery to race and, within the phenomenon of race, from racial theories to racial discrimination, from dependence, division, separation, and segregation principles on the one hand to the principle of racial purity, the purity of race, and the purity of blood on the other hand – in short, from race to racism.

And these conceptual transitions are crucial not only historically but also historiographically, to address the links between the Enlightenment and race as well as challenge the links between the Enlightenment and racism.²⁵

scattered them abroad upon the face of all countries» (*The Holy Bible*, Book of Genesis, Chapter 11, vv. 7-9). See HAYNES 2002, p. 137.

²³ Regarding Nimrod, see *The Holy Bible*, Book of Genesis, Chapter 10, v. 9: «now Chus begot Nemrod: he began to be mighty on the earth. And he was a stout hunter before the Lord. Hence came a proverb: Even as Nemrod the stout hunter before the Lord». Regarding the link between Nimrod and Babel, see HAYNES 2002, p. 138; A. HISLOP, *The Two Babylons* (1853), Ontario, Chick, 2020, pp. 55-58.

²⁴ D.P. ANDREWS, *A Tower of Pulpits*, in *African American Religious Life and the Story of Nimrod*, edited by A.B. Pinn and A. Dwight Callahan, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 199.

²⁵ Regarding the links between the Enlightenment and racism, see G.L. MOSSE, *Toward the Final Solution. A History of European Racism*, New York, Howard Fertig, 1978, pp. 5-21;

5. A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO NAVIGATING CURRENT EVENTS: RACE AS A SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PHENOMENON

After its twentieth-century shift, race as a historical phenomenon went on to lose «its historical role in the new global order that emerged following World War II, with the planned end of colonies, forced labor, and segregation laws».²⁶

Even after waning as a historical phenomenon, however, race survived as a social and political phenomenon. Of the characterizing features the convergence of which gave rise to a highly specific historical phenomenon, certainly, not much seems to remain.

With decolonization, racism today no longer seems to be characterized by exploitation via colonial economic systems – although not always or everywhere has it ceased to be used for the exploitation of labor in domestic and global capitalist systems.

With the end of racial segregation, citizenship and associated rights no longer seem to be reserved definitively for ‘Whites’ alone, and the nineteenth-century model of ‘domi-nation’ and its twentieth-century developments seem to have faded. This political characterizing feature has not disappeared completely or everywhere, however. It does continue to more or less significantly affect dynamics of reception, integration, and citizenship in the service of attempts at resurgent nationalism involving claims which, if no longer centered on domination specifically, do at least entail pretenses of superiority or primacy.²⁷

What is certain is that the idea of race has lost any form of backing from science, the factor so crucial to its original institution: with the sequencing of the human genome, genetics has done away with any aura of scientific validity around polygenesis; it has instead demonstrated the uniqueness of the human race and reframed the traits previously used to posit a plurality of races as mere phenotypical differences.

Nonetheless, «race is not over» in today’s societies: racism has amply demonstrated that, as a social and political phenomenon, it «can do without

M. FOUCAULT, *Qu'est-ce les Lumières?*, Paris, O. Dekens, 2001. Regarding the links between the Enlightenment and race, see J.-F. SCHAUB – S. SEBASTIANI, *Race et Lumières: histoire d'une controverse*, in Id. – EAD., *Race et histoire dans les sociétés occidentales. XV-XVIII siècle*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2021, pp. 315-386.

²⁶ MICHEL 2021, p. 10.

²⁷ Not to mention resurgences of twentieth-century directions in racist thinking, from the Ku Klux Klan to neo-Nazism.

race»; it has the power to outlive the idea of race.²⁸ Scientific backing has been replaced by ideological backing, because the true consistency (in reality, inconsistency) of race as a historical phenomenon remains intact and has proven perfectly compatible with ideology: as a conceptual construct and instrumental fiction («race does not actually exist»), it seems to be quite functional. When it is no longer a matter of one group's domination over another, in the contemporary lexicon racism seems to be used to refer to one group's superiority or primacy over another. It no longer means exclusively 'White' superiority or primacy (or even domination) over 'Black' people; rather, it tends more and more often to indicate any kind of superiority or primacy (or even domination) of one group over another: we tend to also use the label 'racism' and 'racist' for anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-immigration agendas, anti-White movements, etc.²⁹

In the U.S., it is precisely after the end of racial segregation, that is, the end of race playing its historical role, that Critical Race Theory in particular has called for a recognition that race continues to play a social and political role. «It is time to “get real” about race and the persistence of racism in America» sounds like a manifesto on the subject of race in the postmodern era aimed at uncovering the basic contradiction of an «epoch» that is «postracial» in theory but not in practice.³⁰

In the name of equality and rights, which today as in the past continue to represent the main antagonists or sworn enemies of race, Critical Race Theory is perhaps the most intellectual of the many, highly diverse movements that have been formed to fight for the civil rights of Black Americans. It was originally developed in the legal field to focus on racial justice, but it has produced some very interesting results for historiography by also taking on the challenge of history: the history of law, including constitutional law, but also the history of race in the modern and contemporary age. It has even crossed over into the history of political doctrines to show that, in the postmodern age, race and racism constitute one of the main threats to liberalism.³¹

²⁸ MICHEL 2021, p. 259.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. XI, 3, 10.

³⁰ D.A. BELL, *After we're gone: Prudent Speculations on America in a Postracial Epoch*, in *Critical Race Theory. The Cutting Edge*, edited by R. Delgado and J. Stefancic, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 2013, p. 9 (italicized in the original). See also *Critical Race Theory. The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, edited by K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller and K. Thomas, New York, The New Press, 1995, pp. 440-494.

³¹ See K. THOMAS, *Rouge et Noir Reread: a Popular Constitutional History of the Angelo Herndon Case*, in CRENSHAW – GOTANDA – PELLER – THOMAS 1995, pp. 465-494; DELGADO – STEFANCIC 2013, p. 7.

The 1619 Project, led by Pulitzer Prize winner Nikole Hannah-Jones, has involved schools all across America as well as journalists and scholars in marking the 400th anniversary of the first slave ship landing off the coast of Virginia. In the current cultural climate, the scope of this project has not shied away from seeking to influence prevailing ideas of American history from the moment it was presented to the public via a 100-page special issue of the «New York Times Magazine»: «Our founding ideals of liberty and equality were false when they were written. Black Americans fought to make them true. Without this struggle, America would have no democracy at all». It continues: «American democracy has never shed an undemocratic assumption present at its founding: that some people are inherently entitled to more power than others».³²

In practice, the results of the project have achieved, if not a complete rewriting of American history, at least at a new lemmary for studying the country's history encouraging the U.S. to engage with its own history of slavery and race.³³

From a historical point of view, The 1619 Project undoubtedly entails a whole series of patent limitations. As readily noted by American scholars, these weaknesses can be summarized as a tendency to flatten the past onto the present, historically and lexically speaking. Such oversimplification inevitably causes it «to miss the historical complexity» – as denounced in particular by Gordon Wood, one of the best-known scholars of American history.³⁴

At times the problem seems to be the above-mentioned metonymy between race and slavery,³⁵ the historical importance of which is highlighted here above; at other times there are clear lexical issues: racism as a historical phenomenon is highly specific and related to the convergence of certain characterizing features, and the improper and anachronistic use of this noun and its adjective does not help us either to understand the historical phenomenon or to struggle against the contemporary social and political phenomenon.

³² See *The 1619 Project*, «New York Times Magazine», 18 August 2019, pp. 14-22, 50-57.

³³ See N. HANNAH-JONES – C. ROPER – I. SILVERMAN – J. SILVERSTEIN (eds.), *A New Origin Story. The 1619 Project*, New York, Penguin Random House, 2021.

³⁴ T. MACKAMAN, *An Interview with Historian Gordon Wood on the New York Times' 1619 Project*, «World Socialist Web Site», 27 November 2019, <https://wsws.org/en/articles/2019/11/28/wood-n28.html> (October, 2023). For critiques to *The 1619 Project*, a leading player in the debate that will be referred to later in the text, see in general and above all D. NORTH – T. MACKAMAN, *The New York Times' 1619 Project and the Racialist Falsification of History. Essays and Interviews*, Oak Park, Mehering Books, 2021.

³⁵ See the project sources, a mix of race studies and slavery studies, in HANNAH-JONES – ROPER – SILVERMAN – SILVERSTEIN 2021, pp. XIX-XLIX: XXVI-XXVII, XXXV, XLIII, and XLIV-XLV.

In short, if we lose sight of historical complexity and sensitivity, and seek to combat racism simply by replacing its characteristic ideological features with those of an opposite ideology.³⁶ The result cannot help but become entangled in the same old trap – leading by contrast alone to anti-White racism or so-called Cancel Culture, as has occurred in some cases.³⁷

Thomas Jefferson, for instance, held an antislavery stance that was historically characterized by assimilationism and colonialism with strong racial overtones. If he is to be cast without nuance as a slave owner (because he did own slaves) and a racist,³⁸ then the only possible result can be to remove the statue of him from New York City Hall.³⁹

The public debate surfacing around this project is very interesting and thought-provoking, capable of engaging the whole of American society, from victims of racist police violence to historians and jurists in universities, from major newspapers and television stations to journals and specialized texts, from political factions to the New York City Council, from movements such as Black Lives Matter fighting against racial profiling and inequality to former U.S. President Donald Trump. Beyond the variety of positions, and the historical limitations and ideological leanings of Critical Race Theory and aspects of The 1619 Project, they have undeniably performed a public service by bringing the issue of race, still firmly present in the American social and political landscape, to the center of public and institutional debate.

They have done a commendable and timely service to history as well, as evidenced by the professorships and fellowships allocated to the study of race by the best American universities⁴⁰ as well as the numerous recent volumes that in various ways, whether reflexively or not and directly addressing the subject of race or not, have in any case critically confronted U.S. history using perspectives that diverge from the dominant ones of traditional historiography.⁴¹

³⁶ Regarding the ideological aspect of The 1619 Project, see again MACKAMAN 2019.

³⁷ See A. DERSHOWITZ, *Cancel Culture: The Latest Attack on Free Speech and Due Process*, New York, Hot Books, 2020; G. MAIFREDA, *Immagini contese. Storia politica delle figure dal Rinascimento alla Cancel Culture*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2022.

³⁸ See I.X. KENDI, *Stamped from the Beginning*, New York, Nation Books, 2016, pp. 204-205.

³⁹ See the widely covered removal of Thomas Jefferson's statue from New York City Hall that was decided and took place after a debate that ricocheted from the New York City Council to former President Donald Trump between October and November 2021, for which see <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/18/nyregion/removing-a-statue-of-thomas-jefferson-from-city-hall.html> (October, 2023).

⁴⁰ See the so-called Antiracist Research, from the Center for Antiracist Research at the Boston University to the Andrew W. Mellon positions in Humanities at Harvard.

⁴¹ See P. MAIER, *Ratification. The People Debate the Constitution, 1787-1788*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2010; R. DUNBAR-ORTIZ, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, New York,



Fig. 1. T. NAST (drawn by), *The Emancipation of the Negroes – The Past and the Future*, «Harper's Weekly», January 24, 1863, p. 56.

This is useful because, having ceased as a historical phenomenon but survived as a social and political phenomenon, race is also becoming a historiographical phenomenon. There are thus interesting research perspectives on the history of race and role of race in history that have exerted new influence on modern history, contemporary history, the history of science, and the history of political doctrines. These fields can no longer help but address the role of race and its principle of inequality as one of

Beacon Press, 2014; A. TAYLOR, *American Revolutions: a Continental History, 1750-1804*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2016; KENDI 2016; M.J. KLARMAN, *The Framers' Coup. The Making of the United States Constitution*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016; J. LEPORE, *THESE TRUTHS. A history of the United States*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2018. By dominant mainstream historiography I mean the body of work headed mainly by the aforementioned Gordon Wood: see G.S. WOOD, *The Creation of the American Republic*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1998; P.S. ONUF, *The Origins of Federal Republic. Jurisdictional Controversies in the United States, 1775-1787*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983; S. WILENTZ, *The Rise of American Democracy: from Jefferson to Lincoln*, New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 2005; J.J. ELLIS, *American Creation. Triumphs and Tragedies in the Founding of the Republic*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

the main contradictions interfering with the principle of equality and human rights that contemporary liberal democracies should and would like to guarantee.

These prospects of inquiry have grown exponentially and especially in the last decade, from Europe to America, from France to the United States.⁴² With its undeniably varied analyses, sensibilities, issues, periods, historical frameworks, and historiographical outcomes, the recent historiography on race seems to contain, as an undercurrent or explicit focus, a common message: in combatting the contemporary persistence of racism as a social and political phenomenon, the most effective tool of struggle is not eliminating the word 'race' from the public and institutional sphere or from political, legal, and even constitutional language. On the contrary, it is more useful to take a historical approach to the subject of race, studying race as a historical phenomenon and analyzing the role of race in history.

This is true especially because a historical approach allows us to pursue these inquiries from a particular point of view, namely the opposition – intrinsic to the emergence of the historical phenomenon of race – between race based on the principle of inequality and rights based on the principle of equality, in the conviction that this irreducible opposition between these two languages and theories, as well as between these two principles, still today represents the essential key to «getting rid of race».⁴³



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⁴² From F. BETHENCOURT, *Racisms. From the Crusades to the Twentieth Century*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, to M. TURDA (ed.), *A Cultural History of Race*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

⁴³ MICHEL 2021, p. 270.

SOPHUS A. REINERT – ROBERT FREDONA

THE HISTORICAL CANON OF POLITICAL ECONOMY
BETWEEN REASON OF STATE
AND ENLIGHTENMENT

On November 15, 1553, workers digging near the city gates of Arezzo, in the beautiful Chiana Valley in Eastern Tuscany, uncovered a number of stunning artifacts. They harked back to the very origins of civic life in Italy, when Arezzo was known by its ancient Etruscan name of Aritim – before it was Latinized as Arretium by its Roman conquerors around 295 BCE – and, made proverbial headlines even in a city as accustomed to beauty, art, and history as Renaissance Florence. Of all the objects discovered in this improvised archeological dig, however, none made a greater impression than the imposing bronze beast now known as the Chimera of Arezzo. Cast around 400 BCE and measuring 78.5 cm in height and 129 cm in length, it represented the mythical Chimera defeated by the hero Bellerophon in *The Iliad*.¹ According to Homer, the creature was «a grim monster sprung of the gods, nothing human, all lion in front, all snake behind, all goat between, terrible, blasting lethal fire at every breath!».² Tuscany's then Duke Cosimo I de' Medici (1519-1574) himself took an intense interest in the statue, publicly displaying it in the seat of government at Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, and relocated the other Etruscan artifacts to his personal study in his official residence across the Arno River, in Palazzo Pitti. If we are to believe the memoirs of the artist Benvenuto Cellini – still renowned for his magnificent statue of Perseus slaying the equally mythical Medusa – the

¹ G.C. CIANFERONI, *La Chimera: dalla scoperta al Museo Archeologico*, in M. Iozzo (ed.), *La Chimera di Arezzo*, Florence, Edizioni Polistampa, 2009, pp. 27-28: 27. The first reference to the find remains Archivio di Stato di Arezzo, *Antico Comune, Deliberazioni e partiti dei Priori e Consiglio Generale 23, c. 102r*, published in M. GATTO, *Di un dipinto e di altre rappresentazioni cinquecentesche inedite della Chimera di Arezzo*, «Annali Aretini», XVIII, 2011, appendix 1, pp. 11-30: 28.

² HOMER, *The Iliad*, 6, translated by R. Fagles, New York, Penguin, 1990, pp. 212-215: 201.

Duke «took pleasure in personally restoring them with the small chisels of a goldworker».³

Truth be told, Etruscan artifacts were hardly the only thing Cosimo I set his mind on restoring – not to mention improving – during his long reign. If anything, the Chimera became a symbol of all the problems he, the new Bellerophon, had vanquished to assert his state and his estate, reasserting and increasing Tuscany's historical greatness and the magnificence of his bloodline alike. Cosimo I may not have been the most famous member of the Medici clan, and not even the most illustrious Cosimo in the family, an honor claimed by the banker and patron Cosimo the Elder (1389-1464), but it was thanks to him that the lineage solidified its grasp on the storied city and its hinterlands, establishing a dynasty that would rule for two centuries and become immortalized in the annals of civilization.⁴ And the revindication of Tuscany's pre-Roman Etruscan past was a crucial weapon in his ideological armory.⁵ As expressed by the artist and historian Giorgio Vasari, who himself hailed from Arezzo, it was only right that the Chimera «was found in the age of *Duke Cosimo, who today is the dominator of all chimeras*».⁶

For Cosimo I de' Medici did not merely restore old glories; he also forged new ones. And in addition to smiting the chimeras of his age, he helped formalize a new-fangled one with which we still do battle: political economy.⁷ The discipline is often thought of as an invention of the European Enlightenment, and there can be no doubt that the mid-eighteenth century witnessed an 'economic turn' observable across a wide spectrum of intellectual, practical, and symbolic activity.⁸ Yet the term itself was first formulated a century earlier, and enjoyed roots that were consid-

³ B. CELLINI, *Vita*, Cologne, Pietro Martello, 1728, p. 286.

⁴ G. MURRY, *The Medicean Succession: Monarchy and Sacral Politics in Duke Cosimo dei Medici's Florence*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2014; R. BLACK – J.E. LAW (eds.), *The Medici: Citizens and Masters*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2015.

⁵ G. CIPRIANI, *Il mito etrusco nel rinascimento fiorentino*, Florence, Olschki, 1980, p. 80 and *passim*; V. ZUCCHI, *L'Etruscomania di Cosimo I de' Medici*, in S. RISALITI – V. ZUCCHI (eds.), *Chimera Relocated: Vincere il mostro*, Milan, Officina Libraria, 2017, pp. 49-57: 51, 55.

⁶ G. VASARI, *Giornata seconda. Ragionamento terzo*, in Id., *Ragionamenti del signor cavaliere Giorgio Vasari*, 2nd ed., Arezzo, Michele Bellotti, 1762, pp. 79-108: 108. Emphasis added.

⁷ J.C. BROWN, *Concepts of Political Economy: Cosimo I de' Medici in a Comparative European Context*, in G.C. GARFAGNINI (ed.), *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici dell'Europa del '500*, Florence, Olschki, 1983, pp. 279-293; S.A. REINERT, *The Origins of the Developmental State: The European Experience*, in M. WRIGHT et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of State Capitalism and the Firm*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022, pp. 53-77.

⁸ S.L. KAPLAN – S.A. REINERT, *The Economic Turn in Enlightenment Europe*, in Id. (eds.), *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, London, Anthem, 2019, pp. 1-34.

erably deeper.⁹ Political economy is of course, like the chimera, a composite, signifying the synthesis of the political and the economic. According to Adam Smith's famous definition,

political economy, considered as a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator, proposes two distinct objects: first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or more properly to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services. It proposes to enrich both the people and the sovereign.¹⁰

Political economy, in short, was not just about securing 'subsistence' and 'sufficient revenue' but about *enriching* 'both the people and the sovereign'; it was a matter of *improving* material conditions. This branch of legislation enjoyed a complex genealogy involving distinct but ultimately intertwined traditions by the time it was first baptized in the seventeenth century: among them a historical awareness of mercantile and industrial practices and of what had made polities 'great' in the past, the corpora of scholasticism and Roman Law, medieval theology, and the convention of political philosophy still known as *ragion di stato*, or Reason of State.

The meaning and valence of Reason of State to some extent remains an open question, precisely because it was an open question, and a much debated one, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The renegade Piedmontese Jesuit Giovanni Botero defined reason of state as «information (*notizia*) about the means suitable for founding, preserving, and enlarging a dominion». ¹¹ His critic Celso Mancini, Bishop of Alessano, took issue with the definition, attributing it only to «a certain doctor» whom his readers would certainly have known was Botero, but he acknowledged that everyone at the time was talking about reason of state: «In our times the words 'reasons of state' turn about in the mouths of all, and all contend that by this norm they judge what things are done by princes, whether they were done rightly, and whether it was permitted to them by reason of state to do such things». ¹² Mancini's concern that Botero's definition,

⁹ The term seems first to have appeared in L. TURQUET DE MAYERNE, *La monarchie aristocratique*, Paris, Berjon and Bouc, 1611, p. 558, and more famously in the title of A. DE MONTCHRESTIEN, *Traité de l'économie politique*, Rouen, Osmont, 1615.

¹⁰ A. SMITH, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, edited by E. Cannan, 2 vols., Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1976, vol. I, p. 449.

¹¹ G. BOTERO, *Della ragion di Stato*, edited by C. Continisio, Rome, Donzelli, 2009 [original 1589], p. 7. R. DE MATTEI, *Varia fortuna della locuzione 'Ragion di Stato'*, in ID., *Il problema della ragion di Stato nell'età della Controriforma*, Milan, Ricciardi, 1979, pp. 24-39, remains an essential discussion of the phrase.

¹² C. MANCINUS, *De iuribus principatuum libri novem*, Rome, Facciotti, 1596, pp. 22-23.

in stressing information, did not contemplate prudence, justice, or virtue speaks to a contemporary debate that raged about reason of state's relationship to morality, rationality, and especially law. *Ratio* and *ragione* were, after all, also synonyms for law.¹³ And it is meaningful that *ragione di stato* was as or more often translated into Latin as *ius status* or *ius dominii* than as *ratio status*.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly a jurist, Mario Giurba, provided one of the harshest critiques:

although reason of state is contrary to all reason because it does not follow reason but only utility, having only the end of preserving the state, the crowd nevertheless calls it reason of state, not because it is reason, but because it happens very often that vices are colored with the names of virtues.¹⁵

Scipione Ammirato, in giving his famous definition, «reason of state is nothing other than the contravention of ordinary reason for the sake of public benefit, or for the sake of a greater and more universal reason» similarly distinguishes reason of state from other kinds of reason or law, natural law, civil law, the law of war, and the law of nations. Thus, he argued, «it is not appropriate to say that a prince does anything by reason of state, if one can show that he does so by reason of ordinary justice».¹⁶

Other writers followed Botero with definitions of their own. For Giovanni Antonio Palazzo, who for a while worked as a lawyer in Naples, reason of state is a rule and art, which teaches and observes the proper means to achieve the end destined by the practitioner of the art, which definition is verified in government, because it is what makes us know the means and teaches us the exercise of those means to achieve the tranquility and good of the republic.¹⁷

Although the phrase *ragion di stato* was new, Ludovico Zuccolo – a long-time writer at the court of Urbino – argued, it had been known to the ancients by other names:

we circumscribe it with these terms, *ragion di stato*, just as they [the ancients] circumscribed it with others, which nonetheless denote the same thing, some-

¹³ P. FIORELLI, 'Ragione' come 'diritto' tra latino e volgare, in ID., *Intorno alle parole del diritto*, Milan, Giuffrè, 2008, pp. 129-183.

¹⁴ In addition to Mancini, see the discussion in F. TOPIUS, *Tractatus de potestate principis secularis*, Florence, Giunti, 1607, p. 67, numbers 96-97.

¹⁵ M. GIURBA, *Consilia seu decisiones criminales*, Messina, Bianco, 1626, p. 3, column a, number 7.

¹⁶ S. AMMIRATO, *Discorso sopra Cornelio Tacito*, Florence, Giunti, 1594, p. 231.

¹⁷ G.A. PALAZZO, *Discorso del governo e della Ration vera di Stato*, Venice, Franceschi, 1606, pp. 18-19.

times using *vis dominationis*, sometimes *arcana imperii*, and sometimes that way of saying something *est, vel non est, e republica*.¹⁸

Of particular interest is the definition provided by the itinerant philosopher Gerolamo Frachetta,

reason of state is a *paideia*, or expertise, or discipline... arising partly from the teachings of others, partly from the reading of histories and political writers, partly from reports (*relationi*), partly from sense, and partly from the experience of worldly things, by which one governs one's own affairs, or those of anyone else, according to what is required for the benefit of the one to whom they belong.

Following Aristotle, Frachetta distinguishes such a *paideia* from a science, «as a less perfect habit from a more perfect one, because reason of state, being an active faculty, cannot be a perfect habit». This, he says, is why Xenophon calls Cyrus's knowledge of government a *paideia*, an education rather than a science.¹⁹ Princes in the reason of state tradition could rely on no fixed rules or dogmas, and had to be always learning, consuming news and reports, studying the affairs of the world, comparing themselves to their peers. Their performance, ultimately, would be judged by whether they maintained their state and improved it.

Without getting entirely lost in the catacombs of its etymology, it is worth additionally noting that neither of the constituent parts of 'reason of state' is as straightforward as one might first think.²⁰ 'Reason' of course summons the notion of considering something logically and sensibly, but a '*ragione*' also signified the underlying cause of something and, in the jargon of Tuscan merchants, strikingly was both the word for a firm and for its account books; from the Latin *ratio*, meaning a count, a calculation, an accounting, or a reckoning.²¹ There was, thus, a deep conceptual consonance between business, reason, logic, and causality at the time. And neither did '*stato*' or '*status*' carry the exact connotations of a modern 'state' rather

¹⁸ L. ZUCCOLO, *Considerationi politiche, e morali sopra cento oracoli d'illustri personaggi antichi*, Venice, Ginami, 1621, pp. 66-67.

¹⁹ G. FRACHETTA, *L'Idea de' governi di stato e di guerra, con due discorsi l'uno intorno alla Ragion di Stato, e l'altro intorno la Ragion di Guerra*, Venice, Zenaro, 1597, pp. 38-39.

²⁰ See, for overviews, R. BIRELEY, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990; A.E. BALDINI (ed.), *Botero e la "ragion di stato"*, Florence, Olschki, 1992; R. DESCENDRE, *L'état du monde: Giovanni Botero entre raison d'état et géopolitique*, Geneva, Droz, 2009.

²¹ S.A. REINERT – R. FREDONA, *Merchants and the Origins of Capitalism*, in T. DA SILVA LIOPES – CH. LUBINSKI – H.J.S. TWOREK (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to the Makers of Global Business*, London, Routledge, 2019, pp. 171-188: 176, 177; F. EDLER, *Glossary of Mediaeval Terms of Business, Italian Series, 1200-1600*, Cambridge, MA, Medieval Academy of America, 1934, p. 236.

invoking notions of the estate, status, and standing of princes and other rulers.²² As the term was used throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, such a ‘state’ could signify the government, the regime, power, authority, and even condition of a city or territory, and it was something that could be possessed, taken, retaken, held, and lost by agencies as diverse as families, factions, parties, orders, and even individuals.²³ And people either holding or qualifying for public office were known by the substantive adjective ‘*statuali*’ meaning ‘men of state’.²⁴ Like most contemporary princes, Cosimo I was concerned with nurturing the many aspects of his ‘stato’ but he also oversaw the precocious territorialization, centralization, and importantly – by way of how he institutionalized elite supporters as functionaries of the regime – bureaucratization of Tuscany in ways that, for almost a century, have inspired research on the origins of the ‘modern state’ as such.²⁵ He was a creature of his time, but it is hardly anachronistic to observe that some of the measures by which he strengthened his Renaissance ‘state’ contributed to the establishment of the term’s later meaning. And though ‘reason of state’ came to be considered synonymous with the amoral Bismarckian *realpolitik* of increasingly totalitarian Leviathan states, and for some even an antithesis of sorts to ‘political economy’ it remains that, at the time of its emergence as a political discourse, the phrase captured the essence both of how the means used by princes to preserve and improve their dominions were judged by observers and how princes ap-

²² N. RUBINSTEIN, *Notes on the Word stato in Florence Before Machiavelli*, in J.G. ROWE – W.H. STOCKDALE (eds.), *Florilegium Historiale*, Toronto, University of Western Ontario Press, 1971, pp. 314-326; A. TENENTI, *Archeologia medievale della parola stato*, in ID., *Stato: Un’idea, una logica: dal comune italiano all’assolutismo francese*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1987; Q. SKINNER, *British Academy Lecture: A Genealogy of the Modern State*, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 162, 2009, pp. 325-370: 327.

²³ R. FREDONA, *Political Conspiracy in Florence, 1340-1382*, PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2010, p. 13.

²⁴ See, for example, Marco Parenti to Filippo Strozzi, March 1, 1469, in M. PARENTI, *Lettere*, edited by M. Marrese, Florence, Olschki, 1996, pp. 169-172: 171, and for the definition p. 173 f13.

²⁵ The literature on this question is immense, but see, particularly, F. CHABOD, *Was there a Renaissance State* [1958], in H. LUBASZ, *The Development of the Modern State*, New York, Macmillan, 1964, pp. 26-42, for an introduction to which see J. KIRSHNER, *Introduction: The State is ‘Back In’*, in ID. (ed.), *The Origins of the State in Italy, 1300-1600*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995, pp. 1-10. For classic contributions, see, particularly, E. FASANO GUARINI, *Lo stato mediceo di Cosimo I*, Florence, Sansoni, 1973; A. D’ADDARIO, *La formazione dello stato moderno in Toscana: da Cosimo il vecchio a Cosimo I de’ Medici*, Lecce, Adriatica ed. Salentina, 1976; F. DIAZ, *Il Granducato di Toscana: I Medici*, Turin, UTET, 1976. On the Florentine bureaucracy, in particular, see still R. BURR LITCHFIELD, *Emergence of a Bureaucracy: The Florentine Patricians, 1530-1790*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1986.

proached problems of statecraft. Far from a simplistic *realpolitik*, reason of state spoke to a much more fluid world of overlapping significations revolving around the fortune, strengthening, and positioning of a social and political community, an important aspect of which contemporaries knew as material and territorial *improvement*.²⁶

IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

The historiography of improvement and what it connotes has, much like that on the origins of capitalism and political economy, tended to focus on early modern England, but we would suggest its longer history in Italy is indicative also of the need to consider the earlier divergence of Italy and the Mediterranean economy.²⁷ Though the words predated it by centuries, the 1623 *Dictionary* of the Accademia della Crusca included *abbonare* as a synonym of *bonificare*, both derived from the Medieval Latin term *bonificare*, literally to ‘make good’ and defined as variations of *perfezionare* in turn translated as ‘render perfect’, ‘refine’ or ‘improve’.²⁸ Already in his encyclopedic 1241 *Trésor* or *Book of Treasures*, the Florentine writer, notary, and statesman Brunetto Latini insisted that whoever ‘govern cities’ be ‘guardians’ and keep good books to «grow and improve» the «honor and profits of the commune» under their jurisdiction.²⁹ That same year, to take just one other example, the *Codice Pelavicino* decreed that the tenants of fields belonging to a bishopric in the Lunigiana had ‘in perpetuity’ agreed to pay rents and to «cultivate, improve, and work [*colere, bonificare et laborare*]» the land in question.³⁰ Similar duties were enshrined in the legal codes of Renaissance Italy. In the *Statuta Pallavicinia* of fifteenth-century Emilia, for example, a guardian was legally bound to «spend or trade» the «money»

²⁶ S.A. REINERT, *In margine a un bilancio sui lumi europei*, «Rivista storica italiana», 118, 2006, pp. 975-986.

²⁷ See, for examples, P. SLACK, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-Century England*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015; E. ASH, *The Draining of the Fens: Projectors, Popular Politics, and State Building in Early Modern England*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017. For a rare exception, see C.E. MURPHY, *Waters and Welfare: Rivers, Infrastructure, and the Territorial Imagination in Grand Ducal Tuscany, 1549-1609*, PhD Dissertation, MIT, 2023.

²⁸ *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, edited by B. de’ Rossi, 2nd ed., Venice, Jacopo Sarzina, 1623, p. 5.

²⁹ B. LATINI, *Tresor*, edited by P.G. Beltrami, P. Squillaciotti, P. Torri and S. Vatteroni, Turin, Einaudi, 2007, pp. 837, 843. Emphasis added.

³⁰ *Codice pelavicino*, Archivio Capitolare Lunense, Sarzana, CCCLXXVI 338, 315v, https://pelavicino.labcd.unipi.it/evt/#doc=CCCLXXVI_338&page=fol_315v.

of a «ward... in such a way that the goods of the ward themselves may be increased and improved [*bona augeantur et bonificentur*]». ³¹

Beyond the world of law, there was a widespread cultural appreciation of the salubrious consequences of economic activity in Italy. As San Bernardino had preached in the public square of Siena in 1427, «for the sake of the common good» that all-mighty ideal of the *ben commune*, «one should practice trade». ³² By the time of Cosimo I, it was a commonplace that ‘commerce’ had made the city-states of Italy ‘great’ and ‘powerful’ and that governments had a role in competitively nurturing trade for the benefit of citizens and state coffers alike. ³³ There were of course many competing – and overlapping – models of sovereignty in operation at the time, often invoking the pastoral and cynegetic roles of shepherds and hunters. ³⁴ Whichever model one adopted, however, an important element of sovereign husbandry was, as Latini and others emphasized, that of protector, guardian, or *tutor* responsible, in the Smithian sense of political economy, for the improvement of one’s lands and people. ³⁵ Cosimo I, for one, assumed the role of ‘*sovrano tutore*’ or ‘sovereign guardian’ with gusto. ³⁶ And it was in this spirit that he set out to ‘*bonificare*’ and drain the ‘swamps’ of Tuscany to make it the cultural and agricultural landscape it is today, and sojourned in Pisa to «*bonificare* and fortify that city». ³⁷ Now, we would think of this broad discourse and practice of improvement as *development*.

³¹ CH. DU FRESNE, SIEUR DU CANGE, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediæ et infimæ latinitatis*, 7 vols., edited by G.A.L. Henschel, Paris, Didot, 1840-1850, vol. I, p. 723, referencing *Statuta pallavicinia*, Parma, Ex officina Erasmi Viotti, 1582, book 1, cap. 12, p. 16.

³² SAN BERNARDINO OF SIENA, “*Una delle più utili prediche*”, in ID., *Antologia delle prediche volgari*, edited by F. Felice and M. Fochesato, Siena, Cantagalli, 2010, pp. 151-152: 151. On the prevalence of the ideal of the ‘common good’ see, among others, L. MARTINES, *Linguaggio politico e linguaggio giuridico nella prima età moderna*, «Annali dell’Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento», 20, 1994, pp. 239-244: 240-241.

³³ See, for example, A. LIPPO BRANDOLINI, *Republics and Kingdoms Compared*, edited and translated by J. Hankins, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 113-117; G. LAN-TERI, *Della economica*, Venice, Valgrisi, 1560, p. 98.

³⁴ G. CHAMAYOU, *Manhunts: A Philosophical History*, translated by S. Rendall, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012.

³⁵ See, for example, F. GUICCIARDINI, *La historia d’Italia*, Florence, Lorenzo Torrentino, 1561, p. 3.

³⁶ L. MANNORI, *Il sovrano tutore: pluralismo istituzionale e accentramento amministrativo nel principato dei Medici (secc. XVI-XVIII)*, Milan, Giuffrè, 1994, p. 204 and *passim*.

³⁷ Bartolomeo Moro detto il Vertua da Gerzano bresciano to Cosimo I, no date, with “Disegno della palude da bonificare presso Massa” Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato, Carteggio Universale di Cosimo I, f486A, cc. 907-908; Francesco di Paolo Vinta to Cosimo I, April 5, 1552, Mediceo del Principato, 560, 92r.

Of all the big questions of human affairs over the *longue durée*, few are more pressing and more consequential than that of development, understood in Albert O. Hirschman's terms as an «all-around emancipation from backwardness».³⁸ Though the 'modernist' nature of such a characterization has been derided in academia for decades, it remains that the vast majority of people in the world have an instinctive understanding of the matter very close to his definition when, say, they imagine 'better' futures for themselves and their communities. For such 'development' has brought billions of people out of extreme poverty, and for good and ill it has driven technological changes that are pushing our species beyond our planet and our bodies, given birth to the Anthropocene, and remains at the core of geopolitical competition. Development is not merely a vehicle of increasing human welfare, however, for its geographically and temporally *uneven* nature also makes it an indicator of an individual country's competitive output, capacity, and relative status in the world. 'Wealth' as Smith famously paraphrased Thomas Hobbes in his 1776 *Wealth of Nations*, «is power», the ultimate positional good.³⁹

Historically, development has been spearheaded under a diverse array of ideological banners, from capitalism through fascism to communism and variations of them with specific national 'characteristics' and it has occurred in the context of social democracy as well as totalitarian absolutism.⁴⁰ It has been focalized in city-states like Florence and Singapore, but also, in living memory, characterized the rise of a veritable empire harboring more than 1 billion people. Because of the diversity of strategies, structures, and contexts in which development has taken place, and in spite of the best efforts of countless econometricians, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the phenomenon.⁴¹ Yet, past experience suggests certain themes and tools that, to summon a much-maligned concept for professional historians, can still be 'useful' to us. What follows is an attempt to present such a toolkit for development in a historically conscientious manner.

³⁸ A.O. HIRSCHMAN, *The Rise & Decline of Development Economics*, in Id., *The Essential Hirschman*, edited by J. Adelman, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 49-73: 69.

³⁹ SMITH, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, p. 35; T. HOBBS, *Leviathan*, London, Crooke, 1651, pp. 35, 41.

⁴⁰ See, for extreme examples, Y. HUANG, *Capitalism with Chinese Characteristics: Entrepreneurship and the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; S. KOTKIN, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995; R.J. OVERY, *The Nazi Economic Recovery, 1932-1938*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴¹ For a theoretical perspective on why such approaches still remain popular, see D. LEVIT – A. TSOY, *A Theory of One-Size-Fits-All Recommendations*, «American Economic Journal: Microeconomics», 14, 4, 2022, pp. 318-347.

The most striking cases of very rapid economic development occurred in a sequence of countries in Asia between the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries, beginning with Japan during the Meiji Restoration and following World War II, then in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and, more recently and on a grander scale, China.⁴² Such episodes of compressed development are often defined as ‘miracle years’ or simply ‘miraculous’ – as if they somehow lay beyond secular means of realization and explanation – but we will suggest worldlier causes. Numerous ideas have been suggested for how development can be galvanized, from the genetic to the cultural and institutional, but what these episodes all had in common was a relationship between states and markets that was deeply antithetical to the *laissez-faire* ideals of neoclassical economics, and the fact that they all took off in contexts of intense international rivalry through the purposeful emulation of more advanced economies.⁴³ In the analytical vocabulary of the late Moses Abramowitz, these experiences were, more often than not, about ‘catching up’ with those further ‘ahead’ on the developmental frontier.⁴⁴ Related concepts like ‘the developmental state’ have since produced entire subfields of scholarly inquiry and, though they remain highly divisive in global academia, can helpfully explain a large number of historical cases of economic improvement.⁴⁵

Development itself of course pre-dated the discourse to which we have attached its name since the 1950s, and it remains that the earliest economic ‘miracle’, the first time there was sustained per-capita growth and an observable positive divergence from humanity’s Malthusian cycles of surplus and dearth, was the Italian one of the Middle Ages.⁴⁶ Though it undeniably could draw on earlier economic processes and examples from across the Mediterranean world, from the writings of Xenophon the Athenian to the

⁴² For key works, see CH. JOHNSON, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925-1975*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1982; A. AMSDEN, *Asia’s Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialization*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992; R. WADE, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003.

⁴³ E.S. REINERT, *The Role of the State in Economic Growth*, «Journal of Economic Studies», 26, 4-5, 1999, pp. 268-326; ID., *How Rich Countries Got Rich... and Why Poor Countries Stay Poor*, London, Constable, 2007; H.-J. CHANG, *Kicking Away the Ladder: Development Strategy in Historical Perspective*, London, Anthem, 2002; S.A. REINERT, *Translating Empire: Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2011.

⁴⁴ M. ABRAMOWITZ, *Catching Up, Forging Ahead, and Falling Behind*, «The Journal of Economic History», 46, 2, 1986, pp. 385-406.

⁴⁵ REINERT 2022.

⁴⁶ R. FREDONA – S.A. REINERT, *Italy and the Origins of Capitalism*, «Business History Review», 94, 1, 2020, pp. 5-38.

economic policies of antiquity and, more recently, of Byzantium, the Italian experience uniquely codified, theorized, and intellectually initiated a process of cumulative competitive emulation that continues to shape our world to this day.⁴⁷ Indeed, we can understand the more recent Asian cases using the same tools as the Italian one. And, even though the Enlightenment mostly doubted and maligned earlier Renaissance contributions to economic theory – itself a venerable practice of intellectual history more broadly⁴⁸ – contemporary observers like Botero and the lawyer Antonio Serra, whose 1613 *Short Treatise on the Causes that Can Make a Kingdom About in Gold and Silver in the In the Absence of Mines* has been called the ‘first’ work of theoretical economics, continue to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of development.⁴⁹ Though these and other writers looked to the general experience of the Italian peninsula for inspiration, they frequently paused on the example of a particular state, however, one which many considered a ‘model’ that others had followed: the Tuscany of Cosimo I de’ Medici, slayer of chimeras. Hirschman himself liked to emphasize the heuristic power of ‘cases’ with their deep ‘immersion in the particular’ and this essay proposes considering the ‘case’ of Cosimo I as illustrative of larger dynamics of development.⁵⁰

CASES AND CANONS

This story connects some of the dots of our previous work and looks forward to a future one: a synthetic essay on industry, emulation, and inter-

⁴⁷ See, for classical influences, XENOPHON, *Poroi (Revenue-Sources)*, translated by D. Whitehead, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019 and Id., *Oeconomicus: A Social and Political Commentary*, edited by S.B. Pomeroy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994. For the Byzantine example, see R.A. GOLDTHWAITE, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, pp. 5-6.

⁴⁸ A. GRAFTON, *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1991, p. 1.

⁴⁹ G. BOTERO, *Della ragione di stato, libri dieci, con tre libri delle cause della grandezza, e magnificenza delle città*, Venice, Giolito de Ferrari, 1599, translated as *The Reason of State* by P.J. Waley and D.P. Waley, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1956; A. SERRA, *Breve trattato delle cause che possono far abbondare li regni d’oro, et argento. Dove non sono miniere. Con application al Regno di Napoli*, Naples, Lazzaro Scorriggio, 1613, translated as *A Short Treatise on the Wealth and Poverty of Nations* by J. Hunt, edited by S.A. Reinert, London, Anthem, 2011. For context, see the essays in R. PATALANO – S.A. REINERT, *Antonio Serra and the Economics of Good Government*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

⁵⁰ A.O. HIRSCHMAN, *Journeys Toward Progress: Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America*, New York, Twentieth Century Fund, 1963, p. 1; S.A. REINERT and R. FREDONA, *Mercantilism, the Medici, and the Making of the Modern World*, «Harvard Business School Case 722-032», revised January 2022.

national trade in the history of political economy and of economic development, from Medieval Italy to contemporary China. To be clear, the idea of an ‘Economic Turn’ taking place in the middle of the eighteenth century still stands. This is observable in a number of ways, and very obviously so in terms of the publication and translation of new works dedicated to ‘economic’ themes. ‘Political Economy’ as Franco Venturi and more recently John Robertson and others have argued, was one of the greatest bequests of the Enlightenment, an age, as David Hume famously put it, in which ‘trade’ truly became ‘an affair of state’.⁵¹ *Within* this economic turn, however, the question remains what *sort* of economic thought drove this. Already in 1980, the economist and bibliophile Erik S. Reinert drew attention to the problem of canonicity in economics, that is the question of why some texts rather than others are deemed essential stepping-stones to the present, and the inevitable yet often forgotten vicissitudes of such authorities over time.⁵² In particular, he noted how neoclassical economics profoundly had misconstrued its own history. Indeed, and in spite of now decades of critical work on this, there remains a seemingly inverse relationship between the contemporary attention to a given text of economics and its original fortunes in terms of editions and translations.⁵³

Within this larger paradox, many have particularly been intrigued by the historiographical obsession with the school of eighteenth-century French political economy known as Physiocracy.⁵⁴ In effect, many would still say that the Physiocrats marked the *beginning* of political economy and indeed of economics. In some ways, it is a fitting starting place for the sort of economics that came to dominate in the wake of the Cold War, and one can draw a pretty direct line from Turgot’s hubristic and doctrinaire letter to Hume of 23 July 1766, claiming «all those who lead nations, should think like Quesnay on all points» to the meltdown of economics in the face of the 2008 financial crisis.⁵⁵ Still, for many, the notion that *one* master theory can dictate policy in vastly different contexts reigns supreme. Historically

⁵¹ D. HUME, *Of Civil Liberty*, in *Id.*, *Political Essays*, edited by K. Haakonssen, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 51-57: 52; F. VENTURI, *Utopia e riforma nell’Illuminismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2001; J. ROBERTSON, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

⁵² E.S. REINERT, *International Trade and the Economic Mechanisms of Underdevelopment*, PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 1980.

⁵³ REINERT 2011.

⁵⁴ KAPLAN – REINERT (eds.) 2019.

⁵⁵ D. HUME, *Writings on Economics*, edited by E. Rotwein, Edinburgh, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1955, p. 205; M. DESAI, *Hubris: Why Economists Failed to Predict the Crisis and How to Avoid the Next One*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2015.

speaking, however, most successful political economies – successful both in book-historical terms and in terms of contributions to economic growth and even *development* – have tended to be much closer to that expounded by Physiocracy’s greatest critic Ferdinando Galiani, the polymath Neapolitan envoy to Paris in the 1760s, who warned that «the only error of men is to regulate themselves on reasons and examples that are not adapted to their circumstances... In matters of political economy a single change makes an immense difference». ⁵⁶ Political economy, in short, requires careful contextualization.

To adumbrate this richer history, we will repeatedly return to the remarkable treasures hosted in Harvard Business School’s Baker Library. The two first Deans of Harvard Business School (HBS), beginning with the Medievalist economic historian Edwin S. Gay, maintained that, if the school was to be for business what Harvard Law School was for jurisprudence and Harvard Medical School was for medicine, it would need to host the greatest library of business and economics in the world. ⁵⁷ To do this, they bought entire collections – most famously that of the Cambridge economist Herbert Somerton Foxwell, which would become the Kress Collection of Business and Economics – and even traveled personally («to Scotland Adam Smithing» as one letter put it) in search of works for the Baker Library. ⁵⁸ But they also relied on donations, and the crown jewel of the collection was gifted by none other than the department store magnate Harry Gordon Selfridge. He had come across a unique sale at Christie’s after World War I, in which bankrupt descendants of the Medici family of Florence sold their family papers at auction, and bought almost all of them. Though he identified with the Medici to the point that a *Fortune Magazine* article would call him «Cosimo di Selfridge» he was ultimately unable to read any of the documents he bought, and eventually donated them to HBS on the condition that someone there did academic work with them. ⁵⁹

⁵⁶ F. GALIANI, *Dialogues sur le commerce des bleds*, London [but Paris], 1770, p. 14.

⁵⁷ See the anonymous memorandum of September 26, 1928, in Library, Isaac’s papers (2/3); Library, 1928-29, (2/2) C.C. Eaton, November 1, 1929, “Memorandum to the Dean: The Need for Funds in the Baker Library of the Harvard Business School” 2. Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA.

⁵⁸ Wallace Brett Donham to Arthur H. Cole, 20 April 1937, 1, Kress Library of Business & Economics, 1928-1938 (2/2). Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA; R.R. ROGERS, *The Kress Library of Business and Economics*, «Business History Review», 60, 2, 1986.

⁵⁹ Cosimo di Selfridge, «Fortune», 8, 3, September 1933, p. 105; REINERT – FREDONA, *Political Economy and the Medici*, «Business history review», 94, 1, 2020, pp. 125-177.

As often happens, of course, academics got derailed, and, as a librarian soon wrote,

I am afraid we better postpone indefinitely any story about the Medicis. The thing has got into the hands of some of the professors and they are a notoriously slow bunch. They want to take two years to do a job that a librarian would do in two weeks and that the editor of a magazine would do in two hours.⁶⁰

Only 90 years later, we launched the HBS Medici collection, digitizing the greatest collection of Medici business documents outside of Italy.⁶¹ They represent 150 manuscript volumes from seven generations of one branch of the Medici Family, focusing particularly on the family's textile business importing raw wool from Spain, manufacturing it in Florence, and exporting cloth to Europe and the Ottoman Empire. We can do a lot of things with what we learn from these documents. For one, they are a salutary reminder that double-entry book-keeping was practiced long before Luca Pacioli first codified it in his *Summa de arithmetica*; hardly the first or last time that successful practice predated codification and theory in the history of political economy.⁶² For our present purposes of examining a Renaissance tradition of developmental political economy, however, we would like to highlight the granularity with which these ledgers allow us to understand the business practices of the time.

We can calculate their profits but also their exact expenses: what went into the wool and the soap, but also the industrial activities, the combing, the carding, the beating, the washing, the spinning, the weaving, the warping, the scouring, the shearing, the burling, the fulling, the stretching, the dyeing, and so on.⁶³ But our real interest is in the crucial fact that, even at the time of Cosimo I, these Medici entrepreneurs often paid for their raw wool in cloth. In other words, they imported raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods – the basic value-adding and total-factor-productivity-enhancing industrial dynamic that, for the past couple of centuries, many have liked to call 'mercantilism' and which still drives economic policy in large parts of the world. We have very little invested in the specific term, but in spite of the best efforts of very smart people it retains broad

⁶⁰ Charles C. Eaton to Robert R. Updegraff, 13 June 1928, HBS Arch E6 A. 14 7/33 Medici Material, Correspondence 1927-1928. Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA.

⁶¹ <https://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/medici/>.

⁶² L. PACIOLI, *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni, et proportionalita*, Venice, Paganino de Paganini, 1494, I.ii.xi.

⁶³ REINERT – FREDONA 2020.

currency outside of the particular subdiscipline of early modern political economy.⁶⁴ Whatever we call it, few regimes would put this more clearly into a system at the time than Florence under Cosimo I, who turned his family experiences into a veritable industrial policy in the sixteenth century, into ‘political economy’.⁶⁵

BELLEROPHON ON THE ARNO

To be clear, our aim in excavating the case of Cosimo I is to reveal certain tools and mechanisms that have tended to go hand-in-hand with historical development, not to write yet another hagiography of the Medici dynasty or suggest that he somehow ‘invented’ mercantilism. As the Florentine Senator Enrico Poggi lamented already in 1848,

the glories of the Medici have been so overly praised so often and clumsily repeated that it is time to abandon a deceitful and meaningless phraseology, which doesn’t even find justification in that order of facts which most commonly provides the material for their centuries-old praises.⁶⁶

The propaganda of the Medici family, part and parcel of its centuries-old practices of patronage and the signaling of power as it strengthened its grip on Florence and eventually Tuscany, had, in other words, *worked*. Still today, the Medici are frequently presented in almost Hegelian terms, as a ‘world-historical’ dynasty. Speaking of Cosimo the Elder, for example, Dale Kent has argued that his «authority in Florence was unmatched because he *was* – essentially – what Florentines wanted».⁶⁷ There were, needless to say, *many* Florentines who, across the centuries, did not particularly *want* the Medici family, including anyone with a republican disposition, but at the end of the day Cosimo and his heirs played the cards they were dealt better than their adversaries, and, thus victorious, paid to have their histories written and their glories memorialized in stone, on paper, and on

⁶⁴ See, for example, the essays in PH.J. STERN – C. WENNERLIND (eds.), *Mercantilism: Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. B. CÂMARA – T. DA SILVA LOPES – R. FREDONA, *A Mercantilist Brand: The British East India Company and Madeira Wine, 1756-1834*, «Business History Review», 98, 1, 2024, pp. 81-118, provides a case study of how mercantilism functioned at the level of a firm and brand still around the turn of the nineteenth century.

⁶⁵ BROWN 1983.

⁶⁶ E. POGGI, *Cenni storici delle leggi sull’agricoltura dai tempi romani fino ai nostri*, 2 vols., Florence, F. Le Monnier, 1845-1848, vol. II, p. 213.

⁶⁷ D. KENT, *Cosimo de’ Medici and the Florentine Renaissance: The Patron’s Oeuvre*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 16.

canvases that today adorn the greatest art museums of the world. This is thus not yet another ode to the magnificence of the Medici, and we are, for example, utterly uninterested in questions of whether or not Cosimo I was a ‘genius’ or not, though it remains that the causes and consequences of their achievements nonetheless remain telling for the dynamics of wealth and power in the modern world.⁶⁸

As a result of the machinations of his redoubtable mother Maria Salviati, Cosimo I came to power at the age of 17, following the assassination of his cousin Alessandro de’ Medici in 1537. His pedigree uniquely invoked martial prowess as well as mercantile acumen, and, as both a skilled huntsman and the manager of vast pastoral estates, he embodied the full spectrum of contemporary sovereignty; a predator-warden for an age of wolves. These different aspects of his character would serve him well during his long rule, for he entered a world in extraordinary flux. Not only were the smaller city-states of Italy clearly falling behind the unified ultramontane powers in economic terms, but the 1494 French invasion of the Italian peninsula had inaugurated the period of the so-called Italian Wars that would only end in 1599. Technological developments had revolutionized warfare – Cosimo I’s father, the mercenary captain Giovanni delle Bande Nere, may be one of history’s first celebrity deaths from firearms – and, as Francesco Guicciardini noted, in Italy «everything was turned upside down in a storm» as a result.⁶⁹

Cosimo I was eminently aware of the precarity of his position in an age in which relative wealth increasingly had become an indicator of comparative might. As he put it, one either «governs» or one is «governed» in the world, and «without money» one can neither «augment nor maintain» a state.⁷⁰ «We don’t want to spend» he observed with Laconic frugality, «if we can’t». ⁷¹ It was a sentiment that resonated with the book-keeping habits so dear to his mother, which characterized his approach to decades of rule, and which he carefully inculcated in his sons.⁷² One of them would soon warn of the «inveterate style of those who dominate» and particularly of the great powers like Spain and France, «to wish to advance their

⁶⁸ D’ADDARIO 197, pp. 209, 245.

⁶⁹ F. GUICCIARDINI, *Storie fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1998, p. 197.

⁷⁰ Cosimo I to Francesco I, August 6, 1561, in Cosimo I de’ Medici, *Lettere*, edited by G. Spini, Florence, Vallecchi, 1940, pp. 174-180.

⁷¹ Cosimo I to Francisco de Toledo, September 8, 1552, in *Lettere*, p. 119.

⁷² The examples are numerous, but see, for example, Maria Salviati de’ Medici to Giovanni Goretto, June 1, 1527, in M. SALVIATI DE’ MEDICI, *Selected Letters, 1514-1543*, edited by N.R. Tomas, New York and Toronto, Iter Press, 2022, pp. 83-84.

own nation» which made it «necessary for Italians, more than others, to maneuver skillfully and protect themselves with all industry». ⁷³ His father would have been proud. The relative decline of the Italian city-states had made the economic dynamics of power politics precociously clear there, and the stakes could hardly be higher. ⁷⁴ As an anonymous 1608 report to the Medici court explained matter-of-factly, the loss of international trade could lead to nothing less than the «*esterminio*» of a state. ⁷⁵

For Cosimo I, an important part of such industrious protection lay in protecting industry, and more specifically in augmenting, improving, and diversifying Tuscan trade and manufacturing. To this end, he systematically invited and invested in glassblowers from Venice to set up shop and teach locals their trade, and likewise miners from Germany, silk-weavers from Lucca, and tapestry-makers from Flanders. ⁷⁶ England had passed a series of laws to prohibit the export of raw wool and manufacture textiles domestically, and Tuscan *lanaioli*, woolen cloth manufacturers, were subsequently cut off from one of their principal suppliers of raw materials. Not only that, but because of England's lower salaries they now faced the competition of cheaper English cloth in European and Mediterranean markets. Reacting to this, Cosimo I oversaw an industrial 'reconversion' of the Tuscan economy away from wool and towards silk, not to mention a territorialization of the sector whereby a principal focus on the city of Florence gradually gave way to an industrial 'nebula' across the state. ⁷⁷ In the process, he mobilized trusted ministers and a newly formalized bureaucracy to centralize and strengthen the Tuscan state and, in Robert Wade's terms, to ensure its «internal integration» or «articulation». ⁷⁸ To this end, he also waged wars, annexing Florence's historical rival Siena, built entire cities like the 'free port'

⁷³ Ferdinando I de' Medici to Giovanni di Cosimo I de' Medici, January 11, 1605, Medici del Principato, 5153, 139r.

⁷⁴ On this decline, see S.A. REINERT, *Lessons on the Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Conquest, Commerce, and Decline in Enlightenment Italy*, «American Historical Review», 115, 5, 2010, pp. 1395-1425.

⁷⁵ Anonymous, 1608, Mediceo del Principato, 4256, Avvisi di Fiandra dal 1600 al 1619, 453r-v.

⁷⁶ REINERT 2022.

⁷⁷ P. MALANIMA, *An Example of Industrial Reconversion: Tuscany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, in H. VAN DER WEE (ed.), *The Rise and Decline of Urban Industries in Italy and in the Low Countries (Late Middle Ages – Early Modern Times)*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 1988, pp. 63-74: 68, 72-73.

⁷⁸ R. WADE, *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003, p. XLVIII. For context, S.A. REINERT, *The Academy of Fisticuffs: Political Economy and Commercial Society in Enlightenment Italy*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2018, pp. 205 and *passim*.

of Livorno, and eyed colonial adventures overseas.⁷⁹ Precisely as in Smith's conception of political economy, Cosimo I's efforts to *bonificare* or improve Tuscany aimed to «enrich both the people and the sovereign».⁸⁰

THE MEDICI MODEL

Needless to say, we do not suggest that Cosimo I in any way 'invented' or 'originated' the developmental projects and policies he pursued, let alone 'political economy' as such. But he was conscious enough of what he was doing that others took notice.⁸¹ Reason of State authors soon presented Cosimo I's policies as a 'model' to be emulated, and Botero, for one, meditated on it at length.⁸² He thought Cosimo I had «shown great astuteness» in importing «men of excellent qualities» to, in a telling turn of phrase, «enrich the country with the products of their skill and labour» and even codified why. In his 1588 *On the Greatness of Cities*, Botero rhetorically asked

which is of greater value for improving a place and increasing its population: the fertility of its soil, or the industry of its people? The answer is undoubtedly industry... Wool is a crude, simple product of nature, but how beautiful, manifold and varied are the things that human skill creates from it? How many and how great are the profits that result from the industry of those who *card it, give it its warp and its weft, weave it, dye it, cut it, and sew it, and shape it* in a thousand ways and transport it from one place to another?⁸³

Note that Botero here used the *exact* vocabulary of Renaissance textile workers. As such, he codified the way to wealth based on the economic *practices* and experience of the Italian miracle. In his *Reason of State*, he went even further, arguing that one could generalize the sort of policies promoted by Cosimo I. The superiority of human «industry» was obvious to Botero from the cases of «Italy and France» which

⁷⁹ C. TAZZARA, *The Free Port of Livorno and the Transformation of the Mediterranean World, 1574-1790*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2017; B. BRIGE, *Tuscany in the Age of Empire*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2021.

⁸⁰ SMITH, *Wealth of Nations*, vol. I, p. 449.

⁸¹ On 'purposefulness' as a key connotation of developmental projects, see A.O. HIRSCHMAN, *Development Projects Observed*, Washington, D.C., The Brookings Institution, 1967, p. 1.

⁸² T. BOCCALINI, *I ragguagli di Parnasso: Or Advertisements from Parnassus in Two Centuries: With the Politick Touch-Stone*, translated by Henry, Earl of Monmouth, London, Humphrey Moseley, 1656, pp. 66, 416; BOTERO 1956, pp. 26, 48, 61, 218, 245.

⁸³ G. BOTERO, *Delle cause della grandezza delle città*, Rome, 1588, p. 39. Emphasis added.

have no mines of gold or silver, yet they possess more of both these metals than any other country in Europe, for no other reason than the high density of their population and their trade and commerce which draw in money from the furthest corners of the earth.⁸⁴

Encouraging industry the way Cosimo I had, Botero went on, created a «conflux of money and of people» engaged in interdependent activities – what soon would be known as a commercial society. A prince thus had, like Cosimo I, to «introduce every kind of industry and craft by attracting good workmen from other countries» and «encouraging new techniques» but

above all he must not permit raw materials, wool, silk, timber, metals and so on, to leave his state, for with the materials will go the craftsmen. Trade in goods made from these materials will provide a livelihood for a far larger number of people than will the raw materials; and the export of the finished manufactured article will provide the ruler with greater revenues than will the material alone.⁸⁵

For more people could live by manufactures than by raw materials, «and it is the numerical strength of a people which makes a land fertile and by labour and art gives a thousand different forms to the produce of nature, and hence power and wealth to their king».⁸⁶ And again,

to ensure a sufficiency of both raw and manufactured materials the prince must see that raw materials do not leave the country, neither wool nor silk, iron nor tin nor anything of that kind, for if they pass out of the country, so will the crafts connected with them and in consequence the livelihood of many thousands of men who are dependent upon them. He must therefore take every possible measure to ensure that the natural products of his country are used and wrought, according to their nature, by his subjects, and then sold outside the country. For in this way more people will make their living by them, and their public and private utility will be greater.⁸⁷

The core lesson of Renaissance economic policy was to specialize in importing raw materials and exporting manufactured goods as a means of securing employment and focalizing value-added activities in the polity. This, in turn, would ensure livelihoods and secure the political-economic goals of «public and private utility».

⁸⁴ BOTERO 1956, pp. 144-145.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Botero, in other words, codified the successful industrial policies of Cosimo I, which in turn were informed by the business practices of Italian entrepreneurs of the Renaissance and Middle Ages – including the Medici dynasty itself. The step from practice to codification to eventual theory was eventually undertaken by one of Botero’s most careful readers a few years later. Writing in a Neapolitan jail in 1613, the lawyer Antonio Serra for the first time offered a theoretical argument for why Naples, with all its natural abundance, anyway was poorer than industrial Venice, which was built on a swamp. The reason was that the former was devoted to agriculture, the latter to myriads of manufacturing. For

in manufacturing activities it is possible to achieve a multiplication of products, and therefore of earnings. The same cannot be done with agricultural produce, which is not subject to multiplication. If a given piece of land is only large enough to sow a hundred *tomoli* of wheat, it is impossible to sow a hundred and fifty there. *In manufacturing, by contrast, production can be multiplied not merely twofold but a hundredfold, and at a proportionately lower cost.*⁸⁸

Manufactures could thus create more wealth than agriculture because of the difference between increasing and diminishing returns to scale, and it was not without reason that Joseph A. Schumpeter would claim that Serra should «be credited with having been the first to compose a scientific treatise... on Economic Principles and Policy».⁸⁹ Though Serra’s treatise long was lost, it was rediscovered by a group of Neapolitan political economists formed around the Tuscan mathematician Bartolomeo Intieri that included Antonio Genovesi and Ferdinando Galiani. Both drew extensively on Serra in their work, Galiani even seeking to have it republished in the 1750s and paraphrasing the exact same argument in his refutation of Physiocracy:

And *voilà* the great difference between manufactures and agriculture. Manufactures increase with the number of arms you put in, while agriculture decreases. As the end of all good government is to increase the population, it follows that its true end is the increase in manufactured goods that rises with the number of men and continues, so to speak, infinitely; and that it should rejoice at a decrease in the exportation of foodstuffs. It is even possible to attain the total disappearance of this trade, when the population consumes the entire product of the land: then agriculture will supply the people with its subsistence, but manufactured goods alone will bring money and wealth into the state. It is even possible to surpass

⁸⁸ SERRA 2011, p. 121. Emphasis added.

⁸⁹ J.A. SCHUMPETER, *A History of Economic Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1954, p. 195.

these limits, and force population growth so considerable as to require going into depopulated states to purchase, with the product of manufacturing, the produce and food needed by the excess of people you have to feed. Then the art of government will have achieved its masterpiece, for the masterpiece of the art is to force nature and make her work a miracle such as having, on limited land, more men than its forces and means could possibly feed.⁹⁰

The ‘masterpiece’ of government for Galiani and the tradition he represented was essentially to succeed in the sort of international industrial competition pursued by Cosimo I. Botero’s perhaps most innovative insight, however, developed by Serra, was that improvement was not *necessarily* a zero-sum game. «To attract to oneself and acquire just possession of what belongs to another» he wrote, «requires no less skill and judgment than to propagate what is one’s own».⁹¹ Galiani’s colleague and competitor Antonio Genovesi, who also knew his Serra, would echo the same sentiment in Italy’s first textbook of political economy, the goal of which a contemporary review summarized as being «to increase the greatness, power, and wealth of the Nation, without at the same time aiming to enlarge the borders of what one possesses».⁹² Though the specter of war was omnipresent in the early modern period, it remained that the economic mechanisms revealed by a careful engagement with the industrial miracle of the Italian city-states revealed the possibility of improvement without expansion, of actual *development*. But this was not just a Florentine, Neapolitan, or even Italian story.

OUT OF ITALY

Indeed, the case of the Medici Principate uniquely helps us trace the underlying ideas and ideals of development from Italy to England, to the United States and Germany, all the way to Japan, the Asian Tigers, and contemporary China. Few slogans scream ‘Reason of State’ more than Deng Xiaoping’s supposed mantra of «crossing the river by touching the stones».⁹³ And few are more antithetical to its pragmatism than Russia’s shock therapy in the 1990s and Margaret Thatcher’s infamous slogan, «there is no al-

⁹⁰ GALIANI 1770, pp. 150-151.

⁹¹ BOTERO 1956, p. 157.

⁹² «Giornale d’Italia», July 21, 1764, p. 17.

⁹³ E.F. VOGEL, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2011.

ternative». ⁹⁴ The resulting complex of economic ideas and policies is often disparagingly – or fearfully – dismissed as ‘mercantilism’ and frequently affiliated with the ostensibly immoral politics of ‘reason of state’. From Cosimo I through Alexander Hamilton to Lee Kuan Yew and beyond, however, many of the principal exponents of this tradition have both actively embraced these torn legacies and been eminently aware of their deeper historical dimensions. ⁹⁵ The question of why some ideas become canonical at different times is one of the most fundamental ones of intellectual history, but there can be no doubt that, with few intermezzos, the tradition of interventionist industry that emerged in Renaissance Italy has been both theoretically and practically preponderant in all moments of compressed economic development. The standard critique of interventionist policies was long that one engaged in ‘cherry-picking’ by focusing solely on successful cases. Yet the historical record seems quite clear. Visible hands don’t always succeed at kick-starting development, but no economy has *ever* been kick-started *without* them. ⁹⁶ From this perspective, it is not that the alternative hands of *laissez-faire* are invisible, it is that they simply are not there.

We would even venture to suggest that few writers were more instrumental in establishing the baseline of early modern political economy than Botero, whose *Greatness of Cities* and *Reason of State* uniquely codified the dynamics of Italy’s economic greatness in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. To do so we will make two interrelated arguments, both of which rely on the unique research facilitated by Harvard Business School’s Baker Library this past century. Thanks to the indefatigable work of Arthur H. Cole, HBS professor and curator of the Kress Library of Business and Economics from 1929 to 1956, Baker Library began to collect not merely *editions* but also *translations*. As his eventual successor Ken Carpenter would put it:

Involvement with translation is another example of how our sense of responsibility to all working in the pre-1850 period consciously influences acquisition policy. Most libraries will not purchase translations, except in unusual cases. Precisely for this reason, we are able to contribute, perhaps uniquely, by acquiring

⁹⁴ See, for perspectives, E. REINERT 2007; M. FISHER, *Capitalist Realism: Is there No Alternative?*, London, Zer0 Books, 2009.

⁹⁵ See, among others, REINERT 2011, pp. 8, 286-288; I.P. AUSTIN, *Common Foundations of American and East Asian Modernisation: From Alexander Hamilton to Junichero Koizumi*, Singapore, Select Books, 2009; E. HELLEINER, *The Neomercantilists: A Global Intellectual History*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2021.

⁹⁶ REINERT 2022.

translations and thus promoting systematic study of the spread of economic ideas.⁹⁷

As a result of these decades of collection-building and broader research, we have two powerful tools for better analyzing the history of political economy. 1) Carpenter's dataset of translations of broadly defined 'economic' works published in European languages before 1850 – the cutoff date of the Kress Library; and 2) a new list of the 102 works so far that, as a family enterprise of sorts, we have found published in *10 editions or more before 1850*. The overall chronology of the more than 2000 translations in the dataset dramatically reinforces our notion of an 'Economic Turn' in the mid-eighteenth century. As the Marquis de Pombal would put it, «All European nations have improved themselves through reciprocal imitation; each one carefully keeps watch over the actions taken by the others».⁹⁸ And a key vehicle of such emulation was precisely *translation*.

Interestingly, however, the balance of translations between specific European languages changed over time, as the European economy developed in the long eighteenth century. Over time, Italy's early lead gave way to the primacy of England and later Great Britain as it increasingly industrialized on the earlier Italian model. And while Italy in many ways stagnated, England successfully emulated and overtook its former master. Transforming its very economy into one increasingly based on urban industry and importing, on the earlier Italian model, raw materials instead of manufactured goods. And so, while the Italian language mostly *exported* translations in the early period, during which it is important to say that *imported* translations mostly were from Latin to Italian, and so anyway *Italian* in nature, to one in which it *imported*, mostly from French and English, though frequently with French as an intermediary language. Translations, then, could serve as a barometer of economic success.

The mirror image was English, which initially imported more than it exported, only to become the greatest net exporter of economic works in the world. With *direct* translations from English representing a remarkable share of the total market for translations in the long eighteenth centu-

⁹⁷ K.E. CARPENTER, *Annual Report 1968-1969*, Boston, Kress Library of Business and Economics, 1969, p. 2, republished as *Kenneth E. Carpenter Reports on the Kress Library part of Notes on the Harvard Libraries*, «Harvard Library Bulletin», 18, 2, 1970, pp. 212-214: 213.

⁹⁸ S.J. DE CARVALHO E MELO [later Marquis of Pombal], *Escritos Económicos de Londres (1741-1742)*, edited by J. Barreto, Lisbon, Biblioteca nacional, 1986, p. 153, quoted in G. PAQUETTE, *Views from the South: Images of Britain and Its Empire in Portuguese and Spanish Political Economic Discourse, ca. 1740-1810*, in S.A. REINERT and P. RØGE (eds.), *The Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, Houndmills, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 76-104: 76.

ry. Given the status of the French language in Europe, it offered a much more even balance of translations, in which the overall direction of translations evidently was *from* English *to* French, a difference that only becomes greater in the case of more peripheral languages like German. But what *sorts* of translations were these? Here, the second dataset becomes important: a brand new set of the 102 works of economics that achieved 10 or more editions by 1850, which we are putting together on the model first pioneered by Carpenter decades ago.

While Serra may have remained something of an insider source until it was republished in the early nineteenth century, Botero hit the world like a bombshell. There were at least 43 editions by 1671, in Italian, Spanish, Latin, French, English, and German.⁹⁹ Among his many readers was Sir Francis Bacon, who helped launch the Scientific Revolution and did more than most to lay the intellectual foundations of the British Empire.¹⁰⁰ In Germany, Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff inaugurated the academic and administrative tradition of Cameralism in careful engagement with Botero.¹⁰¹ And in France, something similar can be said of the redoubtable statesman Jean-Baptiste Colbert, for whom ‘*bonifier*’ and ‘*perfectionner*’ were favorite words and whose influence on global political economy is as vast as it often is bewailed.¹⁰² Colbert’s calls to ‘*bonifier nostre commerce*’ were frequent in his private papers and memoranda, and he made it clear – also to the King – that one of the principal tasks of a sovereign lay precisely in ‘augmenting and improving’ the industries of the realm.¹⁰³ Yet, since everyone could not import raw materials and export manufactured goods

⁹⁹ E.S. REINERT – F. REINERT, 33 *Economic Bestsellers published before 1750*, «The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought», 25, 6, 2018, pp. 1206-1263. For the first republication of Serra, see P. CUSTODI (ed.), *Scrittori classici italiani di economia politica*, 50 vols., Milan, Nella stamperia e fonderia di G.G. Destefanis, vol. I, 1803.

¹⁰⁰ J. TRACE, *Giovanni Botero and the English Political Thought*, PhD Dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2018.

¹⁰¹ S.A. REINERT, *Cameralism and Commercial Rivalry: Nationbuilding through Economic Autarky in Seckendorff’s 1665 Additions*, «European Journal of Law and Economics», 19, 3, 2005, pp. 271-286.

¹⁰² PH. MINARD, *La fortune du colbertisme: État et industrie dans la France des Lumières*, Paris, Fayard, 1998.

¹⁰³ Colbert to De Terron, November 14, 1669, in *Lettres, instructions, et mémoires de Colbert*, edited by P. Clément, 7 vols. in 9, Paris, Imprimerie Impériale, 1861-1873, vol. II, part 2, pp. 498-499; Colbert to M. de Pomponne, December 5, 1670, in *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, pp. 588-589; Colbert to M. de Pomponne, January 23, 1671, in *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, pp. 602-604; Jean-Baptiste Colbert to M. Daguesseau, June 24, 1682, *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, pp. 734-735; Colbert, *Instruction a sieur Camuset*, in *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, p. 854. See similarly the language of ‘augment and improve’ in his *Mémoire pour M. Bellinzani*, October 8, 1670, in *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, pp. 560-561.

at the same time, industry became a matter of international competition by default – and thus the target of regulations and subventions alike. As Louis XIV himself – in the hand of Colbert – explained in 1666, «the establishment of French lace manufactures» was «of such great consequence for the good of my people» that he felt «obliged» to support domestic «entrepreneurs» and take «great precautions against the malice of those merchants who are accustomed to having the work done in Venice and selling that city’s wares at my court and in my kingdom». ¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the highly protectionist Navigation Acts initiated by Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s essentially mapped Botero’s insights onto an oceanic empire and remain the most iconic mercantilist measures on record. Even Adam Smith found them «perhaps, the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England». ¹⁰⁵

As such, it may not be surprising that, instead of Physiocrats, who are almost entirely absent from the list of bestsellers, the book-history of economics is replete with English, French, and Spanish works promulgated by the Neo-Colbertist group gathered around Vincent de Gournay at the same time, most of them eminently pragmatic works deeply indebted to the Boterian tradition coming out of Renaissance Italy. And, tellingly, the *only* author to have *four* bestsellers on the list was the pre-eminent Anti-Physiocrat Jacques Necker, who wrote a popular *Eulogy of Colbert*. ¹⁰⁶ Strikingly, if one matches historical editions to hits on Google Scholar, one discovers that there at times is an *inverse* relationship between the texts that historically were important and those deemed canonical in later years.

	Real Editions Before 1800	Translations Before 1800	GoogleScholar hits May 3, 2024
Jakob Friedrich v. Bielfeld, <i>Institutions Politiques</i> (1760)	14	6	299
John Cary, <i>Essay on the State of England</i> (1695)	11	3	202

¹⁰⁴ Louis XIV to the Count of La Bourlie [in the hand of Colbert], November 6, 1666, in *Lettres*, vol. II, part 2, pp. 438-439.

¹⁰⁵ SMITH 1976, vol. II, pp. 45-6, praised in T. POWNALL, *A Letter from Governor Pownall to Adam Smith, L.L.D.F.R.S. Being an Examination of Several Points of Doctrine, Laid Down in his ‘Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations’*, London, J. Almon, 1776, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ REINERT – REINERT 2018; J. NECKER, *Éloge de Jean-Baptiste Colbert*, Paris, Brunet & Demonville, 1773.

Géronimo de Uztariz, <i>Theorica y practica de comercio</i> (1724)	10	3	155
Dudley North, <i>Discourses Upon Trade</i> (1691)	1	0	2.050
Nicholas Barbon, <i>A Discourse of Trade</i> (1690)	1	0	995
Dupont de Nemours with Quesnay, <i>Physiocratie</i> (1768)	2	0	2.200

We have simply gotten the history of economics upside down. At times, the reasons seem simple. John Ramsay McCulloch's epochal 1856 *Select Collection of Early English Tracts on Commerce*, for example, helped weave an economic past that was useful to the free trade needs of a maturing British Empire very different from the highly interventionist age that preceded it.¹⁰⁷ His choice to lionize historically ignored liberal pamphleteers like Dudley North – who seemingly never was republished, translated, or referenced before his inclusion in McCulloch's collection – at the expense of influential interventionists like John Cary reverberates to this day. And there are of course similar reasons why Physiocracy's emphasis on *laissez faire* has rendered it attractive to later interest groups. Alas, 'context matters' and 'it depends' hardly make for brazing ideological slogans. To be clear, our point is not to substitute Botero for Quesnay as the sole tradition on which to focus, for we should acknowledge the diversity of political economy past as well as present. That said, it remains that we still have a dangerously skewed view of what ideas and policies mattered historically. Physiocratic reforms in France were repeatedly disastrous, and, despite unceasing efforts to argue otherwise, Physiocracy was *not* successfully implemented in Dietlingen, in Tuscany, or for that matter in Sweden. In practical terms Physiocracy was at best an abortive intermezzo of political economy, one quickly criticized in the harshest possible terms across the European world as politically retrograde and favorable to a new form of Feudalism. Yet, it did inspire some rather fanciful projects.

The deeply antisemitic aristocrat and political economist Giambattista Gherardo d'Arco, for example, may have been the first to present an economic theory of *why* Jews were *parasites*, drawing explicitly on Physioc-

¹⁰⁷ J.R. MACCULLOCH, *A Select Collection of Early English Tracts on Commerce*, London, Political Economy Club, 1856.

racy's insistence on the sole ability of agriculture to produce wealth to argue that

a ghetto [can] not inopportuno be compared to a certain parasitic plant, which some celebrated Naturalists have called grain rust and which they argue absorbs the nutritive juices of the plant on which it is born, without conferring any part of its own to it, nor returning a minimal part of what it has received.¹⁰⁸

No less fancifully, the navyman and amateur agronomist Stanislao Solari launched a millenarian Solarian cult around natural fertilizers which he dubbed a 'New Physiocracy' towards the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁹ And less than two decades later, the prophet of eugenics Jon Alfred Mjøen – who eventually would write a 'defense of Hitler' – suggested that Quesnay's insistence on the 'rule of nature' validated forced sterilizations in the pursuit of a biological utopia and similarly equated his eugenic program with a 'New Physiocracy'.¹¹⁰

But even *without* pursuing these excesses, the popularity of Physiocracy remains troubling in light of what we now know about economic development. Quesnay's maxims encouraged the development of an open agricultural economy based on large-scale latifundianism where exports of produce fuel the imports of luxuries for the landowning elite. The country that best matches such a model today is Malawi, a lovely country, to be sure, but hardly a developmental ideal. So if we want to explore a more enduring 'legacy' of political economy it comes, to quote the English title of a book by Fernand Braudel, *Out of Italy*.¹¹¹ The 'American System' pioneered by Alexander Hamilton was based precisely on the industrial pragmatism of a Botero or a Galiani, and Friedrich List drew on Serra explicitly to help formulate the national economic systems of the U.S., and of the German Zollverein.¹¹² Beyond the European world, the same is true from the Meiji Restoration, the first time a non-Western country successfully

¹⁰⁸ G.B.G. D'ARCO, *Della influenza del ghetto nello stato*, Venice, Gaspare Storti, 1782, p. 85.

¹⁰⁹ S. SOLARI, *La nuova fisiocrazia: Studii e note*, Parma, Ditta Fiacadori, 1901.

¹¹⁰ J.A. MJØEN, *Racehygiene*, Oslo, Dybwad, 1914, pp. 224, 241.

¹¹¹ F. BRAUDEL, *Out of Italy: 1450-1650*, translated by S. Reynolds, Paris, Flammarion, 1991.

¹¹² F. LIST, *Das Nationale System der Politischen Oekonomie*, Stuttgart, G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1841, pp. 456, 460, followed by W. ROSCHER, *Geschichte der Nationalökonomie*, Munich, Oldenbourg, 1881, p. 191. See also, among many others, D. HOUNSHELL, *From the American System to Mass Production, 1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985; R.F. BENSEL, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization, 1877-1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008; S.S. COHEN – J.B. DELONG, *Concrete Economics: The Hamilton Approach to Economic Growth and Policy*, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press, 2016.

‘developed’ all the way to, in the post-war years, the economic policy of the Miracle on the Han River.¹¹³ Korean officials looked actively to the industrial policies of Europe, the U.S., and Japan as they embraced their own model of the developmental state to achieve one of the most extraordinary growth stories on record.¹¹⁴ As one Korean official recently volunteered, out of the blue in a discussion of twenty-first century policies, «our model... all began with the Navigation Acts in the age of Cromwell... We are still adapting that basic model».¹¹⁵ That said, few stories of such industrial emulation are more succinct than that of Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew, who even adopted as his motto «make haste slowly» which also happened to be that of Cosimo I.¹¹⁶

CONCLUSIONS

So when the proverbial ‘West’ is tasked today with ‘learning from Chinese mercantilism’ it is fundamentally presented with a policy mirror, and tasked to reckon with its *own* histories.¹¹⁷ For though there obviously are enormous differences between thirteenth-century San Gimignano and twenty-first-century Singapore, they remain connected by a very real and explicit tradition of pragmatic political economy focused on emulation, industry, and crucially the competitive pursuit of *added value* pioneered by the Italian city-states and codified in the political economy of the long eighteenth century. When, at the end of that century, the English landscapist William Marlow painted his *Capriccio: St. Paul’s on a Venetian Canal*, he drew attention to the very real similarities between the Venetian and the British Empires, and the way in which one seamlessly transitioned into the other.¹¹⁸ From the perspective of political economy, today’s *Capriccios* could equally well show the Shanghai World Financial Center looming

¹¹³ HELLEINER 2021.

¹¹⁴ F. REINHARDT, S.A. REINERT – D. LAU – J. SCHLEFER, *Korea: The Miracle on the Han River*, «Harvard Business School Case 723-019», revised February 2023.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Kim Kyong Hoon, Korea Shipowner’s Association, Seoul, Korea, August 21, 2019.

¹¹⁶ REINERT 2018, p. 400; H. TH. VAN VEEN, *Cosimo I de’ Medici and his Self-Representation in Florentine Art and Culture*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 24.

¹¹⁷ A. SUBRAMANIAN, *Learning from Chinese Mercantilism*, «Business Standard», January 25, 2011.

¹¹⁸ REINERT 2011, pp. 73, 288. See, for context, M. FUSARO, *The Political Economy of Empires in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England, 1450-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015.



Fig. 1. WILLIAM MARLOW, *Capriccio: St Paul's and a Venetian Canal*, c. 1795, Tate.

over the Uffizi – now one of the world’s premier art galleries but originally the seat of Cosimo I’s burgeoning state bureaucracy.¹¹⁹

As we yet again face a period of increasing protectionism and deglobalization, it is worth once and for all sidelining Physiocracy as a relevant ‘origin’ for political economy. It was certainly part of the picture, but the *baseline* has always been Boterian reason of state. With variations, it has characterized every single developmental ‘miracle’ on record. This hardly ought to be surprising. Obviously, a relevant political economy has to be contextually aware. It has recently been suggested that the continuing pursuit of a universal «‘grand hypothesis’ in economics is a chimera».¹²⁰ As such, Cosimo I, ‘vanquisher of all chimeras’ may still be an inspiration. For the very historical success of such industrial emulation, and its *disquieting* ability to empower vastly different political regimes both past and present, should invite far greater study. For good and for evil, the perspective of the last 700 years makes it abundantly clear that, with very brief interludes, it is not *laissez-faire* but rather activist improvement – what most people would understand to be *mercantilism* – that has been the main story all along, and which now deserves our greatest attention. As Claude Washington Kress himself justified his gift of Foxwell’s library to Harvard University President James B. Conant, echoing George Santayana, «Perhaps if our people knew the errors of the past they would not now be so eager to repeat them».¹²¹ In short, a better understanding of this past and of these continuities cannot but help us navigate what promises to be a remarkably stormy future.



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¹¹⁹ P. FINDLEN, *The Eighteenth-Century Invention of the Renaissance: Lessons from the Uffizi*, «Renaissance Quarterly», 66, 1, 2013, pp. 1-34.

¹²⁰ D. COLLARD, *Generations of Economists*, Milton Park, Routledge, 2011, p. 4.

¹²¹ Claude Washington Kress to James B. Conant, December 3, 1937, in Kress, 1936-1939 (2/3). Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, MA.

ANTONIO TRAMPUS

ENLIGHTENED CONSTITUTIONALISM: THE RISE AND FALL
OF ITS POLITICAL VOCABULARY FROM THE LATE
ENLIGHTENMENT TO THE NAPOLEONIC ERA

In this study we shall focus on the history of the language and political vocabulary of the Late Enlightenment in order to provide a comparative analysis of a number of semantic shifts and mutations. These phenomena are a useful indication of how the different European languages attempted to break free of the Ancien Régime and its institutional context. We take as our point of departure the term *constitutionalism* itself, which in the nineteenth century is a new word arising as a typical part of the Late Enlightenment legacy. We then move on to words such as *popolo* (people), *diritti* (rights), *costituzione* (constitution), whose transformations can be detected through a case study based on the different attempts to render these terms in French, English, German, Spanish, and Swedish translations of Gaetano Filangieri's masterpiece, *La scienza della legislazione* (1780). Our excursus concludes with the Napoleonic era, highlighting how the subversion of the republican foundations of Enlightenment constitutionalism led also to a reconfiguration of those Enlightenment values that had been passed on to nineteenth-century constitutionalism.

WHAT IS CONSTITUTIONALISM? A NINETEENTH-CENTURY WORD

The debate on constitutionalism was rife throughout the eighteenth century, entering a new and decisive phase in the second half of the century. At this time, the crisis of the Ancien Régime deepened and, consequently, discussions on the various forms of government extend from the purely philosophical arena to actual political practice. The classical definition of 'constitutionalism' fits this dynamic well, since it is predicated on the idea that government power may and should be delimited by law,

and that its authority and legitimacy derive from the observance of these limitations.¹ Modern constitutionalism, linked with the crisis of the Ancien Régime, consists mostly in identifying ways to hinder and prevent despotic and arbitrary forms of government. It is, thus, first and foremost, an instance of negative freedom. The struggle against despotism and the defence of the right of resistance made Europe and the Atlantic world the principal locales of the birth of the modern constitutional tradition and of the production of new constitutional models. In this respect, modern constitutionalism arises from a common substratum that spans various contexts, places and cultures and brings together different political traditions. This means that the history of Italian constitutionalism is a legitimate and illuminating aspect of this development, despite showing characteristics that differ in part from other European contexts, or from British or Atlantic experiences.² This feeling of being «united in diversity», which will become the motto of the European Union, among other things, characterises both Italy's appropriation and transformation of traditional anti-despotism and the republican roots of its political thought. Those roots reach as far back as the renaissance tradition, as well as being founded on eighteenth-century republicanism, which, after assimilating and reworking the basic tenets of the school of natural law, became permeated with masonic influences.³

However, as is often the case in the history of ideas and political and philosophical concepts, the definition of an object only arises some time after that object's birth. The term 'constitutionalism' made its appearance in European languages not in the age of Enlightenment but at a time when that particular historical experience had, in many ways, come to an end, i.e. after the European Restoration. Paradoxically, it was only with the rise of nineteenth-century constitutional monarchies and the demise of the republican experiment that it became possible to circumscribe and define past experience. We thus had to wait until the nineteenth century for an actual awareness of the nature of constitutionalism to emerge: a typically modern phenomenon, involving active political practice and the proactive

¹ D. GRIMM, *Constitutionalism: Past – Present – Future*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 363-364.

² A. TRAMPUS, *Storia del costituzionalismo italiano nell'età dei Lumi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009, pp. 4-16.

³ V. FERRONE, *La società giusta ed equa. Repubblicanesimo e diritti dell'uomo in Gaetano Filangieri*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2003, pp. 75-123; ID., *The Enlightenment and the Rights of Man*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2019, pp. 57-82; G.L. FRUCI, *Democracy in Italy: From Egalitarian Republicanism to Plebiscitarian Monarchy*, in J. INNES – M. PHILIP (eds.), *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean 1780-1860*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 25-52.



Fig. 1. LACROIX, *La lumière du XVIII^e siècle ou l'art d'éclairer les hommes à la manière des tyrans*, 1815, Fondation Napoléon.

delimitation of the role of government capable of transforming negative freedom into positive freedom.

One of the first works to feature the term 'constitutionalism', and to show an awareness of how it could potentially spread out from the merely technical to a more popular usage, was François Guizot's *Du gouvernement représentatif et de l'état actuel de la France* (1816). Significantly, Guizot uses this word within the debate on the French constitutional Charter of 1814 and the violation of the 1789 principles.⁴ Not even Benjamin Constant had ever used the word *constitutionnalisme*, despite being hailed from the 1840s as one of the forefathers of modern constitutionalism.⁵ In fact, Constant shows a clear awareness of this concept and how it had changed

⁴ F. GUIZOT, *Du gouvernement représentatif et de l'état actuel de la France*, Paris, Maradan, 1816, p. 38.

⁵ See L. BLANC, *Histoire de dix ans 1830-1840*, Paris, Pagnerre, vol. II, 1843, p. 137 and the speeches by Charles-Gérard Eyschen in *Compte-rendu des séances de la Chambre des Députés du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Session de 1856*, Luxembourg, Buck, 1856, pp. 29-30.

in the course of the transition from the Enlightenment to the European Restoration.⁶ However, the word itself is not yet part of his vocabulary. It is only in the 1820s, as the outcome of the liberal revolutions is directly compared with the democratic revolutions of the late eighteenth century, that the term 'constitutionalism' definitively enters European political vocabulary.⁷ As we read in 1825 in the journal «Le constitutionnel», «une épidémie d'un genre particulier vient d'être signalé à l'Europe, et on demande la formation d'un cordon sanitaire. On désigne cette variété de la fièvre jaune sous le nom de *Constitutionnalisme*».⁸ In London, in 1832, «The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine» is equally explicit in linking the concept of constitutionalism with the events in Naples, Piedmont and Portugal.⁹ Again in the British context, in 1840 James Orange, the author of a history of the relationship between the Anglican Church and the State with a focus on Nottinghamshire, still found it necessary to explain the term 'constitutionalism', which was evidently not yet in general use, in relation to the more common 'absolutism', 'republicanism', and 'democratism', glossing it as «the first stage of revolution, being a mixture of absolute and popular control, but still the entire executive is in the former».¹⁰

ENLIGHTENED CONSTITUTIONALISM: NO LONGER AN OXYMORON

In the past fifteen years the expression 'enlightened'/'Enlightenment constitutionalism' has become part of the vocabulary of historians and students of politics, as we have finally overcome the situation denounced by Vincenzo Ferrone twenty years ago.¹¹ After a shaky start, Enlightenment constitutionalism has been finally recognised as a middle way in the history of European and Atlantic political culture, equally distant from both

⁶ J.-P. FELDMAN, *Le constitutionnalisme selon Benjamin Constant*, «Revue française de droit constitutionnel», 76, 4, 2008, pp. 675-702.

⁷ See, for instance, E. MÜNCK, *Schicksale der alten und neuen Kortex von Spanien*, Stuttgart, Metzler, vol. II, 1826, p. 39; «Giornale del Regno delle Due Sicilie», 175, 30.11.1832, p. 1132; «Foglio di Verona», 73, 19.6.1832, p. 298.

⁸ «Le Constitutionnel. Journal du commerce, politique et littéraire», 334, 30.11.1825, p. 2.

⁹ *Sketches on the war of the French in Spain in the year 1823*, «The United Service Journal and Naval and Military Magazine», II, 1832, pp. 26-32.

¹⁰ J. ORANGE, *History and Antiquities of Nottingham in which are exhibited the various institutions, manners, customs, arts, and manufactures of the people*, London, Hamilton and Adams, vol. II, 1840, pp. 798-799.

¹¹ FERRONE 2003, p. 225: «L'espressione e il concetto di costituzionalismo illuminista non esistono nel linguaggio corrente degli storici».

Ancien Régime constitutionalism and the constitutionalism that animated the French Revolution, at least in the turn taken by the latter with the Constitution of the Year VIII. As summarised by Jeremy Waldron, «Enlightenment constitutionalism is massively important; it transformed our political thinking out of all recognition; and it left as its legacy both the unprecedented achievement of the framing, ratification, and lasting establishment of the Constitution of the United States and also the political repudiation of monarchy and nobility in France in the 1790s. Both of these are now taken for granted as part of our political world. And they grew out of the Enlightenment».¹²

Far from being over, however, the attempt to identify the original traits of Enlightenment constitutionalism requires more than ever a sustained effort by historians. In the American context, the definition of this concept is still delegated to theoreticians and students of politics, who took the constitution of the United States as a general model and typical product of the Enlightenment in balancing the different powers against one another in order to safeguard pluralisms and bring order to human life. On the other hand, however, the safeguard of pluralisms appeared to clash with the principles of rationality and the spectrum of typical Enlightenment values as experienced in history.¹³

In the American context, despite the introduction of university courses on the history of Enlightenment constitutionalism, the latter still seems to be identified *tout court* with the action of the forefathers of independence: a one-off historical model entirely contained within the rise of the United States of America.¹⁴

In the Italian context, on the other hand, the diffusion of the expression *costituzionalismo illuministico* went hand in hand with the attempt to clarify the relationship between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution.¹⁵

¹² J. WALDRON, *Isaiah Berlin's Neglect of Enlightenment Constitutionalism*, in L. BROCKLISS – R. ROBERTSON (eds.), *Isaiah Berlin and the Enlightenment*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 205.

¹³ M. SUNDER, *Enlightened Constitutionalism*, UC Davis Law, Legal Studies Research Paper, 48 (2005), pp. 890-904, online https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=744824; J. WALDRON, *Political Political Theory. Essays on Institutions*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2016.

¹⁴ G. McDOWELL – J. O'NEILL (eds.), *America and Enlightenment Constitutionalism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; cf. also the syllabus of Jeremy Waldron's 2024 *Enlightenment Constitutionalism Seminar*, online <https://its.law.nyu.edu/courses/description.cfm?id=34252>.

¹⁵ See Ferrone's remarks in chapter 9, *Illuminismo e rivoluzioni atlantiche*, in Id., *Il mondo dell'Illuminismo. Storia di una rivoluzione culturale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019 (forthcoming in Eng-

We have now moved on from a situation in which the mention of this category provoked outrage among traditional historiographers, who feared that it might detract from the importance of the Revolution as a historical phenomenon.¹⁶ As Fabrizio Simon has remarked, it is now obvious that the concept of Enlightenment constitutionalism is the only appropriate way of «describing the effort to design a form of political power capable of safeguarding human dignity based on the fundamental rights of man sanctioned by natural law».¹⁷ The term has now entered the vocabulary of Italian historians, who use it in relation to a vast spectrum of positions, from the Scottish Enlightenment to the legacy of the Enlightenment in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁸ With its intrinsically republican nature, Enlightenment constitutionalism thus provides a framework of reference against which to measure the transformations of other constitutional experiments in the context of the Ancien Régime.¹⁹

Partly on account of the Revolution paradigm, French culture still maintains an ambiguous position towards Enlightenment constitutionalism, which it acknowledges as a distinctive trait of the second half of the eighteenth century, while finding it hard to define its peculiar characteristics. The fundamental problem lies in the fact that to acknowledge Enlightenment constitutionalism as an autonomous entity risks diminishing, at least in part,

lish as *The World of the Enlightenment*) and Chapter 10, *The Enlightenment-French Revolution Paradigm*, in Id., *The Enlightenment: History of an Idea*, Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2015 [or. *Lezioni illuministiche*, Rome-Bari, Laterza 2010, pp. 101-110]; see also M.C. JACOB, *The Secular Enlightenment*, Princeton & Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2019, pp. 233-262.

¹⁶ See C. CAPRA, *Repubblicanesimo dei moderni e costituzionalismo illuministico: riflessioni su nuove categorie storiografiche*, «Società e Storia», 2004 (taken up by E. DI RIENZO, *Sguardi sul Settecento. Le ragioni della politica tra Antico Regime e rivoluzione*, Naples, Guida, 2007, p. 8) together with V. FERRONE, *Risposta a Carlo Capra*, «Società e Storia», 104, 2004, pp. 401-407, which gave rise to the study of Enlightenment constitutionalism in Italy.

¹⁷ F. SIMON, *Illuminismo giuridico e idee economiche nelle opere di Cesare Beccaria e di Gaetano Filangieri*, in J. ASTIGARRAGA GOENAGA – J. UZOZ OTAL (eds.), *L'économie politique et la sphère publique dans le débat des Lumières*, Madrid, Casa de Velazquez, 2021, pp. 141-163.

¹⁸ On the term *Enlightenment constitutionalism* as applied to the origins of the Scottish Enlightenment see A. TORRE, *Il contesto costituzionale dell'Illuminismo scozzese*, «Giornale di Storia costituzionale», 20, 2010, p. 43 and C. MARTINELLI, *Profili costituzionali dello Scottish Enlightenment*, in Id. (ed.), *La Scozia nella costituzione britannica. Storia, idea, devolution in una prospettiva comparata*, Turin, Giappichelli, 2016, p. 113. On the issue of Enlightenment constitutionalism see D. PORENA, *Tra costituzionalismo rivoluzionario di fine Settecento e costituzionalismo liberale del XIX secolo: alcune riflessioni sul contributo di Giuseppe Mazzini*, «Rivista dell'Associazione Italiana dei Costituzionalisti – AIC», 1, 2022, pp. 89-106.

¹⁹ G. RICUPERATI, *La riforma 'criminale' di Pietro Leopoldo*, in A. BARBERO et al., *Gli anni di Firenze*, Rome-Bari-Laterza, 2009; but see also M. CATANZARITI, *Segreto e potere. I limiti della democrazia*, Turin, Giappichelli, 2014, p. 99.

the role played by revolutionary constitutionalism and, with it, the centrality of the French experience in the history of western constitutionalism. Because of this, often the essential character of Enlightenment constitutionalism is reduced solely to the theory of the separation of powers, regardless of the choice of a specific form of government, whether monarchical, republican or mixed.²⁰ Still quite recently, even an author such as Antoine Lilti, who aims to provide as comprehensive an account of the Enlightenment as possible, only mentions constitutionalism incidentally, as he explicitly declares that his focus is not on the *pars construens* of the Enlightenment discourse, i.e. its values and its theories of government, but rather on the *pars destruens*, represented by its power of critique.²¹ It has even been maintained that the necessity to defend French identity seems to arise from the fact that Enlightenment constitutionalism does not present a uniform character throughout Europe, and that, once the principle of the separation of powers was accepted, it would lose its universalising nature.²²

One aspect that paradoxically confirms the growing presence of this issue in the historiographical debate is the fact that discussions of Enlightenment constitutionalism have ended up being partly subsumed within the polemics on the supposedly anti-modern character of the Enlightenment. Acknowledging the existence of an Enlightenment constitutionalism, with its European origins, based on the safeguarding of the rights and freedom of European and American citizens, is then viewed as evidence of its imperialistic racial bias, of the domination of Europeans over non-Europeans, and especially over colonial peoples, or, in gender terms, of male over female.²³

²⁰ M. TROPER, *Constitutionnalisme et démocratie*, in *Mélanges Raymond Guy. Du droit interne au droit international. Le facteur religieux et l'exigence des droits de l'homme*, Rouen, Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1998, pp. 144-145; J. LECLAIR, *L'avènement du constitutionnalisme en Occident: fondements philosophiques et contingence historique*, «Revue de Droit de l'Université de Sherbrooke», 41, 1, 2011, pp. 181-185.

²¹ A. LILTI, *L'Héritage des Lumières. Ambivalence de la modernité*, Paris, Seuil-Gallimard, 2019. For a critique of Lilti's position see A. TRAMPUS, *La Naissance du langage politique moderne. L'héritage des Lumières de Filangieri à Constant*, Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2017, pp. 81-100.

²² P. LEROY, *La Tradition constitutionnelle de la monarchie parlementaire en Europe*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2021, p. 44.

²³ J. SUAREZ-KRABBE, *The Other Side of History: Human Rights, Race and Gender from a Transatlantic Perspective*, in N. DHAWAN (ed.) *Decolonizing Enlightenment. Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World*, Opladen, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014, pp. 211-226; C. SPECTOR, *Que rest-il des Lumières? Les droits de l'homme à l'épreuve des études post-coloniales*, in *Controverses sur les Lumières 2*, «Lumières. Histoire. Littératures. Philosophie», 34, 2019, pp. 51-52.

KEYWORDS OF ENLIGHTENED CONSTITUTIONALISM: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

The fundamental characteristics of Enlightenment constitutionalism emerge from its struggle against the remnants of the Ancien Régime and the inequalities left behind by feudalism. These traits consist, first and foremost, in its intrinsically republican character, from which issues its egalitarian and, consequently, universal nature. This republicanism of the moderns is quite different from ancient or renaissance republicanism, based on the *civitas* or on social status, antecedents that are cited at most as a rhetorical trope. This new republicanism arose from different needs; it took on board the English experiment as well, and developed a vocabulary that would become part of the revolutionary experience.²⁴ Moreover, it aspired to equality of rights among people, which enhanced its universal perspective. This was certainly not a straightforward mission, since this republican and universalistic vision risks coming into conflict with the issue of identity, whether cultural, political, linguistic, or of gender. As Simon Serverin remarked on the characteristics of Enlightenment constitutionalism, «le constitutionnalisme des Lumières est global dans son essence, mais il faut veiller à ce que ce globalisme n'aboutisse pas au déni de l'historicité des sociétés qu'il entend écôlaiser».²⁵

Another distinctive trait of Enlightenment constitutionalism, next to its republicanism, is its written nature. The history of modern constitutionalism is characterised by the search for a form capable of providing not only the legitimation of authority but also the limitation of the power arising from the latter. In actuality, this limitation arises from the acknowledgement and safeguard of individual rights, while in formal terms it derives from a written constitution. If nothing else in mechanical terms, and because of the complex nature of any modification procedures, the fact that the constitution is set out in writing guarantees that its fundamental principles cannot be modified, except perhaps when certain specific conditions are met.²⁶

²⁴ See also FERRONE 2003, pp. 159-222 and D. DI BARTOLOMEO, *La république anglaise du Thermidor au premier anniversaire de Brumaire (1794-1800)*, in *Le républicanisme anglais dans la France des Lumières et de la Révolution*, special issue of «La Révolution française [En ligne]», 5, 2013, edited by F. Quastana and P. Serna, published online 31 décembre 2013, accessed on 1 January 2024. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/lrf/1060>.

²⁵ S. SERVERIN, *Le globalisme du constitutionnalisme japonais*, «Jus Politicum. Revue du droit politique», 15, 2016 (online <https://juspoliticum.com/article/Les-globalismes-du-constitutionnalisme-japonais-1072.html>).

²⁶ TRAMPUS 2009, pp. 209-216.

As is generally acknowledged, the first written constitution was that drawn up for Corsica in Italian in 1755 through the intervention of Pasquale Paoli, which later became a model for all subsequent constitutions and declarations of rights down to the revolutionary period. From that moment onwards we witness what Linda Colley has described as «the contagion of written constitutions», a proliferation of written constitutions leading up to the Declaration of Independence of the American colonies and the 1787 Constitution of the United States of America. In the period up to 1820 more than fifty constitutions were drafted, some of them destined to be rather ephemeral: by the 21st century, written constitutions have gone from being a typical Enlightenment product to becoming a global phenomenon.²⁷

The fact that the American constitution was to become the most successful model in this respect does not necessarily imply that the focus, in historical terms, should shift from Europe to the Atlantic context. Europe remained the breeding ground of Enlightenment constitutionalism throughout the eighteenth century, with all its values, contradictions, and cultural experiences. This is borne out by the very invention of the written form: not only because, as already mentioned, the first experiment in this regard took place in Corsica in 1755, but also because both the use of the word *costituzione* and the prototype of the written form refer back to Italian culture. As is well known, the historical and juridical term *costituzione* derives from the Latin and, subsequently, the Ecclesiastical traditions, where it is used in connection with the adoption of acts that have constitutional power, i.e. are legitimised by a relevant authority and are capable of bringing about innovations in a juridical context. The modalities in which the constitution was written down and the form of its text were the result of extensive consultation between Pasquale Paoli and his team on how to achieve the greatest possible efficacy, in a pared down form of writing subdivided into articles and clauses.²⁸ It shares its archetypal structure with codes of law regulating the activity of harbour towns, such as the *Livornine* of the free port of Livorno (formerly Leghorn) (1591-1593), the city that provided the Corsican revolutionaries with the greatest amount of aid, and the later Boston Port Bill, which provided the blueprint for the constitution of the state of Pennsylvania.²⁹ It is therefore important to contextualise

²⁷ L. COLLEY, *Empires of Writing: Britain, America and Constitutions 1886-1848*, «Law and History Review», 32, 2, 2014, pp. 237-266; EAD., *The Gun, the Ship, and the Pen: Warfare, Constitutions, and the Making of the Modern World*, New York, Liveright, 2021.

²⁸ TRAMPUS 2009, p. 80.

²⁹ On the constitutional laws of free ports see G. DELOGU, *L'emporio delle parole. Costruire l'informazione nei porti franchi d'età moderna*, Rome, Viella, 2024.

Enlightenment constitutionalism in relation to the Ancien Régime, while American constitutionalism, which was to be viewed as a global phenomenon, should rather be situated in the context of the debate between the two sides of the Atlantic. Far from being peripheral in the history of Enlightenment constitutionalism, the European context is an essential part of its development.

Its republican nature and the written form should therefore be considered as two originary traits of Enlightenment constitutionalism. These are accompanied by a series of values/keywords that are the focus of efforts at adaptation by a number of writers, philosophers, jurists, and their translators into various European languages, by means both of the invention of new words and the redefinition of the meaning of ancient ones.

POPOLO (PEOPLE)

The first of such words that we should consider is *popolo*. This has been a keyword of modern constitutionalism especially from the moment when, with the crisis of the Ancien Régime, constitutions started to be regarded as a necessary preliminary act to the birth of a new form of government, to the extent that the government itself is viewed as a consequence of the constitution.³⁰ The constitution, in this case, is not an act of government, as when it is drafted or granted by the prince, but is rather an act that constitutes the government itself. Through this reversed perspective, as the constitution is seen as a necessary premise to the birth of government, it can have either one of two origins. On the one hand, it may derive from natural right, in which case its source is the theory of natural law, as in the opinion, for instance, of the physiocrats.³¹ On the other hand, the constitution can be an act of popular sovereignty, as demanded by the political culture of the Enlightenment, i.e. an expression of the people's constitutional power.

This is why for Enlightenment constitutionalism it is of primary importance to investigate and define what is meant by *people*, both before

³⁰ A. TRAMPUS, *Metamorfosi del linguaggio politico: il 'pubblico' tra parole antiche e significati nuovi nelle strategie del tardo Illuminismo*, in B. BORELLO (ed.), *Pubblico e pubblici in Antico Regime*, Pisa, Pacini, 2020, pp. 183-202.

³¹ The inevitable reference is to F. QUESNAY, *Physiocratie ou constitution naturelle du gouvernement*, Leiden & Paris, Merlin, 1768; but see also the information provided in B. HERENCIA, *Recherches pour une constitution physiocratique*, «Annales historiques de la Révolution française», 378, 4, 2014, pp. 3-28.

the Revolution and after the creation of a revolutionary vocabulary, as well as the ways in which it might be possible to convey the new idea of popular sovereignty through an ancient word with such a neutral and indefinite meaning. The first two volumes of Gaetano Filangieri's *Scienza della legislazione*, written between 1776 and 1779, and published in 1780, devote a great many pages to trying to define the nature of sovereignty through a historical investigation into the functions and prerogatives of ancient peoples, and in particular of the Romans. In fact, in this Filangieri resumes work that had been carried out twenty years earlier, again in Italy, by Antonio Genovesi, and which had influenced the constitutional experiments of the second half of the eighteenth century. This explains the centrality of the word for 'people' in the text of eighteenth-century constitutions, starting from the very first elements of the text, i.e. the introductory part, which at the same time declares and constitutes the declaration of rights. Take for example the 1755 project of a constitution for Corsica, where Pasquale Paoli, who had spent some time in the Naples of Antonio Genovesi, declares that «La Dieta generale del popolo di Corsica [...] volendo, riacquistata la sua libertà, dar forma durevole e costante al suo governo riducendolo a costituzione tale, che da esso derivi la felicità della nazione...».³² It is important to study this text in the original Italian, taking its context into account, because the vocabulary that Paoli uses here refers directly back to a value system that revolves around meanings that can be understood most readily in the context of the Italian peninsula, which is here being asked to provide financial aid and armaments. The expression *Dieta del popolo* refers neither to the class-based assemblies of the Ancien Régime nor to a modern idea of political representation, but to a concept that appears in Italy in a historical and ecclesiastical context, especially in connection with the history of the Jewish people.³³ In the same way, the word *felicità* (happiness) existed within this liminal space between law and religion, and had not yet acquired predominantly lay connotations.³⁴ Something similar applies to the word *nazione*, which in the Italian context was meant to stimulate a sense of empathy in connection with the relationship between the individual, their community and their rights.³⁵ From

³² «The General Diet of the People of Corsica [...] having reconquered its liberty, wished to give a durable and permanent form to its government by transforming it into a constitution suited to guaranteeing the well-being of the nation».

³³ See, e.g., C. CALINO, *Lezioni scritturali e morali sopra il libro primo de' re*, vol. VII, *Il popolo ebreo sotto al governo di Samuele*, Venezia, Recurti, 1736, p. 303.

³⁴ A. TRAMPUS, *Il diritto alla felicità. Storia di un'idea*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2008.

³⁵ FERRONE 2003, pp. 124-222. On the 'pedagogic' nature of Enlightenment constitution-

this point of view, the Corsican experiment is revealed as strongly linguistic in character: it allowed the association and redeployment of ancient words, such as *popolo*, *libertà*, *governo*, *felicità*, *nazione*, in a new political context and fostered lexical innovation by charging such words with new meanings.

The first volume of Filangieri's *Scienza della legislazione* is extremely indicative of this process as it represents a further step forward: in it, the process of linguistic creation was tested through the attempts and experiments in translation into the different European languages. The linguistic experiment is thus amplified in ways that delineate a global history of these developments.³⁶ Some of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century translations of Filangieri's work, such as the Austrian and English ones, do not go beyond the first or second volume. These were, of course the most important parts of the work, in that they offered a synthesis of the constitutional architecture of the entire project. However, the interruption of the translation was surely also connected to the fact that the first volume of a work is a litmus test for any translator and for the effectiveness of their translation, as well as for the reception of the work in question by a public that is not necessarily attuned to this new language.

In the case of the translations of the first volume of the *Scienza* into French, German, Spanish, and English, the work's success was facilitated by the fact that the author uses ancient, semantically neutral words, which are consciously given new meaning by the contexts in which they are deployed. Let us take as an example the famous statement «il popolo non è più schiavo e i nobili non ne sono più i tiranni» («the people is no longer enslaved and the aristocrats are no longer its tyrants»)³⁷ Here, the partitive «ne» (i.e. «of it», of the people) clearly represents a power relationship, in that Filangieri asserts that the aristocracy are no longer tyrants «of (over) the people». This sentence is translated faithfully into French, as «Le peuple n'est plus esclave et les nobles n'en sont plus tyrans».³⁸ However, in both the English and the

alism, especially in the case of Filangieri, see F. DI DONATO, *Rivoluzione costituzionale, moderazione concettuale, Esprit de société, civilizzazione statuale e prudenza politica nell'opera di Gaetano Filangieri*, in A. LE QUINIO – T. SANTOLINI (eds.), *Trois précurseurs italiens du droit constitutionnel. Giuseppe Compagnoni, Gaetano Filangieri, Pellegrino Rossi*, Paris, La Mémoire du Droit, 2019, pp. 273-385.

³⁶ A. TRAMPUS, *Enlightenment in Global History: On Filangieri's Science of Legislation and the Transformation of Political Language in the Classical Liberalism*, in S. KARP (ed.), *Век Просвещения. Что такое, Просвещение? Новые ответы на старый вопрос / Le Siècle des Lumières. Qu'est-ce que les Lumières? Nouvelles réponses à l'ancienne question*, Moskva, Nauka, 2018, pp. 110-125.

³⁷ G. FILANGIERI, *La scienza della legislazione*, edited by V. Ferrone, vol. I, *Delle regole generali della scienza legislativa* (1780), edited by A. Trampus, Venezia-Mariano del Friuli, Edizioni della Laguna, 2003, p. 12.

³⁸ G. FILANGIERI, *La science de la législation*, Paris, Cuchet, 1784, vol. 1, *Introduction*, p. III.

Spanish version it undergoes some alteration: respectively, «The people are no longer slaves: The nobles are no longer tyrants» and «El pueblo ya no es esclavo, ni los nobles tiranos».³⁹ In both English and Spanish, therefore, the two halves of the sentence, which in the original denote a power relationship, become independent of each other: they refer no longer to a specific context but to a theoretical one, and become simply two phrases in apposition. Moving on to the translation produced in Austria, the meaning is altered even further as the subject is no longer «the people» but, more widely, «peoples»; on the other hand, the sense of a power relationship is reinstated through the use of the possessive adjective «ihr» (their) associated with «tyrant»: «Die Völker sind nicht mehr Sklaven, und der Adel ist nicht mehr ihr Tyrann».⁴⁰ Anspach's German translation, which originated in a masonic context much closer to Filangieri's own, reinstates the original sense: «Das Volk ist nicht mehr Slave; und seine Edel sind keine Tyrannen mehr».⁴¹ Finally, in the 1814 Swedish translation we find «Folket är icke mera slav, och Adeln ej mera dess förtryckare»,⁴² where the term for «tyrant» is deliberately substituted with «förtryckare», i.e. «oppressor», despite the fact that the Swedish language does include the word «tyrann», which is the equivalent to what is found in the other European languages.⁴³

Despite the significant increase in the past two decades in the number of studies on constitutionalism and constitutions between the end of the Ancien Régime and the age of democratic revolutions, including studies of a comparative nature, this type of analysis of the meaning of specific words would still repay further development. A more frequently trodden path has been tracing the history of the circulation of texts through the publishing circuits and translators, rather than attempting to identify the linguistic pathways along which words are disseminated and transformed.

RIGHTS OF MAN AND DECLARATIONS OF RIGHTS

Linguistic migrations are, therefore, important tools for documenting the pathways along which a semantically neutral word takes on new mean-

³⁹ G. FILANGIERI, *Analysis of the Science of Legislation*, London, Robinson, 1791, p. 4; C. FILANGIERI, *Ciencia de la legislación escrita en italiano... traducida al castellano por Don Jayme Rubio*, Madrid, Gonzalez, 1786, p. 8.

⁴⁰ G. FILANGIERI, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesetzgebung*, Wien, Sonnleithner, 1784, p. 4.

⁴¹ G. FILANGIERI, *System der Gesetzgebung*, Anspach, Hau Eisen, 1784, p. 5.

⁴² G. FILANGIERI, *Lagstiftningens Vetenskap*, Strengnäs, Ekmarck, vol. I, 1814, p. 6.

⁴³ C. DEELEN, *Swedish and English Pocket-Dictionary eller Swenkt och Engelskt Hand-Lexikon*, Lindbro, Lindh, 1829, p. 507.

ings according to the textual and cultural contexts into which it is inserted. Filangieri's «popolo» no longer coincides with a group of spectators: it is now an active subject, the holder of sovereignty and legislator, taking over these roles from the Ancien Régime legislator-prince.

Another fundamental concept in relation to Enlightenment constitutionalism is the birth of a modern theory of the rights of man, which no longer depended on the tenets of the old school of natural law but was based on the acknowledgement of rights by political society and their consequent constitutionalisation. As noted by Ferrone, Filangieri was one of the first thinkers who, in 1780, enunciated and illustrated a modern idea of the rights of man – and possibly the very first to do so in the Italian context.⁴⁴ Even though Filangieri does not actually use the expression *diritti dell'uomo*, this is yet another case in which the idea precedes word formation, as this phrase developed gradually as it migrated into the various European languages thanks to the process of translation in the course of the 1780s. A case in point is how, in the second book of the *Scienza della legislazione*, Filangieri, in discussing the rights of the American colonies, touches on the «diritti che l'uomo acquista con nascere, che la società e le leggi devono garantire, che sono essenzialmente in noi, che formano la nostra esistenza politica» («the rights that man acquires at birth, which must be safeguarded by society and the laws, which are essentially in us, which shape our political existence»)⁴⁵ The 1784 German translation was carried out in a cultural context imbued with masonic influences, which was still, however, far from possessing a juridical vocabulary independent of the Germanic institutional context: a context dominated by a territorial idea of citizen that was typical of the Germanic world, and was linked to an idea of the relationship between city and State in which citizenship is a matter of urban identity. In this context, Filangieri's sentence became «die Rechte endlich, die in der Person eines Privatbürgers, eines einzigen Gliedes der Gesellschaft, schon so viele Achtung fordern: konnten sie wohl einem betrachtlichen Theil des Staats-Korpers versagt werden; konnte man die Colonien einer Nation davon ausschliessen?»⁴⁶ Filangieri assigns the rights to a universal «uomo» – a term that eighteenth-century gender neutrality was happy to use not only for «man» but for human beings in general. However, despite the actual availability of the entirely gender-neutral *Mensch*, the German translation transfers those rights to persons insofar as

⁴⁴ FERRONE 2003, pp. 100-123.

⁴⁵ FILANGIERI 2004, vol. II, edited by M.T. Silvestrini, p. 172.

⁴⁶ FILANGIERI 1784, vol. II, p. 329.

they are citizens (*Privatbürgers*), i.e. private beings who interact with institutions and thus become part of the body politic and the State. Filangieri's discussion is thus brought down from a universalistic outlook – as already mentioned, the context of this passage is a discussion of the American colonies – to a more specific and restricted territorial space, causing the words used in the *Scienza della legislazione* to lose part of their power. Finally, in the 1806 English translation, the first that includes the second volume of Filangieri's *Scienza*, we see how the sentence in question is by now clearly associated with the new language of Enlightenment constitutionalism, by featuring the actual expression 'rights of man': «There are original rights of man. Society and the laws should secure them to him, for they are essential to him, and form his political being, as the mind and body his physical existence». ⁴⁷ Another interesting fact is that the Swedish translation of 1814, while following Filangieri's original quite closely, introduces an intensifier:

dessa rättigheter, hvilka menniskan erhåller på samma gång som hon födes, och som böre beskyddas af samhället och Lagarna; dessa rättigheter, oskilieltiga ifrån var varelse, och som utgöra var politiska existense, liksom själ och kropp utgöra vår fysiska. ⁴⁸

The new element is the expression «rättigheter oskilieltiga ifrån var varelse», which means «rights [that are] inseparable from each being» and is directly derived from the new Swedish constitutional language. This expression is here used to reinforce Filangieri's «che sono essenzialmente in noi» («which are essentially in us»).

The third focal point of Enlightenment constitutionalism is the interaction between declaration of rights and constitution proper, i.e. between a document that acknowledges the rights of man as part of the public sphere and a document that sets out how they are to be put into practice and safeguarded. Filangieri appears to have had clear in his mind that acknowledging that rights are «natural» was not enough: those rights needed to be explicitly declared and then applied in the civil and political sphere. However, on this point the *Scienza della legislazione* positions itself in a transitional phase. At the time of its composition and publication there was already a model of declaration, issued by the thirteen American colonies; however, no constitution had actually been proclaimed as yet. Filangieri seems to harbour a clear idea of the distinction between these two phases,

⁴⁷ *The Science of Legislation. From the Italian of Gaetano Filangieri*, London, Ostell, 1806, vol. II, p. 137.

⁴⁸ FILANGIERI 1814, vol. I, p. 245.

declaration and constitution, without, however, assigning them two distinct denominations. The *Scienza* does not contain the phrase «dichiarazione dei diritti», while the word «costituzione» is quite clearly used to denote the fundamental norms of a political community, which safeguard those rights.⁴⁹ This process would only be completed with Mario Pagano's 1799 project of constitution for the Neapolitan Republic, where the constitution is preceded by the declaration of rights. In the long term, one of the fundamental characteristics of Enlightenment constitutionalism remained the presence of declaration of rights and constitution alongside each other: in French revolutionary constitutionalism these were gradually subsumed into a single document, while in the Napoleonic era both tended to disappear in favour of the new codes of law.

CONCLUSION: NAPOLEONIC CONSTITUTIONALISM AS THE TOMBSTONE OF ENLIGHTENED CONSTITUTIONALISM?

In terms of the debate on Enlightenment constitutionalism, specific questions arise when the latter is compared with developments that occurred in the Napoleonic era, and in particular with the *Sénatus-consulte* of 1804, the so-called Constitution of the Year XII, which, by modifying the Constitution of the Year VIII, transformed the consulate into an empire. This required a substantial modification of the French constitution, which was accompanied, not by chance, by the *Code Napoléon* of the same year, which broke away entirely, including from a formal point of view, from the democratic legacy still present in the Constitution of the Year VIII. In fact, as is well known, after the *coup d'état* of the 18 Brumaire the latter Constitution had already distanced itself from the Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, violating its article 16 («A society in which the observance of the law is not assured, nor the separation of powers defined, has no constitution at all»)⁵⁰ What is certain is that, from

⁴⁹ On how in Italian and subsequently, thanks to translations of Filangieri, in German, the meaning of the term for constitution shifted from a material to a formal sense see A. TRAMPUS, *Linguaggi della politica e lessico costituzionale: Filangieri e i traduttori tedeschi*, in Id. (ed.), *Diritti e costituzione. L'opera di Gaetano Filangieri e la sua fortuna europea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2005, pp. 85-125 and TRAMPUS 2009, pp. 9-12.

⁵⁰ (English translation from https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp; accessed 18/02/2024.) For a critical analysis of the Constitution of the Year VIII and its violation of the principles of 1789, see J. MENICETTI, *L'écriture de la Constitution de l'an VIII: quelques réflexions sur l'échec d'un mécanisme révolutionnaire*, «Napoleonica. La revue», 18, 3, 2018, pp. 68-83.

the onset of the 1804 *Sénatus-consulte*, the Declaration of rights – that typical expression of Enlightenment constitutionalism – disappears from French constitutional charters and the rights are instead addressed via the codes of law.

The opinion is now sometimes put forward that the Constitution should be seen as a form of evolution rather than the betrayal of the principles of the Enlightenment and of 1789, and that it is an expression of the transformation undergone by the abstract «political metaphysics» of the Enlightenment into an actual social mechanism capable of safeguarding human liberties, as typically found in modern constitutions, partly as a result of the standardisation of constitutional vocabulary.⁵¹

However, if we look again at the historical context, it becomes apparent that the 18 Brumaire *coup* was an important watershed with respect to previous constitutions. This was perceived at the time by the British political press, which provided a detailed analysis of the differences between that document and previous constitutions.⁵² Napoleon himself was aware of this, at least at the time of his exile on St Helena, when he attempted to justify the Consulate as a necessary move away from the «metaphysical» constitutionalism of Sieyès and of the Enlightenment.⁵³

Napoleon's effective violation of the Enlightenment's constitution caused sections of European culture to call Filangieri's *Scienza della legislazione* into question again. Filangieri's critics focussed mainly on Benjamin Constant's famous *Commentaire sur l'ouvrage de Filangieri* (1820-1822) and on the liberal revolutions that took place after the European Restoration. It has generally escaped critics' notice, however, that most of Constant's 1820 work in fact derives from a first draft of the unfinished *Principes de politique applicables à tous les gouvernements représentatifs* (1804-1806). It was only with the recent critical edition of the *Commentaire* that a philological reconstruction of these texts became finally available, which showed step by step the development of Constant's thought between 1804 and 1820.⁵⁴ In other words, it was not the Restoration or the monarchical constitution of 1814 that rekindled interest in Enlightenment constitutionalism but the Sé-

⁵¹ MENICETTI 2018.

⁵² «The Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary-Miscellany being a General Repository of Literature, History, and Politics for 1804», LXVI, 1804, pp. 466-467.

⁵³ *Mémoires de Napoleon, écrits sous sa dictée à Saint-Hélène*, Paris, Philippe, 1829, p. 37; D. AMSON, *Histoire constitutionnelle française de la prise de la Bastille à Waterloo*, Paris, LGDJ, 2010, p. 337.

⁵⁴ B. CONSTANT, *Commentaire sur l'ouvrage de Filangieri*, edited by K. Kloocke and A. Trampus, Berlin-Boston, de Gruyter, 2012, pp. 14, 49, 70, 75-79.

natus-consulte of 1804 and attendant violation of republican principles. In his 1806 manuscript Constant devotes numerous pages to the consequences of the *coups d'état* and to the necessary conditions denoting that the constitution had indeed been violated.⁵⁵ Filangieri's work thus became an instrument for a reflection on the nature and limitations of Enlightenment constitutionalism. This appears all the more significant when we recall that in 1804, once again in the wake of Napoleon's Senatus-consulte, Sir Richard Clayton (1745-1828), a diplomat and member of the Royal Society, began his new translation of *Scienza della legislazione* into English. Clayton, who felt an organic connection with Enlightenment culture, deliberately chose to translate only the first two volumes of Filangieri's *Scienza*, i.e. the volume on laws in general and the one on economic laws, specifically with the intent of highlighting the political message of the Italian thinker. However, in the English context the discussion, fuelled especially by followers of Edmund Burke, became extremely heated, not least because Filangieri's work was read outside the context in which it was written and in the light of events at the start of the century.

In a long article published in the *Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal* in 1807, and mostly devoted to the first volume of Filangieri's work, an anonymous reviewer insisted that one should not read Filangieri simply as a testimony of the past, but rather in the light of the more recent political upheaval. The strong points of Filangieri's Enlightenment constitutionalism – linguistic experimentation, a neutral vocabulary that sought to convey new meanings, a tendency to uncover new words that were not yet part of the constitutional vocabulary – thus became so many indictments of the legacy of the Enlightenment.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ B. CONSTANT, *Principes de politique applicables à tous les gouvernements représentatifs (texte de 1806)*, edited by K. Kloocke, Berlin-New York, de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 209-230.

⁵⁶ *The Science of Legislation, from the Italian of Gaetano Filangieri*, by Sir R. Clayton, «The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal», January 1807, pp. 354-373.

ENLIGHTENMENT LECTURES



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LYNN HUNT

WRITING THE HISTORY OF HUMAN RIGHTS:
SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS*

Because the topic – the history of human rights – is so huge and so much has been published about it in the last twenty years or so, a very short overview of the different possible approaches might be useful. These can be briefly summarized as positive vs. negative views of human rights; long-term vs. short-term examinations of their sources; geographically focused (the West) vs. global accounts; and differing high water marks for their elaboration. For the purposes of discussion, I would put my account in *Inventing Human Rights* (2007) and the detailed exploration by Vincenzo Ferrone, *The Enlightenment and the Rights of Man* (2019) in the positive column and Samuel Moyn's *The Last Utopia* (2010) and Dan Edelstein's *The Terror of Natural Right* (2009) in the negative column. The distinction is not absolute but nonetheless important. None of these books tries to give a truly long-term history of human rights emphasizing sources in ancient Greece and Rome or the medieval period or a global account emphasizing sources of rights outside of Europe and the United States. Instead they focus on particular moments. Much debate about human rights in the West concerns chronology: is the eighteenth century particularly important (Ferrone, Hunt, Edelstein), the reaction to World War II, the 1970s (Moyn) or the 1990s?

Although chronology still remains up for discussion, it is now possible use Google n-grams to pin down the use of terms (something impossible when I wrote my book). A Google n-gram of French shows that *droits de l'homme* was rarely used before 1760, became much more common in the late 1780s and 1790s and then dropped off again after 1800 while still

* The Enlightenment Lectures were delivered at the first summer school of THP. The lectures by Dan Edelstein, Vincenzo Ferrone, Lynn Hunt and Céline Spector have already been published in V. FERRONE – V. ALTOPIEDI – A. MAURINI – G. GRIECO (eds.), *Enlightenment Legacy: The Rights of Man in a Global Perspective*, Turin, Fondazione 1563 per l'Arte e la Cultura della Compagnia di San Paolo, 2022.

remaining more current than it had been before the end of the eighteenth century. A Google n-gram of rights of man in English follows a similar path. If I had had access to these more refined digital tools when I wrote my book I would have been able to be more precise, though I was aided in crucial ways by ARTFL, the US access point to Frantext, a database of French literature, which though incomplete can be very suggestive. Now that more such tools exist, it is possible to affirm, for instance, that Voltaire, while being a champion of human rights in many respects (especially religious toleration), did not use the term *droits de l'homme* very often: twice to be exact, once in 1765 and once in 1777. Similarly, the 16 volumes of Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire, 1753-1790*, register few uses of the term until 1788. Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* has the term twice in the 1770 edition, three times in the 1774 edition, and 9 times in the 1780 edition. Finally, the complete works of Maximilien Robespierre, spokesman for the revolutionary government in 1793-94, give us 138 uses of the term, all but two of them after 1789. I belabor this point in order to make two observations: first, the use of new digital resources can help us pin down language in much more precise ways than ever before, and second, to defend my own position, which is somewhat different from that of Ferrone, that while the Enlightenment plays an important role in formulating the idea of rights of man, the political crisis of the French Revolution gives it much greater resonance (both for better and for worse since rights were then associated with revolutionary violence). Human rights are not just an idea; they are a politics as well, and the politics makes the idea more powerful.

In my own work, I tried to combine three approaches with attention to three main places, France, the United States, and Great Britain: an intellectual history of the idea of the rights of man in the late eighteenth century; a political history of the events at the end of the eighteenth century that gave those ideas greater salience; and what be called an affective history, that is, a history of the emotions mobilized by reading novels, descriptions of judicial torture, or the brutal treatment of slaves. This last part was the most controversial of my approaches but also perhaps the approach that has had the most influence on other scholars. I argued that equality, the kind of equality that is crucial to human rights, was not just an idea; it had to be felt to make sense. People had to learn to feel that others unlike themselves were equal to them in some fundamental fashion, and I concluded that they did that learning through reading, especially reading that fostered empathetic identification with those of lower social standing. I do not think I convinced all my readers, but at least it gave them something to consider.

CÉLINE SPECTOR

WHAT IS LEFT OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT?
THE POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

From the very end of the eighteenth century, the philosophy of human rights was subjected to powerful objections.¹ It quickly became evident that human rights couldn't adequately explain their inherent nature and universal applicability. Several paradoxes characterize the rights of man from their advent during the American and French declarations of 1776 and 1789: human rights are both self-evident and yet declared, natural and yet historical, innate and yet civic, universal and yet national. As a result, human rights were very early considered as pure fictions or mere illusions. The bill of rights could only concern men fit to be citizens and legislators.² What was at stake, above all, was the question of inclusion. The exclusion of women, slaves and other minorities deprived of the status of citizenship imperiled the intentions of the American or French revolutionaries: did they really want to extend the benefits of freedom and equality to all human beings? The assertion later put forth by feminists and Marxist thinkers is incredibly potent: human rights perpetuate new forms of privilege. They can conceal neither their hypocrisy nor their impotence: human rights, declared to preserve freedom and justice against all forms of oppression and exploitation, are indeed a pure ideal devoid of substance.

However, new theories coming from *postcolonial studies* have recently added their own objections against human rights.³ These theories were

¹ This article amends a published text: *Que reste-t-il de l'universel? Les droits de l'homme à l'épreuve de la critique post-coloniale*, special issue on *Controverses sur les Lumières 2*, «Lumières», 34, 2nd Semester 2019, pp. 45-60.

² H. ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Paris, Gallimard, "Quarto", 2002, pp. 591-607.

³ For a valuable clarification, see C. BOIDIN, *Decolonial and postcolonial studies in French debates*, «Cahiers des Amériques latines», 62, 2009, pp. 129-140; and the special issue of «Raison présente», edited by R. Pfefferkorn, A. Hammouche and G. Meynier, 199, 3, 2016. The work that we have undertaken remains to be carried out for authors from the Caribbean or Latin America.

inspired by the Frankfurt School and the poststructuralist critique of the Enlightenment. Since the 1980s, under the influence of Edward Said and Dipesh Chakrabarty in particular, these theories have developed a sharp critique of the Enlightenment, stamped by Western values. Without overemphasizing their unity, one can find a line of arguments in the edited volume by Nikita Dhawan, *Decolonizing Enlightenment: Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World* published in 2014.⁴ Against this background, this contribution examines a vast and expanding array of scholarly works, encompassing not only departments of literary studies or anthropology, but also those of history, law, cultural studies, and political science. Within this body of literature, the critique of Enlightenment's fake universalism, of its illusions and its arrogance, is in no way marginal: rather, the denunciation of 'human rights' as seen by the West is key.

The postcolonial critique rests mainly on five claims: 1) human rights are not universal but European (born in Europe, they are dedicated to protecting European citizens, not non-European peoples or slaves); 2) human rights are rights that are 'natural' only in name; rather, these are ideological fictions that may have served colonization and justified the 'civilizing mission' of the European superpowers; 3) human rights are associated with a certain conception of 'reason' and 'civilization' in Europe: American Indians, Asians or Africans described as 'savages' or 'barbarians' are therefore incapable of accessing the idea of subjective rights; 4) the list of human rights itself sounds arbitrary, even abusive: acknowledging the right to private property within human rights amounts to excluding all nomadic peoples; therefore, human rights can be used to expropriate rather than to protect; 5) human rights are those of the settlers and slave masters, who did not have the political will to put an end to slavery.

Different issues are at stake (I): what is the consequence of the *European* origin of the philosophy of human rights? Does it mean that one should deny the universal scope of these rights? Does the granting of such rights depend on certain conditions, such as the development of reason – which would presuppose a preliminary process of 'civilization'? (II) Postcolonial studies rightly argue that the justification of colonization was made for the benefits of 'plantations', which served to expropriate nomadic peoples from their lands. The Declarations, by justifying the right to property in the name of the sacred and inalienable rights of man, are blamed for re-

⁴ N. DHAWAN, introduction to ID. (ed.), *Decolonizing Enlightenment: Transnational Justice, Human Rights and Democracy in a Postcolonial World*, Leverkusen, Germany, Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2014. See also D. CAREY – L. FESTA (eds.), *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009.

inforcing these abuses. Did the influence of ‘possessive individualism’ infiltrate the essence of the Declarations to such an extent as to justify the dispossession of stateless nations? (III) Finally, the most powerful accusation of certain authors associated with the current of postcolonial studies concerns colonization and slavery. Can we approve the idea that the philosophy of human rights is wrong because it was established within the great colonial powers, at the very moment of their expansion?

This article offers a brief overview of the various criticisms directed towards the Enlightenment, conceptualized as a cohesive entity. These critiques have emerged more prominently as postcolonial theory has begun to influence studies of the eighteenth century.

NATURALNESS, EUROPEANNESS

Typically, postcolonial studies consistently question the identity of the ‘human’ in the concept of human rights as declared in the eighteenth century. In principle, of course, this is anyone and everyone – that’s the whole point of claiming rights as a human rather than as a citizen of a particular country – and the rights of this human must apply equally, without discrimination. The language signals the inclusive equality of all human beings. *And yet* in practice the scope of human rights has been far more limited. In particular, the ideal of French human rights – that of access to equal freedom, security, property, and resistance to oppression – was immediately betrayed by the exclusion of certain groups who could not enjoy these rights. The Enlightenment philosophers – so the story goes – have introduced a hierarchy between the white European and the native American, reserving to the first the privilege of natural rights. Moreover, the declarations of the American or French revolutionaries resulted in the refusal to protect human rights for the colonized peoples: in the eighteenth century, human rights remained those of the white man, but in no way applied to the slaves of the American or French colonies, nor the freedmen of color (*libres de couleur*); they did not affect peoples considered as ‘savages’ or ‘barbarian’, because it was supposedly required to have achieved the *progress of the human mind* to become the subject of rights. In the *rights talk*, reason was then considered not as a universal attribute of humanity, but as the prerogative of the few, namely Europeans who, considering themselves ‘civilized’, had the privilege of the rights created by their own civilization. The very idea of ‘perfectibility’ was at the core of this view: only those who had actualized their perfectibility in a linear model of the progress of the human mind deserve to be holders of subjective rights.

One can find this typical line of thought in *Decolonizing Enlightenment*. According to Nikita Dhawan, the Declaration captures the Enlightenment claim of emancipation through the exercise of reason. In the face of feudality, violence, and prejudice, the Enlightenment enunciates ideals of equality, rights, and rationality as a way out of domination towards freedom. However,

Enlightenment's promise of attaining freedom through the exercise of reason has ironically resulted in domination by reason itself. Along with progress and emancipation, it has brought colonialism, slavery, genocide, and crimes against humanity (p. 9).

On this account, Europeans emerged as ethical subjects in the guise of redeemers of the 'backward' people and dispensers of rights and justice. The aim of Dawan, thus, «is to question the hollow myth of the Enlightenment's long march to freedom and emancipation» (p. 10). To consider human rights as universal principles, neither contingent nor negotiable, so that they are undeniable by any rational person independent of particular times and places, is simply flawed.⁵ The truth, rather, is that the universalizing project of Enlightenment imposed a uniform standard of instrumental reason, privileging European conceptions of knowledge and institutions. On this account, the Enlightenment claim of having overcome 'barbarism' in Europe, justifying its spread to the 'uncivilized' non-European world, is considered as leading to domination, not emancipation.⁶

The substantial challenge to the Enlightenment model of emancipation posed by postcolonial studies can essentially be interpreted as a contemporary iteration of the Marxist critique of human rights: instead of the *bourgeois* who conceived his freedom on the model of private property,⁷ the target is the white man, the master, the slave owner who conceives his own freedom as preconditioned by the slavery of others. On this account, the 'liberal' tradition of the Enlightenment has defended the full enjoyment of civil rights as a privilege of the few; the *human* in human rights *has* to be an abstraction in order to deliver equality, but this empty ethical imperative is incapable of dealing with the institutionalized power relations that currently mark us as unequals; finally, the community of free men still has

⁵ N. DHAWAN, *Affirmative Sabotage of the Master's Tools: The Paradox of Postcolonial Enlightenment*, in Id. 2014, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷ MARX, *On the Jewish Question* (1843). See J. LACROIX – J.-Y. PRANCHÈRE, *Le Procès des droits de l'homme*, Paris, Seuil, 2016, pp. 215-254.

racial, gendered, and social boundaries.⁸ Finally, when the French revolutionaries declared the Rights of Man and the Citizen, they did not commit themselves to the view that all humans are born free and equal. Although the French revolutionaries subsequently voted to extend the rights to Protestants as well as Catholics, Jews as well as Christians, and finally to freed black slaves from the colonies, they did so under the pressure of events and continued to resist the suggestion that French women could have the same full citizenship rights as French men.

OWNERSHIP

The second aspect of the critique of human rights concerns property rights. The claim here is slightly different. Not only did the absence of agriculture in freshly ‘discovered’ America prove the lack of sovereign status of the natives and form part of the ideological justification for the colonial appropriation of non-European territories and ‘wasted’ natural resources; not only were the nomadic practices of some natives judged inferior to sedentary forms of life. More accurately, the justification of property rights helped to secure colonization: the generalization of the private property regime was extremely detrimental to the forms of land use by Amerindian communities. Assigned by the Enlightenment to the status of ‘savage’, uncivilized beings, the indigenous peoples of the Americas were forced to privatize their property. Instead of being considered as one form of property among others, the common use of land was reduced to an antecedent status in a space devoid of law and culture called ‘state of nature’.⁹ The ‘modern’ or ‘civilized’ way of life could only prevail through the disappearance of traditional modes of subsistence.¹⁰ In the Americas and particularly in Mexico, this belief led to the massive dispossession of lands previously held by indigenous populations.

POLITICAL AND CIVIL FREEDOM

Lastly, countering the ideals of human rights, a crucial argument emerges for postcolonial theorists: they expose the significant hypocrisy

⁸ D. LOSURDO, *Contre-histoire du Libéralisme*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013, p. 112.

⁹ J. SCHACHERREITER, *Propertization as a Civilizing and Modernizing Mission: Land and Human Rights in the Colonial and Postcolonial World*, in DHAWAN 2014, pp. 227-242.

¹⁰ B. DE SOUSA SANTOS, *Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledge*, «Review», XXX, 1, 2007, pp. 45-89.

inherent in discussions about rights, since in principle, human rights are based on justice, freedom, and tolerance all over the world; but in practice, they are used against political power in Europe, not abroad. This would be the *original sin* of the Enlightenment. Whereas the intellectuals who were engaged in decolonization movements in the 50s or 60s often relied on the human rights ideals to denounce the way in which Europeans had betrayed or misrepresented them, postcolonial or decolonial authors now dismiss universalism as such. According to them, in fighting despotism ‘at home’, philosophers (Locke or Rousseau in particular) and revolutionaries obscured the *civil*, not *political*, use of the category of slavery, or – even worse – naturalized slavery in Asia and Africa (Montesquieu). In the end, the emancipation of slaves owed nothing to the ideas of philosophers; it came about purely and simply as a result of the violent struggles of slaves and black abolitionism.

ANSWERS?

In the final section of this paper, I will endeavor to evaluate this ‘disenchantment’ with the Enlightenment – the notion that colonialism and persistent slavery serve as evidence that the progressive ideals of the Enlightenment were indeed compromised. Postcolonial studies strictly appear as the heir of Marxist theory despite of their sharp criticism of Marx. As a matter of fact, the rationale identified by the *postcolonial studies*, in essence, supports the commonplace idea that human rights are the Trojan horse of Western cultural imperialism.

Consequently, two responses are usually put forward: the first one argues in favor of *cultural relativism* and advocates a local approach to human rights, rooted in either African, American, or Asian practices (the core idea being that any legal order should depend on the cultural differences, and human rights themselves be understood contextually).¹¹ The second path argues in favor of a more authentic universalism, whose sources are not in the philosophers’ ideas but in the actual revolts of slaves.¹²

¹¹ A.A. AN-NA’IM, *The Spirit of Laws is not Universal: Alternatives to the Enforcement Paradigm for Human Rights*, «Tilburg Law Review», 21, 2, 2016, pp. 255-274.

¹² R. BLACKBURN, *Slavery, Emancipation and Human Rights*, in K.E. TUNSTALL (ed.) *Self-Evident Truths? Human Rights and the Enlightenment*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2012, pp. 137-155, here pp. 138-139. See also by the same author *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, London, Verso, 1988. It should be noted that, from a historical point of view, the origins of abolitionist ideas cannot be attributed only to the resistance of the slaves, in particular outside the case of Santo Domingo (D. GEGGUS, *Rights, Resistance and Emancipation: A Response to Robin Blackburn*, in TUNSTALL 2012, pp. 157-167).

This line of argument is to be found in Siba N. Grovogui's excellent paper, which points out that the colonized had their own notions of human rights – notions which were integrated into their revolutionary principles and institutionalized within the Constitution drawn up during the Haitian Revolution.¹³ In a work entitled *A Colony of Citizens. Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean*, the French historian Laurent Dubois had already established the originality of the Haitian Revolution by rejecting the theory of the 'contagion' of revolutionary ideas from the continent: in Santo Domingo from 1791 to 1804, it was the slaves who freed themselves, owing nothing to the so-called 'universal' declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen. For Dubois, the Declaration of 1789 perpetuated the colonial order based on plantation and forced labor, creating a 'Republican racism'.¹⁴ In an article titled *Mind, Body, and Gut! Elements of a Postcolonial Human Rights Discourse* (2006), Siba N. Grovogui follows in his footsteps: while the subject of the Declaration of Independence and of the French Declaration was in no way 'the human' in general defined by his physical and intellectual faculties, but *the owner-man defined by his race and his class*, Haitian revolutionaries knew how to 'deracialize' political agency and denounce the racial ontology of the Enlightenment in order to resist oppression. Siba N. Grovogui mentions the articles of the Haitian Constitution which reject any reference to the color of the skin (Art. 14), and abolish the titles, advantages, and privileges other than those which would come from the service rendered to freedom and independence (Art. 3). The author further emphasizes that the Haitian Constitution gave equal access to property to the *former free* and the *new free* (emancipated slaves) and recognized the equal dignity of all men, while setting up social rights for the protection of women and children. He concludes that it was up to the black slaves, and to them alone, to have theorized the precepts of freedom, equality, justice, and produced 'universal notions of rights'.¹⁵

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What is left, then, of the Enlightenment's legacy? Can we subscribe wholly to the staunchest contestations of the emancipatory claims of the

¹³ S.N. GROVOGUI, *To the Orphaned, Dispossessed, and Illegitimate Children: Human Rights Beyond Republican and Liberal Traditions*, «Indiana Journal of Legal Studies», XVIII, 1, 2011, pp. 41-63.

¹⁴ See L. DUBOIS, *A Colony of Citizens. Revolution and Slave Emancipation in the French Caribbean, 1787-1804*, Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Enlightenment since the first generation of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory? All arguments from postcolonial studies are profoundly significant, and we must fully acknowledge the authors who have highlighted the significance of slave revolts or the Haitian Constitution. But should we conclude that the concept of human rights is always an alibi or that there are non-Western, singular and specific, culturally situated ways of thinking about and implementing human rights? Is it justifiable to assert that discourses on transnational justice, human rights, and democracy serve as ideological expressions of a coercive will to power by the global North? Such a reinterpretation of history is limiting. It may confuse the philosophical examination of the nature and content of human rights and the analysis of their scope of application. To say the least, the fact that human rights take time to become 'truly universal' does not jeopardize their value as *aspirations* or *ideals*. Nor does it undermine the *task* of humanity to struggle to enforce them. Enlightenment concepts can function as aspirational ideals while providing evaluative criteria to critically assess our socio-cultural, legal, and economic practices. It is the case at least when the universality of human rights is understood, as Condorcet had wished, *without distinction of gender, religion or race*: the 'human' is then understood as a sensitive being, endowed with fundamental needs, who uses his reason to satisfy them.¹⁶ Condorcet fought not only for the rights of Protestants, Jews, Women, and Black slaves but also against the hypocrisy of the colonists who did not want to follow the implications of the Declaration. Under attack in 1789 by a settler from la Martinique in the *Journal de Paris* who did not want to apply the Declaration to the French Indies and to free the slaves, Masseron de Launay, he answered that one should add to the first article of the Declaration: all *white* men are born free and equals («*tous les hommes blancs naissent libres et égaux en droits*»); and even provocatively asked about a method to assess whiteness («*une méthode pour déterminer le degré de blancheur nécessaire*»¹⁷).

The Enlightenment philosophers were certainly less naïve than our contemporary authors believe they were. Therefore, it is always dangerous to reduce any kind of universal aspiration to a pretense or to a game of dupes. To be sure, while proclaiming to be universal, liberal democracy building upon human rights can be shown to be exclusionary in a variety

¹⁶ CONDORCET, *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres* (1781), Paris, GF-Flammarion, 2007.

¹⁷ J.-F. ROBINET, *Condorcet, sa vie, son œuvre, 1743-1794*, Paris, Librairies-Imprimeries réunies, 1893, pp. 69-70. See comment from S. LARCHER, *L'Autre citoyen*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2014, pp. 40-41.

of ways. Yet the postcolonial critique amounts to confusing the destructive effects of colonization with those of the philosophical theories that did not defend it. As Vincenzo Ferrone has pointed out in the conclusion of his book,¹⁸ the Enlightenment was not the cradle of racism. By projecting all the evils caused by Western imperialism onto the inspirers and drafters of the Enlightenment Declarations, postcolonial studies subscribe to a Manichean account of intellectual history. They tend to accredit the questionable idea of intrinsically ‘Asian’ or ‘African’ values that no transcultural vision could apprehend.¹⁹ Therefore, it is imperative that we strive to rectify this misrepresentation of the relationship between Enlightenment and Empire by rediscovering critical perspectives within European political thought.²⁰

¹⁸ V. FERRONE, *The Enlightenment and the Rights of Man*, translated by E. Tarantino, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2019, p. 496.

¹⁹ Not everyone falls, obviously, into these failings – the case of Spivak can be emphasized because her position, albeit critical, is clearly more subtle. G. CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, *Righting Wrongs*, in A. SINGH RATHORE – A. CISTELECAN (eds.), *Wronging Rights? Philosophical Challenges for Human Rights*, New Delhi-London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 78-103. According to the author, «some of the best products of high colonialism, descendants of the colonial middle class, become human rights advocates in the countries of the South».

²⁰ S. MUTHU, *Enlightenment against Empire*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2003.

Casa Editrice
Leo S. Olschki
Firenze



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DAN EDELSTEIN

A HIDDEN LEGACY: ENLIGHTENMENT RIGHTS TALK,
NINETEENTH-CENTURY CONSTITUTIONS,
AND THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The nineteenth century poses a problem in the history of human rights.¹ It may be bookended, on one side, by a flurry of revolutionary declarations of rights, and on the other, by the many proposals leading up to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). But what of the hundred or so years in between? The age of Bentham and Marx took a dim view of rights. Even in France, the revolutionaries of 1848 did not see it necessary to preface the constitution of the second republic with a declaration.² Nor would their republican successors, in 1875. Given these interruptions, is there much basis to claims that emphasize historical continuity between 1789 and 1948? Does the UDHR owe much or anything at all to the Age of Enlightenment and Revolutions? Or must we look elsewhere for its genesis?³

In this paper, I suggest that the nineteenth century did in fact extend the Enlightenment rights tradition up to the doorstep of the twentieth century, but that historians have not been looking in the right places. The line of transmission runs not through philosophical or political treatises, but through a more ephemeral conduit: constitutions. It was ephemeral because few of these constitutions lasted more than a few years; some were

¹ This paper draws on my recent book, *On the Spirit of Rights*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019, and the volume of essays I am co-editing with Jennifer Pitts for the *Cambridge History of Rights* (Volume 4. *The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024).

² This constitution does mention in its Preamble that France «recognizes rights and responsibilities anterior and superior to positive laws» (art. 3).

³ For different views on these questions, see notably L. HUNT, *Inventing Human Rights*, New York, Norton, 2007, and S. MOYN, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010.

never even implemented. But the discourse of constitutionalism – ‘constitution talk’, as it were – perpetuated the Enlightenment language of rights, especially as it had been expressed in the 1789 French Declaration of Rights of Man and of the Citizen (DRMC). What’s more, these constitutions provided a seedbed for the next generation of international declarations, which made their appearance in the 1920’s and ’30’s. These declarations, in turn, were immediate precursors to, and models for, the UDHR.

To appreciate this argument, it helps to start at the end. In October 1929, André Mandelstam (1869-1949) attended a meeting of the *Institut de Droit International* in New York. Mandelstam was a professor of international law, and after the 1917 revolution, an exile in France. He was a member of the Russian league of rights, the sister organization of the famous Ligue des Droits de l’Homme (LDH), both of which were headquartered in Paris.⁴ He was also an admirer of the Italian professor of constitutional and international law, Pasquale Fiore (1837-1914), whose earlier (1890) work he had praised in a book on the Ottoman empire.⁵ Fiore had already issued a call for «the declaration of the rights that everyone expects [*la dichiarazione dei diritti spettanti a ciascuno*]», one which would complete the work of the Enlightenment authors who «had all defended the rights of mankind» and assisted in «the development of the eminently just principles of the international community».⁶

In New York, Mandelstam attempted just that: he presented a ‘Declaration of the International Rights of Man’ (*La Déclaration des Droits Internationaux de l’Homme*). It was a short document, consisting of six articles and

⁴ On Mandelstam, see J.H. BURGERS, *The Road to San Francisco: The Revival of the Human Rights Idea in the Twentieth Century*, «Human Rights Quarterly», 14, 4, 1992, pp. 447-477; P. GORDON LAUREN, *The Evolution of International Human Rights: Visions Seen* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013 p. 114); D. KEVONIAN, *André Mandelstam and the Internationalization of Human Rights (1869-1949)*, in *Revisiting the Origins of Human Rights*, edited by P. Slotte and M. Halme-Tuomisaari, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 239-266; and H.PH. AUST, *From Diplomat to Academic Activist: André Mandelstam and the History of Human Rights*, «European Journal of International Law», 25, 2, 2014, pp. 1105-1121.

⁵ MANDELSTAM, *Le Sort de l’empire Ottoman*, Lausanne, Payot, 1917, pp. 445-447.

⁶ For the original Italian, I consulted the third edition, which contains many additions to the original 1890 edition: *Il Diritto internazionale codificato e la sua sanzione giuridica*, Turin, Unione Tipografica editrice, 1900. An English translation, based on the fifth edition, appeared in 1918: *International Law Codified and Its Legal Sanction: Or, The Legal Organization of the Society of States*, translated by E. Borchard, New York, Baker, Voorhis and Co, 1918. For the quotation, see § 15/§ 11 for Italian, and § 10. On this work, see M. KOSKENNIEMI, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 54-57. See also M. DURANTI, *The Conservative Human Rights Revolution: European Identity, Transnational Politics, and the Origins of the European Convention*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 68-69.

a preamble. The articles combined French-style affirmations of the right to life, liberty, and property (art. 1) with an American insistence on due process and equal protection (referring explicitly to the fourteenth amendment). It was well publicized in the early 1930's, and still remembered in 1941, when the American jurist George Finch described it as a precursor to Roosevelt's 'Four Freedoms'.⁷ It would be one of the declarations considered by John P. Humphrey when he prepared the first draft of the UDHR.⁸

Mandelstam's declaration was also very self-aware about how its genealogy stretched back to the revolutionary era:

*les Déclarations des droits inscrites dans un grand nombre de constitutions et notamment dans les constitutions américaines et françaises de la fin du XVIII^e siècle, n'ont pas seulement statué pour le citoyen, mais pour l'homme.*⁹

What is interesting about this statement is that Mandelstam inscribes not only a point of origin for human rights (the eighteenth century), but also sketches out their historical legacy: «dans un grand nombre de constitutions». Still, this comment is rather elusive, and does not clarify where exactly Mandelstam found these other rights claims.

An important clue can be found in another book published that same year by one of Mandelstam's closest collaborators, Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch (1892-1955).¹⁰ Mirkine-Guetzévitch was also a Russian professor of international law, also an exile in Paris, and the secretary general of the Russian league of rights. In 1929, he co-edited a collection of world constitutions with Alphonse Aulard.¹¹ This was a telling collaboration: Aulard was the inaugural holder of the chair for the history of the French Revolution at the Sorbonne until 1922 (he died in 1928). He also played an important role in the LDH (est. 1898), whose founding statute was the DRMC.¹²

⁷ See G. FINCH, *The International Rights of Man*, «American Journal of International Law», 35, 41, 1941, pp. 662-665: 663-664; cited in MOYN 2010, p. 294 n7.

⁸ See Humphrey, who mentions the draft by the Institut de droit international as one of those he consulted: *Human Rights & the United Nations: A Great Adventure*, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., Transnational Publishers, 1984, p. 32.

⁹ MANDELSTAM, *La Déclaration des Droits Internationaux de l'Homme*, «Esprit International: The International Mind», 4, 14, 1930, pp. 232-243.

¹⁰ See D. KEVONIAN, *Question des réfugiés, droits de l'homme: éléments d'une convergence pendant l'entre-deux-guerres*, «Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps», 72, 2003, pp. 40-49: 42-43; S. PINON, *Boris Mirkine-Guetzévitch et la diffusion du droit constitutionnel*, «Droits», 46, 2, 2007, pp. 183-212; and MOYN 2015, pp. 28-33.

¹¹ *Les Déclarations des Droits de l'Homme: Textes constitutionnels concernant les droits de l'homme et les garanties des libertés individuelles dans tous les pays*, Paris, Payot, 1929.

¹² See E. NAQUET, *La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme: une association en politique (1898-1840)*, PhD

At the head of Mirkine-Guetzévitch and Aulard's volume, they placed the 1789 Declaration, highlighting its function as a generative matrix for the burst of constitution writing that exploded in the nineteenth century. Their collection included a thorough index, allowing readers to see how rights originally announced in the DRMC were repeated, often word for word, in constitutions the world over.

Mirkine-Guetzévitch and Aulard's volume highlight how national constitutions make up an essential, if largely overlooked, legacy of Enlightenment rights, one that, moreover, played a crucial role in the efforts to produce a *new* international declaration in the twentieth century. This legacy is easy to miss: while few nineteenth-century constitutions were preceded by standalone Declarations of Rights, many incorporated rights claims within them. And while the phrasing they chose to express these rights was often lifted directly from the 1789 Declaration, or other French Revolutionary constitutional documents, it can still be difficult to track. Most constitutions cherry-picked articles from the DRMC, or only cited them partially, and of course translated them into other languages.

Once you know where and how to look, however, it is fairly straightforward to identify how revolutionary rights spread through nineteenth century constitutions. In what follows, I'll offer some examples, though this is in no way an exhaustive list. Consider the first written constitution in Spanish America, the 1811 Constitution of 'the United States of Venezuela'.¹³ It contains no prefatory declaration, so the presence of rights provisions less obvious. Only in its eighth chapter do we find detailed the «Rights of man [*derechos del hombre*], which are to be acknowledged and respected throughout the whole extent of the State».¹⁴ Here is where a large number of similarities with the DRMC appear:

1. The Venezuelans borrow the highly idiosyncratic French (and ultimately Rousseauist) definition of the law as «the free expression of the general will...» («*La ley es la expresion libre de la voluntad general*», art. 149; cf. art. 6 of the DRMC, one of the most famous formulations).

dissertation, Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 2005; and WILLIAM IRVINE, *Between Justice And Politics: The Ligue des Droits de l'Homme, 1898-1945*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2007.

¹³ See in general J. LYNCH, *The Spanish American Revolutions, 1808-1826*, New York, Norton, 1986; and by the same author, *Simón Bolívar: A Life*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006; and J. SIMON, *The Ideology of Creole Revolution: Imperialism and Independence in American and Latin American Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

¹⁴ *Venezuelan Declaration of Independence and Constitution*, Longman and Co., 1812, p. 248. Available online: <https://scholarship.rice.edu/jsp/xml/1911/9253/1/aa00032.tei.html#div2030>.

2. They also adopted the same definition of liberty: «Liberty, is the faculty of doing every thing that does not injure the rights of other individuals, or the body of society, whose limits can only be determined by law, for otherwise they would become arbitrary, and ruinous to liberty itself» («*La libertad es la facultad de hacer todo lo que no daña á los derechos de otros individuos, ni al cuerpo de la sociedad, cuyos limites solo pueden determinarse por la ley, por que de otra suerte serian arbitrarios, y ruinosos á la misma Libertad*», art. 153). The borrowing here is more subtle, as it includes some additional language and a different order of ideas. Compare with art. 4 of DRMC: «*La liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui: ainsi, l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits. Ces bornes ne peuvent être déterminées que par la loi*».
3. They determined the relation of the law to liberty in the same exact terms: «It shall not be lawful to hinder anything not prohibited by law, and no one shall be obliged to do any thing, that is not thereby prescribed» («*No se puede impedir lo que no está prohibido por la ley, y ninguno podrá ser obligado á hacer lo que ella no prescribe*», art. 157; cf. art. 5, «*Tout ce qui n'est pas défendu par la Loi ne peut être empêché, et nul ne peut être contraint à faire ce qu'elle n'ordonne pas*»).
4. The presumption of innocence was expressed in the exact same terms as the French: «Every person shall be presumed innocent, till he has been declared guilty in conformity to the laws...» («*Todo hombre debe presumirse inocente hasta que no haya sido declarado culpable con arreglo á las leyes*», art. 159; cf. art. 9: «*Tout homme étant présumé innocent jusqu'à ce qu'il ait été déclaré coupable*»).
5. And finally they laid down a very similar (if not perfectly identical) principle of criminal procedure, insisting «No person shall be judged, or condemned, to the sufferance of any punishment in criminal matters, till after he has been legally heard» («*Ninguno podrá ser juzgado, ni condenado al sufrimiento de alguna pena en materias criminales, sino despues que haya sido oido legalmente*», art. 160; cf. the very similar art. 7: «*Nul homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la Loi, et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites*»).

What we find in this instance is a combination of 'copy-paste constitutionalism', alongside extensive paraphrase. These passages are not always obvious to catch. But they are fairly typical of other constitutions as well, both in the new Spanish American republics, as well as European ones.

The Argentine Constitution of 1819 (officially known as the Constitution of the United Provinces of South America) offers a similar example. Again it does not include a prefatory enumeration of rights, though it does have a fifth section entitled *Declaración de Derechos*:

1. The article outlining the five basic rights that all citizens can enjoy contains a second sentence very close to DRMC: «No one can be deprived of any of them except in accordance with law» («*Los miembros del Estado deben ser protegidos en el goce de los derechos de su vida, reputación, libertad, seguridad y propiedad. Nadie puede ser privado de alguno de ellos sino conforme a las leyes*», art. CIX; cf. art. 7: «*Nul homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formes qu'elle a prescrites*»).
2. Like the Venezuelan one, this Constitution also adopts the same principle (and similar language) describing the relation between law and liberty: «No inhabitant of the State shall be forced to do what the law does not mandate, nor deprived of what it does not prohibit». («*Ningún habitante del Estado será obligado a hacer lo que no manda la ley, ni privado de lo que ella no prohíbe*», art. CXIII; cf. art. 5: «*Tout ce qui n'est pas défendu par la loi ne peut être empêché, et nul ne peut être contraint à faire ce qu'elle n'ordonne pas*»).
3. Finally, it protected the right of property in identical terms as the DRMC, terms which became quasi canonical in constitutional law («*Siendo la propiedad un derecho sagrado e inviolable*», art. CXXIII; cf. art. 17: «*La propriété étant un droit inviolable et sacré*»).

What the Argentine constitution adds to this account is a recognition of how certain particular phrases and concepts had a greater likelihood of circulating and reappearing in constitutional documents. At some point, one might ask whether drafters were aware of the original source of their phrasing. But it is likely that they were all familiar with the DRMC, given its particular notoriety, and the fact that a Spanish translation had been published in Bogotá in 1793 by Antonio Nariño, the future president of Cundinamarca (now part of Columbia).¹⁵

Indeed, such was the allure of the DRMC that its influence can even be seen on the 1812 Cádiz constitution, written in opposition to the French occupation.¹⁶ Here as well, there is no prefatory declaration. But scattered

¹⁵ See A. MCFARLANE, *Colombia Before Independence: Economy, Society, and Politics Under Bourbon Rule*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978, pp. 285-287.

¹⁶ See e.g. J.E. RODRIGUEZ O., “*We are All Now the True Spaniards*”: *Sovereignty, Revolution,*

throughout are clear signs that the Spanish *liberales* were drawing on the French.

1. Some examples are fairly obvious: the Cádiz declaration opens by stating that «sovereignty resides essentially in the nation» («*La soberanía reside esencialmente en la Nación*», art. 3), directly copying art. 3 of DRMC: «*Le principe de toute souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la nation*».
2. Others require digging deeper into the constitutional text. Freedom of the press was guaranteed by article 371, which placed similar caveats on a free press as had the French: «All Spaniards have the freedom to write, print, and publish their political ideas, without needing any license, revision, or approval before the publication, under the restrictions and liability established by law» («*Todos los españoles tienen libertad de escribir, imprimir y publicar sus ideas políticas, sin necesidad de licencia, revisión ó aprobación alguna anterior á la publicación, baxo las restricciones y responsabilidad que establezcan las leyes*»). Compare article 11 of the DRMC: «*La libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l'homme: tout citoyen peut donc parler, écrire, imprimer librement, sauf à répondre de l'abus de cette liberté dans les cas déterminés par la loi*».
3. The Spanish drafters also drew on other French constitutional language. Article 172, on the executive power of the king, criminalized any «attack on individual liberty» (*atentado contra la libertad individual*).¹⁷ This was precisely the language employed in the French penal code of 1791, which the Spaniards are more likely to have known from the 1808 Bayonne Statute: «*Tout attentat contre la liberté individuelle, base essentielle de la constitution française, sera puni ainsi qu'il suit*» (Part 2, tit. 1, sec. 3, article 19).

Finally, the 1822 constitution of Portugal echoed the French Declaration even more openly, as it began with a section on 'the individual rights and duties of the Portuguese' (title 1).

Independence and the Emergence of the Federal Republic of Mexico, 1808-1824, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2012, esp. Chapter 5; S. EASTMAN – N. SOBREVILLA PEREA (eds.), *The Rise of Constitutional Government in the Iberian Atlantic World: The Impact of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812*, Tuscaloosa, University of Alabama Press, 2015; and R. BRENA, *The Cádiz Liberal Revolution and Spanish American Independence, in New Countries: Capitalism, Revolutions, and Nations in the Americas, 1750-1870*, edited by J. Tutino, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017, pp. 71-104.

¹⁷ «No puede el Rey privar á ningún individuo de su libertad, ni imponerle por sí pena alguna. El secretario del Despacho que firme la orden, y el juez que la execute, serán responsables á la Nación, y castigados como reos de atentado contra la libertad individual», art. 172, item 11.

1. Article 1 defined the object of the constitution as guaranteeing the «liberty, security, and property of all Portuguese» («*A Constituição política da Nação Portuguesa tem por objecto manter a liberdade, segurança, e propriedade de todos os Portugueses*»). Here was the French ‘trinity’ of rights (minus resistance to oppression, which had been added later), laid out in article 2 of the DRMC.
2. Like the Venezuelans and the Argentines, the Portuguese adopted the same French definition of liberty as «consist[ing] in not being obliged to do what the law does not command, nor to refrain from doing what it does not forbid». («*A liberdade consiste em não serem obrigados a fazer o que a lei não manda, nem a deixar de fazer o que ela não proíbe. A conservação desta liberdade depende da exacta observância das leis*», art. 2). This wording paraphrased art. 5 of the DRMC: «*Tout ce qui n’est pas défendu par la Loi ne peut être empêché, et nul ne peut être contraint à faire ce qu’elle n’ordonne pas*», art. 5.
3. They similarly enshrined property as «sacred and inviolable» («*A propriedade é um direito sagrado e inviolável*», art. 6; cf. art. 17), and adopted the French rules for eminent domain: «When, for some reason of public and urgent need, it is necessary that he be deprived of this right, he will first be compensated, in the manner established by the laws» («*Quando por alguma razão de necessidade pública e urgente, for preciso que ele seja privado deste direito, será primeiramente indemnizado, na forma que as leis estabelecerem*», art. 6; cf. art. 17: «*si ce n’est lorsque la nécessité publique, légalement constatée, l’exige évidemment, et sous la condition d’une juste et préalable indemnité*»).
4. Interestingly, they looked to the French declaration to affirm the English common law principle of *habeas corpus*: «No one shall be arrested without charge... The law will designate the penalties with which they must be punished» («*Ninguém deve ser preso sem culpa formada... A lei designará as penas...*», art. 4; cf. art. 7: «*Nul homme ne peut être accusé, arrêté ni détenu que dans les cas déterminés par la loi, et selon les formes qu’elle a prescrites*»). Even if this right is traditionally associated with English constitutionalism, it was often the French declaration that provided the modern formula.
5. And they asserted freedom of expression in identical terms as in DRMC. «*A livre comunicação dos pensamentos é um dos mais preciosos direitos do homem*», art. 7; cf. «*La libre communication des pensées et des opinions est un des droits les plus précieux de l’homme*» (art. 11).

These examples, chosen among many others, highlight the gradual dissemination of key Enlightenment rights provisions, particularly around

the rule of law, through multiple national constitutions. The fact that so many constitutions copied/pasted the same language should not be seen as laziness or unoriginality on the part of drafters, but rather underscores the success of particular ideas (or at least ideals).

To be sure, the French Declaration was not the only source for these. The Venezuelan constitution of 1811, for instance, also looked to the American bill of rights: Article 160, to cite just one example, insisted that «no person shall be compelled or forced in any cause, to give testimony against himself» (cf. the Fifth amendment).¹⁸ The Portuguese constitution also included a nod to Beccaria, insisted on proportionality of crimes and punishments, and abolishing torture and other «infamous punishments».¹⁹ More generally, the entire practice of incorporating human rights into constitutionalism owed a debt to Gaetano Filangieri's 'science of legislation'.²⁰

But it is also striking – and in a way, somewhat surprising – how the French Declaration served as the chief model and *Urtext* for perpetuating Enlightenment and Revolutionary era rights into nineteenth-century constitutions. In part, it was perhaps because the French, in 1789, were often gesturing toward future, yet unwritten, legal codes that their declaration served as a better template (as opposed to, say, the American revolutionaries, who were primarily concerned about retaining the existing body of English common law).

But because the language and principles of the DRMC spread so widely around the world, international lawyers could claim that these ideas had *already* gained an international acceptance. They could point to the 'universal' spread of revolutionary principles to argue that they should be codified into a document with explicitly 'universal' jurisdiction. In other words, the presence of Enlightenment-era rights in constitutions from around the world allowed international lawyers to claim that these rights

¹⁸ Article 160 granted defendants «the right of demanding the motive of the accusation attempted against [them]» (cf. article 1, sec. 9, of the U.S. Constitution). It also insisted that «no person shall be compelled or forced in any cause, to give testimony against himself» (cf. the Fifth amendment). The following article (161) established trial by jury (cf. the Sixth amendment). Others (162-63) forbade warrantless searches (cf. the Fourth amendment).

¹⁹ «The entire penalty must be proportionate to the crime; and none will pass from the person of the delinquent. Torture, confiscation of goods, infamy, scourging, holding and trading, branding with a hot iron, and all other cruel or infamous punishments are abolished» art. 11 («Toda a pena deve ser proporcionada ao delito; e nenhuma passará da pessoa do delinquente. Fica abolida a tortura, a confiscação de bens, a infâmia, os açoites, o barão e pregão, a marca de ferro quente, e todas as mais penas cruéis ou infamantes»).

²⁰ V. FERRONE, *The Politics of Enlightenment: Constitutionalism, Republicanism, and the Rights of Man in Gaetano Filangieri*, translated by S.A. Reinert, London, Anthem Press, 2014.

actually were ‘universal’. What’s more, even when imperfectly enforced, these rights provisions afforded the citizens of new republics (and some kingdoms, like Norway, Portugal, or Greece) with genuine political and legal experiences. The language of property rights, freedom of expression, or ‘individual liberty’ might have been recycled, but the habits that these rights made possible were new and often welcome. Constitutional history, in this regard, can also be a proxy for cultural and even social history, which in turn can explain why certain peoples might value rights more strongly than others.



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Casa Editrice
Leo S. Olschki
Firenze

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MUSIC OF LIGHT.
HOW THE GREAT MUSICIANS HELPED
TO SHAPE AND REPRESENT THE ENLIGHTENMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the relationship between music and the Enlightenment,¹ focusing on the works of three great composers who lived and worked in the Viennese context between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century: Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadé Mozart (1756-1791) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). The first two musicians worked at the end of the eighteenth century, and celebrated the ideas and aspirations of the Enlightenment² in works such as *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Mozart, 1786), *Die Zauberflöte* (Mozart, 1791) or *Die Schöpfung* (Haydn, 1799). Beethoven continued to assert Enlightenment ideals into the following century, in compositions such as *Fidelio* (1804-1814), the *Fifth* (1808), and the *Ninth Symphony* (1824).

At first glance, the fact that the greatest musical achievements of the Enlightenment are connected to the Viennese milieu may seem surprising.

¹ This is a topic often addressed in specialised literature, but rarely in a systematic way. As reference texts, the reader can consult: F. BLUME, *Classic and Romantic Music*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1970; C. ROSEN, *The Classical Style*, New York, W.W. Norton 1971; B. DIDIER, *La musique des Lumières*, Paris, PUF, 1985; C. DAHLHAUS, *Musikästhetik*, Laaber Verlag, 1986, and Id., *Klassische und romantische Musikästhetik*, Laaber, Köln, 1988; D.P. SCHROEDER, *Haydn and the Enlightenment: The Late Symphonies and their Audience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1990; L. LOCKWOOD, *Beethoven: The Music and the Life*, New York, W.W. Norton, 2003; M.E. BONDS, *Music as Thought. Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006; L. LUTTEKEN, *Mozart. Leben und Musik im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 2017; G. BIETTI, *La Musica della Luce. Dal Flauto magico alla Nona Sinfonia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2021.

² We do not have the space to deal with the relationship of the two composers, in particular Mozart, with Freemasonry, which has also been widely studied.

England, and especially France, should have been more suitable places, given that these are the countries from which the ideas of the Enlightenment had spread, and in which the political and philosophical debate was most heated. We imagine Vienna as linked to the 1814-15 Congress, i.e. the beginning of the Restoration, rather than to the Enlightenment. Eighteenth-century Vienna was cosmopolitan, with a Western cultural tradition that looked, even geographically, towards the East: it is enough to mention the Slavic names of many patrons for whom Beethoven composed, such as Lichnowsky, Lobkovitz, Razumovsky, and Galitzin. Within the walls of the capital, Hungarian and Czech were spoken alongside German. It is no coincidence that echoes of Hungarian, Czech, Croatian, or even Russian popular music resonate in the compositions of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. Of course, Enlightenment ideas penetrated slowly in Vienna, and were expressed in a much less radical way than in France; but precisely for this reason the court was more tolerant, a fact that the musicians active in the city were able to take full advantage of. In Paris it would have been unthinkable to set to music, in 1786, a libretto like that of the *Marriage of Figaro*,³ which instead in Vienna was authorized by the emperor himself.

A particular characteristic of the Viennese context in the second half of the eighteenth century seems to me fundamental for the development of a musical Enlightenment: the fact, perhaps without real precedents, that in this period the music of the different social classes was based on the same elements, on the same system of sounds organisation (the so-called classical tonality). The melodies sung by Austrian peasants used the same musical language as the court dances, the refined string quartets played in noble salons, the symphonies heard in large concert halls,⁴ the opera arias, even sacred music: all the social groups and classes 'spoke the same musical language'. This unique context explains how the three great Viennese were able to build a dialogue between all the different components of society in their compositions, and without any apparent effort:⁵ as we will see, in

³ The libretto of Mozart's famous opera is by Lorenzo da Ponte, and was based on a comedy by Beaumarchais whose performance had been prohibited in France.

⁴ It will suffice to mention the research that has dealt with the surprising melodic identity between the themes of many of Haydn's symphonies and the popular songs and dances of Lower Austria. See for example SCHROEDER 1990, pp. 142-157.

⁵ To understand how this aspect is unique and reflects the universal and inclusive vision of the Enlightenment which is expressed in the music of the three great Classics, just think of Mahler's symphonies, equally 'Viennese' pieces composed a century later: here the confrontation between different musical styles has an 'alienating' effect, it causes harsh lacerations in the musical texture. In comparison, the fluidity with which Mozart switches from one style to another in *The Magic Flute* is impressive.

Mozart's *Magic Flute* we pass without contradictions or irreparable fractures from the 'high', contrapuntal style to the comic style and even to the folksong-like style. In the first Finale of *Don Giovanni* three dances resonate together, superimposed: the aristocratic Minuet, the bourgeois *Contredanse* and the popular *Deutsche Tanz*. And Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* explicitly celebrates the 'embrace of all peoples', and the 'kiss to the whole world', in search for *fraternité* and the conciliation between all men through music. Perhaps such a universal result could only be achieved in the Vienna of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

During the lives of the three composers, the role and consideration of music in society changed profoundly. In the aesthetics of the early eighteenth century, music was considered inferior to painting or poetry, and instrumental music, without a literary text, was in turn considered inferior to vocal music. One hundred years later, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, philosophers and writers considered instead instrumental music as the highest of all the arts: in 1805 Friedrich Schlegel wrote that music was «less a representational art than a philosophical language», and that it «really lies much higher than mere art».⁶

During the eighteenth century music underwent a transformation that seems extraordinary to us today, as does the ethical and social role that the art of sounds acquired during the Age of Enlightenment. Like many of their contemporaries, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven were convinced that the world could change, could be improved; and they demonstrated this possibility through music. In their most important works they expressed the Enlightenment values *par excellence*: freedom, brotherhood, and equality. Values that must be achieved gradually, step by step; and the musical process reflects this path of knowledge and awareness. Many compositions by the three musicians are articulated as a great musical realisation of the most well-known Enlightenment metaphor, which gave its name to the entire eighteenth-century current of thought: the passage from darkness to light, from the darkness of ignorance and oppression to the light of knowledge and freedom. The idea that it is necessary to reach knowledge to achieve freedom is fundamental in the music of the three Viennese musicians, and it is no coincidence that this is also one of the cornerstones of Enlightenment thought. In 1784 Immanuel Kant published an article entitled *Answer to the question: What is the Enlightenment?* (*Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*): according to the famous philosopher, the motto of the Enlightenment is '*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own intelligence!'

⁶ BONDS 2006, p. 22.

It is precisely this motto that inspires Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: their music literally wants to lead the listener to use his own intelligence.

The next two paragraphs examine some technical aspects that allow the musical ‘passage from darkness to light’: the so-called sonata form and the alternation of the minor and the Major mode. Paragraph 4 shows how music during this period was considered a mirror of the world: the orchestra was compared to civil society, and a chamber ensemble such as the string quartet was metaphorically described as a conversation between *rational* individuals, who spoke to each other through sounds. In the background of the three paragraphs there lies one of the main conquests achieved by music during the eighteenth century: the idea that music is a language, and that it can therefore convey very precise meanings, including ethical and political ones.

Paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 are dedicated to a rapid examination of some particularly significant Enlightened compositions: Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*, written in the last years of the eighteenth century, Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, written before the Congress of Vienna, and Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, written during the Restoration.

2. THE WORLD CAN BE CHANGED: SONATA FORM AND THE NEW CONCEPTION OF TIME

In order to realise the transition from darkness to light, to represent the Enlightenment’s values, a piece of music must *speak* to the listener, and its main elements must have the characteristics and articulation of a proper language. And the instrumental style developed in the second half of the eighteenth century seems to give music an explicit discursive and narrative quality. A late eighteenth-century piece ‘tells’ something through the notes; the musical materials are transformed during the piece and take on different roles and functions.

The most important principle of formal organization that was defined in this period, the so-called sonata form, provides a first part (technically, the Exposition) based on contrast and opposition, a second (the Development) which elaborates the materials and dynamizes the texture, and a third (the Recapitulation) which re-introduces the themes of the beginning but reconciles them with each other, resolving the initial opposition. The path is therefore dramatic and narrative: it is no coincidence that some nineteenth-century theorists speak of the sonata form in theatrical terms, describing its three parts as an exposition of the drama, a ‘thickening of the plot’ and a resolution.

Sonata form is an evolving process. Its fundamental concept is transformation: in the compositions of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, we hear musical themes appear in various forms: with a new orchestration, for example, or with a different harmonisation. The transformation also affects the internal structure of the themes, which are generally built from single ‘motifs’ of a few notes that the composer elaborates, continuously changing their musical meaning. The famous four notes with which Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* begins – the ‘Destiny knocking at the door’, as the composer himself called them – reappear several times throughout the entire composition but with different functions: they can be part of a theme, then become an accompaniment, then a signal, a contrasting theme, a transition, a triumphal fanfare, an echo... The very fact that it is possible to describe so precisely the different functions and meanings encapsulated by the motif throughout the elaboration process shows us how the articulation of musical thought in the so-called Viennese Classicism is similar to that of a language. It shows us how *eloquent* an instrumental composition can become in the hands of Mozart, Haydn, or Beethoven. Through the transformations of the four-note motif the *Fifth Symphony* builds a process of tension and resolution: a path that leads from the dramatic tension of the first movement – dark and contrasted – to the triumphal resolution – luminous and assertive – of the last.⁷ But if a piece of music is perceived as a gradual process that leads from contrast to resolution, it can also be read, metaphorically, as a sound representation of the human possibility of resolving conflicts, overcoming difficulties, and harmonising them. A piece of music can be heard as a *metaphor of the world*, the image of an ideal society rendered through sounds.

It is worth highlighting two particular aspects of this fundamental aesthetic revolution. First, the sonata form process is profoundly rational: it is the result of artistic reflection, it is achieved through a technique – the so-called motivic elaboration technique – and above all it manifests itself in a progressive accumulation of meanings, in a qualitative change. In short, it is a journey of *knowledge*.

Secondly, sonata form ideally expresses the change in the conception of time that took place during the eighteenth century: the passage from a static to a dynamic conception of the world and of society.⁸ For the *Philo-*

⁷ The transition from the minor mode of the first movement to the Major mode of the last plays a fundamental role in the process, an aspect that will be explored in the next paragraph.

⁸ See for example V. FERRONE, *Il mondo dell’Illuminismo. Storia di una rivoluzione culturale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2019, pp. 48, 71, 132, 156.

sophes the world is not immobile and immutable, it is no longer the world of Counter-Reformation and Absolutism. It changes – or rather, it *can be changed*, as the Revolutions at the end of the century will demonstrate, in the most dramatic way. And music perfectly reflects, in its forms and linguistic structures, this possibility of change.⁹ This is why the ‘dynamic’ arts, those which unfold over time such as music and theatre, became progressively more important during the eighteenth century in comparison to the arts developing in the space – painting, sculpture, architecture.

The first of the two aspects just examined, the emphasis placed on reason and the rationality of the process, today seems perhaps more obvious than the second, the emphasis on the new dynamic conception of time and on transformation. We generally tend to have a simplified vision of Enlightenment thinking, examining only its rational aspects, the primacy of reason. But the so-called ‘Tree of knowledge’ (*Arbre de la connaissance*) in the *Encyclopédie* had three branches, distinct and parallel,¹⁰ called respectively *Mémoire*, *Raison*, *Imagination*. Reason alone was not sufficient to reach full knowledge: it had to be supported by memory – the reflection on time – and imagination – the creative faculty. Evidently, there was no art that represented the interaction of the three branches better than music: an art that unfolds over time, that is highly imaginative and, perhaps more importantly, that had acquired the characteristics of a real language, at the same time expressive and rational. At the end of the eighteenth century, it was possible to reach knowledge through music.

3. FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT: MINOR MODE AND MAJOR MODE

To fully represent the contrast between the darkness of ignorance and oppression and the light of knowledge and freedom in notes, musicians of the late eighteenth century often use a specific musical strategy, alongside the principle of sonata form: the contrast between the minor mode and the Major mode, one of the fundamental characteristics of the Classical tonal system.

⁹ The baroque musical form, unlike the sonata form, is ‘static’ and symmetrical: a baroque aria – e.g. in the operas by Vivaldi or Händel – is written in ‘da capo’ form, in three sections, the last one repeating literally the first (which was however embellished by the performer, through improvisation). The so-called ‘Ritornello-form’, typical of the solo concerto in the early eighteenth century, begins and ends with the same music, which returns at the end of the piece identical to the beginning (listen, for example, to the first movement of Bach’s *Fifth Brandenburg Concerto*). Baroque musical thought tends towards circularity, it communicates the image of an immutable, defined, non-transforming world.

¹⁰ FERRONE 2019, p. 15.

It is not possible here to go into technical details explaining what tonality is. It will suffice to say that every single key can be declined in two different ‘modes’: Major and minor. Many notes of the scale, the most important ones from a structural point of view, are identical in the two modes (for example the notes C, D, F, and G are common to C Major and C minor), while other notes change. And it is precisely through these changing notes that we can define whether the key is Major or minor: for example, in C Major we use the note E, in C minor the note E flat. But the most important thing to consider here is the *expressive effect* that the two modes, Major and minor, have on the listener’s perception. Scholars and commentators have built a large vocabulary of metaphors to describe the effect of the two modes in the Classical period: the minor mode is used to express dramatic, melancholic, dark atmospheres, the Major for triumphal, serene, luminous atmospheres.

It would be too risky to consider these metaphors as an absolute rule, but in any case when a composer, at the end of the eighteenth century, wanted to musically represent a painful, sad, melancholic mood, he generally used the minor mode. It is enough to mention three Mozart arias: «L’ho perduta ... me meschina» by Barbarina in the fourth act of *Le nozze di Figaro*; «Tradito, schernito» by Ferrando in the second act of *Così fan tutte*; and Pamina’s aria in the second act of *The Magic Flute*. On the contrary, a joyful state of mind (the first aria of Papageno in *The Magic Flute*), a resolute one («Vedrò, mentr’io sospiro» by the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro*), a mischievous or burlesque one («Madamina, il catalogo è questo» by Leporello in *Don Giovanni*) was almost invariably rendered through the use of the Major mode.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the average listener was therefore accustomed to associating very specific suggestions with the minor and the Major mode: the sudden appearance of a section in minor during a piece in Major, for example, gave the impression of an increase in dramatic tension, of a darkening of the musical texture, as if the sky had suddenly clouded over. The transition from minor to Major gave the opposite sensation, it was a sudden resolution of tensions and conflicts. The comparison of the minor to the darkness and the Major to the light presented itself almost spontaneously to the listener’s mind; and in fact many compositions of this period which begin in a minor key but continue – or end – in Major, with a total reversal of the expressive character, were immediately described from the first appearance as a gradual ‘passage from darkness to light’, that is, as an explicit musical rendering of the Enlightenment metaphor. Some examples of ‘passage’ became particularly famous, such as the beginning of *The*

Creation (Die Schöpfung) in which Haydn renders the metaphor evident: minor and Major represent the primordial contrast between chaos and order, darkness and light.

The list of compositions by Haydn and Mozart that begin in a minor key and end in a Major one is quite numerous, especially after 1780: it will suffice here to mention the *Symphonies nn. 80, 83, and 95* by Haydn, the *Piano Concerto K. 566*, the *Quartet for strings and piano K. 478* and the *String Quintet K. 516* by Mozart. But it is above all in Beethoven's works that this technical characteristic shows itself more often, with more force, and in all musical genres: we find it in the piano sonatas (*op. 90, op. 111*), in the piano concertos (*n. 3, op. 37*), in the string quartets (*op. 95, op. 132*), in the overtures for orchestra (*Egmont, op. 84*) and in the *Fifth* and *Ninth Symphony*, undoubtedly the two pieces that drive the process of tension and resolution, the contrast between dark and light, to the extreme consequences. In fact, in both symphonies the first movement is in minor, the last in Major, and the two modes alternate and contrast themselves several times throughout the entire composition, until the final statement of the Major.

4. IMAGES: THE 'REPUBLIC OF SOUNDS' AND THE 'RATIONAL CONVERSATION'

There is another way to understand how music, at the end of the eighteenth century, was considered a metaphor of the world, the image of an ideal society: we can consider how contemporaries spoke of the main instrumental musical genres of the time, the symphony and the string quartet. These are two complementary genres: the symphony is spectacular and *public*, it's written for orchestra, for a large number of performers, and is addressed to many listeners in a large hall; the quartet is *private*, intimate, refined, and was played at home by four musicians, sometimes even without any listener. Analogising with painting, we could say that the symphony is a large fresco that can be observed from afar, while the quartet is a miniature that must be observed close up to grasp all the exquisite details. Above all, it's interesting to observe that contemporaries often tended to speak of the two genres in metaphorical terms: the orchestra was compared to civil society, and the string quartet to a private discussion. In 1808, for example, the Italian Giuseppe Carpani spoke of Haydn's orchestral music in his singular biography of the composer in epistolary form entitled *Le Haydine*.¹¹ After writing that before Haydn and the affirmation of instrumental thought

¹¹ G. CARPANI, *Le Haydine, o lettere sulla vita del celebre Maestro Giuseppe Haydn*, anastatic reproduction, Bologna, Forni, 1969, p. 4.



«music was a monarchy: the singing was sovereign, the accompaniments were subjects», Carpani goes on to describe the Haydnian purely orchestral symphony: «that genre of music which does not belong to the human voice, but it is composed of instruments only, this republic of different and united sounds, in which every instrument has the right to figure». The orchestra is therefore considered a republican symbol, a model of unity and equality.¹²

To observe how the quartet was considered at this time we can quote a famous phrase by the great writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, according to whom in listening to a quartet we can hear «four rational gentlemen speaking to each other». The quartet – and more generally chamber music – is a conversation through sounds.

This definition shows us once again that contemporaries looked at the music of the Classical period as a language, perfectly defined and ‘rational’, which allowed them to exchange ideas and communicate their point of view on society and the world. It will therefore not surprise us to discover that in the years of the Restoration, after the Congress of Vienna and the Karlsbad Decrees of 1819, musical language was used as a political tool, a way to protect and spread ideas. Many times, in Beethoven’s famous *Conversation Notebooks*,¹³ music is considered as an ideal way to bypass censorship and to communicate ethical and political meanings inexpressible with words. For example, the poet Franz Grillparzer wrote to Beethoven: «If only people knew what you are thinking with your music!»; and another poet, Christoph Kuffner, writes: «the words are censored: luckily the sounds, which represent the words and give them power, are still free».

5. ÉGALITÉ AND THE PATH TO LIGHT AND KNOWLEDGE: *DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE*

The Magic Flute, the last of Mozart operas, stages the universal, archetypal conflict between good and evil. Or, in more Enlightenment

¹² The importance of this metaphor can be fully understood if we compare it with the image of the orchestra proposed a century earlier, in 1699, by the Frenchman Charles Dufresny, who describes the orchestral ensemble – and in particular the *Batteur de mesure*, the person who ‘beats the time’ – using the language of Absolutism: «Everyone depends on the sovereign of the orchestra, a prince whose power is so absolute that by raising or lowering his scepter, the roll of paper he holds in his hand, he regulates every movement of this capricious population». The orchestra is a (capricious and fickle) population; its leader is a sovereign, a prince with a scepter characterized by absolute power. In short, at the end of the seventeenth century the orchestra was considered the mirror of the reign of Louis XIV. See J. SPITZER – N. ZASLAW, *The Birth of the Orchestra*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 512.

¹³ The sheets with which friends and visitors communicated with the composer, became completely deaf in 1817.

terms, the conflict between the darkness, represented musically and scenically by a character who is not by chance called ‘The Queen of the Night’, and the light, represented by Sarastro and the ‘temple of wisdom’.¹⁴ It will not surprise us to observe that darkness is almost always evoked through the minor mode, and light through the Major mode. But the way in which Mozart chooses to represent the two forces in conflict with each other is more original: the expression of darkness is entrusted to the voice of the coloratura soprano, and is therefore agitated, shrill, very high-pitched; the light of wisdom, on the other hand, is expressed in the basso profondo voice, and is serious and calm.¹⁵ In the second act the composer gives us, one after the other, the arias of the Queen of the Night and Sarastro, both centered, but with opposite meaning, on the word *Rache*, revenge: the *hölle Rache*, the ‘infernal revenge’ which boils in the Queen’s heart, is contrasted with Sarastro’s statement that «in these sacred rooms revenge is unknown». *Allegro assai* for the Queen, *Larghetto* for Sarastro; minor mode, abrupt modulations, incessant and restless motion, violent shifts in register in the first aria, Major mode, tonal stability, regular rhythm, delicate and relaxed melodic lines in the second. One could hardly imagine a more original and more effective musical rendition of the dark/light, anger/wisdom dualism.

The contrast between the two primordial forces led Mozart and his librettist, Emanuel Schikaneder, to organise the entire plot of *The Magic Flute* around a complex system of symmetries, which are naturally reflected in the music: Sarastro and the Queen, Tamino/Pamina and Papageno/Papagena, Tamino’s flute and Papageno’s *Glockenspiel*, the three ladies and the three boys, Monostatos and the Orator, the slaves and the priests. Many moments of the plot, in fact, seem to proceed in parallel by juxtaposing these symmetrical couples: in the first Finale, for example, the magic instruments allow Papageno and Tamino to escape Monostatos and to enchant the animals; in the second Finale, these instruments allow the same characters to find the dream’s girl and to overcome the trials of water and fire. To give one more example, in the same second Finale we witness both Pamina and Papageno attempting to take their own lives. The symmetrical

¹⁴ The work is notoriously rich, at the same time, in Masonic symbols and meanings, which we do not have the space to examine in this essay. Suffice it to say that *The Magic Flute* has many characteristics of the ‘initiation tale’, with the characters facing successive trials on their path to light and wisdom.

¹⁵ Almost always, both in Mozart’s predecessors and successors, light is instead represented in the high register and darkness in the low register, as we will see in the next paragraph, regarding Beethoven’s *Fidelio*.

couples mirror each other, face the same existential problems – while naturally finding rather different solutions.

Most striking in the opera is the dramaturgical strategy that Mozart uses to transmit the light of reason to the whole world in this late masterpiece of his: through the variety of musical genres and styles. *Die Zauberflöte* passes in fact from the folksong style of Papageno to the serious opera style of the Queen of the Night, from the most rigorous counterpoint (the fugue of the overture, the chorale of the second Finale) to the lyrical style of Tamina and Pamino, the solemn and hieratic Sarastro, the comic Monostatos. Such a variety is surprisingly achieved without any stylistic fracture, with exceptional expressive and musical continuity. Mozart clearly represents in his music the idea of a world in harmony, in which differences have value and every style, every voice finds its place, balanced with the others.¹⁶

To obtain this exceptional ethical and aesthetic result Mozart developed, following the experiments already carried out in his previous Italian operas such as *Don Giovanni*, a specific formal strategy capable of giving musical and dramatic continuity to the action: we could call it *strategy of gradation*. The mixture of styles and genres is never casual in *The Magic Flute*: it answers to a precise logic, the transition from one dramatic situation to another and from one style to another is generally achieved in successive degrees. We can observe this constructive logic from the beginning of the work, which shows a very subtle and surprising gradation of the different musical styles – first ‘descending’, then ‘ascending’:

- In the Overture Mozart uses the high, contrapuntal style, writing a real fugue.
- Tamino’s entrance, chased by the giant snake («Zu hilfe, zu hilfe!»), is written in a clearly dramatic style: minor mode, agitated musical texture, contrasts of dynamics and register.
- Then the entrance of the three ladies, who after killing the snake (an undertaking commented on by hints of fanfare with a military flavour) contemplate the fainted Tamino and dispute over him («Ich sollte fort?»), in perfect opera buffa style.
- Finally, the entrance of Papageno («Der Vogelfänger bin ich»), the extreme point of the descending gradation, in folksong style.

¹⁶ We saw in the *Introduction* of this essay how the mixture of styles, the singular contact between the music of the different social classes was a specific and unique characteristic of the Viennese musical context.

After this scene the gradation begins to rise:

- Tamino's aria («Dies Bildniss»), in lyrical style.
- Aria of the Queen of the Night («O zitt're nicht»), dramatic and virtuosic, in opera seria style.

The breath of *The Magic Flute*, the dramatic rhythm of the entire work, is therefore built step by step thanks to Mozart's strategy of gradation. The moments of the opera that most clearly show us both the stylistic gradation and the symmetrical structure are the two Finales, divided into a succession of scenes which in a certain sense summarise the mix of genres and musical styles. Each of the two Finales begins with the exhortation by the three children; in each of the two we find a comic episode in which Papageno plays the *Glockenspiel*, a serious episode in which Tamino plays the purifying magic flute, a lyrical meeting between Tamino and Pamina, the punishment of an evil character (Monostatos in the first act, the Queen's quintet in the second, both in minor mode), a final triumphal chorus (in Major).

The evolution, at the same time human, spiritual, and musical, that the couple of Tamino and Pamina goes through during the course of the opera is particularly interesting. In fact, at the beginning the two are almost abstract *types*. We don't know where Tamino comes from, with his extravagant 'Javanese hunting costume': he falls in love simply by looking at a portrait, just as Pamina, who at first appears little more than a poor frightened girl, falls in love by hearing that a prince is in love with her. It's the love of fairy tales, as many commentators have observed. But at the end of the opera, when the two characters are finally reunited, the love is real, mature, and the score expresses it with a warmth, truth and, at the same time, simplicity («Tamino mein! O welch ein Glück!») that even Mozart's music had perhaps never achieved before. This is why it was necessary to start from almost characterless characters, from types rather than beings of flesh and blood: because their path towards light and knowledge must take shape gradually, the music must build their personality step by step on the stage. Above all, the evolution of the character of Pamina seems exceptional to me. In the Finale of the second act she has become «a woman who does not fear night and death», and she will lead Tamino through the trials of water and fire. Pamina is perhaps the first true heroine of the German opera house, fifteen years before *Fidelio*.¹⁷

¹⁷ The female figures in Mozart's theatre clearly show the distance that separates Enlightenment thought from the nineteenth century: Pamina and Susanna (in *The Marriage of Figaro*) are enterprising women who face difficulties and overcome them, who compete on

Finally, we can make some observations on the role that Mozart and Schikaneder reserve for *silence*, the absence of sound and music. In Tamino's path, silence is the first trial to overcome, the starting point of the initiatory journey. But the journey of Papageno, the 'natural' man, also begins with silence, when the three ladies close his mouth with a padlock to punish him for his lies and the character is therefore forced to express himself through shapeless gestures and moans, in the quintet of the first act. At the end of the opera, when Papageno has finally found his Papagena, Mozart seemingly wants to return to this moment, in a certain sense making Papageno recover his speech little by little, starting, like a child learning to speak, from the individual syllables («Pa-pa-pa-pa») to gradually recover the words. And the singing: that is, music.

Die Zauberflöte is a celebration of the power of music: the magic of sound, the musical instruments that protect us, show us the path, allow us to overcome every challenge. As Edward Dent writes, the work «is itself a lesson for those who wish to penetrate music. It is necessary to prepare with silence, meditation, it is necessary to pass through fire and water, before being able to enter the temple of wisdom». This is one of the reasons why this opera occupies a special place in the heart of every musician, and in the heart of all those who love music and have faith in its power.

6. LIBERTÉ, OR THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE: *FIDELIO*

Fidelio is the only opera written by Beethoven. It's a composition that must have had a truly special meaning for him: three different versions and four overtures remain, and the compositional process spanned over ten years (1804-1814), longer than the *Missa Solemnis* or the *Ninth Symphony*. Beethoven collaborated, as modifications and changes became necessary, with three different librettists: Joseph Sonnleithner for the first version, Stephan von Breuning for the changes made in the second and Georg Friedrich Treitschke for the third, extensively revised and rewritten. The libretto of *Fidelio* in turn reworks a French original by Jean Nicolas Bouilly, *Leonore, ou l'amour conjugal*: to compose his first opera Beethoven therefore turned to a French text that exalted the Enlightenment values, the moral qualities which were so important to him. The plot of the work can be summarised in a

equal terms with the male characters often managing to get the upper hand. What a difference with the female figures in nineteenth-century works, feeble, threatened, often destined to succumb even physically. In music, the romantic woman really seems to have taken a step back compared to the eighteenth-century woman.

few words: a woman, Leonore, disguising herself as a man and hiding under the symbolic name of Fidelio, manages to save her husband, Florestan, unjustly held prisoner by the hateful and evil governor Pizarro.¹⁸ Beethoven wrote the work in the typical theatrical form of the Viennese *Singspiel*, with spoken dialogues instead of sung recitatives. In the background, the influence of the *Magic Flute* stands out very clearly, both in its moral and Enlightenment content and in the idea of enhancing the figure of a heroine, a courageous and enterprising woman, through music.

Fidelio is Beethoven's greatest declaration of faith in the values of the Enlightenment. No other composition, not even the *Ninth Symphony*, celebrates in an equally explicit and confident manner the ideals of freedom, justice, brotherhood, words that in fact continually resonate in the libretto. The work can even be read as a criticism of the harshness and arbitrariness of the eighteenth-century judicial and prison system, topics widely covered in the literature of the time – for example, in Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene*, 1764. Pizarro actually holds Florestan prisoner without any justification, moved only by his own desire for revenge: the prisoner's only fault, as he himself reveals to us in his aria at the beginning of the second act, is that of having said the truth.¹⁹

The solution adopted by Beethoven to highlight the moral values of the work is typical of his musical style: exasperating and accentuating the contrasts. To ensure that at the end of the opera freedom, justice and brotherhood can triumph, the composer underlines with extraordinary power the negative, opposing issues: imprisonment, inequality, human and social disparity. Reaching the light becomes more decisive and cathartic if to get there we start from total, deep, impenetrable darkness. No villain of an eighteenth-century opera had ever been as ruthless, evil, and violent as Pizarro. We will have to wait for Iago, or Scarpia, to find a figure comparable to this demonic governor who appears on stage singing an aria brutally focused on 'revenge' – *Rache*, a word that Mozart had already underlined in *The Magic Flute* – and on 'death': «*Er spricht von Tod und Wunde*», he speaks of death and wounds, the soldiers of his entourage sing in amazement. And no prison on an eighteenth-century stage had ever been as dark and inhospitable as the one in which we find Florestan locked up at the beginning of the second act, after an orchestral Introduction which cre-

¹⁸ A curiosity: it seems that the story really happened, and that Bouilly himself witnessed it during the years in which he was responsible for the administration of a small Department in the Loire region.

¹⁹ «*Wahrheit wagt ich kühn zu sagen, und die Ketten sind mein Lohn*» («I bravely dared to speak the truth, and my reward are the chains»).

ates perhaps the most impressive musical rendering of darkness, of inaccessible depth, of all time. The first words sung by Florestan are precisely «*Gott, welch Dunkel hier!*», «God, how dark it is down here!».

The main dramaturgical idea of *Fidelio* is therefore undoubtedly the passage from darkness to light, and more specifically from oppression to freedom: one of the *topoi* of Beethoven's poetics, which few of his other compositions explore in an equally insistent and participate way. This passage, upon closer inspection, almost entirely organises the dramatic flow of the opera: it articulates the beginning of the first Finale (with the prisoners coming out in the open air, hesitant and fearful), and the entire second act (from the deep prison in which Florestan is locked up to the triumphant and festive crowd scene at the end). With a brilliant intuition, Beethoven constructs the relationship between darkness and light on two parallel levels: the purely musical level (the play of minor/Major mode, of registers, of orchestration, which we will examine shortly) and the scenic one (the contrast between *below* and *above*, between the dark and narrow prison and the open-air, spacious, and bright scene). The plot of *Fidelio* begins in a rather tenuous light – the 'bourgeois comedy' at the beginning of the first act –, then descends into darkness and finally rises back into the light. But at the end of the work the latter looks transfigured, it has become a very different light from the initial one: it is the light of reason and justice, the light of the Enlightenment.

The main musical tools through which Beethoven gives life to this formidable dramaturgy of contrasts are essentially three: the alternation of Major and minor, the use of musical *space* (the differentiation between high and low sonorities) and instrumentation (the prevalence of light or dark instrumental colours). The moments in which the composer wants to highlight darkness and obscurity, for example, are characterised by the use of the minor key, by the sudden eruption of 'abysses', restless and threatening, in the low register, and by the recourse to 'dark' instrumental combinations in which the timbres of the basses, trombones, timpani, and contrabassoon prevail, even if only for an instant. Obviously, the 'bright' moments invert the parameters and are mainly based on Major keys, on textures that move towards the high register and on an instrumentation in which flutes, violins, even the piccolo, a high-pitched, penetrating wind instrument, stand out.

If we want to grasp, embrace in a single glance the maximum polarisation, the points of the opera in which the two configurations appear opposed to each other in the most extreme way, it is enough to observe two passages from the second act. On the one hand, the obscure duet «*Nur hurtig*

fort», in minor mode, during which Rocco and Leonore/Fidelio descend to the prisoner's cell to dig the grave in which he will have to be buried: it is the darkest point of the opera, where Beethoven uses the lowest timbres, trombones, contrabassoon, double basses, which dominate the musical texture – and they seem, literally, to prevent the rest of the orchestra from any attempt to raise and lift the texture, to render it more airy and luminous. On the other hand, the beginning of the second Finale, the triumph of light, justice, and brotherhood: Major key, lively and brilliant march character, texture constructed as a sort of 'Rossini crescendo' *ante litteram* which progressively reaches the highest register through the entrance of oboes, flutes, violins, piccolo. The contrast of dark and light could not be more radical, in character, in the use of musical space, tonality, and the orchestra.

What we have just observed is, as mentioned, the most extreme polarisation of the work, the two individual scenes depicting darkness and light, imprisonment and freedom, oppression and justice in the clearest way. But Beethoven is not only interested in contrast, in the pure opposition of the two antithetical forces; he is equally interested in transformation, in the *passage*. Thus he developed a compositional strategy that during the first act allows the darkness to progressively insinuate itself into the pale initial light,²⁰ and which instead in the second act gives the listener the physical sensation of the opposite path, a gradual reconquest of the light.²¹ In *Fidelio*, therefore, the music follows – or creates? – the moral path of the plot, which culminates in the second Finale with the triumph of the Enlightenment ideals enunciated in Don Fernando's short speech:

Our gracious Majesty's will and pleasure
Has sent me here to you poor men,
That I disclose the crimes of darkness
Which has enveloped all of you.
No longer kneel like slaves before me,
Tyrant's grimness I detest.
A brother's come to seek his brethren,
And can he help, he gladly helps.

²⁰ And in fact, from the moment Pizarro enters the scene, some dramatic 'vacuums' in the minor mode start to appear in the musical texture, and Beethoven begins to use instruments with a low timbre, particularly the trombones.

²¹ During the second act, which begins in absolute darkness, the minor keys and the 'dark' instruments progressively disappear – the contrabassoon already in the duet *Nur hurtig fort*, the trombones in the great quartet – while the higher-pitched ones such as oboe, flute, piccolo, are gradually introduced.

It is interesting to reflect briefly on the dramatic meaning and overall role of this Finale: strictly speaking, in fact, at this point the action of *Fidelio* is over, everything has been resolved in the two previous pieces, the quartet and the subsequent duet of Florestan and Leonore. The Finale adds a couple of episodes (the condemnation of Pizarro, the physical liberation of Florestan from the chains), but essentially its function is to enunciate the moral of the work, to establish its happy ending. It seems to me that this aspect fully demonstrates the difference between Beethoven's and Mozart's poetics and dramatic conception. In *Le Nozze di Figaro*, in *Don Giovanni*, in *Die Zauberflöte*, the moral of the drama is concentrated in a short ending chorus; the Finales of the three works are very rich in action, surprises, twists, and the *denouement*, the resolution takes place during the Finale, not before. Beethoven, on the other hand, dedicates an entire, large organism to the moral: the affirmation of light, of freedom, of justice is not a *post-scriptum*, a comment, but a symphonic and monumental gesture, a whole piece which represents a culmination not only dramatically but also musically – and *orchestrally*, with its writing based on the clear, luminous sounds of the winds, trumpets, piccolo. It is certainly no coincidence that in this Finale we clearly perceive an anticipation of the features which ten years later will characterise the *Ode to Joy*: the Hymn character, the brightness of the orchestration, the assertive marching rhythms.

7. FRATERNITÉ, 'ALLE MENSCHEN WERDEN BRÜDER': THE NINTH SYMPHONY

Fidelio is undoubtedly the most heartfelt declaration of faith in Enlightenment values that Beethoven left us. But it is absolutely characteristic, emblematic of Beethoven's poetics and career, the fact that in his music the most famous and powerful oppositions of darkness and light are not found in the theatrical production but in the symphonic one.

This aspect shows us again the distance – temporal and aesthetic – that separates Mozart and Beethoven, the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century (with the watershed of the Revolution and its disruptive consequences, from the Terror to the Napoleonic Wars). For Mozart vocal music, and in particular opera, could still express ethical or social content to the listeners with more force and clarity than purely instrumental music. But only a few years later the audience had become accustomed to thinking that an instrumental composition, and above all a piece written for the orchestra, for 'this republic of different and united sounds', spoken with an eloquence equal to vocal music, was perfectly ca-

pable of representing the difficulties, dreams, and aspirations of an entire society. Indeed, that it could do so with even greater force: instrumental music, without words, is able to *objectify* a feeling or a moral issue, to make them shared and universal precisely because it does not need to express it through a specific spoken language, nor through rhyme, poetic verse, or the mediation of a theatrical character. In short, at the beginning of the nineteenth century the idea had spread that in a symphony it was possible to express the ideals of a community, that through the path of the sonata form, the succession of the different movements, the orchestral writing a composer could communicate a vision and a metaphor for the world. And this idea was embodied with the greatest force, throughout Europe, precisely in Beethoven's symphonies.

The concept of the passage from darkness to light in a general sense – a *topos* of critical literature on our musician, sometimes even excessively repeated – seems to be the basis of many of Beethoven's instrumental compositions throughout his career, and from the beginning: it will suffice to mention the *Sonata for cello and piano op. 5 no. 2* of 1796 (in two movements, the first in minor and the second in Major), and compare it to Beethoven's last complete work, the *String Quartet op. 135* (1826), whose Finale begins in minor but ends in Major, reversing the initial gesture. Between these two chronological extremes Beethoven incessantly explores the 'passage' with ever-changing solutions; but the most effective musical renderings of the dark/light dichotomy in his production undoubtedly remain the two great symphonies in minor mode: *Symphony no. 5 in C minor op. 67* and *Symphony no. 9 in D minor op. 125*, the two most famous orchestral compositions of all time. It is in the symphonic genre, therefore – a public genre intended for a large number of listeners gathered in a large hall, a *community* – that Beethoven left us the highest and most lasting testimony of his Enlightenment faith.

The two symphonies, written fifteen years apart, have such a similar structure that we could think that Beethoven deliberately built the *Ninth* on the overall formal scheme of the *Fifth*: a dramatic and dark first movement in minor, a triumphal and luminous last movement in Major; between them a Scherzo in minor but with a central section in Major, and a slow movement constructed in the form of a variation, within which short triumphal fanfares resonate. The martial character actually characterises both symphonies, in the instrumentation and in the insistent use of marching rhythms. In the last movement of the *Ninth* Beethoven inserts a real march (*Allegro assai vivace, alla Marcia*: this is the section of the Finale which I define below as the 'second internal movement', underlined by an orchestration which also includes piccolo, contrabassoon, and per-

cussions), but martial echoes can already be heard in the third movement, and especially in the first. In fact, in this initial part of the symphony the unmistakable marching rhythm appears continuously, in the basses, in the accompaniments, in the melody. In some moments it becomes more explicit through brief hints of fanfare, generally entrusted to trumpets and timpani. And the movement ends with an impressive funeral march, grave and solemn,²² naturally in minor mode. The dark/light dialectic in the *Ninth* is therefore articulated – in addition to the alternation of minor and Major modes, the progressive orchestral cumulation, and the use of voices – also through the passage from the funeral march of the first movement to the triumphal and victorious march of the Finale. But why end the first movement of the symphony with a funeral march? Who is the (metaphorical) hero that Beethoven commemorates in the first movement, only to have him resurrected and triumphing in the fourth? What meaning does darkness and light have in the *Ninth Symphony*?

We know very well what light represents here: for the first time in the history of the symphonic genre Beethoven uses a poetic text in the Finale, inserts a choir and four solo voices singing some stanzas of the *Ode to Joy* (*An die Freude*) by Friedrich Schiller, an Enlightenment text from 1785, which celebrates the brotherhood of peoples in an ideal state. *Alle Menschen werden Brüder*, «all men become brothers»: this is the line of the *Ode* that interests Beethoven the most, and the voices repeat it dozens of times. The *Ninth* sings the joy of *fraternité*, the light that triumphs at the end of the symphony is, once again, that of the great Enlightenment ideals. And therefore the darkness must evidently be the extinguishing, the death – temporary – of those ideals: restoration, obscurantism, which find a tragic, extremely powerful expression in the funeral march rhythms of the first movement.

In theory, to listen to the *Ninth Symphony* there is no need for extra-musical interpretations. Every day, all over the world, millions of people enjoy this masterpiece without worrying about the meaning of the funeral march in the first movement, and without reflecting on the profound meaning of the transition from darkness to light. But in reality it is impossible to completely set aside the ethical and social (and therefore political) meanings of the *Ninth*: it is no coincidence that the melody of the last movement, that of the *Ode to Joy*, has become the European Anthem, a symbol of unity, of social and political brotherhood. And the history of the reception of

²² In the Coda, from b. 513. The funereal and ‘painful’ character of this extraordinary passage is also enhanced by the descending chromatic bass, a musical symbol of lament in use for over two centuries.

Beethoven's masterpiece teaches us that its meaning has often been manipulated, distorted, exploited in the two centuries that have passed since the first performance (1824): the *Ninth* was considered a universal symbol but also a nationalist symbol, an appeal to equality but also to cultural and racial supremacy, a hymn to brotherhood but also to oppression.²³

In itself, however, the ethical contents that Beethoven wants to communicate to us through the *Ninth* are unequivocal. The piece was composed in the early 1820s, that is, in a Vienna caught in the grip of the Restoration: in 1819 Metternich had promulgated the so-called Karlsbad Decrees, which in practice sanctioned the institution of a true system of state espionage, placed the press and universities under strict control and suppressed political and student societies. In these years, Beethoven's *Conversation Notebooks* even warn about the presence of government spies in public places, ready to detect any hint of political and potentially seditious arguments in the speeches of patrons. In short, it is clear which darkness the composer wants to defeat through his music. Beethoven's willingness to shout, in a moment of serious political difficulty, that «all men become brothers» has an extraordinary value, and launches a universal message that still resonates very powerfully today.

As he had already done in the *Fifth*, in the *Ninth Symphony* Beethoven uses the entire ensemble, instrumental and vocal, only in the Finale which thus becomes the culminating point of the entire composition. In addition to the choir and the four solo voices, in the Finale the composer introduces the piccolo, the contrabassoon – the trombones, equally used, had already made a brief appearance in the second movement – and the so-called 'Turkish' percussions, triangle, cymbals, and bass drum: instruments with an unmistakably military connotation, particularly the percussions which in fact had never previously been used in a symphony, at least in the Viennese context.²⁴

²³ For a broad examination of the exploitations to which the *Ninth Symphony* has been subjected over the centuries – ranging from the disturbing exploitation by totalitarian regimes (it was one of the favourite pieces of music by both Stalin and Hitler) to the aberrant idea to use the melody of the *Ode to Joy* (in 1974, naturally with a different text) as the national anthem of Rhodesia, i.e. of an openly racist state – we recommend reading Esteban Buch's book *La Neuvième de Beethoven: une histoire politique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999.

²⁴ There is only one exception: *Symphony no. 100*, the so-called 'Military Symphony', by Haydn. The use of 'Turkish' percussion in the Finale of the *Ninth* seems to me to play an important symbolic role: non-European and non-Christian cultures also find a place in the Hymn of brotherhood of the peoples of the world. On the Turkish, ethnic connotation of these percussions, see G. BIETTI, *Lo spartito del mondo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018, pp. 36-38.

It is not possible here to dedicate an in-depth look to the *Ninth Symphony*, one of the richest and most complex pieces in the history of Western music. I will limit myself to a few observations on the last movement, the culmination of Beethoven's Enlightenment journey and the most powerful hymn to *fraternité* that a musician has ever wanted to sing. As I have already said, for the first time in the history of the genre the Finale makes use of the human voice, four soloists plus the choir. A fact that to Beethoven's successors, in particular to Wagner, signified 'the end of the symphony' as a musical genre. In reality we know that a few months before finishing the symphony Beethoven was still working on the idea of an exclusively instrumental Finale.²⁵ The composer strongly felt the problem of integrating a vocal ending into an instrumental composition, and approached it with great care, articulating the transition between the two areas in a very subtle way. The instrumental writing, in the Introduction, acquires a vocal character, both in the recitatives of cellos and double basses and in the Hymn character of the main theme; and at the same time the vocal writing shows an instrumental character – and in fact it was very often criticised, for example by Giuseppe Verdi.²⁶

The aspect that is undoubtedly worth examining more deeply is the construction of the Finale, its form. Here the novelty of Beethoven's conception fully stands out, and in fact the interpretations of scholars are anything but univocal regarding the form of this movement: some consider it a cycle of variations, others assimilate it to the sonata form, still others to the rondo; some consider it a cantata, others a 'free fantasy'. One thing is certain: the piece is a clear attempt to *merge several movements into one*, it is a sort of symphony within the symphony. In the composition we can recognise, strongly rethought and transfigured, the general characteristics of a very large sonata form, but at the same time the different parts of the form present themselves as truly autonomous movements, which Beethoven explicitly takes care to separate from each other through the insertion of a long rest at the end of each section. All the 'internal move-

²⁵ The drafts of the *Ninth* contain a theme that would be used, a few years later, as the main theme of the Finale in the *Quartet op. 132*.

²⁶ According to Verdi, the *Ninth* was «sublime in the first three movements, terrible in workmanship in the last part!» Evidently even a great musician like Verdi struggled to understand the novelty of Beethoven's gesture and the strength with which the composer relates vocal and instrumental style. Verdi was certainly not the only great musician to express doubts about this particular aspect of the Finale of the *Ninth*: Stravinsky, for example, judged it «a failure», adding that «the message of the voices is of a finitude that diminishes the message of the music without words» (see I. STRAVINSKIJ – R. CRAFT, *Ricordi e Commenti*, Milan, Adelphi, 2008, p. 376).

ments' are built on the same theme, the one with the character of a Hymn written on the text of the *Ode to Joy*, which is varied and elaborated.²⁷ The piece thus confronts variation, counterpoint, sonata form, inserting all of them in a *cyclical* form which looks divided into four movements plus a huge Coda. It seems almost foolish to try to summarise the extraordinary richness of this monumental piece in a descriptive scheme; but perhaps it is worth giving the reader an idea, albeit superficial, of its form through a brief synopsis:

- Instrumental introduction, which opens with the great 'fanfare of terror' (Wagner) in minor mode and includes quotations from the incipits of the first three movements of the symphony, plus the announcement of the Hymn, the main theme of the piece (the 'theme of Joy', as it is often defined), in Major;
- Vocal introduction: new appearance of the fanfare in minor, then the famous recitative of the baritone («O friends! Not these sounds!») whose text was not included in Schiller's *Ode*;
- *Allegro assai* (first 'internal movement', in Major), on the theme of Joy, developed in a series of variations for soloists, choir, and orchestra, which ends with a long rest.²⁸ Schiller's text celebrates «joy, beautiful divine spark, daughter of Elysium», and declares the fundamental concept of the *Ninth*, the idea that «all men become brothers» («*Alle Menschen werden Brüder*»);
- *Allegro assai vivace, alla Marcia* (second 'internal movement'): it's a Scherzo, based on a further variation of the Joy theme; it introduces a new atmosphere,²⁹ underlined by the text that incites the «brothers» to follow the path «joyful like a hero to victory». This is the moment in which Beethoven introduces the piccolo, the contrabassoon, and the 'Turkish' military percussions;

²⁷ Elaborated also contrapuntally: the theme of the third 'internal movement', *Andante maestoso*, apparently new and not connected with the Hymn, turns out *a posteriori* to be superimposable on the latter in a grandiose Double Fugue (which also superimposes two literary texts, two different stanzas of Schiller's *Ode*).

²⁸ Rests play an important role in the movement: they separate the various sections and help the listener recognise the overall form. It is truly remarkable that in the entire Finale there is practically not a single episode of transition, apart from the Fugato.

²⁹ It is important to note that the new key, B flat major, is the same as the second theme in the first movement of the symphony (and is also the key of the third movement, *Adagio molto e cantabile*). Furthermore, the order of the 'internal movements' in the Finale follows that of the entire Symphony, in which the Scherzo, contrary to convention, is the second movement, the *Adagio molto e cantabile* the third.

- The Scherzo leads to a Fugue exclusively entrusted to the orchestra, which evidently carries out the functions of a Development: it ends in fact with the return of the theme of Joy sung by the choir, in the main key but on the rhythm of the March, which therefore gives the impression of a sort of synthesis of the two ‘movements’ heard so far;
- After a sudden rest, we hear the *Andante maestoso*, later *Adagio ma non tanto e divoto* (third ‘internal movement’), in a new key and based on a new theme: the function is therefore that of the slow movement of a symphony. It is the section in which the literary text explicitly mentions religious aspects (the «starry vault» in which a «benevolent father» reigns), and Beethoven therefore chooses a *divoto*, intimate and fervent musical tone, even recovering archaic and modal atmospheres. From an orchestral point of view it must be underlined that at this point of the piece the trombones enter with their solemn sonority;
- New pause, followed by the *Allegro energico, sempre ben marcato* (fourth ‘internal movement’): in the main key, with the *Andante* theme overlapping with the Joy theme: a new synthesis, a new progressive integration of heterogeneous elements;³⁰
- The very long Coda also begins after a pause, and within it, it is important to underline, the theme of Joy will no longer reappear except for brief hints. It is constructed in *accelerando*: *Allegro non tanto*, *Presto* and *Prestissimo*. The synthetic character of this Coda is fully understood if we take into consideration the orchestral writing: only in this final section are all the resources available used, the ‘Turkish’ percussions and the piccolo (which we had only heard in the *Alla Marcia* section) as well as the trombones (introduced in the *Andante maestoso*). The Finale of the *Ninth* then points towards a climax in which we finally hear the entire orchestra, in addition to the solo voices and choir. A culmination which naturally represents the point of arrival of the progressive conquest of Enlightenment ideals, in the symphony and even, in a certain sense, in the entire parable of the so-called Viennese Classicism: *fraternité*, the idea that «all men become brothers» is expressed through the interaction of all the composite elements that had given life to the immense organism of the Finale. The ethical, martial, and religious aspects of the text, the voices,

³⁰ Furthermore, the superposition of two different texts creates at the same time a synthesis of the Enlightenment and religious aspects exposed separately in the first and third ‘internal movements’.

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the entire instrumental ensemble finally reunited – in which there is also space for ‘Turkish’ percussion, for non-European cultures, with a cosmopolitan and multicultural touch – celebrate the triumph of light in the *Ninth Symphony*, one of the greatest and most moving utopian dreams ever realised by an artist.



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VINCENZO FERRONE

THE LEGACY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT:
THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL
AND THE RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY

As is becoming more and more apparent, the key to the enigma of the Enlightenment may lie in the invention of the language of the ‘rights of man’, which is also its most valuable and vital legacy.

Eighteenth-century thinkers were already aware of this, and so were the enemies and detractors of the Enlightenment across the centuries, who saw those rights as something that must be neutralised at all costs. In order to denounce and ‘expose’ this – in their view, negative – legacy, its enemies, to this day, do not hesitate to jumble together Jacobin populism and the Terror, the French Revolution – which, as Robespierre pointed out at every opportunity, was an attempt to uphold those rights – and what they see as the most dangerous and disturbing outcomes of the cultural revolution sparked by the Enlightenment.

In fact this cultural revolution had far reaching roots even before it spread through France and throughout the western world in the course of the eighteenth century. We have only just begun to investigate its new and original characteristics in their own right, breaking free from the traditional exclusive association of the Enlightenment with the French Revolution.

To this effect one need only listen to D’Alembert, who, in the *Discours préliminaire* of the *Encyclopédie*, clearly linked the intellectual framework and early roots of that cultural movement back to Italian Humanism and the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution of Galileo, Descartes and Newton, as well as to the sceptical stance of Montaigne and Bayle, and Bacon’s empiricism as reworked by John Locke. All these cultural movements had clearly set the agenda for the redefinition of the very foundations of all branches of knowledge, and of the tree of knowledge itself: something that was felt to be absolutely necessary if the experimental scientific method was to be extended to the nascent sciences of man, which were the other, great original legacy of the Enlightenment.

The need for a new empiricism and a new humanism was expressed also by other thinkers, such as, in Italy, Giambattista Vico, with his *Scienza nuova*, Hume in Scotland and then Herder in Germany. However, we now know that it was the epistemological revolution represented by the *Encyclopédie* that gave it great impetus and a common voice. That monumental enterprise, which was, in Robert Darnton's words, «the supreme text of the Enlightenment», brought about a major anthropological shift, which in turn dramatically changed the course of western culture. It did this by placing at the centre of the new tree of knowledge man as an autonomous, finite cultural agent, capable of acting as 'the minister and interpreter of nature' through his intellectual faculties, memory, and imagination, as well as reason, which were now placed all on the same gnoseological level. This epistemological revolution was carried out by critiquing and going beyond mechanicism, which was now no longer seen as the most successful method of representation when it came to nature and science. It exposed the inadequacy of an abstract, purely logical and mathematical kind of discourse for the construction of the new sciences of man and other living beings. Above all, this new epistemology challenged the primacy of abstract rationalism and of pure logic in all cognitive processes, taking issue with the cultural stance or *esprit de système* that dominated the major seventeenth century philosophical works, such as Spinoza's *Ethica more geometrico demonstrata*.

The actual foundations of what Diderot called, with polemical intent, the new 'experimental philosophy' were laid by Rousseau's *Discours*, and even more so by Diderot's own *Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature*, that veritable *Novum Organum* of Enlightenment science. These works brought about an entirely new concept of philosophy, which eschewed all metaphysics, and which the Enlightenment avant garde set against not only Scholastic thought, but also against the old 'rational philosophy' of the academicians. It was only in this way that the Scientific Revolution could finally be set on the right path: through the critique of the epistemological limitations of seventeenth-century rationalism and the logics of domination that beset that form of rationalism, science could finally become an emancipatory tool at the service of humanity, a methodology capable of bringing together scientific empiricism and the Enlightenment humanism of the moderns.

The rise, history, and specificities of the language of the 'rights of man', indeed the definition itself, 'rights of man', which did not appear in Europe until the second half of the eighteenth century, would have been unthinkable without this epistemological revolution, which has been

neglected for too long by Enlightenment scholars. The language of the rights of man was, as a matter of fact, an essential aspect and offshoot of a radical anthropological transformation, which reviewed from a scientific point of view the characteristics of the human species, which Linnaeus had placed among the Primates, and indeed attempted to rewrite natural history entirely. The result of this anthropological revolution was the rise, in European Enlightenment circles, of the modern sciences of man and of a new humanism.

This means that, before they could ‘invent’ the rights of man, Enlightenment thinkers had first to ‘invent’ our modern concept of man. This was a man (a human being) to be studied in all his components: from the mind-body nexus, to his individual autonomy as a cultural agent, to his belonging, as a species, at one and the same time to the world of nature and the history of mankind: a polysemic being, with multiple meanings (*morale, politique* and *naturel*), a living being of male and female gender, as was clearly described in the *Encyclopédie* entry for *Homme*.

I have traced elsewhere the main aspects of this major shift in our view of the language of rights compared with its genealogy as traditionally studied up to now. What came to light was the considerable distance of this new concept from the first isolated traces of the theme of subjective natural rights as an a priori moral idea in late-twelfth-century canon law; how it also differed from the sparse and controversial references to this subject in the Second Scholastic, and above all from the ‘modern natural right’ found in Grotius and Pufendorf. Pufendorf’s version of this natural right (*Le droit de la nature ou système générale des principes les plus importants de la morale, de la jurisprudence et de la politique*) and that of his followers were to hold sway for a long time in universities across Europe. This new and important metamorphosis of the natural right of the ancients was also influenced and legitimised by the Scientific Revolution of Galileo and Newton, and especially by the geometric-demonstrative method of the Euclidean system, and aimed at the creation of major rational systems founded on principles and postulates. The most important among those principles was the Aristotelian idea of man as a social animal, as expounded in the *Politics*: a principle that had always foregrounded collective identities – the family and the different communities – in human society, and which is found both among the Stoics and then in Thomistic communitarianism, and in the great sixteenth-century revival of Cicero and the Stoa, the latter being appealed to mostly in order to pave the way for modern social disciplining practices in an attempt to halt the tragic civil and religious conflicts that ravaged Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, that very same community-focused sociability principle, which inevitably foregrounded duties over rights, also legitimised the re-discovery of the moral idea of subjective rights, those rights that had first arisen in canon law. These rights were now derived on a theoretical basis from duties, in a complex historical process that was first traced by Gerhard Oestreich and Knud Haakonssen, and then relaunched by those American philosophers and historians of politics who propound a communitarian theory of ‘duty-based rights’.

Pufendorf was definitely one of the greatest protagonists of this development, which he expounded admirably in his tract *De officio hominis et civis iuxta legem naturalem*, which was to become a Europe-wide best seller. The idea that rights derived from duties, which reinforced the sociability principle and consequently the primacy of collective identities in social and political analyses, became especially widespread in Germany thanks to the work of Christian Wolff and in Scotland and England through that of Sir William Blackstone, finally reaching France through the Physiocrats, whose original economic and social take on this subject took hold in the second half of the eighteenth century and came to inform the ‘Thermidorians’ 1795 *Déclaration des droits et des devoirs de l’homme et du citoyen*.

However, the momentous early-modern shift from duties, as already celebrated in Cicero’s *De Officiis*, to rights also happened through the emphasis on the primacy of the individual as he was in the state of nature, and the systematic critique of Grotius’s and Pufendorf’s theory of natural right. The latter, important pathway was the one chosen by numerous Enlightenment circles throughout Europe. Grotius’s idea of natural right was refuted in Italy, both in Naples, by Giambattista Vico, and in Milan, in Beccaria and Verri’s journal, «Il Caffè», while in France Voltaire, among others, saw in Pufendorf’s works «un esprit faux, obscur, confus, incertain», and the worst legacy and «toutes les horreurs de la scolastique».

In the modern construction of individual identity this critique went far beyond the abstract, rational acknowledgement of Descartes’s cogito ergo sum, or of the philosophical primacy of the subject in the new contractualism of Hobbes or Locke. In Italy, Vico distanced himself from the sociability principle in his Lucretius-inspired account of the state of nature, and described early men as isolated beasts: primitive individuals endowed with natural rights that must be put into practice through the new conventional right that was emerging in the universal history of mankind. On the other hand, Hume, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, called for a new ‘science of man’ that should draw on scientific empiricism and on history viewed as an effective form of knowledge. However, it was Rousseau, with

his *Discourse on Inequality*, who laid the actual foundations for a new anthropology capable of joining firmly together the language of rights with experimental philosophy and the new humanism of the moderns, as outlined by Diderot in the *Encyclopédie* entry on *Humanité*.

Rousseau achieved this by critiquing Linnaeus and Buffon, through his research into medicine and physiology, and through his reading of travel literature. He attempted to trace the boundaries between the two different kinds of primates, monkeys and men, and found that the humanity of man consisted first and foremost in his being an individual endowed with freedom rather than animal instinct. Thus, for the first time, with the acknowledgement of the individual's fundamental natural right to freedom, the language of the rights of man had identified the very essence of mankind and of the dignity of man, his original and distinctive trait, the insuperable obstacle to any form of dominion and slavery, without which human beings were deprived of their humanity.

The Enlightenment thinkers' modern construction of the identity of the subject as a concrete human person in relation to the rights and to the freedom-humanity nexus was not based solely on the, however fundamental, attempt to justify those rights with anthropological and historical reasons. Condorcet explains this quite clearly in his *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, where he claims an important role for the struggle for religious freedom and *libertas philosophandi* in the defence of the individual and more generally in the process of emancipation and civilisation across Europe. This struggle was carried forward by Enlightenment thinkers, who transformed the natural rights of medieval canon law and the iteration of those rights in Pufendorf's work into 'droits politiques', as proudly described by Condorcet: those thinkers turned the language of rights into what we would now call a powerful 'political formula', which could be deployed in the struggle against the despotism, privileges and injustices of the Ancien Régime.

As we now know, eighteenth-century reforms in Italy were strongly influenced by the idea of a new universal morality founded on the rights of man, as outlined by Antonio Genovesi in his *Diccosina o sia filosofia del giusto e dell'onesto*, as well as in Cesare Beccaria's celebrated *Dei delitti e delle pene*, and in the work of Filangieri and Pagano. Beccaria's short treatise enjoyed outstanding international success, changing the course of penal law and leading to the secularisation and humanisation of the very idea of justice in the western world: it led finally to the separation of guilt and crime; openly denounced judicial torture and the violent arbitrariness of judges; in France, it contributed to amplifying the effect of Voltaire's intervention

in the affaire Calas, which was followed by the affaire Sirven, the affaire Martin and Monbailli, the affaire Lally-Tollendal. The language of rights even spilled over into novels, plays, paintings, and music, in order to spread among the nascent public opinion the new humanitarian spirit and what Rousseau, in his *Contrat social*, called the new civil religion of the rights of man. In Germany, in the *Spätaufklärung*, the masonic lodges, and especially the Bavarian Illuminati, played a major role in popularising this language, alongside the works of Lessing, Goethe, Herder, and Schiller that spoke out against despotism and obstinately searched for the original traits of the *Humanität* of modern man.

However, the most important milestone in the rise of the Enlightenment language of the rights of man as we know it today was, without a doubt, the Seven Years' War.

Besides setting definitively in motion the modern colonialism and global imperialism of the western world, this first great world war was a crucial test of the nexus between the cultural revolution and the emancipatory project of reformation demanded by the politicised intellectuals of the Late Enlightenment. The language of the rights of man was forced to confront the issue of the slave trade, with the difficult challenge that it posed to the universalisation of rights. Similar challenges came from the new claims for communal rights, i.e. the rights of the new collective identities that were beginning to take centre stage: for instance, those nations that had acquired new strength through the revolutionary political principle of popular sovereignty against the divine right of kings; or the new nation-states as opposed to the old multiethnicity continental empires.

Overcoming an initially uncertain reaction to the issues of colonialism and slavery, after the Seven Years' War the universalistic turn of the idea of humanity developed by the European Late Enlightenment rapidly began to assert itself at a theoretical level, and then in political and cultural practice. In their writings, Diderot, Filangieri, Lessing, Condorcet, among others, fought strenuously against the slave trade in the name of the moral principle of the equality of rights for all individuals on earth, regardless of class, nationality, religion, gender, or skin colour. Among the greatest Enlightenment thinkers, Genovesi and Herder in particular called for the establishment of a new universal morality founded on the tenet of the common identity of all mankind, on the acknowledgement of the fundamental dignity and humanity of man as a person and an individual regardless of physiognomy, racial or national origin, or the civilisation stage reached in the history of the individual nations, regardless of hierarchies in the construction of the common humanity of the human species. The ethical ten-

et of the equality of rights was called upon to clarify the true meaning of the scientific research of Buffon, Blumenbach, Cuvier, Camper, and others into human physiology and the varieties of peoples on earth, keeping at arm's length the early signs of that scientific racism that was coming to the fore especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, which was used to legitimise slavery, and which would become dominant in the following centuries. This principle of the universal equality of rights, as invoked by Raynal, Diderot, and Filangieri in their indictment of slavery, thus became a powerful instrument and a precious political and moral legacy, which can still be applied to the defence of the freedom and life of individuals. This remains true notwithstanding the early, momentous betrayal of those principles in the undoubtedly racist American Constitution of 1787, which effectively denied Jefferson's 1776 *Declaration* that all men are born free and equal, and the similar betrayal that we see in the racial struggles that were unleashed by the Haitian Revolution.

A rather more complex and subtle threat to the principle of individual rights came from the assertion of the rights of communities and new collective identities.

We now know that the construction and defence of the modern concept of individual identity really was the primary and most successful challenge taken on by the cultural revolution of the Enlightenment in the western world. Nothing comparable in terms of achievement occurred anywhere in the world. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out one thing: first, we need to consider very carefully the very modalities and themes of this cultural revolution and also the reasons why its construction of the individual became such a public opinion success through novels, scientific texts, and its cultural and artistic practices in general; we also need to bear in mind the sophisticated and theoretically rich formulation of the idea of the subject in the new universal moral philosophy. After we have considered all these things, we will realise that it is simply wrong to rehash the old accusation by the followers of Hegel and Marx, according to which the Enlightenment was at the origin of modern social atomism and of a pernicious liberal individualism. In fact, individualism as a political and ideological issue is entirely a nineteenth-century concept.

In the eighteenth century, the sciences of man always saw the subject, the individual in the context of the history of nations; eighteenth-century thinkers thought of individuals constantly in relation to one another, and to the theme of the Other, within the context of the transformation undergone by collective identities such as homeland, nation, republics (*res publicae*), peoples, corporations. For instance, Enlightenment thinkers de-

voted constant attention to the issue of the new social ties that needed to be established in order to go beyond the hierarchical society of the Ancien Régime, with its basis in corporate privileges and prescriptive inequality. In order to realise how much attention Enlightenment thinkers devoted to these issues, one need only consider the great projects for nationwide education formulated by Filangieri and Condorcet, or the masonic- and cosmopolitan-inspired calls by Lessing and Herder to finally set underway a programme of ‘education in humanity’.

From the start, Enlightenment thinkers were aware of the major political problem of how to reconcile the new rights of the individual with those of their communities. Rousseau placed this issue at the centre of his *Social contract*, where he wrote:

Where shall we find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole aggregate force the person and the property of each individual; and by which every person, while united with all, shall obey only himself, and remain as free as before the union? Such is the fundamental problem, of which the Social Contract gives the solution.¹

In fact the various solutions that were put forward – from the ‘general will’, to democracy or republicanism – obviously failed to protect the rights of the individual, as became dramatically evident during the French Revolution. The third clause of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l’homme* solemnly asserted:

The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation. No entity or individual may exercise any form of authority that does not expressly emanate from the Nation.

This principle, arbitrarily interpreted, effectively paved the way for Jacobin populism and the Terror, which found no obstacles to their annihilation of the rights of man. The undisputed primacy of the Nation, the omnipotence of popular sovereignty and of collective identities over individual ones definitively caused the rights of man to be pushed to one side.

Nevertheless, the fundamental question of how to protect the rights of man as an individual remained at the core of the political thought of the Enlightenment throughout Europe even during the Revolution. Condorcet, Paine, W. Humboldt, Filangieri never gave up on the idea of the universal, inalienable, and imprescriptible character of the rights of the individual, of

¹ *An Inquiry into the Nature of the Social Contract, or Principles of Political Right*, translated from the French of J.J. Rousseau, London, 1791, p. 205.

their centrality in the project of emancipation that would lead to a modern society of citizens who are all free and equal before the law.

We now know about these efforts, which started with the debates following the American Revolution. The solutions that were put forward included entrusting the defence of the rights of man to solemn Declarations or to legislation. The preferred solution, however, was the full constitutionalisation of these rights. The theoretical foundations of the new Enlightenment constitutionalism were already fully outlined in Filangieri's monumental *Science of Legislation*, which was widely translated thanks to international masonic circles. Filangieri advocated a new juridical system based on the language of rights and the equality principle. This process was carried further by Francesco Mario Pagano, who, in the 1799 Neapolitan Constitution, openly took issue with the Thermidorian constitution of 1795, and came up with the idea of a Tribunal of Ephors, a valuable instrument for constitutional engineering, something like a modern high court of constitutional justice, especially devised to protect the rights of man as an individual from the legislative power and the omnipotence of the new popular sovereignty.

Nevertheless, the Enlightenment type of constitutionalism came under attack and was soon superseded by the various nineteenth-century forms of constitutionalism. Even historians disregarded it. Of course, following Tsar Alexander the First's Holy Alliance, the cosmopolitan language of the rights of man was faced with formidable, invincible adversaries, such as the legitimacy and nationality principles. Corporations, social classes, nations, peoples all appealed to the rights of the communities, and denied the universal character of the rights of the individual. The precarious balance between the individual and the community that the Enlightenment had sought to preserve in its constitutional project and all its works was set aside and neglected.

In response to today's wars, ethnic and religious cleansing, dictatorships and genocide, we rather tend to invoke the language of human rights, which has a more 'moral', and a generally anti-political and rhetorical character. It is a sort of ultimate American Utopia, which flared up in the 1970s and was characterised by its polemical tone and distanced itself from European Enlightenment constitutionalism, with its open acknowledgement of the political and juridical nature of the defence of individual rights. In fact, even though the solution put forward by the Enlightenment, which advocated the full constitutionalisation of rights, was itself largely utopian, the world of the Enlightenment and its legacy must be credited at the very least with being the first to flag up the problem, and the im-



portance of what was at stake, which once again confirms the role of the Enlightenment as a veritable laboratory of modernity. How valuable that legacy still is today can be seen by the response of a neo-Enlightenment thinker such as Norberto Bobbio, in a 1999 interview with the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, to the request by China and India to rewrite the 1948 Declaration of Rights foregrounding ‘Asian values’, and, more generally, to any form of communitarianism that denied the existence of the rights of man as an individual:

I do not agree. Unlike the supporters of the community, I remain faithful to the idea of the primacy of the individual, since it is on this primacy that liberal democracy is founded. The only real element of progress this century, as far as I can see, is the widespread acknowledgement of the rights of man, and this refers to the rights of man as an individual, not to their rights as part of such or such community, but as citizens of such and such a state [...] We belong simultaneously to a number of very different communities. Sometimes our religious and ethnic communities coincide, but often they don’t and we may belong to a religious community that does not correspond to the religion of one’s people, or vice versa. Which is why today the defence of the rights of peoples has become a prominent issue again. But is there really a “people” as such, whose existence comes before that of single individuals? A “people” is an abstract construct: only individuals have concrete existence.²

There could be no better illustration of the importance of the problematic, but still powerfully relevant, legacy of the Enlightenment and its cultural revolution.

² The interview was published in Italy by «La Stampa», 30 December 1999.

NEW VOICES ON THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE RIGHTS OF MAN

GABRIEL DARRIULAT

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He specialises in political philosophy during the Enlightenment. He edited issue 42 of the journal «Lumières» titled *Condorcet, Democrat?* He has also published an article in the same journal on Rousseau titled *A Lesson in Political Art: Political Union and Social Division in the Chapter 'Of the Roman Assemblies' of The Social Contract*. He is currently preparing a monograph on Condorcet based on his dissertation, which will be published by Vrin.

The Constitutionalisation of the Rights of Man in the Political Theory of Condorcet

My research aims to show how the constitutionalisation of human rights during the electoral period of the *Etats-généraux* of France led Condorcet to value the direct exercise by the citizens of their political rights in order to fight against the violation of their rights.

Condorcet is beyond doubt one of the precursors in France of the project of declaring the rights of man. At least three manuscripts of the Declaration of rights are listed in the Fonds Condorcet at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut for the year 1789. They reiterated most of his natural rights theory, the first drafts of which were elaborated in the early 1770s. However, before the late 1780s, Condorcet did not link the need to preserve the natural rights of men to a constitutional theory.

The constitutional debates of the late 1780s, in which Condorcet opposed those who advocated check and balances in government, led him to think about the best way to limit legislative power. It is in this context that he introduced the idea of a declaration of rights, born in America, at the core of his Constitutional theory.



This idea was linked to the acknowledgment of the sovereignty of the nation. The nation, which was not totally identified to the national assembly, but could also express itself in the *assemblées de baillage* and later in the *assemblées primaires*, had the constituent power and therefore had also the constant task to watch the constituted powers in order to make them respect the rights of man. Because the citizens were aware of their basic natural rights, knowledge that merely required common sense (*bon sens*), the declaration of rights had to be a separate document and political institutions needed to be created that left room for popular participation in order to control the way the National Assembly exercises power.

LUIS DE LA PEÑA

Luis De la Peña is currently doctoral PhD student in Historical Studies at the University of Florence. He holds a BA in History from the National University of Columbia and an MA in Comparative History from the Central European University. His main topics of research are focused temporally on the age of revolutions and geographically in Latin America and the Balkans, with a special interest in military history, public history, and intellectual history.

Giving the Life for the Rights. Antonio Nariño, the Translation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Fight for the Independence of Colombia

The echoes of the revolution and the Enlightenment had a different impact on the Spanish colonies in America than in other spaces and contexts of the age of revolutions. The conditions of colonial society in America, with its rigid hierarchies in terms of race and social advancement, made the possibility of a revolution unthinkable despite several examples of social discontent and harshly repressed revolts in the 1770s, such as the *Comuneros* revolt in New Granada or Tupac Amaru rebellion in Peru.

This would begin to change with the development of revolutionary events on both sides of the Atlantic, first with the independence of the United States, the subsequent French Revolution, and the constant flow of news and new ideas to the colonial territories in America. In this context, the figure of Antonio Nariño, a citizen of New Granada, who translated the declaration of the rights of man in 1794 into Spanish for the first time, is inserted. This deed of Nariño, despite being praised ad nauseam by the official historiography of Colombia and, at the same time, little known outside the Colombian context continues to be one of the most important episodes in the process of Enlightenment in Latin America: a translation made in secret, with a printing press acquired to give the greatest possible reach and dissemination to the declaration, which helped to tangibly manifest a

new political vocabulary with concepts such as citizen, rights, sovereignty, freedom, and representation.

Consequently, this milestone led Nariño to jail as this translation was considered a seditious act before the absolutist authority of the King of Spain. In any case, the seed of revolution and discontent with colonial domination had been sown and irrigated by Nariño and his translation. In any case, it is worthy to analyze his figure and his actions with a global and critical historiographical perspective, swinging around the questions about the uses of the translation of the declaration during the wars of independence to give legitimacy to the republican project in Colombia; or if the figure of Antonio Nariño a tangible connection between the revolutionary processes in Europe and Latin America, all of it to try to understand what was the true scope of the Spanish translation of the rights of man in 1794. These are some of the questions that this presentation tried to answer.

CAMILLA FROIO

Camilla Froio earned her PhD at the University of Florence, Italy, with a dissertation on the legacy of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Laokoon in America throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries century, focusing in particular on Clement Greenberg's Marxist interpretation of the German treatise. For her doctoral project, she was the recipient of a Library Grant from the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Moreover, in 2022, she became a fellow of the Center for Italian Modern Art, New York, where she studied the reception of Alberto Pasini's Orientalist paintings in Gilded Age America. Her current research interests focus on French art theory between the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, specifically on the development of the connotation of words such as "art", "beauty", and other aesthetic categories, between the first and the second half of the eighteenth century. She is currently teaching a course on History of Art Criticism at the University of Florence, Italy.

'The Otherness': a Comparative Discourse on Volney's Voyage and Alberto Pasini's Memories of the Orient

In the Introduction to his landmark study, *Orientalism*, Edward Said stated that the origins of Western discourse around Middle Eastern culture should be traced back to the final years of the eighteenth century; consequently, the scholar not only dedicated scarce attention to the writings of the main representatives of the Enlightenment, but misinterpreted the thought of Constantin-Francois de Chasseboeuf de Volney as well as the main tenets of his *Voyage en Egypte et en Syrie* (1787), simplistically dismissed as the basis of Napoleon's expedition in Egypt.

A few years before Said's publication, Sergio Moravia's *La scienza dell'uomo nel Settecento* shed light on Volney's interpretation and perceptions of the Near East by means of a broader contextualization that related the philosopher's thought to the activities of the so-called *Société des observateurs de l'homme* (1799-1804) as well as to the foundations of French anthropology. According to Moravia, in the case of the *Voyage*, which was based on Volney's firsthand experience of the Middle East, the close observation of 'the other' was the core of the author's methodology. The verb *observer* (to observe) recurs frequently throughout the pages: for Moravia, it should be regarded not as the symptom of an impressionistic or simplistic approach, instead as the pinnacle of the influence Volney received from the Cartesian sense of evidence and from the development of French sensism.

Even though Said read Volney's survey merely as the memoirs of a traveler, the *Voyage* contradicted the common perception of the Oriental world, mostly nourished by stereotypical expectations, and proved the author's modernity as well as profound awareness of the problematic distance between the West and the East. A new discourse around the metamorphoses of Volney's legacy throughout the nineteenth century could be centered on the visual representation of the Orient made by the Italian painter Alberto Pasini (1826-1899). The artist's depictions of market scenes and mosques, which reflected the principles of Realism and Positivism, proved how the perception of "otherness" had been irreversibly transformed by colonialism and, as an extension, by the global art market. As Carl Schmitt pointed out in *The Concept of the Political*, the late nineteenth century culture played a pivotal role in the process of objectification of "the other" by transforming it into a commodity and a source of amusement, therefore excluding any possible attempt to understand the contradictory and conflicted relationship between the Western world and the Near East.

JESPER LUNDSBY SKOV

Jesper Lundsby Skov is a Danish historian with a PhD (2019) from the University of Southern Denmark about the political interpretations of civil rights in the Danish constitution 1840-1953. He has been a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Copenhagen, and he is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oslo on a project about the emergence of a Scandinavian concept of civil rights in the late Enlightenment.

The Origins of Civil Liberty and Civil Rights in Denmark-Norway in the Late Enlightenment

Denmark-Norway was an absolute system of government from 1660-1814/1848. In the last half of the eighteenth century, a new spirit of freedom and

reform changed the government's policy on various topics. Freedom became a key concept in the discourse of the time, and freedom of speech was tolerated, particularly in the periods 1770-1773 and 1784-1799. In this period, Denmark-Norway functioned as an enlightened kind of absolutism.

During these periods of open discussion, civil liberty became a focal point. Civil liberty was defended by critics of the regime and even by the government itself. The concept's meaning changed dramatically in the last decades of the eighteenth century. While everyone in these years defended the rule of law as a minimum standard of civil liberty, three other interpretations of civil liberty emerged.

In the 1750s and 1760s, civil liberty was defended as a paternalistic concept. The government decided what was best for the citizen and protected their security. This was civil liberty, according to representatives of the government. This understanding changed in the 1770s and 1780s when a new and more harmonic interpretation of civil liberty emerged. It was no longer only the government's decisions that mattered. The citizen's personal freedom was underscored, but true civil liberty was only achieved when the citizen used his liberty for not only his own welfare but also for the welfare of the greater society. This concept was contested in the late 1790s by a more individualistic concept of liberty that rejected any idea of harmony between the individual and the state. The state was a threat to civil liberty; therefore, the citizens needed rights against any encroachment from the state. This individual concept of civil liberty never became dominant, but it was a critical last interpretation of liberty before the government restricted the freedom of speech in 1799.

VANESSA MASSUCHETTO

Vanessa Massuchetto is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory, Frankfurt am Main, Germany. She holds a PhD. and a Master's degree in Legal History from the Federal University of Paraná. In 2024, she was a Kanzler Fellow at the University of Cologne and, in 2022, a Junior Postdoctoral Fellow at the Maria Sibylla Merian Centre Conviviality-Inequality in Latin America. She was a visiting researcher at the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History (2019-2020) and at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon (2018-2019).

Massuchetto's research centres on women's legal history and gender relations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Ibero-American Worlds. Her work particularly emphasises women's agencies, experiences, knowledge, and strategies in and before justice institutions, as well as criminal normativities and conflicts in colonial societies.

Women and Enlightenment Thought in the Iberian-American Criminal Legal Order (Eighteenth Century)

The research project concerns women's Enlightenment thinking on the female statutes in the criminal justice system from the Iberian-American Worlds in the eighteenth century. Understanding the global historical perspective as the transnational bias for the analysis of social, cultural, legal, political, and economic elements in history, the study has been developed by the analysis of doctrinal, legal, and political thought on criminal law regarding women's statute paying special attention to their discourses. Intertwining gender, race, and colonialism, the aim is to identify how and why the normativities regarding women within the criminal justice system were considered especially by the female historical actors.

My presentation encompassed the analysis of the legal doctrine regarding women's statutes according to jurists from the Iberian-American Worlds. In the early modern period, the debates about women's "rights" were developed meanwhile the ways of thinking about the sexual differentiation between men and women were changing. The intellectual environment in this moment had the natural order as a base perspective for society, which justified the hierarchies between genders and maintained the female representations based on the physical and intellectual constitution of men and women. From this perspective, it was a very common idea among jurists that prohibitions based on incapacities arose from the weakness and debility of the female sex, even despite contradictory arguments.

For the criminal justice system, the lack of capacity, the weakness, and the ignorance had different meanings besides imposing limitations. Regarding convictions and penalty application, it seems that there was no inclination toward guilt or impunity, but mitigation or removal of penalties for different reasons through the different centuries. The possibility of making accusations hung between capacity and incapacity, however the prohibition did not remain in the same way in the eighteenth century and the incapacity was valid when expressed. In other words, the capacity to initiate legal proceedings was the rule, limitation became the exception. Among the factors that led to the jurists' thinking, were fear of public exposure and the woman's dishonesty, thus, it is plausible to affirm that these notions, which were part of the feminine representations, served as a basis for the construction of several legal devices.



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1.

THE LONG VOYAGE OF REASON

The metamorphoses of Minerva (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries)

1.1. BARTOLOMEO CRIVELLARI and DAVID SODERLING after PELLEGRINO TIBALDI (b. 1527), *Minerva Assisting Prometheus as He Attempts to Scale the Heavens*, etching, 1756.

It was only in the aftermath of the Revolutions that Prometheus took on the role of presiding god of progress and of the advancement of industry and commerce. In mythology Prometheus was the demigod who taught men the arts and technology that helped shelter them from the vagaries of chance and the whims of the gods. This boon for the human race, however, amounted to sacrilege towards the gods: Prometheus had stolen a spark of fire, of which the gods had deprived mankind as a form of punishment; as a consequence, he was subjected to eternal and horrific punishment. Still in the middle of the sixteenth century Prometheus' enterprise was construed as an abhorrent crime. In the story that Pellegrino Tibaldi (Bologna, Palazzo Poggi, 1555) drew from Lucian of Samosata, and which we show here in an eighteenth-century etching, Minerva is an accomplice in an unlawful deed and party to a serious crime against the authority of Jupiter. In this respect, the goddess here personifies *deviousness* and *cunning* rather than the more traditional rule of Reason.





1.2. CLAUDE MELLAN, *De l'instruction de Monseigneur le Dauphin*, etching, 1640.

The young boy shown in this magnificent 1640 etching is the future Louis XIV, who at the time was only two years old. A recurring theme in the iconological tradition of the French monarchy shows Minerva, accompanied by – or rather under the direction of – Faith, presiding over the education of the personage who Heaven had decreed should rule France in his role as «Roi Très-Chrétien». At the end of the seventeenth century, in the celebrated pedagogical novel *Les Aventures de Télémaque fils d'Ulysse*, written «ad usum Delphini» between 1694 and 1699 by François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon, Bishop of Cambrai and tutor of the Duke of Burgundy, it is Minerva herself who is hidden under the guise of the wise pedagogue Mentor.



1.3. BERNARD PICART, *Minerva in a Library Surrounded by the Attributes of the Arts*, engraving, 1713.

By contrast, in non-Catholic milieus, such as the Huguenot refugees, Minerva is associated with the classical role, later reprised by the Enlightenment, of goddess and emblem of knowledge and the arts, not only of a mechanical or scientific kind but including disciplines such as rhetoric and philosophy. Accordingly, here she is portrayed in the midst of a luxurious library; behind her, we see a flourishing olive tree, which was her sacred plant.

1.4. SIMON FOKKE, *Le Songe de Télémaque* (Minerva shielding Telemachus from love's arrows), engraving, 1775.

This engraving illustrates a pivotal episode in Fénelon's *Télémaque*: in pure *specula principis* tradition, Minerva acts as an impenetrable shield «ad usum Delphini» against the lures of lust. The episode of the nymph Eucharis on Calypso's island shows the Prince being confronted with the degrading impulses of profane love, as he is “ambushed” for the first time by the senses – an inevitable milestone at the end of puberty. Taking on the role of both tutor and officiating priest, Fénelon – i.e. Minerva in the guise of Mentor – severely reprimands the heir to Ulysses' reign for even thinking of giving up the throne, «la gloire et [...] la haute destinée que les dieux vous ont promise par tant de merveilles qu'ils ont faites en vos faveurs [...] pour vivre déshonoré auprès d'Eucharis!» Eventually the young man escapes his pernicious love for the nymph by jumping off a cliff into the sea. Throughout the eighteenth century, this episode from Book VI of the *Télémaque* and its edifying finale will give rise to much moralistic painting, as well as sheet after sheet of music in the form of cantata scores and operas.





1.5. PIETER HENDRIK JONXIS, *The Homage to Minerva*, engraving, 1786.

This image was to decorate the frontispiece of the novel *Numa Pompilius* (Paris, Didot, 1786) by Jean-Pierre Claris de Florian, Voltaire's great-nephew by marriage, best known as the author of fairy-tales and corny pastorals. It is an homage to a political model of an absolute monarchy tempered by respect for the teachings of the gospel and natural rights, and founded on an agrarian, pacifist, and populist kind of Christianity: a celebrated and unsurpassed model that Fénelon had been propounding since 1699. Accordingly, here lights (*Lumières*) shine out of *Télémaque*, who is naked, as befits Truth. The young genius on the right (Innocence, i.e. Florian himself) is presenting Reason with his newly updated proposal for a paternalistic enlightened despotism. The dedication of the *Numa* to Queen Marie Antoinette is a clear indication of who Minerva is supposed to represent in this case.

1. THE LONG VOYAGE OF REASON

1.6. DOMENICO MARCHETTI after GIOVANNI BATTISTA CIPRIANI, *Minerva and Mercury*, engraving, 1787.

Here Minerva is portrayed in conjunction with Mercury, messenger of the gods and, from ancient times, patron of commerce and exchanges. Reason, or rather Discernment – the rational assessment of the probabilities of success – were the guiding principles in risky commercial enterprises and all forms of profit-driven activities. It is not by chance that this specific allegory, in which entrepreneurship is associated with discernment and the rational planning of investments, was devised by Francesco Bartolozzi, a successful printer of quasi-industrial capabilities and a prominent member of a group of London-based Italian artists; nor is it coincidental that this image was launched onto the English market at the onset of the Industrial Revolution and of the era of world-wide commerce and colonial domination.



1.7. SAMUEL JENNINGS, *A Study for Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences, or the Genius of America Encouraging the Emancipation of the Blacks*, oil on canvas, 1791-1792, New York, Metropolitan Museum.

With the French Revolution the previous representation of Minerva as closely connected with the symbolism and apology of despotic power starts being substituted by her identification with the goddess of Liberty. In this anti-slavery painting, a figure of Liberty that is clearly inspired by Minerva is portrayed on a throne holding the goddess's distinctive attribute, the rod with a Phrygian cap on top. Next to the traditional iconography such as books and scientific instruments we discern in the background a Tree of Liberty, a symbol derived directly from the «Grande Révolution».



1.8. ANON., *An Annotated Moral Map, or Chart: Symbols of the Republic; Liberty's Founding Fathers; Martyrs for Freedom*, engraving, c. 1794.

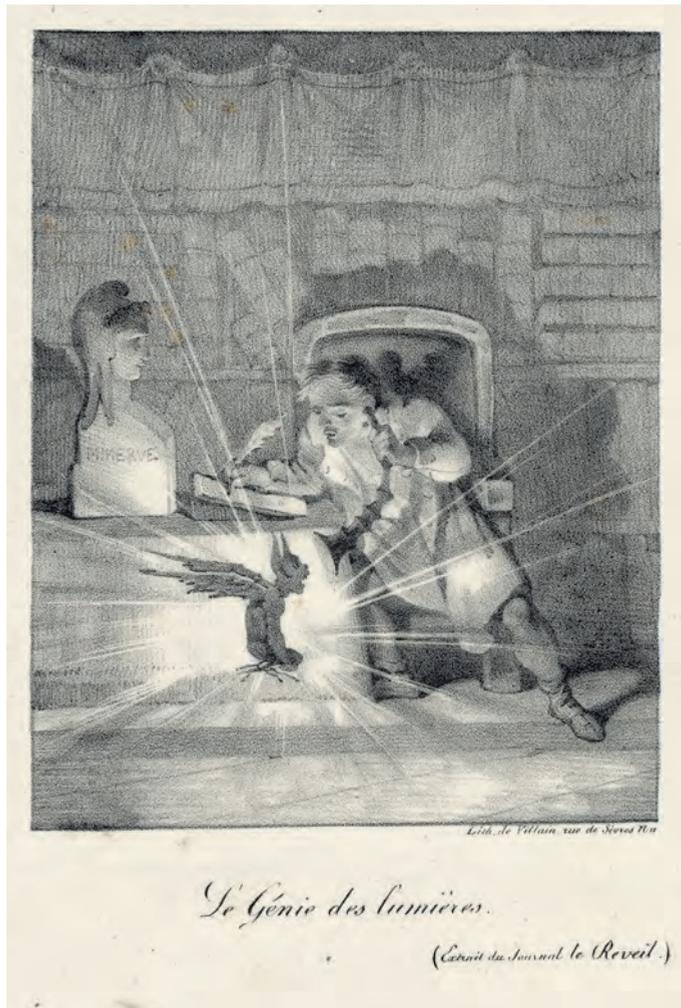
In this popular print, a triumphant Revolution selects and celebrates a Pantheon of its many founding fathers and precursors from both historical and present times, while at the same time displaying her new cache of allegorical personifications, i.e. the «Symboles de la République». Accordingly we see here on parade Nature, Reason, Philosophy, Liberty, Equality, Unity, Indivisibility, Justice. Though currently banished from this august company, Minerva can still be glimpsed in the personification of Liberty. This is most obvious in the shield, which since time immemorial has been Minerva's most recognisable attribute [cf. above, Fig. 1.4]; but see also her throne and her style of dress.

1. THE LONG VOYAGE OF REASON



1.9. HIERONYMUS SNOECK, *Allegory of the Rights of Man* [*De Regten van den Mensch*], engraving, 1795.

This pro-French propaganda image shows even more clearly the iconological derivation of the goddess of Liberty from Minerva, in this case through the war helmet adorned with laurel leaves. This image celebrates the beneficial aspects of revolutionary law, which on 19 January 1795 had led to the foundation of the Batavian Republic, the earliest and longest-lived of the “Sister Republics”. The long caption reads: «LIBERTY, crowned with laurel [cf. the motto of the French National Convention: how beautiful it is to be able to offer Peace to a People, when you bear the Laurel crown of Victory!], and supported by STABILITY, graciously extends her hand to PEACE and HARMONY and stands before the Temple of PEACE together with the Statues of INGENUITY and RELIGION; in the foreground we see HUMAN CHARITY, pointing to the Rights of Man. Among the clouds we see PLEASURE singing a Hymn of Praise, while on the other side GENEROSITY offers PEACE a crown of flowers. On the Altar in the front [right-hand corner], two crossed Swords symbolise the ALLIANCE [of the Batavian Republic] with [republican, Directory] France in order to support each other with all their strength, etc.».



1.10. FRANÇOIS-JEAN VILLAIN, *Le Génie des Lumières*, «Le Réveil», 28 October 1822.

Minerva makes her re-appearance once the Bourbons' Restoration is well underway, though this time she is seated on the wrong side: or so one gathers from a print that was distributed as a free insert with a *royaliste* newspaper from the *ultras* fringe. A bad journalist believes that he is inspired by Reason and the Enlightenment, represented by a heavy bust of Minerva, now wearing a Phrygian cap – more Marianne and Liberty than Minerva, then – which he has placed in the middle of his desk. In fact, the pinpoint of light that he sees in his dream and that he believes to be his inspiration is nothing but the Devil's megaphone. In his ramblings the spectre of revolutionary rhetoric raises its ugly head again: «[l]e petit démon noir élève la voix, et [lui] dit: Haine à Dieu! Haine aux rois! Haine aux lois! Haine aux prêtres! Haine aux grands! Haine à la vertu! Récompense au crime! Mépris de la vieillesse! Flatterie à la jeunesse! Et toujours mensonge et calomnie!». Eventually, the title of the article drafted under the Devil's dictation reads «Vertus du siècle et progrès des lumières». In the shadow behind the «journaliste mauvais homme» we notice an extensive collection of bulky tomes: it is still from there that the evil originates. Inside the newspaper issue, a detailed explanation of the print takes up two columns.

1.11. FRANCISCO GOYA Y LUCIENTES, *El sueño de la razón produce monstruos*, etching and aquatint, 1797-1799.

The previous print forms an ideal counterpart to Goya's famous *Sleep of Reason*, though there is no evidence that the two works were directly connected. Nevertheless, it is important to note the confusing signals and iconological ambivalence that still weigh on Goya's etching, at least in terms of its implied meaning. This work is generally interpreted as an indictment of the *sleep* of Reason, i.e. its lethargy or temporary suspension, which threatens to unleash the inner monster that inevitably resides within such an imperfect creature as man. In fact, Goya may have wanted to put across the opposite allegorical meaning, the confusion being caused by the semantic ambivalence of the term *sueño*, which means both *sleep* and, even more frequently, *dream*. In this sense, this may have been a veiled attack on reason itself and the most extreme projections of its *sueño*, amounting to a dangerous giving in to the mermaid song of *Utopia*. Hovering over such ill-advised *revêrie* we do not see Minerva's traditional, reassuring owl, but a horrific cloud of bats accompanied by the most ominous of night birds: the hoopoe, harbinger of the witches' sabbath. The presence of a cat, another creature linked with witchcraft, could equally well support either interpretation. In either case, man is portrayed as constantly under siege from the darkness that he himself is capable of generating.



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2.

PRE-ANTHROPOLOGICAL LEGENDS
AND PRIMACY OVER THE OTHER

*The hierarchy among men according to the dictates
of the scriptures (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries)*



2.1. THEODOR DE BRY after FEDERICO BAROCCI, *Spanish Soldiers and Missionaries are Slain by Savages*, engraving, 1594.

This is one of the illustrations in Girolamo Benzoni's *Collectiones peregrinationum in Indiam occidentalem* (*America, pars quarta, de Bry*, Frankfurt am Main, 1594); the friar in the centre, awaiting martyrdom on his knees, was copied from an Italian source, *Saint Francis receiving the stigmata* by Federico Barocci (c. 1581-1585). The Latin caption reads: «Spanish monks being slaughtered by Indians».



2.2. PIETRO MONACO after GIOVANNI DOMENICO TIEPOLO and GIOVANNI BENEDETTO CASTIGLIONE, also known as IL GRECHETTO, *One of Noah's Sons Goes to People One Part of the Earth*, engraving, c. 1743-1763.

It is likely that this image originally had an entirely different title and that, indeed, the actual subject of the Grechetto paintings from which the Tiepolo drawing and eventually the engraving derive had nothing to do with Noah or his sons. Benedetto Castiglione, *alias* il Grechetto (1609-1664), specialised in paintings that depicted themes from the scriptures in countryside settings. His work was especially famous for his skilful rendition of animals. In this image, however, the shepherd guiding his flock in the background rather conflicts with the idea of a deserted Earth in the aftermath of the Great Flood. The image is meant to illustrate the creationist *monogenist* thesis, i.e. how the Earth was peopled again from a single family that survived the catastrophe, as per God's will, by taking refuge in Noah's ark. This illustration therefore has the awkward task of showing in a realistic, convincing manner something that is stated in sacred history: that is, how, in practical and material terms, a handful of men were scattered over a vast, deserted Globe and colonised lands situated at such huge distances from one another. The ultimate effect verges on the ridiculous, and did not fail to provoke Voltaire's caustic irony: «Certes, Noé envoya sa famille voyager loin; son petit-fils Ménès en Égypte, son autre petit-fils à la Chine, je ne sais quel autre petit-fils en Suède, et un cadet en Espagne. Les voyages alors formaient les jeunes gens bien mieux qu'aujourd'hui» (Voltaire, *Remarques sur l'histoire*, 1742).



2.3. DANIEL SEITER, *The Drunkenness of Noah, Genesis 9: 21-23*, black chalk, heightened with white gouache, late-seventeenth/early-eighteenth century, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This image depicts the biblical episode that was believed to provide a theological justification for enslaving black Africans, who were supposed to have descended from Ham (or Cam), Noah's youngest son, who was in turn Canaan's father. Ham sacrilegiously mocked the nudity of the patriarch, who had fallen into a drunken sleep, and Canaan and his descendants were cursed as a result. As we read in Genesis 9: 24-

27 (RSV): «When Noah awoke from his wine and knew what his youngest son had done to him, he said, “Cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers.” He also said, “Blessed by the Lord my God be Shem; and let Canaan be his slave. God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem; and let Canaan be his slave.» Ham's four sons, Cush, Mizraim (or Egypt), Put and Canaan, were the forefathers of all the African races and of the Canaanites. The canonical value of this curse was confirmed by the whole spectrum of Christianity, from the Church Fathers and Catholic councils and popes to the various Protestant denominations. Confirmation that this episode could be read as justification for slavery is already found in Augustine of Hippo: «Thus, the first cause of slavery is sin, whereby man is bound to another man through a bond of subjection; but this does not happen without God's judgement, in which there is no injustice» (*De civitate dei*, 19, 15).



2.4. PIETER TANJÉ after PHILIP VAN DIJK and CONRADUS SWYGHUIZEN, *Portrait of the Reverend Jacobus Eliza Johannes Capitein*, engraving, 1742.

Capitein was the first black Dutch preacher. He was active in the mid-eighteenth century in his native community of Fort Elmina, in today's Ghana.

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2. PRE-ANTHROPOLOGICAL LEGENDS



2.5. ANON., *The Peoples of Africa*, Dutch print, 1819-1840.

In this print an ethnographic catalogue of costumes, customs, and physiognomies turns into a taxonomy of different races.

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3.

OURSELVES AND THE OTHERS

Colonialism, at the same time the pride and bad conscience of the western world (sixteenth-nineteenth centuries)



3.1. DIRCK VOLCKERTSZOON COORNHERT after MAARTEN VAN HEEMSKERK, *The Imperial Troops of Charles V Bringing Civilization to the New World*, engraving, 1555.

This image is the sixth in a series of twelve prints dedicated to the Infante Felipe, the future King Philip II of Spain and Portugal, Emperor of the Indies, celebrating the beneficial impact of his father's military victories in every corner of the world. This kind of propaganda condemned without possibility of appeal the native customs of the American peoples. The Latin inscription reads: «1530. Before, the Indians fed on human flesh; now they have a milder disposition, as they have been conquered by Caesar's ever victorious armies».



3.2. THEODOR DE BRY, *Indios Men, Women and Children Taken as Slaves by the Spaniards*, engraving, 1594.

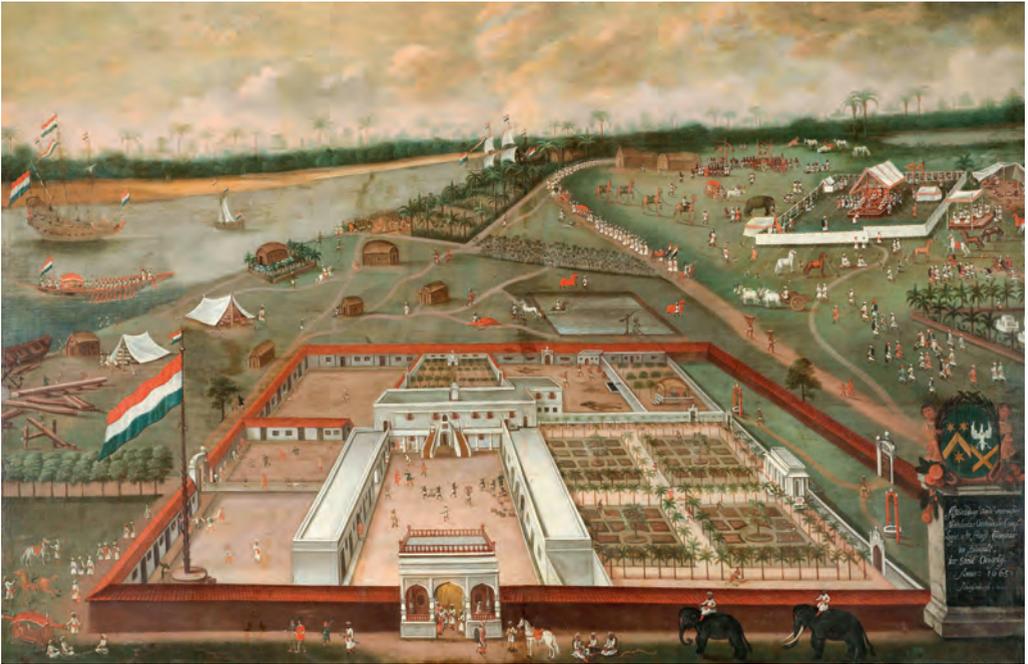
This engraving too comes from Benzoni's *Collectiones peregrinationum*. The heading reads: «Pedro de Calice's cruelty towards the Indios», and the image shows a group of Peruvian Indios being taken as slaves. The prisoners' deportation soon turned into a death march. As Benzoni reports: «Pedro de Calice, the captain of the troop, arrived in Amaracapana with four thousand slaves. He would have brought even more, but many had been overcome by tiredness, weakness, and anger, and some had fled along the way; others were unable to keep up with the pace of the convoy due to the heavy objects that they were forced to carry, and the Spaniards ran them through with their swords».



3.3. ANON., *East Indian Market Stall in Batavia*, oil on canvas, c. 1640-66, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Being perishable, exotic fruit and animals were hard to import. In this genre painting they are reproduced with scientific exactitude and exhibited in the guise of spectacular *mirabilia* within the framework of market buying and selling, creating an exotic combination of still life and conversation painting.

3. OURSELVES AND THE OTHERS



3.4. SCHUYLENBURGH, *The Dutch Factory in Hooghly-Chinsuar, Bengal*, oil on canvas, 1665, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

The trade outpost known as Fort Gustavus, founded in 1655, was one of the main strongholds of the Dutch East India Company. It dealt in products such as saltpetre, spices, indigo, and cotton.



3.5. ANON., *Dutch Merchant with Slaves in East Indies Hills*, painting on canvas, second half of the seventeenth century, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

A European man accompanied by a native woman and two armed henchmen is leading two prisoners along a hillside path somewhere in Indonesia or maybe India. He is the only one in the group who is not barefoot; he is dressed according to late-seventeenth-century fashion and carries a short sword. Is he a colonist or a slave merchant?

3. OURSELVES AND THE OTHERS



3.6. FRANS VAN DER MIJN, *Portrait of Jan Pranger and an Enslaved Servant*, oil on canvas, 1742, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

Pranger was Director-General of the Dutch Gold Coast («Guineesche Goudkust»); through the window in the background one can see the fortress that defended the commercial outpost, flying the flag of the United Provinces.



3.7. THEODOOR KONING after CHARLES-JOSEPH-DOMINIQUE EISEN, *The Slave Trade*, engraving, 1774.

This image is found on the frontispiece of one of the volumes of the abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (La Haye, Gosse, 1774).



3.8. ANTOINE VESTIER, *Eugène-Joseph-Stanislas Foullon d'Écotier*, oil on canvas, 1785, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Foullon d'Écotier must have commissioned this official portrait of himself following his appointment as Intendant of Guadeloupe. It was exhibited at the Salon de Peinture in 1785. The attributes of office proudly displayed by the high-ranking official included the latest maps of the island, administrative *Ordonnances* and seafaring manuals. What is kept safely out of sight is any reference to the *Code Noir* and the harsh reality on which the prosperity of the plantations and the whole of the cane sugar industry was based: slavery and the slave trade.

3. OURSELVES AND THE OTHERS

3.9. NOACH VAN DER MEER II after JACOBUS BUYS, *Deadly Fight among Black Slaves*, engraving, 1778-1785.

In terms of composition, this scene imitates a famous classical model: the death of Julius Caesar. However, here the Dutch engraver focuses on the brutality and shortcomings of the African slaves as human beings, as they engage in a deadly brawl over futile reasons. By showing the men as ready to kill at the drop of a hat, and unable to control their basic impulses, this scene conveys a negative moral judgement; at the same time, it hints at the need for the civilised, rational white men to control these primitive and dangerous beings and exercise severe discipline over them, for their own good, in order to curb their aptness to sudden and brutal acts of violence.



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3.10. RALPH EARL, *Elija Boardman in His Shop*, oil on canvas, 1789, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This is the portrait of a prosperous and dynamic merchant in his shop in New Milford, Connecticut. Besides dealing in cloth, Boardman imported luxury colonial goods from India and China, all of which were carried across the Atlantic by English vessels.



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Firenze



3.11. JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH after GEORGE MORLAND, *African Family Torn apart by Slave Merchants* («Slave Trades»), colour engraving, London, 1791.

George Morland was best known as a genre painter. Here, he adds to the source drawing for this famous print the compositional anti-rhetorical models of the new historical painting pioneered by Benjamin West in *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770). An extremely high number of copies of this large-format image were printed in 1791. It carries a dedication to the Prince of Wales and is accompanied by an explicatory poem: «Lo! the poor Captive with distraction wild / Views his dear Partner torn from his embrace! / A different Captain buys his Wife and Child / What time can from his Soul such ills erase?»



3.12. MAARTEN BOS, *Men, Women and Children on Sale in New Orleans*, engraving, 1861.
 The original title of this Dutch print reads «Before the selection» («Voor de verkooping»).

Bibliography: T. TODOROV, *La conquête de l'Amérique: la question de l'autre*, Paris, Seuil, 1982; J. ISRAEL, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1995; A. PAGDEN, *Lords of the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-1800*, New Haven Ct., Yale University Press, 1998; H.S. KLEIN, *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; J.H. ELLIOTT, *Empires of the Atlantic: Britain and Spain, 1492-1830*, New Haven Ct., Yale University Press, 2006; O. GELDERBLUM (ed.), *The Political Economy of the Dutch Republic*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009.

4.

TRADE DEALINGS MUST GO ON – EVEN WITH
THE ABOMINABLE TRADE

The paradox of consumer goods (eighteenth-nineteenth centuries)



4.1. WILLIAM HACKWOOD, *Anti-Slavery Medallion* («Am I Not a Man and a Brother?»), ceramic, manufactured by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, 1787, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This «Slave Medallion» was produced in support of the abolitionist cause. It became the emblem of the British «Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade», which was established in 1787.



4.2. GIUSEPPE PIAMONTINI (attributed to) after PIETRO TACCA, *Black Slave*, porcelain, manufactured by Ginori di Doccia, late eighteenth century, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

This image of a slave in chains is an interesting example of the transferral of symbols and meanings, being based on the famous Medicean Monument of the *Four Moors*, by sculptor Pietro Tacca (1577-1640), a pupil and collaborator of Giambologna. The monument was erected in Livorno to celebrate the victories of the Knights of St Stephen over the Barbary pirates. Tacca added the four bronze figures between 1623 and 1626 to the base of a pre-existing marble monument to Ferdinand I de' Medici. Unsurprisingly, this monument, Livorno's most recognisable landmark, has in recent times become a target of so-called «Cancel Culture». Going back to the figurine, it was crafted by the Doccia manufacturers probably with the British market in mind, the idea being to compete with Wedgwood by transforming the "racist" artefact of the Medici era into a product intended for the anti-slavery market.

4.3. Enamel Patch Box “American Independence Forever”, second half of the eighteenth century, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

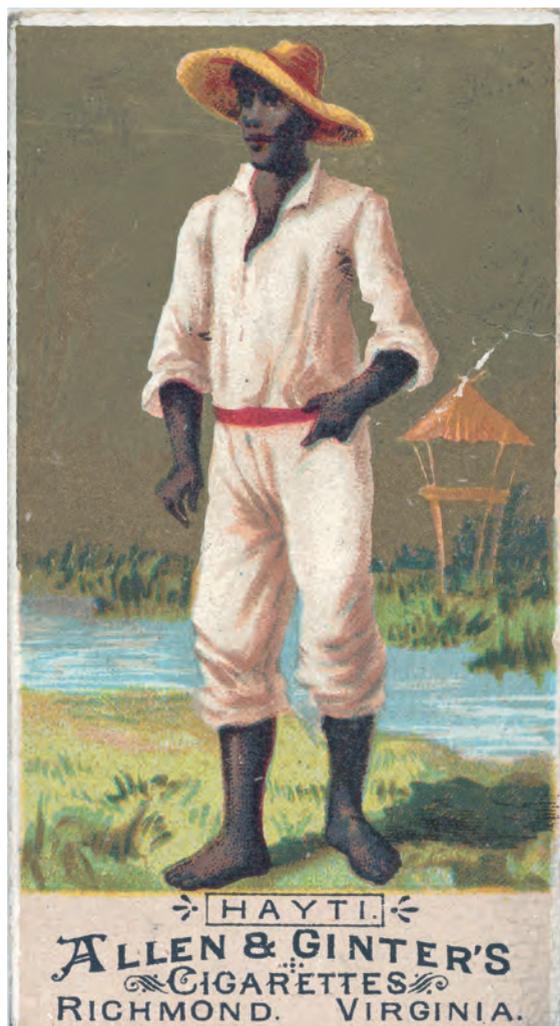
This independentist political gadget or *souvenir* has an even more surprising origin than the previous item. It was probably manufactured in the wake of the American Declaration of Independence of 4th July, 1776. The American insurrection and resulting war did not stop trade and manufacturing exchanges between the warring factions on opposite sides of the ocean, nor did they completely supersede the rules of the Navigation Act, considering that this object, clearly destined for the American market, was manufactured in England.



4.4. FRÉDÉRIC-ÉTIENNE-JOSEPH FELDTRAPPE after JOHN RAPHAEL SMITH and GEORGE MORLAND, *Traite des Nègres*, furnishing textile, early nineteenth century.

This printed furnishing textile was marketed in France at a time when a heated debate was raging on the subject of the slave trade. Its scenes, repeated on alternate layers, merge together iconographical traditions and sources from different times and places but with a common underlying theme: the infringement of natural law. The top layer derives from an earlier iconographical tradition with a specifically continental origin (from France and from Dutch prints in travel and ethnography books). It depicts customs, traditions, and attributes showing the happiness of the pure state of nature, and its ideological background can be linked to an extensive apologetic literature that reaches from Montaigne all the way to baron Lahontan's *Dialogues*. The second layer amplifies a famous print by J.R. Smith from a Moreland drawing, with a modified heading from the original English one [see fig. 3.11 above]: «Slave Trades».





4.5. ANON., *Hayti*, from the *Natives in Costume* series (n. 16) for Allen & Ginter Cigarettes Brands, 1886.

Local traditions and customs were the subject of this series, which decorated the back of matchboxes. The plantation clothes worn by black slaves who were transported to Haiti before they were set free are portrayed like just another typical traditional costume. This is a veritable instance of erasure of ethnic identity: it is as though these people had only ever been slaves from the beginning of time.

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5.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT: COMMON IMPOSTORS OR PROPHETS OF FREEDOM?

(Eighteenth-nineteenth centuries)

5.1. JOHANN HEINRICH FÜSSLI, satirical frontispiece of *Remarks on the Writings and Conduct of J.J. Rousseau*, Caddel, Johnson, Davenport and Payne, London 1767, engraving.

'Henry' Füssli, Swiss by birth but based in England, is famous for his horrific and "esoteric" illustrations from Shakespeare and is to this day considered one of the most important precursors of European Romantic painting. When the dispute between Rousseau and Voltaire broke out, he sided with his countryman, of whom he produced a heartfelt "critical" defence. From the vantage point of his study of religion, Füssli accused Voltaire of feasting «on the bones of Manicheism». He went on to say that, while Voltaire proclaimed to believe in God, «he has proved that his God is the Devil. One of the liberal treatises in which he set forth that comfortable and philosophic principle is his poem on the disaster of Lisbon: he thought, a man who had enough experienced what we call the devil in this world – could not but embrace his opinion and he therefore took care of sending it to Rousseau. [...] But Rousseau did not think that success on the stage could authorise a player to dethrone God. – He in his answer treated him with that pity he deserved and gave him plainly to understand, that a chamber pot cannot arraign its maker». In the *Remarks* frontispiece, Voltaire is grotesquely riding the monster of human nature, blithely inciting its brutality with his whip. On the left, Rousseau is pointing at him, distancing himself; in the background, Justice and Liberty hang from a gibbet.





5.2. JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID, *Mort de Socrate*, oil on canvas, 1785, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The famous episode of the death sentence pronounced on Socrates, «iuste damnato», became one of the most effective narratives recycled by Enlightenment apologists. Antoine-Léonard Thomas produced a version in the epideictic genre, Billardon de Sauvigny and Voltaire himself adapted it for the theatre, and in the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique*, an illustration of the progress of the human spirit, Condorcet denounces it as the archetypal first crime perpetrated by superstition and fanaticism against the independent search for truth. However, many of those who saw David's painting at the 1787 Salon de peinture drew a different conclusion: the philosopher's unjust death sentence was clear evidence of the intrinsic instability and pitfalls of a democratic and republican form of government. As for the opinion of professional critics of the time, Socrates' death was interpreted as per the tradition: as prefiguration, and therefore validation, of the dogma of the immortality of the soul. In David's painting too Socrates' finger pointing to the sky appears to express the dying philosopher's ultimate faith in the mercy of a just and omnipotent Creator.

5.3. ANON., after FÉRRÉOL DE BONNEMAISON, *Idée du tableau le plus touchant du Salon de l'an IX. Étude après nature présentée aux Ames Sensibles* (*La Pauvre rentière*), engraving, 1800.

The destitute widow in this image is as if frozen, her gaze fixed on the viewer in wordless reproach. The young son is forced to beg; his clothes betray a well-to-do past and luxuries that have also now fallen to pieces. The success of the painting on which this mediocre engraving was based is a clear indication of the extent to which, in the aftermath of the Revolution and the middle of the Consulate, “philanthropic” subjects in defence of an indigent population could take over the visual arts. In the final years of the Ancien Régime, Jean-Baptiste Greuze, his pupils, and his many imitators, such as Étienne Aubry, Philibert-Louis Debucourt, Étienne Théaulon and Pierre-Alexandre Wille, were the unchallenged figureheads of humanitarian genre painting: their intended audience were the feudal aristocrats, the financiers, bankers, and all the entrepreneurial élites and those «rentiers» who regularly came to the attention of the public for their extensive philanthropic activity. Was this, then, simply a humanitarian subject? Or were the affluent classes themselves voicing their protest against the way in which, in their view, they had been financially ruined by the Revolution and the attendant currency depreciation caused by the ‘last ditch’ financial politics of the paper bonds, or *assignats*?



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6.

ABSOLUTE ALTERITIES

The rights of the Other (nineteenth century)

6.1. EUGÈNE DELACROIX, *Les Natchez*, oil on canvas, 1823-1835), New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Supported by the popularity of René de Chateaubriand's *novella*, Delacroix's painting was designed in 1823 based on an ethnographic engraving from the previous century. It took twelve years to be completed, just in time to be exhibited at the 1835 Salon de peinture. In 1823-1826 Delacroix produced the cycle of paintings devoted to the massacres that took place during the Greek war of independence (cf. *La Grèce sur les ruines de Missolongi* and, especially, *Le massacre de Scio*). A century earlier the Natchez too, a native American people based in Louisiana, had rebelled against the injustices perpetrated by the French colonists. As a consequence, they were driven from their territories *manu militari*, forced to a nomadic life of untold hardship, and finally crushed into extinction. In the early 1830s, the systematic massacre of the native American peoples was only at the beginning: Delacroix's painting reproduces the theme of the displaced refugees, transferring to a defence of the American «sauvages» the indignation caused in the European, mostly philo-Hellenic, public opinion by Turkish cruelty and the cynical diplomatic policy of the European powers.

6. ABSOLUTE ALTERITIES

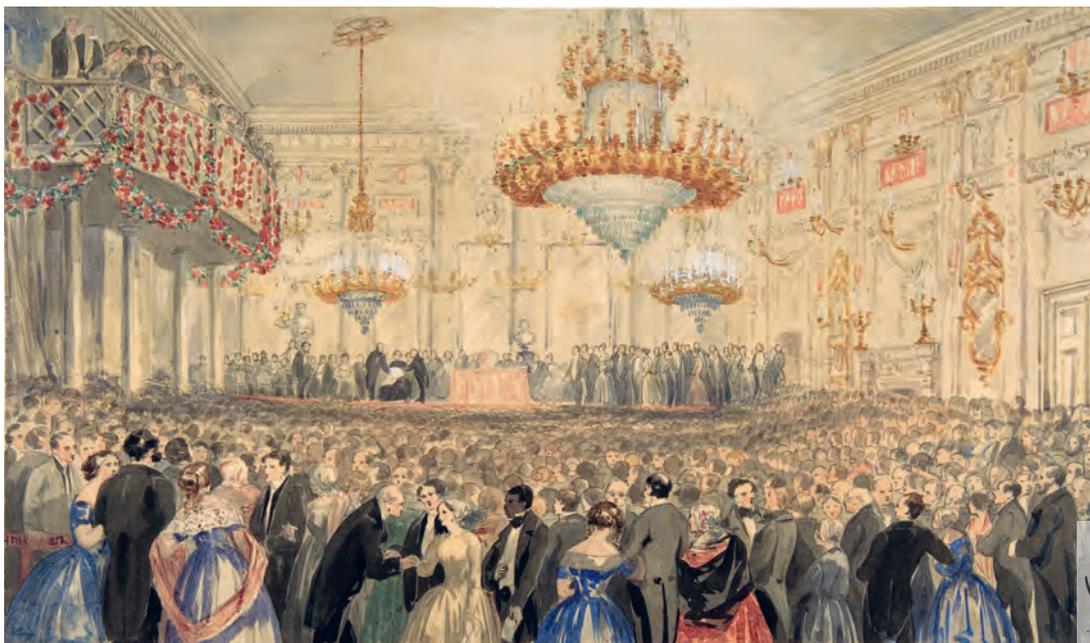


6.2. FREDERICK STILES AGATE, *Indians Lamenting the Approach of the White Man*, pen and black ink, grey washes and graphite, ca. 1830, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.



6.3. FRANÇOIS-AUGUSTE BIARD, *Bust-Length Study of a Man*, oil on canvas, 1848, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Besides being well known as a painter of exotic subjects, drawn from life with great realism and ethnographic exactitude, the result of his extensive travels in Asia and across the American continent, Auguste Biard was a staunch campaigner against the slave trade and for the abolition of slavery. In 1838 the public exhibition of his large painting on *La Traite des esclaves* (1833, now at the Wilberforce House Museum, Hull UK) caused huge uproar. In 1848, following the rise of the Second Republic and the prohibition of all forms of slavery across its overseas colonies, the French State commissioned from Biard a monumental historical tableau to celebrate officially *L'Abolition de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (1849, now at the Musée du Chateau de Versailles). This bust-length study of a male subject is part of the preparation for that celebratory work.



6.4. WILLIAM HENRY FISK, *Abolition Meeting Held at Willis's Room in Honour of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, pencil drawing and watercolour, 1853, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Uncle Tom's Cabin enjoyed a truly phenomenal success, especially in Europe. Virtually out of nowhere, the author, a mature housewife and mother, the wife and daughter of Calvinist pastors, was catapulted to the uppermost echelons of the international abolitionist movement. In London Beecher Stowe had an official meeting with the mayor and also met privately with major exponents of the aristocracy. The «British and Foreign Antislavery Society» organised a reception in her honour, which, as reported by the press, was attended by a select, elegant public. It is indeed a shame that the novelist never had the opportunity to address the audience at any of these public events: the rigid puritan conventions of feminine modesty and reserve, strictly forbade women from speaking up in public.



6.5. THEODOR KAUFMANN, *On to Liberty*, oil on canvas, 1867, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Kaufmann was originally from Germany, and had fought in the Dresden Uprising of 1848-1849. In 1850 he was exiled and settled in the United States, where, during the Civil War, though aged fifty, he joined the army of the Unionist North as an illustrator-reporter. Kaufmann had studied in Düsseldorf and Munich. While his art was close to Auguste Biard's in terms of themes, realism, and perception, like Delacroix's *Natchez* [fig. 6.1] this specific painting addresses a typical subject of the European 'risorgimento' uprisings: that of the exiled refugee. A cloud of uncertainty hangs over not just the future emancipation but the very survival of these slaves, who have fled their plantation in order to join the Unionist camps and place themselves under the soldiers' protection. Where will their path «to Liberty» actually lead them? What awaits them is hardly a new Eden: once the war has ended, they will face a work market saturated with cheap unskilled labour, and more subtle forms of exploitation and subjugation. For this bedraggled group of black women, youths, and children the road «to Liberty» was going to be very long still.

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7.

FEMALE MARTYRS, AMAZONS, VESTALS

*The fate and duties of women before and after the Enlightenment
(seventeenth-nineteenth centuries)*



7.1. CLAUDE DERUET, *Triumph of the Amazons* (detail), oil on canvas, ca. 1620, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

From the very inception of classical mythology, the Amazons were seen as the embodiment of a pernicious blood-thirsty power; a bewildering barbarian mercilessness that was in obvious contravention to all eternal hierarchies and laws established by nature; something that vied in outrageousness with the human sacrifices practised by the Scythians, or with incest, a custom that Herodotus described as characteristic of several Oriental peoples. Gynocratic republics were a world unto themselves, outside male control, where men were enslaved and subjected to harsh discipline, their main use being as reproductive tools: in eighteenth-century comic theatre this monstrous regiment of women was still viewed as a glaring example of the world upside-down (e.g. Goldoni's *Mondo alla roversa*), the heir to that implicit, unquestioned aberration that was the ancient matriarchy, which even nineteenth-century classicists still considered a curious paradox of the prehistoric era in Greece and the Mediterranean. Of the thirty-one Amazons listed in Greek and Latin lyric and epic poetry, six were despatched by Hercules, three by Achilles, two each by Diomedes and Theseus, and one each by Idomeneus, Podarces, and Ajax the Lesser. One can only imagine how the audience, in both ancient and modern times, would be cheering from the stalls, giving clear signs of their appreciation and male complicity.



7.2. CHARLES VANLOO, *The Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, preliminary drawing in pen and brown ink, 1755, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In his *Politique tirée des paroles propres de l'Écriture sainte* (published posthumously in 1709), Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, explained that, «comme les autres», in ancient Israel «[l]es princes tenoient leurs enfants, et jusqu'à leurs filles, toujours prêts à immoler leur vie pour la salut du pays». This was the moral of the famous parable of the «fille unique de Jephthé». The original biblical episode defined the role, prerogatives, and duty of obedience to one's father, and even the practice of sacrificing young girls in ancient societies; however, it also illustrates the significant import, during the Ancien Régime, of an artistic legacy that celebrated the sacrifices of Hesione, Polyxena, Macaria, and especially Iphigenia. The pagan mythological allegory should always be read in biblical and Christian terms: in this instance, in the light of the sacrifice of the biblical girl, who thus confirmed her willingness to die to her father: «My father, if you have opened your mouth to the Lord, do to me according to what has gone forth from your mouth, now that the Lord has avenged you on your enemies, on the Ammonites» (Judges 11:36). Thus, obedience to one's father equalled obedience to God. And although human sacrifices are rather hard to justify in terms of common sense, allegorical exegesis will rise to the task of making these teachings acceptable. As explained in the Jansenist *Bible de Royaumont*, «si l'action du père est si blâmable, celle de la fille ne se peut assez admirer [...]. Elle apprend à toutes les vierges chrétiennes qui sont touchées de l'amour du Ciel et de la haine du siècle, à s'immoler à Dieu avec joie [...]; s'offrant à Dieu en sacrifice avec une plénitude de cœur, sans se mettre en peine si leurs pères sont justes ou injustes dans cette occasion».



7.3. HENDRICK GOLTZIUS, *The Suicide of Lucretia*, engraving, c. 1578-1580.

Faced with the episode of the rape of Lucretia by one of the sons of king Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, it is unlikely that what came immediately to the mind of an audience of subjects of a monarch would be the victorious rebellion that brought down the last king of Rome, leading to the foundation of the Roman Republic. With far greater probability they would view this episode as the just revenge of three noble kinsmen against the open violation of the honour of their dynasty. According to the rules of wounded honour, the juridical and proprietorial dimension of the conflict prevailed over the civil consequences of the crime that was thus avenged. In this case, the events that unfolded were the logical and natural outcome of the internal crisis of the aristocracy of archaic Rome, in fact, of the branches of one aristocratic dynasty, the *gens Tarquinia*. By allowing the rape to be perpetrated, the sovereign had proved himself incapable of safeguarding the sacred right of «ménage» as acknowledged in Bodin and every theoretician of absolute «royale» monarchy. The violated woman came specifically under the jurisdiction of such a «ménage». In other words: Lucretia has no juridical capability; as such, she is not a person but the property of her husband, who alone has an exclusive right to her enjoyment. The injustice thus did not concern the woman herself as a person: it was, instead, a form of damage inflicted to property belonging to an illustrious dynasty and, consequently, an injury to the latter's honour.



7.4. GEORGES DE LA TOUR, *The Penitent Magdalen*, oil on canvas, ca. 1640, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Another female figure frequently encountered in the Christian figurative tradition was eminently suited to the reflection on sin and the vanity of mortal things in the face of the eternity of death. That figure was the «daughter of Eve» and reformed sinner *par excellence*: in the gospels, Mary of Magdala; on the altars, Saint Mary Magdalene. As in the other four extant versions by Georges de La Tour, the Metropolitan Museum's *Penitent Magdalen* displays the usual symbols of the widespread and pervasive *vanitas* genre: the mirror and the skull, in striking contrast with the attractions of a florid and fresh complexion, the bold promise hinted at in the flowing hair, the prostitute's gaudy low-cut dress. In the other versions, even her knees are bared. However, in this series, with its severe Augustinian asceticism, and the probable influence of Jansenism, as can be felt in numerous other paintings by La Tour, the usual iconographical apparatus is accompanied by the well-known metaphor of the lamp. This was no mere virtuoso show, an attempt to create a sense of "drama" through clever light effects; it was, rather, a specific reference to a difficult point of faith, a meditation that aimed at attaining some understanding of the divine, however partial and imperfect. As stated by Augustine, «the free grace of God is the oil of the lamps» (*In Joh. Ev.*, 5, 23, 3). However, the

flame is here also reflected in a mirror. In a different version (Washington, National Gallery) the flame is hidden by the skull placed on a book. This hints at the fact that, while man is weighed down by his flesh and by sin, God himself and Truth can only be grasped through the symbols and enigmas scattered throughout creation, which are nothing but pale earthly reflections of *Veritas Domini*. Only after death, and only if saved and completely redeemed, will the faithful be able to contemplate God and Truth in all their splendour.

7.5. GASPARE TRAVERSI, *Saint Margaret of Cortona*, ca. 1758, oil on canvas, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As soon as her canonisation was approved by the Orsini Pope Benedict XIII, on 16th May 1728, Saint Margaret of Cortona was greeted on the altars with the appellation of «Nova Magdalena». Compared with the previous image (7.4), however, this painting denotes a completely opposite view of how to remedy sin and of the options open to the penitent soul seeking redemption. This view was more understanding and forgiving, as well as less abstractly theological; one might even say, it was far more joyful. The very life story of the penitent Margaret was in itself a kind of hagiographic soap opera, complete with the inevitable happy ending: first, as a very young woman, she fell into a life of sin; then, she was abducted and cohabited *more uxorio* with her abductor, becoming a mother still without the sacrament of marriage; then, the tragic death of her rich aristocratic lover, after which Margaret was cursed and cast off by her own humble peasant family; finally, she was admitted to the Franciscan Order, where she enjoyed a life of prayer and peace. Gaspare Traversi's painting summarises all these events – both the tragic ones and the eventual happy outcome, which were already well known to the devotees of this saint, who is extremely popular in Central Italy: the woman has just



been saved by the very fact of having made her choice: the Devil flees in desperation, and Margaret is home and dry. In religious environments characterised by a more rigidly ascetic penitential view, the numerous elements of tenderness and sensuality in this painting would have given scandal and been considered nothing short of sacrilegious: namely, the loving gaze of the Saint directed towards the Angel; the little girl holding a biscuit and looking fondly at the dog lying at her feet – she could be the fruit of Margaret's sin, or Margaret herself as a still innocent child. It is nonetheless significant that Gaspare Traversi, the author of this picture, is famous for his genre paintings of a satirical kind, depicting «ridicolose» scenes with a strong comical component. However, in terms of psychological meaning, this particular painting renders in the best possible way that promise of hope and the exhortation to work towards one's redemption on which the doctrine of Good Deeds is founded: which amounts to an invitation to advertise and support a Church that never rejects any sinner willing to convert. Ultimately, Margaret did not devote herself to the ascetic life of a hermit, but chose, far more dynamically, to remain in the World and perform 'good deeds', becoming the founder and soul of female communities and religious sororities that worked to assist the poor.



7.6. ÉTIENNE FESSARD after CHARLES-JOSEPH NATOIRE, *Premier tableau des Sœurs*, etching and engraving, de tail, 1756.

This is one of a series of fifteen engravings by Fessard that reproduced the no longer extant frescoes from the chapel of the Enfants-Trouvés orphanage in Paris. The chapel, built between 1746 and 1750, was demolished in the nineteenth century as part of the capital's urban restructuring. Natoire's image is an almost archetypal hagiographical representation of the religious education of girls.



7.7. REINIER VINKELES, vignette for the frontispiece of Denis Diderot's *La Religieuse*, Haarlem, Bohn, 1798.

This in fact rather poorly executed vignette illustrates the frontispiece of a Dutch translation of Diderot's *La Religieuse*, and could not be more different in spirit from the previous image. Diderot's short novel was written around 1760. Some ten years later it started circulating abroad in manuscript form and in a very small number of copies within Grimm's «Correspondance littéraire» and was finally published in 1780, still as an anonymous, clandestine work. The Dutch translation in question was destined for the national market, and came out in 1798, under the Batavian Republic. The legend of the vignette reproduces the following passage from the novel: «l'on me jeta sur une natte que l'humidité avait à demi pourrie» («alwaar men mij op een mat, die door de vogt half verrot was, neersmet»). © 2025



7.8. FRANÇOIS-HUBERT DROUAI, *Portrait of a Young Woman as a Vestal Virgin*, oil on canvas, 1767, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

For Enlightenment culture, convents were places where women were forcibly segregated and subjected to others' arbitrary decisions as well as to physical and moral torture. Especially in the absence of a definite and genuine vocation, monastic vows were a crime against God, Nature, and the «droits de l'humanité». In the Late Enlightenment, the theme of the Vestal, as portrayed in paintings, plays, and literary works, provided the *philosophes* with a further, formidable tool for indirect propaganda. In the course of a few decades, the sacrifice of the Vestals, virgins devoted to the preservation of the sacred fire of the Roman State, allowed a number of protest parables with a widely political, religious, and civil agenda to set down on the page and the stage the pernicious effects on innocent and defenceless creatures of a religion founded on bloodshed, fanaticism, and superstition. The aim of these protests was to bring both religious and family life round to more enlightened customs and solely beneficial actions that would help both individuals and the whole of civil society. As Diderot explained: «[C]'est qu'une vestale est un être en même temps historique, poétique et moral». This figure became so popular that by then it had been a fashionable subject in portrait painting for years: a flattering fiction for the amusement of great aristocratic ladies. This splendid portrait by Drouais is one example of this among many.



7.9. JACQUES-LOUIS DAVID, *Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier and Marie-Anne Lavoisier*, 1788, oil on canvas, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

After so much grief, penance, and female segregation, here is, at last, a painting depicting a couple who appear to have set their marriage on an equal footing. This union originated in financial milieus, since, like his father-in-law, the great scientist was a *fermier*, or “tax-farmer”. Lavoisier was fifteen years older than his bride. The Lavoisiers were the toast of society: an ideal couple, rich, cultured, and witty. And yet Marie-Anne Pierrette Paulze was much more than simply the amiable hostess of a scientific salon, or the translator from English of scientific essays that her husband used in his work. She was not, that is, a mere “laboratory muse”, the devoted handmaid who kept the instruments in order: she was her husband’s peer in terms of scientific research, and shared with him the merit of fundamental discoveries in the field of chemistry and biology, herself making several important contributions to chemical science. After her husband was guillotined, Marie-Anne continued to carry out and publish her research. In 1804 she married another scientist, physicist Benjamin Thompson, but kept Lavoisier’s surname.



7.10. PIERRE-MICHEL ALIX after JACQUES BLÉZOT, *Mathilde and Richard the Lionheart Leaving for the Crusades*, colour acquatint on etched lines, 1814.

Madame Sophie Cottin's famous and long-winded *troubadour* novel, *Mathilde ou Mémoires tirés de l'histoire des Croisades*, published in six volumes in 1805, is in many ways a forerunner of the militant nineteenth-century historiography that placed a romantic and reactionary slant on the "holy enterprise" of the Crusades, viewed as an act of faith and civilisation, in opposition to the execrable sacrilegious evaluation of this event by Enlightenment historians, and especially to Voltaire's remarks in his *Essai sur les mœurs*. Indeed, the long historical preface to the novel is signed by François-Joseph Michaud, who was later to embark on an acclaimed, monumental, and rather ideological *Histoire des Croisades*, the third and final version of which was published in 1840. The protagonist, Mathilde, had been raised in a convent and had been destined from childhood to become a nun. At the start of the novel, she suddenly decides to leave the convent, not in order to escape taking the vows but to become a pilgrim and follow her brother Richard the Lionheart, King of England, in the Crusades. Ultimately, this simply meant moving from being under one jurisdiction to being subject to another. In true romance tradition, in the Holy Land chaste Mathilde experiences the torments of the flesh, having fallen in «passionate but most chaste love with the brother of the Great Saladdin», valiant and magnanimous Prince Adel-Malek. After much strife, their wedding is immediately followed by the death and conversion *in articulo mortis* of the Infidel. Mathilde will thus enjoy the privilege of remaining eternally pure. Following the unconsummated marriage, faithful nonetheless to the memory of her spouse, Mathilde decides to withdraw forever to the monastery on Mount Carmel. A nineteenth-century admirer of Madame Cottin's novel, wrote: «One cannot imagine a more pious or virtuous maid: the purpose for her journey to Syria is holy, the modalities are decorous», since she travelled under the tutelage of her brother; «she is modest in her behaviour, most innocent in her mores; she is, in sum, completely worthy of wearing those sacred veils, in the same way as if she had already entered monastic life». One might say that, given the outcome, in *Mathilde's* case a religious education turns out to have produced excellent results.



7.11. EDGARD DEGAS, *The Ballet from «Robert le Diable»*, 1871, oil on canvas, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As Romanticism acquired a taste for the dark and the demonic, a new kind of morbidity, with unmistakably erotic undertones, became attached to the motif of the enforced segregation of unwilling nuns who had been unnaturally forced into a life of chastity. In 1831, the ballet from the third act of Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (libretto by Eugène Scribe and Germain Delavigne) portrayed the moonlit cloister of a derelict convent in which demons and the ghosts of damned nuns joined a dance that soon descended into «une bacchanale ardente». Bertram, the protagonist of the opera, thus glosses the proceedings: «Ces prêtresses du ciel dont l'infidèle ardeur, / Brulant pour d'autres dieux un encens impudique, / Où régnaient les vertus fit régner le plaisir!». Despite causing uproar, this sacrilegious ballet was performed without cuts, thanks to a new law on the freedom of the press passed by the constitutional monarchy after the July Revolution. However, throughout the nineteenth century anyone who wished to watch this scene live in the theatre would have to travel to the Opéra in Paris. The opera was heavily censored in the province, and in some cases banned outright, which did not prevent it from becoming one of Meyerbeer's greatest successes. At the same time, it was the foundational work in the *grand-opéra* genre. Verse translations were produced abroad, where, however, it was subjected to mean-spirited and often drastic alterations: the times, situations, statements were blatantly misrepresented; at times whole verse sequences already set in music, parts of the finale and even entire acts were brutally shaved off the libretto.

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Firenze

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FINITO DI STAMPARE
PER CONTO DI LEO S. OLSCHKI EDITORE
PRESSO ABC TIPOGRAFIA • CALENZANO (FI)
NEL MESE DI MAGGIO 2025

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Recent historiography often portrays the Enlightenment as the intellectual source of modern evils and projects contemporary biases on Enlightenment thinkers. Discussions on the legacy of the Enlightenment have ended up being subsumed within the study and exploration of Western imperialism, colonial domination, capitalism, inequalities, and racism. For its part, this volume aims to offer an alternative perspective on the legacy of the Enlightenment. It does so by shedding light on the new language of rights, constitutionalism, and equality shaped by the Enlightenment and by exploring its legacies, transformations, and reinterpretations in the nineteenth century. The Enlightenment promoted a cultural revolution and a new humanism associated with the invention of the language of the “rights of man” and the idea of the equality of humanity. The essays collected in this volume retrace some aspects of the intellectual legacy of this revolution by looking at how Enlightenment authors and texts influenced debates on the safeguarding of individual rights, written constitutionalism, inequalities and the remnants of feudalism, ideas of development, the equality of men and women, European colonialism, and the oppression of indigenous people. The volume also explores the impact of the ideas of rights and humanity brought on by the Enlightenment by looking at the new ethical and social role acquired by art and music.

DOI: 10.82026/9788822286604

