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Discourses of Decline

Essays on Republicanism in Honor of Wyger R.E. Velema

Edited by

Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes, and Arthur Weststeijn

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Preface

This volume of essays honors the scholarship of Wyger Velema on the occasion of his retirement from the University of Amsterdam in 2021. Over the past decades, Velema has played a prominent role in international discussions on the history of political thought and the culture of the Enlightenment, especially regarding the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic. Born in 1955, he closely witnessed and participated in the development of the historiography of early modern republicanism, first as a student of Ernst Kossmann at the University of Groningen, then as a doctoral student of John Pocock at Johns Hopkins University, and subsequently at the University of Amsterdam, where, in 2009, he succeeded Eco Haitsma Mulier on the Jan Romein chair for the Philosophy of History and the History of Historiography. Velema's many contributions to the history of political thought include his initiative, together with Terence Ball and Jörn Leonhard, to start the book series Studies in the History of Political Thought with Brill publishers. We are grateful to the current editor, Annelien de Dijn, for including this volume in that series, as it is the most fitting venue to honor Velema's scholarship. Thanks are due also to Stichting Daendels, which provided funding for the copy-editing of the volume, and to Kate Delaney for her corrections. This volume was edited and published in the context of the ERC-funded research program *RISK: Republics on the Stage of Kings*, with which two of the editors are affiliated. We would like to thank Alessandro Metlica of the University of Padua, the PI of this program, for making it possible to publish this volume in open access. Finally, we would like to thank all the friends, colleagues, and former students of Wyger Velema who contributed to this volume. We are confident that the diversion of their reflections on the theme of decline will avert the menace of intellectual decline that looms after academic retirement.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Republican Decline in Context

Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes, and Arthur Weststeijn

The study of early modern republicanism has featured prominently in the development of intellectual history and the history of political thought ever since 1955, when Hans Baron published his famous book *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*. In this pioneering study, Baron launched the concept of "civic humanism" to denote a specific philosophy of public engagement, based upon the virtuous citizen who actively participates in the government of his community and fights for its liberty to save it from impending doom. According to Baron, this ideal came to fruition in the early fifteenth century when Renaissance Florence faced and surmounted an imminent crisis and the threat of foreign invasion and tyrannical rule.[1] Baron had first coined the term *Bürgerhumanismus* as a young scholar in the Weimar Republic, and subsequently developed his thesis during his exile in the United States. As he himself acknowledged, his thinking was a reflection of the crisis of Western democracy and its eventual triumph over Nazism.[2]

Few historiographical interpretations have been as influential as this thesis of "civic humanism." The details of Baron's historical account have been disputed and revised by subsequent scholarship on the Florentine Renaissance,[3] but his interpretation has been immensely significant because it laid the groundwork for later studies which essentially transposed and applied Baron's thesis to other contexts. In this process, "civic humanism" transformed into "classical republicanism," an intellectual tradition originating in antiquity and rising to prominence in the early modern period. Landmark publications directly or indirectly inspired by Baron, from John Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) to the two volumes edited by Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage* (2002), have placed this

1 Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 11 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

2 Riccardo Fubini, "Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron," *The Journal of Modern History* 64, no. 3 (1992): 541–74.

3 James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56, no. 2 (1995): 309–33; idem (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

republican tradition firmly on the historiographical map as a crucial element in early modern European history and the history of Western thought at large.[4]

Yet as Rachel Hammersley shows in a recent comprehensive overview, the origins, contents, and limits of this republican tradition are complex and contested.[5] Following Baron's trail, republicanism has generally been studied as a specific political language that holds that the best form of government is defined by the self-rule of citizens, rather than by a singular head of state. The study of this specific political language has, however, produced a bewildering array of specific types of early modern republican thought. Pocock's analysis put the concept of virtue in the sense of citizen participation in politics on center stage, whilst Skinner gave predominance to the concept of republican liberty in the sense of the absence of arbitrary domination. Whereas some historians point out that republican thought originated in classical (Roman or Greek) models that were taken up and adapted by future generations – most notably in Renaissance Italy but also in the eighteenth century – others have proposed that such a lineage hardly existed and that synchronic influences have been of greater importance than diachronic ones, questioning the existence of a singular "republican tradition."[6]

In recent years, moreover, historians have increasingly questioned the dichotomy between republics and monarchies. Scholarship on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy, for example, shows that the political systems of republicanism and seignorialism were not so very different.[7] The common denominator of political thought in the city-states of the Italian Renaissance was not so much a partisan adherence to a specific political system or conception of "republican" liberty, as a shared humanist belief that citizens and rulers should cultivate virtue, irrespective of the existing form of government.[8] Even

4 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, ed. by Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner, 11 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

5 Rachel Hammersley, *Republicanism: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2020).

6 For recent historiographical overviews on republicanism, see Ibid., 199–203; Rachel Hammersley, "Introduction: The Historiography of Republicanism and Republican Exchanges," *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 3 (2012): 323–37; Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn, "Introduction: Classical Republicanism and Ancient Republican Models," in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, ed. by Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1–19.

7 Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Myth of Republicanism in Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015).

8 James Hankins, *Virtue Politics: Soulcraft and Statecraft in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019).

absolutist regimes in early modern Europe such as the Spanish monarchy or the Holy Roman Empire harbored strong traditions of communal government at local level that can be considered comparable to the kingless polities of Venice, Genoa, the Swiss Confederation or the Dutch Republic.[9] Other studies have shown that the republican characteristics of these polities should not be overestimated, as concepts of statehood and sovereignty and practices of representation remained strongly embedded in a monarchical framework.[10] Revisionist scholarship has even argued that the American Revolution, in Pocock's analysis "the last act of the civic Renaissance," was essentially an insurrection in favor of royal power.[11] At the same time, new sweeping interpretations of the republican tradition have forcefully argued for the existence of a "radical republicanism" from Machiavelli to Marx that is fundamentally based on popular democratic sovereignty and opposed to not only political but also economic and social structures of domination, including capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy.[12]

The rich scholarship on republicanism has thus, paradoxically, blurred the coherence of republicanism as a specific political language, while even the distinction between republics and monarchies is often hard to draw. Yet for all their variety, recent studies on republicanism, mainly prioritizing the

9 *Repúblicas y republicanismo en la Europa moderna* (*siglos XVI-XVII*), ed. by Manuel Herrero Sánchez (Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2017); Thomas Weller, "Political Representation and Symbolic Communication in the Early Modern Period: The Imperial Cities of the Holy Roman Empire," in *Political Representation in the Ancien Régime*, ed. by Joaquim Albareda and Manuel Herrero Sánchez (New York: Routledge, 2019), 105–20.

10 Carlo Bitossi, *Il governo dei magnifici. Patriziato e politica a Genova fra Cinque e Seicento* (Genoa: ECIG, 1990); Thomas Maissen, *Die Geburt der Republic. Staatsverständnis und Repräsentation in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Helmer Helmers, *The Royalist Republic: Literature, Politics, and Religion in the Anglo-Dutch Public Sphere, 1639–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Alessandro Metlica, "Magnificence and Atticism in Seventeenth-Century Venice," in *Magnificence in the Seventeenth Century: Performing Splendour in Catholic and Protestant Contexts*, ed. by Gijs Versteegen, Stijn Bussels, and Walter Melion (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 261–75. The dichotomy between republic and monarchy is also critically interrogated in the ongoing research project "Republics on the Stage of Kings: Representing Republican State Power in the Europe of Absolute Monarchies, late 16th – early 18th century," in the framework of which this volume is published.

11 Eric Nelson, *The Royalist Revolution: Monarchy and the American Founding* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462.

12 John P. McCormick, *Machiavellian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); *Radical Republicanism: Recovering the Tradition's Popular Heritage*, ed. by Bruno Leipold, Karma Nabulsi, and Stuart White (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Annelien de Dijn, *Freedom: An Unruly History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

concept of liberty, have largely neglected a theme that in Baron's pioneering analysis emerged as one of the key aspects of the republican tradition: the concept of *decline*.[13] For Baron, whose interpretation originated in a time and place obsessed with crisis and the prospect of decline, the essence of "civic humanism" was precisely that it seized a moment of crisis to disrupt the looming course of fate and prevent imminent decline. This notion was further expanded and problematized by Pocock, who essentially turned Baron's thesis of crisis on its head. In Pocock's account, a crucial feature of classical republicanism is the awareness that republican rule is destined to eventual decline and fall. This awareness, indeed, identifies the "Machiavellian moment" when a republic confronts, in Pocock's phrasing, "its own temporal finitude."[14]

Following the Renaissance rediscovery of Polybius and his cyclical theory of the rise and fall of polities, early modern republicans understood the interplay between virtue and corruption as an inevitable development towards decline, as exemplified by the ancient models of Athens and Rome. The narrative of the Roman historian Sallust in particular suggested that the main threat to the survival of republican virtue was the onset of luxury, which supposedly undermined civic engagement and equality in the exercise of citizenship on the basis of land ownership and the bearing of arms. The theme of luxury gained traction with the rise of commercialization in the eighteenth century, when new modes of historical thinking in terms of stages of development engendered new discourses of cultural reflection that criticized modern commercial society as an epoch of decadence and decline.[15] Decline, then, is of central importance to the tradition of classical republicanism as it was originally

13 See for instance the recent overview by Hammersley, *Republicanism*, where the theme of decline is hardly mentioned.

14 Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, viii.

15 On the theme of luxury in the eighteenth century, see: Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, "The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, ed. by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 7–27; Istvan Hont, "The Early Enlightenment Debate on Commerce and Luxury," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 379–418; Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness: Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment* (London: Clarendon Press, 2004); John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007); Urte Weeber, *Republiken als Blaupause. Venedig, die Niederlande und die Eidgenossenschaft im Reformdiskurs der Frühaufklärung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 332–40. The rise of cultural critique in relation to modern commercial society in the eighteenth century is analyzed in Theo Jung, *Zeichen des Verfalls. Semantische Studien zur Entstehung der Kulturkritik im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 123–87.

theorized by Pocock and to the development of that tradition in early modernity, specifically in the eighteenth century. Yet in the more recent scholarship that approaches republicanism especially as a theory of liberty, the theme of republican decline has been overlooked by most historians – with the notable exception of Pocock himself, who has dedicated his later career to a sweeping analysis of the theme of decline and fall in European intellectual history.[16]

1 The Dutch Republic and the Problem of Decline

In this volume we seek to reintegrate the theme of decline into the current debates on the republican tradition, focusing in particular on the Dutch Republic during the later eighteenth century, arguably the polity that best encapsulates the topic of republican decline. While the United Provinces rose to prominence in the seventeenth century as a remarkably successful republican model surrounded by absolutist monarchies, for many eighteenth-century observers throughout Europe this once powerful polity had entered a steep path towards decline.[17]

Pocock has repeatedly grappled with the question how to make sense of eighteenth-century Dutch understandings of decline in light of his own account of classical republicanism. The eighteenth-century discourse of decline, for Pocock, essentially hinges on a narrative of virtue and corruption that looks back at the ancient liberty of agricultural property-holders, and that sees modern liberty in a commercial society as potentially corrupt. The case of the Dutch Republic complicates this interpretation, since it was an essentially commercial, urban state whose citizens were engaged in trade and possessed no landed property. What then did decline mean to Dutch republicans? In his most recent reflection on this question, Pocock eventually came to the conclusion that "we seem [...] to lack a study of how (whether?) [the narrative of virtue and corruption] was reformulated by Dutch thinkers of the *perrukentijd* [sic] and *patriottentijd* to explicate the problems of the declining republic."[18]

16 J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, VI vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–2016).

17 See *Dutch Decline in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. by Koen Stapelbroek, *History of European Ideas* 36, no. 2 (2010). This special issue considers the theme of decline mostly from a political economy perspective.

18 J.G.A. Pocock, "The Atlantic Republican Tradition: The Republic of the Seven Provinces," *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 2, no. 1 (2010): 1–10, quote on 9.

Our aim in this volume is to take up the invitation hidden in this statement and explore the multiple meanings of Dutch republican decline in context.

The theme of decline has in fact been central to scholarship on the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, although the bulk of the historiographical discussion has been concerned with the extent and the causes of Dutch economic decline, and the question whether this should be seen as relative or absolute.[19] Largely separate from the debates of economic historians, a smaller body of work has been devoted to Dutch eighteenth-century perceptions and understandings of decline, critically departing from Pocock's approach. When Pocock first discussed the applicability of his framework to the Dutch case, he suggested that one should make a sharp distinction between, on the one hand, the classical republican discourse of patriotism, which cherished the idea that the moral and political discipline of a civic militia and a republican form of government can offset the negative effects of a burgeoning commercial society, and, on the other hand, the Enlightenment discourse of politeness, which considered the rise of commerce an opportunity to enhance sociability. While the former discourse, in Pocock's analysis, was preoccupied with the menace of decline, the latter stressed "the progress of civilisation through the growth of commercial and cultural interchange."[20]

The prominent Dutch intellectual historian Ernst Kossmann was the first to reply to Pocock on this issue. In a series of publications, including a contribution to the landmark volume *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment, and Revolution*, Kossmann essentially tried to collapse the Pocockian distinction between a republican language of decline and an Enlightenment discourse of progress. He argued that the eighteenth-century Dutch conception of *achteruitgang* meant a temporary state of "retrogression" rather than an "inexorable process of diminishing power, health, or energy that

19 Joh. de Vries, *De economische achteruitgang der Republiek in de achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Van Campen, 1959); and see for instance C.R. Boxer, "The Dutch Economic Decline," in *The Economic Decline of Empires*, ed. by Carlo M. Cipolla (London: Methuen, 1970) 253–63; James C. Riley, "The Dutch Economy after 1650: Decline or Growth?" *Journal of European Economic History* 13 (1984): 521–69; Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade, 1585–1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 377–98; Arthur van Riel, "Rethinking the Economic History of the Dutch Republic: The Rise and Decline of Economic Modernity Before the Advent of Industrialized Growth," *Journal of Economic History* 56 (1996): 223–29; Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Growth, Decline, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500–1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Cf. also Koen Stapelbroek, "Dutch Decline as a European Phenomenon," *European History of Ideas* 36, no. 2 (2010): 147.

20 J.G.A. Pocock, "The Problem of Political Thought in the Eighteenth Century: Patriotism and Politeness," *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 9, no. 1 (1982): 3–24; quote on 21.

may be stopped or slowed for a while but rarely if ever reverses itself."[21] Kossmann's relative neglect of eighteenth-century uses of the concept *verval*, the Dutch word for decline that captures that second connotation, suggests that he deliberately downplayed the republican dimension of the Dutch discourse of decline. In the same volume, Wijnand Mijnhardt viewed decline through a cultural lens, focusing in particular on the quintessential Dutch spectatorial periodical, Justus van Effen's *Hollandsche Spectator* (1731–35). Mijnhardt observed that Van Effen and his contemporaries perceived the cause of economic decline as moral, but he concluded, like Kossmann, that they were optimistic about the possibility of recovery.[22] Mijnhardt and Kossmann thus approached the Dutch discourse of decline not as a republican discourse in the Pocockian sense, but rather in the Enlightenment terms of the interplay between retrogression and progress.[23]

This approach, however, disregards the fact that most commentators in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, whatever political faction they belonged to and whether they could be considered conservatives or reformers, were proud to call themselves republicans and shared a keen sense of the vulnerability of the republican system in general and theirs in particular. The relevance of this essentially republican dimension to Dutch discussions about decline has been explored more effectively by Wyger Velema, to whom the essays in this volume are dedicated. Throughout his career, Velema has successfully demonstrated

21 E.H. Kossmann, "The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment, and Revolution*, ed. by Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 29. See also E.H. Kossmann, "Comment on J.G.A. Pocock and Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republicanism," *Theoretische geschiedenis* 9 (1982): 29–36; idem, "Dutch Republicanism," in *L'età dei Lumi. Studi storici sul settecento Europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, vol. 1 (Naples: Jovene, 1985), 453–86; idem, "1787. De ineenstorting van de Patriottenbeweging en het probleem van Nederlands verval," in *Vergankelijkheid en continuïteit. Opstellen over geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), 114–137.

22 Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, "The Dutch Enlightenment: Humanism, Nationalism, and Decline," in *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Jacob and Mijnhardt, 208.

23 Over the years, Mijnhardt has repeatedly questioned the validity of the Pocockian paradigm, arguing moreover that the study of the Dutch eighteenth century has been taken hostage by a "new orthodoxy" with a "mono-disciplinary fixation" on politics, at the cost of excluding the socioeconomic and cultural dimension. See Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, "The Limits of the Present-day Historiography of Republicanism," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 37 (2005): 75–89; idem, *Een republikeinse erfenis* (Utrecht: Universiteit Utrecht, 2019), 20; idem, "Meervoudige moderniteit en de vergeten erfenis van de Nederlandse Verlichting," *Jaarboek De Achttiende Eeuw* 2 (2018): 21–23. Compare with this Wyger Velema, "Wijnand W. Mijnhardt on the Historiography of Republicanism: A Reply," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 37 (2005): 193–202, and the last section of this introduction.

the rich variety of Dutch republicanism and its significance for the republican tradition at large, demonstrating inter alia that the languages of patriotism and politeness were essentially intersected in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic and that civic humanism, economic thought, and Enlightenment were not mutually exclusive categories. Far from insisting on the republican tradition as an exclusively political language, Velema made the crucial observation that the Dutch spectatorial writers, often seen as the embodiment of Dutch Enlightenment culture, should be understood as "republican theorists" who represented the "cultural dimension" of classical republicanism.[24]

Velema's work, which has explored how different discourses of virtue and politeness, corruption and decline, operated simultaneously and often interacted with and against each other, therefore invites us to consider the coexistence of multiple discourses of decline as an intrinsic feature of republicanism, and to approach republicanism not only in political but also in cultural terms. By adopting this approach in this volume, we aim to provide answers to some of the key questions that Pocock has raised in his attempt to make sense of Dutch understandings of republican decline. These questions include the role of the mythical Batavian past in Dutch perceptions of decline, the narrative that eighteenth-century Dutchmen construed to understand their own history in relation to antiquity and the rise of modernity, and the paradoxical transformation of the Dutch Republic into a parliamentary monarchy in the nineteenth century.[25]

More generally, the focus on the problem of decline allows us to interrogate the linearity that underlies much scholarship on the republican tradition. Pocock's narrative of classical republicanism clashing with the rise of commercial society and eventually ceding to modern liberalism has been seriously challenged, particularly in the context of the French and American Revolutions.[26] Yet, a notion of a linear development of rise, decline, and fall remains

24 Wyger R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), chapter 4 (77–91): "Polite Republicanism and the Problem of Decline." This chapter draws on two earlier publications: "Beschaafde republikeinen. Burgers in de achttiende eeuw," in *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen*, ed. by Remieg Aerts and Henk te Velde (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1998), and "Ancient and Modern Virtue Compared: De Beaufort and Van Effen on Republican Citizenship," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30 (1997): 437–43.

25 Pocock, "The Atlantic Republican Tradition," 9–10.

26 See e.g. Keith M. Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001): 32–53; Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics After the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008); Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For the case of the United States, see Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, *Liberal*

engrained in contemporary scholarship on republicanism. For all their bewildering variety, studies on the republican tradition overall share the conviction that the "classical" republicanism of the early modern period progressively faded away and that the ancient language of virtue and positive liberty was replaced around 1800 by the modern language of rights and negative liberty – a narrative that essentially continues in the footsteps of Benjamin Constant's famous lecture from 1819 on the liberty of ancients compared with that of moderns. Indeed, several of these studies assert that republican liberty has itself been subjected to decline and therefore needs to be resurrected in the twenty-first century as an historical alternative for modern liberalism: in a way, scholarship on republicanism thus seems to have internalized the republican discourse of decline.[27]

By steering away from liberty as the central republican concept and thematizing this very discourse of decline, our aim in this volume is to reach a new understanding of the dynamics between ancient and modern in the republican tradition. The development of republicanism, we contend, should not be seen in terms of a linear process. Instead, the complexity and multifaceted nature of republicanism asks for an approach that analyzes the intersections between different republican discourses in a variety of contexts (including monarchical polities), and that explores how these discourses develop, transect and overlap, disappear and reappear again, submerge and resurface in different moments and places in time. This approach includes, but is certainly not limited to, questions such as the ones we address in this volume: what was the significance of ancient republican models in early modern theories confronting defeat and decline? Which political and intellectual strategies were developed to forestall, transform, or overcome republican decline? How did political theorists cope with the prospect of decline in periods of sudden and rapid change such as the revolutionary era?

The essays in this volume address these questions from various angles. Ordered in a chronological and geographic sequence, they all venture beyond the traditional Pocockian focus on the Florentine Renaissance,

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Beginnings: Making a Republic for the Moderns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Cf. on the Dutch revolutionary era, Wyger R.E. Velema, "Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse Revolutie, 1795–1798," in *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800*, ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas, and Wyger Velema (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013), 27–63; idem, "Reform, Revolution, and the Republican Tradition: The Case of the Batavian Republic," in *Languages of Reform in the Eighteenth Century: When Europe Lost Its Fear of Change*, ed. by Susan Richter, Thomas Maissen, and Manuela Albertone (New York: Routledge, 2019), 363–83.

27 Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); De Dijn, *Freedom*.

seventeenth-century England and the nascent United States of America, and also leave aside the well-studied case of Revolutionary France. Instead, they place the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic at the heart of the debate. The first three chapters survey Dutch intellectual developments from the early seventeenth until the late eighteenth century. They discuss reflections on the commercial and imperialist nature of the Dutch Republic and zoom in on key authors and texts, including the philosopher Baruch Spinoza who, in the influential thesis of Jonathan Israel, has been characterized as the foundational figure of modern democratic republicanism.[28] The tension between aristocratic and democratic tendencies again became a central theme in republican debate during the Dutch revolutionary era around 1800, which forms the core of this volume. Chapters five to nine provide fresh perspectives on the intense ideological conflict of this era, when Patriot revolutionaries strongly criticized the oligarchical nature of the traditional Dutch republican government. Fueled by internal political struggle and international developments, particularly the American and French Revolutions, a debate on the nature of republicanism was waged with profound consequences for the ideological and institutional arrangements of the Dutch Republic, culminating in the eventual transition of the republic into a monarchy and the subsequent demise of republican thought in the Netherlands.

To situate the Dutch Republic within a broader international perspective, the last five chapters of the volume explore connections with other contexts, republican and monarchical, that have been much less studied within scholarship on the history of republicanism: the Spanish monarchy, the polity from which the Dutch gained their independence, the German lands, which culturally and intellectually are most strongly connected to the Netherlands, and the Republic of Venice, which shares with the Dutch Republic a narrative of decline and fall. While the volume at large takes a transnational perspective in analyzing how ideas and writings travelled across borders and were picked up, adapted, and disseminated internationally, these final chapters particularly allow for a comparative approach that reminds us of similarities and differences, not only between different republics but also between republics and monarchies. For example, the myth of noble and virtuous Batavian ancestors that played such an important part in Dutch republican narratives, took on a surprising dimension in Spain, a polity that, as John Elliott has shown, was equally haunted by the specter of decline.[29] Besides bringing such monarchical

28 Jonathan Israel, "The Intellectual Origins of Modern Democratic Republicanism (1660–1720)," *European Journal of Political Theory* 3 (2004): 7–36.

29 J.H. Elliott, "The Question of Decline," in *Spain and its World, 1500–1700* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 211–286.

contexts into the historiographical debate on the republican tradition, this volume also bridges the gap between the early modern period, which remains dominant in republican scholarship, and post-1800 developments, up to the Weimar Republic of the 1920s when Baron coined his concept of *Bürgerhumanismus* in a period during which the theme of decline became, once again, a powerful intellectual narrative.

2 The Many Guises of Patriotism and Politeness

The contributions in this volume have been written as separate essays, but together they deepen and revise our understanding of the different discourses of decline that can be distinguished in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic and beyond. In her chapter, Eleá de la Porte has revisited the very spectators that are so central to previous analyses of Dutch decline. De la Porte confirms the view that spectatorial writers saw moral degeneration as the main cause of the decay of the Republic and that they considered themselves to be its healers. She follows Velema in his observation that the seventeenth century became for these authors a "golden age of Dutch manners and morals,"[30] while the mythological Batavian past lost its relevance, because the Germanic tribe of the Batavians was now considered too uncivilized to serve as an example. However, as De la Porte shows, this trend was reversed towards the end of the eighteenth century. Spectatorial authors writing in the time of the Dutch Revolution (c. 1780–1800) overwhelmingly belonged to the revolutionary camp. For them the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic was less useful as model for the present because of the old-regime connotations it had now acquired. The ancient Batavians resurfaced as uncorrupted, virtuous republicans, even if their incivility remained a source of discomfort.

Jan Rotmans, too, demonstrates that the eighteenth-century Dutch discourse of decline did not develop in a linear way. Like De la Porte, Rotmans takes the work of Velema as his starting point, but unlike Velema and De la Porte he identifies a more orthodox classical republican strand in Dutch political thought that was more pessimistic about the possibility to bring republican decline to a halt than the spectatorial writers. According to Rotmans, late-eighteenth-century authors such as Cornelis Zillesen (1735–1828) and IJsbrand van Hamelsveld (1743–1812), whom Velema had previously classified with the polite republicans in the tradition of Van Effen, in fact continued to see decline first and foremost as the result of the rise of luxury and presented civic virtue

30 Velema, "Polite Republicanism," 82.

as its antidote. The introduction of representative government and a constitution, which was the Dutch revolutionary solution to the corrupted political system of the stadtholderian regime, did not strike them as the magic bullet that would help them to escape the inevitable fate of every republican state.

Ida Nijenhuis and Lina Weber juxtapose differing views on decline. In her longitudinal analysis of commercial republicanism in the early modern Dutch Republic, which bears the fruits of a long career that ran parallel to that of Velema, Nijenhuis contrasts the traditional discourse in which decline is caused by luxury with the writings of authors who, following the publication of David Hume's *Of Luxury*, have a less negative view on luxury, such as Simon Stijl (1731–1804), Isaac de Pinto (1717–87), and Elie Luzac (1721–96).[31] Of those three authors, Weber gives center stage to Luzac, the Orangist theorist to whom Velema dedicated his doctoral thesis, and compares his thinking to that of the famous revolutionary Patriot Joan Derk van der Capellen (1741–84).[32] Weber specifically focuses on the problem of debt. According to the classical republican orthodoxy, debt, like luxury, had corrupting effects, and therefore contributed to decline. Weber points out that for Van der Capellen debt as such was not problematic, but in his view Dutch patricians had become corrupted because they had lent money to England. Luzac, by contrast, considered national debt as ruinous, but he reached this conclusion following a modern economic rather than a classical republican line of argument.

Discussions of decline touched upon not only economic issues within Dutch society such as debt, but also upon issues relating to the colonial world overseas. As Freya Sierhuis shows in her chapter, the craze for colonial consumer goods based on slave labor, such as coffee, was increasingly deemed to corrupt republican simplicity and sobriety in the later eighteenth century. Dutch colonial agents, blinded by imperial arrogance and greed, could be considered to have forsaken their republican identity, while freedom-loving Asian princes who tried to resist corrupted Dutch rule embodied a true republican ethos, for example in the play *Agon, Sultan van Bantam* (1769). Nonetheless, the interaction between republicanism and anti-colonial and abolitionist discourse was complex since Enlightenment theories concerning the different stages of

31 See also I.J.A. Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe. Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787) en de ontwikkeling van de politieke economie in de Europese Verlichting* (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1992); and idem, "De weelde als deugd?," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 24, no. 1 (1992): 45–56.

32 Wyger R.E. Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1721–1796)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993). Cf. also idem, "Generous Republican Sentiments: The Political Thought of Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol," in *A Marble Revolutionary: The Dutch Patriot Joan Derk van der Capellen and his Monument*, ed. by Arthur Weststeijn (Rome: Palombi, 2011), 39–65.

civilizational progress essentially prioritized a paternalist narrative of moral education towards liberty.

Was there no escaping the notion of decline in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic? Niek van Sas writes that Joan Hendrik Swildens (1745–1809), in his best-known work *Vaderlandsch A.-B.-boek* (Patriotic A.-B.-Book), did not speak of decline, despite the fact that this abecedarium appeared in the crisis year 1781, which also saw the publication of Van der Capellen's *Aan het Volk van Nederland* (To the People of the Netherlands). Swildens shared with the spectatorial writers the optimistic Enlightenment view that the Dutch people could regain their former glory if they only behaved virtuously. Van Sas suggests that Swildens did not possess the classical republican pessimism of the authors studied by Rotmans. At the same time he does point out that the *Patriotic A.-B.-Book* was intended as a means of moral rearmament, so we may infer that Swildens was ultimately driven by an implicit sense of decline similar to that triggering the spectators' moral critique.

After the revolutionary era, the Netherlands became a constitutional monarchy, in which there was little room for republican thought. In his contribution Remieg Aerts asks why this was the case, and whether there were any continuities between the Dutch Republic, the revolutionary era and 1848. Was there an undercurrent of pre-Restoration republican thought in the Kingdom of the (United) Netherlands? If Aerts is correct in assuming that there wasn't, this also helps to explain why the language of decline hardly played a role in later nineteenth-century versions of republicanism. In the first place nineteenth-century Dutchmen rejected the history of the Republic and equated republicanism with the political discord and party struggle of the revolutionary era. Since the narrative of decline remained central to this partisan and polarized republicanism – as Rotmans convincingly shows – it is perhaps no wonder that it disappeared after 1800. Secondly, nineteenth-century commentators were more future-oriented and geared towards (gradual) development within a constitutional-monarchical order. This outlook did not fit well with the language of decline. Aerts concludes that an upsurge of republicanism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century emanated from socialist ideology and did not reach back to early modern classical republicanism.

The patchy nature of the Dutch republican tradition is perhaps best embodied by Spinoza, arguably the most important republican thinker in the Dutch Republic, whose legacy in the Netherlands was initially modest and did not prove of much importance in later moments of Dutch radical republicanism.[33]

33 See Wyger R.E. Velema, "Jonathan Israel and Dutch Patriotism," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 41 (2009): 152–160.

In this volume Wiep van Bunge analyzes in depth how Spinoza tried to come to terms with the instant failure of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* around 1672, when the Dutch Republic experienced its deepest crisis and the total collapse of the republican system appeared to be imminent.

This volume's emphasis on the Netherlands gains significance when we compare this case to other moments and places. Alessandro Metlica shows in his chapter how in early modern Venice after its Renaissance heyday, the myth of stability was powerful enough to allow for an increase in the display of private luxury without an equally growing sense of decline. By contrast, the notion of decline increasingly gained dominance in the seventeenth-century Spanish monarchy, when rebellions on both sides of the Atlantic, in the Netherlands and Chile, posed a formidable challenge to Spanish authority. Significantly, Spanish commentators essentially adopted and inverted the Dutch narrative of a glorious Batavian republican past to depict their rebellious opponents as uncivilized barbarians. As Lisa Kattenberg shows, the Spanish consoled themselves by maintaining that it was simply impossible to fight rebels who were as liberty-loving as the Dutch and the Chilean Mapuche. The use of the classical republican analogy of the Batavians thus helped the Spanish monarchy to accept its military decline while preserving a sense of political and cultural superiority.

Elements from the classical discourse of decline can also be found in the monarchical contexts of the German lands during the eighteenth century. While Velema has highlighted the political aims of the Dutch spectatorial periodicals, Hans Erich Bödeker, in his chapter, does something similar for the German Enlightenment press. Bödeker shows that the German obsession with the ancient Greeks had not only a cultural but also a strong political component. Athens and Sparta were presented as two opposing models that had not yet lost their political relevance, even if the historical distance between antiquity and the present was increasingly acknowledged. The two Greek polities represented to the Germans contrasting models that, in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic, were found in the seventeenth century and the Batavian past respectively: civilized and moderately luxurious versus rough and spartan. To the Mainzer citizen Niklas Vogt (1756–1836), who is at the center of Matthijs Lok's contribution, Greece also functioned as a model, but in his case for a pluralistic "European Republic." Writing during the ever-changing political world of the revolutionary era, Vogt found inspiration in a wide array of ancient and modern authors from Polybius to Hume, and wavered between a pessimistic and an optimistic view of the future fate of this republic. In his analysis Lok once again reminds us that conservatism and Enlightenment thought were not

mutually exclusive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Velema has set out to demonstrate multiple times throughout his career.[34]

Wessel Krul's chapter serves to show that two other intellectual traditions, republicanism and Romanticism, should not be seen as incompatible either. Like Vogt, Thomas Mann lived through a time of upheaval, and his thinking likewise evolved during this period, but in a very different direction. Initially Mann was drawn to Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West, 1918–23), which applied a cyclical rise-and-fall perspective not to states but to cultures, and to the European West in particular. Spengler's dichotomy between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* can perhaps be considered a modernist version of the opposition between Athens and Sparta, or that between the Dutch Golden Age and Batavian antiquity. Mann finally sided with *Kultur* and increasingly identified this vision with both the legacy of Romanticism and the democratic regime of the Weimar Republic. For a man who had previously, like the eighteenth-century Dutch spectatorial authors, cultivated an image of himself as *unpolitisch*, culture and politics had now become inextricably linked.

Beyond the case of Mann, the context of Weimar Germany merits some closer attention here, because it reveals that changes in the image of the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic can at least partly be ascribed to historiographical trends that transcend the debate over the nature and relevance of the Atlantic republican tradition. Like the Dutch Republic, the Weimar Republic has long been regarded as a paradigmatic case of a state in decline. There are some remarkable similarities in the ways in which historians of both polities have started to depart from this *idée reçue* over the past decades. In both contexts, the state of crisis was first thought to be a *Totalkrisis*;[35] a crucial difference was that whilst the Dutch eighteenth century was characterized as an era of the "absolute nothing," [36] it was generally assumed that in Weimar political and moral decline had given rise to an exceptional flowering

34 Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism*; idem, "Enlightenment against Revolution: The Intellectual Origins of Dutch Conservatism," in *Cosmopolitan Conservatisms: Countering Revolution in Transnational Networks, Ideas and Movements* (*c. 1700–1930*), ed. by Matthijs Lok, Friedemann Pestel, and Juliette Reboul (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 108–30.

35 See De Vries, *De economische achteruitgang*, 7–8, about the work of the historian P.J. Blok; and Rüdiger Graf, "Either-Or: The Narrative of 'Crisis' in Weimar Germany and in Historiography," *Central European History* 43 (2010): 596.

36 Philip de Vries, "De Nederlandse cultuur in de eerste helft van de achttiende eeuw," in *Algemene Geschiedenis der Nederlanden*, ed. by J.A. van Houtte et al., vol. VII (Utrecht: W. de Haan, 1954), 255; quoted in Mijnhardt, *Een republikeinse erfenis*, 6.

of the arts and sciences.[37] For both states the total character of the crisis has subsequently been nuanced. As Kossmann had done – not entirely without problems, as we have seen – for the Dutch vocabulary of decline, historians of Weimar have pointed out that *Krise* had, for contemporaries, a less exclusively negative and more hopeful connotation than it has in German today.[38] The idea that both states were consistently underperforming compared to other states of their own time has been called into question.[39] The eighteenth-century Dutch Republic was not devoid of intellectual and cultural bloom.[40] The Weimar Republic was no *Republik ohne Republikaner* and provided fertile soil for republican symbolism and ritual.[41]

3 Politics, Culture, and the Transnational History of Republicanism

This interesting historiographical parallel can be ascribed to the influence of the linguistic and cultural turns that have taught historians to critically assess concepts and conceptual change and not to treat politics and culture as strictly separate spheres. The working life of Wyger Velema has coincided with the rise, and what is starting to look like the slow decline of the new paradigm that has emerged after these turns. Throughout his career, Velema has made major contributions to this paradigm, from his role as co-founder of the seminal

37 See most famously Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968); Detlev Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1987).

38 Kossmann, "The Dutch Republic," 29–30; Moritz Föllmer, Rüdiger Graf, and Per Leo, "Einleitung: Die Kultur der Krise in der Weimarer Republik," in *Die 'Krise' der Weimarer Republik. Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005), 9–41.

39 See for the Dutch Republic above, footnote 19 and also 21. For Weimar: Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?" *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 2 (1996): 629–56; *Beyond Glitter and Doom: The Contingency of the Weimar Republic*, ed. by Jochen Hung, Godela Weiss-Sussex, and Geoff Wilkes (Munich: Iudicum, 2012).

40 See for instance Joost Kloek and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt, *1800: Blueprints for a National Community* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Inger Leemans and Gert-Jan Johannes, *Worm en donder. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700–1800: de Republiek* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013).

41 Manuela Achilles, "Reforming the Reich: Democratic Symbols and Rituals in the Weimar Republic," in *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s*, ed. by Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), 175–91; Kathleen Canning, "Introduction: The Politics of Symbols, Semantics, and Sentiments in the Weimar Republic," *Central European History* [special issue *Culture of Politics – Politics of Culture: New Perspectives on the Weimar Republic*] 43 (2010): 567–80.

Nederlandse Begripsgeschiedenis book series[42] – the Dutch response to the German *Begriffsgeschichte* school – to his more recent work, which firmly situates the eighteenth-century political language of classical republicanism in a much broader cultural pattern of classical reception.[43]

Wyger Velema's scholarly work is unique in its combination of a relentless dedication to the history of republicanism and a wholehearted embrace of the political-cultural approach. It has taught us to bear in mind that the republican worldview could permeate not only the political sphere, but all aspects of life, and invites us to take into account, for instance, literary figures who are not normally considered to belong to the republican political canon, such as Justus van Effen or, for that matter, Thomas Mann. In order to understand crucial aspects of the republican tradition, such as the discourse of decline, republicanism has to be studied through a cultural as well as a political lens, since decline was perceived as having causes and effects that went beyond the realm of politics and touched upon economic, social and above all moral issues. No wonder that many looked at public education as a means to overcome the perceived decline of the *res publica*, or that republican discourses of decline and rise-and-fall narratives can be found not only in political and economic texts but also in historical works, cultural magazines, novels and plays.

42 Wyger R.E. Velema, "Nederlandse begripsgeschiedenis. Ten geleide," in *Vaderland. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende eeuw tot 1940*, ed. by N.C.F. van Sas (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), ix-xvii; *Vrijheid. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende tot de twintigste eeuw*, ed. by E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and Wyger R.E. Velema (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999). See also Velema, *Republicans*, chapter 7, "The Concept of Liberty in the Dutch Republic," and idem, "'Republic' and 'Democracy' in Dutch Late Eighteenth-Century Discourse," in *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794–1806: France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy*, ed. by Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes, and Erik Jacobs (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 49–56.

43 Wyger R.E. Velema, *Omstreden Oudheid. De Nederlandse achttiende eeuw en de klassieke politiek* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers, 2010); idem, "Introduction: Antiquity and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: The Case of the Dutch Republic," *in Classical Antiquity in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by A.J.P. Raat, W.R.E. Velema, and C. Baar-de Weerd (Utrecht: Werkgroep 18e Eeuw, 2012), 17–29; idem, "Conversations with the Classics: Ancient Political Virtue and Two Modern Revolutions," *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 415–38; idem, "Classical Antiquity Contested: The Dutch Eighteenth Century and Ancient Politics," in *Vek Prosveshcheniia*, vol. IV: *Antichnoe Nasledie v Evropeĭskoi Kul'ture XVIII Veka,* ed. by S.Ia. Karp and G.A. Kosmolinskaia (Moscow: Nauka, 2012), 213–26; idem, "Oude waarheden. Over de terugkeer van de klassieke oudheid in de verlichtingshistoriografie," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 127, no. 2 (2014): 229–46; idem, "Against Democracy: Dutch Eighteenth-Century Critics of Ancient and Modern Popular Government," in *Ancient Models,* ed. by Velema and Weststeijn, 189–213.

By investigating a wide range of sources in conjunction with one another, this volume aims to give a new impulse to the study of the republican tradition.

Despite its focus on the Dutch Republic, this volume also shows the importance of transnational and comparative approaches to the history of republicanism. As Wyger Velema has taught us, there is little to be gained when one is "obsessed with the need to identify a particularly and exclusively Dutch form of political discourse."[44] Although Dutch republicanism shows the marks of its specific local social, economic, and political circumstances, it never developed in isolation and should be analyzed in tandem with republican varieties elsewhere. The approach of this volume allows for a fuller integration of all these varieties of republicanism into the broader framework traditionally focused on Italian and Anglo-American republican theory. The Dutch Republic, after all, produced relatively few hardcore theorists, but many citizens who forged republican identities for themselves and their fellow countrymen, passionately discussing the Republic's cultural norms and values and their political implications. We cherish the diversity of these intellectual endeavors and refrain from "anachronistically imposing a definition of republicanism," because we concur with Wyger Velema that "such an exercise is futile."[45] Instead, we explore the full breadth of the republican tradition between the poles of politeness and patriotism, Athens and Sparta, Golden Age and Batavian myth, and even *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, with a renewed focus on the ever-present theme of republican decline.

44 Velema, *Republicans*, 32.

45 Ibid., 28.

CHAPTER 2

Trends and Transitions in Dutch Commercial Republicanism, 1600–1800

Ida Nijenhuis

The commercial republic the Dutch established during their struggle to gain independence from Spanish Habsburg rule featured prominently in early modern debates concerning what we nowadays call economics.* Elsewhere kings and princes dominated politics, economics and religion, but they (and their advisors) believed that the Dutch had created an economic "miracle", notwithstanding the forbidding character of their territory. Finding solutions for "the limits nature seemed to have set to productivity" had made them into an example of human ingenuity.[1] Various French and English writers on matters concerning the state's household, later labelled as political economists, tried to analyze Dutch economic success with a view to taking appropriate political measures for their own countries, generating economic principles in passing.[2] Historiography was for a long period attached to the notion that the Dutch, though regarded as the early modern creators of an economic miracle, did not play a significant role in these debates or in the creation of economic theory.[3] Even the Dutch themselves believed they were a practice-ridden and theory-lacking nation. Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807), one of the founding fathers of Dutch academic economics, for instance, stated at the beginning of the nineteenth century that foreign authors criticized the Dutch for possessing more practical experience than theory; hence they did not use the general rules and principles that were also applicable to their country. Kluit lamented the fact

* This chapter combines and reviews my results from earlier published material mentioned in the footnotes.

1 Joyce Appleby, *Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 77–78.

2 Ibid., 85; Lionel Rothkrug, *Opposition to Louis XIV: The Political and Social Origins of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 202; Jacob Soll, "Accounting for Government: Holland and the Rise of Political Economy in Seventeenth-Century Europe," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40 (2009): 215–38.

3 Though some acknowledged the singular influence the seventeenth-century brothers Johan and Pieter de la Court may have exerted. Ivo W. Wildenberg, *Johan & Pieter de la Court (1622–1660 & 1618–1685). Bibliografie en receptiegeschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Holland Universiteits Pers, 1986), 52–56.

that his compatriots had not yet come up with what he called "a well-founded system."[4]

However, due to the linguistic turn in historiography, "economic thought" in the early modern era was no longer the sole remit of economists, who were often inclined to pure "Dogmengeschichte" and concentrated on the genesis of economic analysis. In the wake of John Pocock's epoch-making *Machiavellian Moment* (1975) and Istvan Hont's groundbreaking publications on the interaction of politics and commerce, students of intellectual history, political scientists as well as historians, started to study political and economic ideas and concepts in their historical contexts.[5] They did so with a sharp eye to those early modern authors who felt commerce had a fundamental impact on political society. This approach did not pass unnoticed in the Netherlands, where Wyger Velema was one of the first to apply Pocock's method in an analysis of Elie Luzac's writings on commerce, while I have used Hont's studies in investigating Isaac de Pinto's economic ideas.[6] Other research from this perspective established that the Dutch Republic not only figured prominently as an interesting case study in the investigations of foreign writers into the wealth of nations, but also demonstrated how Dutch authors as dissimilar as Willem Usselincx (1567–1647), Hugo Grotius (1583–1645), his cousin and fellow-jurist Dirck Graswinckel (1601–66), the De la Court brothers (Johan 1622–60 and Pieter 1618–85), Hendrik Herman van den Heuvel (1732–85), to mention only a few, contributed to this field of enquiry. Indeed, from the late sixteenth century onwards several private and public agents in the Dutch Republic published broadsheets, tracts and treatises in an effort to influence political decisions

4 Ida J.A. Nijenhuis, "De ontwikkeling van het politiek-economische vrijheidsbegrip in de Republiek," in *Vrijheid. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende tot de twintigste eeuw*, ed. by E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and W.R.E. Velema (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 236.

5 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). The enormous scholarly impact of this work can be deduced from "The Machiavellian Moment Turns Forty: Re-thinking J.G.A. Pocock's Intellectual Legacy," a special issue of *History of European Ideas* 43 (2017). Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective* (Harvard: Harvard University Pres, 2005) contains the definitive version of all the articles Hont published separately from 1983 onwards. In that year he published, together with Michael Ignatieff, "Needs and Justice in the *Wealth of Nations*," in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Pres, 1983), 1–44. All other references to Hont will be to *Jealousy of Trade*.

6 W.R.E. Velema, "Homo Mercator in Holland. Elie Luzac en het achttiende-eeuwse debat over de koophandel," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 100 (1985): 427–44; I.J.A. Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe. Isaac de Pinto (1717–1787) en de ontwikkeling van de politieke economie in de Europese Verlichting* (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1992).

on what nowadays would be called economic affairs. Nameless as well as well-known authors, often professionally linked to trade, industry or finance and frequently acting as officeholders, treated the *ars mercatoria* or practical trade knowledge and subjects like grain exports, the position of the Amsterdam exchange-bank, cloth production and foreign sales, fiscal measures, protection of industrial interests, the limited porto-franco, trade policies regarding either France or England, national debt, credit facilities, etcetera.

Given this variety of authors, sources, and themes, it is not the intention of this chapter to create retrospectively a pantheon of brilliant Dutch proto-economists, but to identify constituting and changing elements in this plethora of Dutch thought and practice within the context of the early modern debate on classical versus commercial republicanism. Internationally this argument concentrated on the negative effects of expanding commerce on virtuous politics. Commerce, it was feared, would become a raison d'état.[7] In the Dutch context, not the rise of commerce but rather the effects of its changing nature formed the heart of the argument. This discussion was strongly influenced by natural jurisprudence, the political-theological discourse of laws and what is right and wrong, which started in Holland with Grotius and revived through the German jurist Samuel Pufendorf (1632–94).[8]

From the perspective of natural law it was not republican political virtue that was pivotal, but the balance of needs and justice in society. Self-preservation, property, political stability, sociability and civilization developed into main topics within a European theory of modern society and its morals. In Britain, Adam Smith's economic concepts were generated by his legal and moral theories. Molded by Grotius's, Pufendorf's and John Locke's works on natural law and property, Smith in his *Wealth of Nations* (1776) set out to tackle the problem of justice in a modern i.e. commercial society. In doing so he explained the compatibility of staggering economic inequality and adequate subsistence for the wage earner within a free market system.[9] In its preoccupation with both politics (the legitimate forms of government) and property (hence commerce and the mores of commercial society) natural law confronted a gap between theory and facts that notably in German universities was bridged by *Statistik*: the application of natural law to concrete socio-economic realities in specific countries.[10]

7 Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 186.

8 Ibid., 159–84, for Pufendorf's role in the debate on commercial society.

9 Ibid., 13–15; 389–403.

10 Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 116. See for the development of

In the following, I will first discuss how civil liberty and free trade became the pillars of Dutch commercial republicanism during the seventeenth century. Subsequently I will show how the eighteenth-century debates on Dutch decline effected the commercial paradigm, dividing Dutch writers into those who accepted and defended the changed character of commerce, and those who did not. Finally, I will explain how *Statistik*, as a new kind of political science, contributed to the development of Dutch academic economics as well as the restatement and renewal of commercial republicanism.

1 Commercial Republicanism Meets Reason of State

Most early modern authors assumed that commerce prospered better in a republic, free from the arbitrary constraints princely rule might impose. A republican form of government suited trading states like Venice and the Dutch Republic, mercantile and maritime entities more resembling entrepôts than nations and with needs unlike those of large territorial states like France. From the 1580s until the revolutionary era of the late eighteenth century, the Dutch lived in such a republic. Soon Dutch economic success and political power became associated with the absence of constraint and coercion. Contemporaries defined Dutch liberty as consisting of independence, provincial autonomy, religious toleration, and a republican form of government. These four elements brought together "by accident, by unpredictable historical events," combined to produce a thriving society and whenever one of these elements was at risk, warnings about the ruinous effects this might entail for its prosperity were a matter of course.[11] In this way, the nexus of commerce, liberty, and a republican state also became almost a truism to most authors concerned with matters of state and economy. References to Christian humanist values served to justify and support this salutary trinity. The God-fearing merchant outlined by Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert (1522–90) in his *De Coopman* (The Merchant), for example, took care his soul was not endangered by love of gain, idleness,

Statistik in Germany Hans Erich Bödeker, "Das staatswissenschaftliche Fächersystem im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Wissenschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. by Rudolf Vierhaus (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1985), 142–62, and Gabriella Valera, "Statistik, Staatengeschichte, Geschichte im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Aufklärung und Geschichte. Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft im 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Hans Erich Bödeker et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1986), 119–43.

11 E.H. Kossmann, "Freedom in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Thought and Practice," in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, ed. by Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 286 and 291–92.

untrustworthiness, and other sins. Of course, profit-directed, even fraudulent activities were widespread, causing critics to publish admonishing tracts that emphasized Christian humanist virtue. An exhaustive analysis of the correspondence of the Leiden merchant Andries van der Meulen (1591–1654) and his family has taught us how early modern Dutch traders adopted professional ethics that corresponded to Coornhert's profile but were realistic at the same time. Reputation among fellow-traders was vital and went far to define a firm's reliability, but the rule of law guaranteed basic security of property and person.[12] This civil liberty and free trade were the props of Dutch commercial republicanism. Economic liberty, though, did certainly not yet mean free competition or free labor – with the exception of Pieter de la Court's *Interest van Holland* (1662), principled attacks on guilds or protection by monopoly were absent in the seventeenth century.[13]

Classical republicanism emphasized liberty not as security by legislation but as the freedom to participate in politics, ideally embodied in the virtuous, independent citizen eager to give his life in the defense of his republic.[14] Having won freedom from outside domination, Dutch republicanism did not give this aspect of political activity, of positive liberty, a prominent place. Political rectitude and religious purity were not paramount in Dutch political and economic behavior, as England's republicans were to experience during the 1650s: they erroneously presumed a natural ally in the Dutch, being fellow Protestants and

12 Ida Nijenhuis, "Trading Information: Willem Usselincx (1567–1647) in the Corridors of Power," in *Information and Power in History: Towards a Global Approach*, ed. by Ida Nijenhuis et al. (London: Routledge, 2020), 55–56.

13 Published during the so-called First Stadtholderless Era (1650–72), when most provinces, including Holland, did not appoint a stadtholder and Grand Pensionary Johan de Witt (1625–72) dominated Dutch politics. The book was reprinted in 1669 as *Aanwysing der heilsame politike gronden en maximen van de Republike van Holland en West-Vriesland*. Wildenberg, *Johan & Pieter de la Court*, 40 ff. De la Court wanted to liquidate guilds and monopolies in order to facilitate the export of goods from the province of Holland, but the local commercial elite held on to the primacy of the staple market and its regulations. He also attacked the regulation of production conditions by the guilds and the regulation of product specification and quality by the so-called halls. In his view, this type of control interfered with trade by influencing demand and profits in a detrimental way. Nijenhuis, "Het politiek-economische vrijheidsbegrip in de Republiek,", 244–45. Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 224–41.

14 David Wootton, "Introduction: The Republican Tradition: From Commonwealth to Common Sense," in: *Republicanism, Liberty, and Commercial Society 1649–1776*, ed. by David Wootton (ed.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 16–17.

patriots.[15] Mainstream commercial republicanism in the Dutch Republic combined civil and civic liberty in a quite modern state, which featured, according to the English observer William Temple (1628–99), a certain amount of social equality amongst its citizens. Protection from arbitrary and armed power by law was essential to the inhabitants of the Dutch Republic, and trust in the government was a consequence of both public and private security.[16]

During the second half of the seventeenth century, the Dutch gradually lost their lead in international trade to competing monarchies, which realized that commerce was essential to their self-preservation. Growing rivalry made them adopt trade as a reason of state.[17] The most principled Dutch answer to this challenge came from the De la Court brothers who, with Spinoza, have been characterized as the exceptional and eclectic Dutch representatives of classical republicanism, in part because they favored a non-expansionist commercial republic to be defended by a citizen army.[18] In his *Interest van Holland*, Pieter de la Court argued that an aristocracy of merchants would make for the welfare of all whereas government by one supreme head (a monarch or a stadtholder) would lead only to undue preferences and riches for himself, his courtiers and soldiers. According to De la Court, the interest of republican rulers was to procure rich and populous cities, which explains why republics prospered far more in commerce, arts and industry than monarchies and exceeded them in power and population. True republican liberty, in short, encouraged

15 Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650–1668* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 90: "It was the perceived ideological and religious lassitude of the Dutch, not the ineluctable law of supply and demand, which made the Dutch into dangerous economic rivals."

16 Raimund Ottow, *Markt – Republik – Tugend. Probleme gesellschaftlicher Modernisierung im britischen politischen Denken 1670–1790* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 105–09 and Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, 194–201. Temple wrote his *Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands* (1673) after he had been England's ambassador to the Dutch Republic. The work was translated into Dutch and French several times. See also Ida J.A. Nijenhuis, "'Shining Comet, Falling Meteor': Reflections on the Dutch Republic as a Commercial Power during the Second Stadholderless Era," in *Anthonie Heinsius and the Dutch Republic 1688–1720: Politics, War, and Finance*, ed. by Jan A.F. de Jongste and Augustus J. Veenendaal, Jr. (The Hague: Institute of Netherlands History, 2002), 115–17; and idem, "Republican Risks: Commerce and Agriculture in the Dutch Republic," in *The Republican Alternative: The Netherlands and Switzerland Compared*, ed. by André Holenstein, Thomas Maissen, and Maarten Prak (Amsterdam, 2008), 266–67.

17 Rothkrug, *Opposition to Louis XIV*, 354–55; Hont, Jealousy of Trade, 23–24.

18 Eco Haitsma Mulier, "A Controversial Republican: Dutch Views on Machiavelli in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, ed. by Gisela Bock, Quentin Skinner and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 256–57; Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 16–20.

wealth and numbers. Merchant rulers were clear about their goals: they sought their own interest by promoting freedom in trade and industry, and because mercantile prosperity could not benefit a few without benefiting all, their private interest led to public welfare instead of corruption.[19]

This beneficial mixture of private and public interests would not occur if commerce became a reason of state, turning commerce, as Jean Baptiste Colbert (1619–83) put it, into "perpetual combat" or, in the words of his contemporary Josiah Child (1630–99), "a kind of warfare."[20] According to De la Court and other, less radical Dutch republicans, "the conquering spirit was one of the main and one of the most disastrous characteristics of monarchies."[21] Monarchical longing for territorial aggrandizement resulted in wars of ambition, which jeopardized trade. Therefore, commercial republics must be peaceful without being pacifistic, fighting wars only with a view to maintaining state power. This principle implied comprehensive freedom of trade, "not as an abstract economic formula or a lofty ideal to spread in the world, but as a necessary element of national prosperity, as the pivot of Holland's reason of state in the burgeoning arena of international competition."[22]

2 Commercial Republicanism Meets Decline

The radical republicanism of the De la Court brothers did not halt the changes in the nature of commerce nor counter the very real decline of Holland as a specialized commercial state amongst competing territorial states. Worried comments increased and in due time led to a reassessment of Dutch commercial republicanism. During the second half of the eighteenth century, when the Dutch became increasingly obsessed with the loss of political and economic prominence, they tried to analyze their situation using the insights of French,

19 De la Court, *Aanwysing der heilsame gronden*, 6–7, 45. Nijenhuis, "'Shining Comet'," 120.

20 Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 79; Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe*, 90.

21 E.H. Kossmann, "Dutch Republicanism," in *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam: KNAW, 2000), 167–93: 181.

22 Jan Hartman and Arthur Weststeijn, "An Empire of Trade: Commercial Reason of State in Seventeenth-Century Holland," in *Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, ed. by Pernille Røge and Sophus Reinert (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 25. Hiram Caton, *Politics of Progress: Origins and Development of the Commercial Republic, 1600–1835* (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1988), 242–43.

English, and German Enlightenment authors.[23] They discussed, for instance, the writings of Montesquieu and others on luxury, on the loss of republican virtue in commercial societies, not within the current international context of the debate on the (moral) consequences of economic modernization, but from their own perspective of decline in wealth and power.[24] Though this change in context never resulted in a fundamental condemnation of commerce as a source of wealth and power, it did mean a transition into another mode of commercial republicanism. While during the seventeenth century, liberty, trade acumen, and mercantile prowess were specifically associated with the strength and preservation of the United Provinces as an independent republic, during the eighteenth century the agreeable and civilizing effects of commerce on society were praised. Liberty was not only the precondition for commerce, but also its consequence. Simon Stijl (1731–1804), for example, still described commerce as the cornerstone of the Dutch state, but, like David Hume, he also defined it as the source and advancement of (civil) liberty, at the same time promoting refinement in arts and sciences as well as industrious activity in other branches of economy.[25] Likewise, in his contribution to a 1771 prize contest of the Holland Academy of Sciences, Adriaan Rogge (1732–1806) was as convinced as Luzac in his *Hollands Rijkdom* (Holland's Wealth) of the close relationship between commerce and a comfortable, pleasant i.e. happy life.[26]

What, then, were the main issues eighteenth-century Dutch authors confronted when they discussed the troubled state of the commercial Republic? Primarily, one notices a continuation of the Christian humanist tradition featuring many complaints dealing with the loss of the ancient mercantile virtues of frugality, trustworthiness, and industry that built the Republic. Though it had its intellectual origins in the Dutch Republic, Bernard Mandeville's notorious maxim "private vice, public virtue" did not meet with a favorable reception there.[27] Dutch authors in general were more inclined to call attention to

23 W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750–1815* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 113–15; Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe*, 96–97.

24 Nijenhuis, *Een joodse philosophe*, 104–112; W.R.E. Velema, "Republican Readings of Montesquieu: *The Spirit of the Laws* in the Dutch Republic", *History of Political Thought* 18, no. 1 (1997): 50–57.

25 S. Stijl, *De opkomst en bloei van de Republiek der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: Petrus Conradi, 1774), 401–03.

26 Adriaan Rogge, "Antwoord op de vraag: Welke is de grond van Hollandsch koophandel?," *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappy*, vol. XVI (Haarlem: J. Bosch, 1775), 163–65; Elie Luzac, *Hollands Rijkdom*, IV vols. (Leiden: Luzac en Van Damme, 1780–83), I, 146–47.

27 Bernard Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees: or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (London: J. Roberts, 1714). See Rudi Verburg, "The Dutch Background of Bernard Mandeville's Thought:

the damaging public repercussions of individual vices. From their perspective commerce seemed to change because of the immoral behavior of the people involved. The true mercantile virtues expressed in the "commerce d'oeconomie" (transit trade) appeared to be replaced by idleness, a penchant for conspicuous consumption, and a propensity to earn easy money by speculation, by overextending credit, and by tolerating a foreign-owned national debt. Montesquieu's widely read and much discussed *The Spirit of the Laws* encouraged this line of thought by warning against the corrupting influences of luxury, stating that "les républiques finissent par le luxe." In his view, a commercial republic could survive only when the spirit of commerce continued to rule, entrenching the habits of frugality, restraint, and hard work.[28]

This became one of the central issues dividing Dutch writers into those who did and those who did not accept the modern aspects of the commercial republic. To the former, including De Pinto and Luzac, nothing was wrong with luxury, credit, and debt, as long as liberty and property were secure and merchants kept doing their jobs. Even no real threat was expected from (growing) material inequality, according to Montesquieu a result of the system of commerce that caused the inevitable loss of political virtue in commercial republics. Their opponents, however, especially contributors to periodicals like *De Koopman* (The Merchant), *De Borger* (The Citizen), and *De Denker* (The Thinker), associated luxury with idle, voluptuous *rentiers* buying foreign goods with money invested in foreign funds, who thereby weakened the republic. Luxury was frequently criticized as the phenomenon that caused depopulation (because people tended to postpone marriage), trade deficits, bankruptcy, and other state-injuring practices. Furthermore, sumptuousness could be profitable only when luxury goods were produced in the country in which they were consumed, i.e. in quite another type of economy. In general, these authors associated luxury consumption with growing poverty. From their perspective, moral regeneration and political measures should counter all the effects of this loss of ancient mercantile virtues.[29]

This fascination with decline and recovery can already be observed around the turn of the eighteenth century. The *Korte schets van 's lands welwezen door de laatste vrede* (1714), a pamphlet celebrating the end of the costly War of the Spanish Succession, restated De la Court's arguments for freedom of trade

Escaping the Procrustean Bed of Neo-Augustinianism," *Erasmus Journal for Philosophy and Economics* 9 (2016): 32–61.

28 Velema, "Republican Readings of Montesquieu," 56.

29 Ida Nijenhuis, "De weelde als deugd?", *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 24, no. 1 (1992): 45–56.

and production, predicting the recovery of Dutch primacy in trade now that the republic was experiencing another era of true liberty after the death of Stadtholder William III (1650–1702).[30] However, as in De la Court's case, this treatise met with a lukewarm response. Increasingly, eighteenth-century writings, instead of urging the necessity of more political and economic liberty, concentrated on the causes of economic decline and loss of power and analyzed them mainly in terms of growing foreign competition. Counteracting the loss of moral fiber was one way to deal with the Dutch predicament. Political action, especially applying protective measures to disarm foreign competition, became the other recommendation. Calling for political measures, of course, involved the question who was supposed to take them within the republican constitution, gradually leading to a controversy between reformist Patriots and conservative Orangists in which national wealth became more and more politicized.

Especially during and after the short stadtholderate of William IV (1747–51) publications pursuing explanations for the "Dutch condition" abounded. In analyzing the sources of Dutch commerce, many authors would use as a model the *Verhandeling over den Koophandel* ("Treatise on Commerce") of 1751, which was reprinted amongst others in the already-mentioned *De Koopman*, a journal devoted to trade and finance, in 1771.[31] This treatise accompanied the then well-known "Proposition for a limited porto-franco," a proposal aimed at facilitating trade within the staple market system, drawn up by several members of Holland's commercial elite. It classified the origins of Dutch commercial prosperity as natural, moral, and accidental or external in nature. Necessity (the lack of adequate resources) and the location of the country had forced the Dutch to become industrious, frugal, and inventive. They had joined in a polity that secured civil and religious liberty, property, and peace. These combined elements built a flourishing commercial state. Prudent statecraft through what was called mild (republican) government had sustained it for a long time, but now prosperity and power could no longer be taken for granted. The natural origins of prosperity, like the moral ingredients of success – meaning religious tolerance, civil liberty, security of property, equality before the law, and loyalty with respect to alliances – were still operative. However, as the external setting had changed dramatically, the effects of increasing international competition had to be counteracted by implementing the measures suggested in the "Proposition."

30 True liberty was associated with Johan de Witt and the First Stadtholderless Era. After the death of William III in 1702, another stadtholderless era began and lasted until 1747.

31 Ida Nijenhuis, "For the Sake of the Republic: The Dutch Translation of Forbonnais's *Elémens du Commerce*," *History of European Ideas* 40, no. 8 (2014): 1204–06.

William IV was expected to carry out these reforms, but he did not fulfil the role the *Verhandeling over den Koophandel* wanted him to play. After his untimely death in 1751, economic recovery failed to occur and many Dutchmen continued to worry about the dwindling international position of the Republic. During the 1770s, the valuation of commerce became the central issue in the debates and publications of the so-called Economic Society. This branch of the Holland Academy of Sciences was founded in 1777 on the wave of public concern with the state of the Republic.[32] According to a substantial number of people in the Economic Society, the Dutch economy was off balance due to a lasting preferential treatment of trade that hampered the necessary development of domestic manufactures. This ominous situation, bringing about widespread poverty, could not be altered as long as a towncentered, commerceorientated and degenerate regent class dominated the political scene. The representatives of this argument did not challenge the republican setup but recommended more support for industry and agriculture as well as economic patriotism. Wearing homemanufactured clothes was promoted together with better education for officeholders and moral regeneration of the ruling class.

However, soon some of the Economic Patriots realized that reform had to be accomplished not in cooperation but in competition, perhaps even in conflict, with the established regime.[33] Some of them, as we shall see below, drifted into the more radical Patriot movement of the 1780s to end up in the political experiments of the Batavian Republic. Progressively, then, more attention was paid to the political system as a major factor in the analyses of the decline of Dutch power and prosperity. It became important to associate commerce and liberty with a "politically correct" republican history. The Patriot tax officer Cornelis Zillesen (1735–1826) used the allegedly free and democratic Batavians to play the decisive part in his representation of the genesis of Dutch commerce.[34] Orangists like Luzac and Kluit, on the other hand, attributed the pioneering

32 The Economic Society was founded in imitation of the Society instituted in London for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce. J. Bierens de Haan, *Van Oeconomische Tak tot Nederlandsche Maatschappij voor Nijverheid en Handel 1777–1952* (Haarlem: H.D. Tjeenk Willink, 1952), 5; Koen Stapelbroek, "The Haarlem 1771 Prize Essay on the Restoration of Dutch Trade and the Economic Branch of the Holland Society of Sciences," in *The Rise of Economic Societies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Koen Stapelbroek and Jani Marjanen (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 257–84.

33 Mijnhardt, *Tot Heil van 't Menschdom*, 106 ff.; Bierens de Haan, *Oeconomische Tak*, 37.

34 Cornelis Zillesen, "Antwoord op de vraag: Welke is de grond van Hollandsch koophandel?," *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappy*, vol. XVI (Haarlem: J. Bosch, 1775), 323 ff.

role to the medieval counts, a prefiguration of the stadtholder's performance.[35] To the Orangists, both wealth and the moral state of the republic were to be guaranteed by a mixed constitution with an active stadtholder. Whereas Zillesen – after the fall of the Republic – severely criticized the federal constitution for its damaging effect on prosperity as well as the stadtholders for their pro-English policy which resulted in wars with disastrous consequences for trade, Luzac chided the partisans of "true liberty" for their anti-Orangist position. He strongly disapproved of De la Court's defense of an aristocratic republic led by merchants. According to Luzac, the nature of their trade, focused on profit, made merchants incapable of serving the public interest, which ought to be left to qualified statesmen. The best form of government leads a commonwealth to the apex of prosperity and prevents its downfall. The *regnum mixtum* of the Dutch Republic met these requirements most beautifully and therefore should not be tampered with.[36]

3 Commercial Republicanism Meets *Statistik*

These reactions to the Republic's loss of political and commercial primacy were accompanied by and linked with a call for better education of the Dutch youth and future officeholders. In 1775, the spiritual father of the Economic Society, Van den Heuvel, published a prize essay on the foundations of Dutch commerce and on the causes of its decline in which he scolded the inadequate training of the young in the universities.[37] They should not only be reading law but also be instructed in "true politics, the art of making a people happy." This

35 Luzac, *Hollands Rijkdom*, I, 1 and *passim*; A. Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog met de Republiek, en iets over Nederlands koophandel, deszelfs bloei, verval en middelen tot herstel* (Amsterdam: Wouter Brave, 1794), 254.

36 Cornelis Zillesen, *Wysgeerig onderzoek wegens Neerlands opkomst, bloei en welvaard; het daarop gevolgd verval, en wat de nog overgeblevene middelen van herstel zijn* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1796), 138–41, 150–51, 220. Luzac, *Hollands Rijkdom*, III, 125–30, 150, 176–77, 189–90; IV, 414; Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1725–1796)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 122, 140–43.

37 H.H. van den Heuvel, "Antwoord op de vraag: Welke is de grond van Hollandsch koophandel?," *Verhandelingen uitgegeeven door de Hollandsche Maatschappy*, vol. XVI (Haarlem: J. Bosch, 1775), 42, 72. See Nijenhuis, "For the Sake of the Republic," 1207–11. Van den Heuvel was, of course, neither the first nor the last person to criticize the Dutch academic performance in the eighteenth century. In the early 1730s the journalist Justus van Effen (1684–1735) complained in his *Hollandsche Spectator* about the academic title becoming a status symbol acquired with little effort by dissolute youngsters who had better be trained in the practice of trade. To him this conduct was an ominous sign of the changing times.

could be done by following the foreign example of teaching in the vernacular the facts relevant to the household and the prosperity of a country. Van den Heuvel was probably thinking of "German-made" *Statistik*, the quasi-empirical science of states that evolved from the seventeenth-century political-historical courses in *prudentia civilis*.[38]

In order to realize this educational project, the Dutch hired several German professors. The Dutch *Statistik* tradition started with Everardus Otto (1686–1756), who left the University of Duisburg to become a professor of public, civil and feudal law in Utrecht from 1720 to 1739. His *Primae lineae notitiae rerum publicarum* (Jena, 1728), a statistical compendium of Germany, Great Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Netherlands inspired by Pufendorf's history of European states, had considerable impact on Dutch academic curricula in public law.[39] From 1763 onwards, Friedrich Wilhelm Pestel (1724–1805) from Rinteln continued to comment on the Dutch section of Otto's compendium at Leiden University, but he added to it considerably, stressing political aspects and using politico-historical sources. This resulted in his *Commentarii de Republica Batava* (Leiden, 1782) which in its combination of Thomasian natural law with a factual approach to the Dutch state signalled the transition to a specifically Dutch *statistiek*.[40] As a true follower of Thomasius, Pestel looked for a correlation between a state's *Kräfte* and society's *Glücksgüter*. The happiest state was one "in which goods that can be obtained through human diligence are least lacking, and where the number of such people who are unhappy by themselves or without being able to help themselves is very small." A government established and promoted the happiness of the community by administering the powers of the state, which were defined by nature but could be improved by man: "The strengths of a state are not strengths if they are not directed well."[41] Managing the state was like running a machine, though a very special one, because every state had its own unique qualities, which forbade *Nachahmung*, imitation.[42] Legislation, form of government and the moral fiber of the ruled all contributed to the vitality of the state. One of the

38 C.J.H. Jansen, "Het achttiende-eeuwse onderwijs in de statistiek aan de juridische faculteiten van de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden," *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 58 (1990): 116–17; Gerhard Oestreich, *Neostoicism and the Early Modern State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 155–65; Valera, "Statistik, Staatengeschichte," 120–21.

39 Jansen, "Het achttiende-eeuwse onderwijs," 113 ff.

40 I will refer to the German edition that was published as *Vollständige Nachrichten von der Republik Holland aus authentischen Quellen gesammelt* (Berlin: Verlag der Buchhandlung der Realschule, 1784).

41 Pestel, *Vollständige Nachrichten*, 1–4, 234.

42 Ibid., 347.

most important *Glücksgüter* of Dutch society in Pestel's view was its political and philosophical liberty, prospering in a mixed republican system and held together by a stadtholder. Defined from a negative angle this liberty meant the ability "to live as one wishes without offending others." Moreover, because the greatest happiness did not equal the greatest liberty, legislation, dictated by utility, created comfort and pleasure for both the inferior and the superior orders of society.[43]

Looking at the actual situation of the Dutch Republic, Pestel refused to conclude that the Republic was in decline. Using analytical tools from German *Statistik*, he distinguished between *nothwendige* and *verhältnismässige* or intrinsic and relative powers within the Republic.[44] Though Pestel did refer to the irreversible cycle of rise and fall in human affairs, he was rather down-to-earth in stating that nothing was wrong with the Republic intrinsically. The state of things had changed because of the activities of other countries, but no one could deny that the Dutch were still unsurpassed in the field of finance and in the exploitation of monopolies.[45]

In 1778, fifteen years after Pestel's arrival in Leiden, Adriaan Kluit was appointed at the same university as a "professor Antiquitatum et Historiae imprimis diplomaticae Belgii Foederati." In his pioneering lectures on Dutch constitutional history, Kluit already used to digress on the state of Dutch commerce, past and present. Kluit's intellectual shift to *statistiek* came when he and Pestel, avowed Orangists, were both forced to leave their posts at the outbreak of the Batavian Revolution in 1795. During the period of his dismissal, Kluit buried himself in the available literature on *statistiek*, and he started private tuition on that subject in 1797. After his return to the academic chair in 1802, he continued this instruction in public and in the Dutch language. Kluit's diligent furtherance of the discipline was rewarded in 1806, a few months before his death, when the university board conferred upon him an additional appointment as "professor statistices."[46]

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Kluit expressed his frustration at the lack of system and method in matters of state and economy. He did so by comparing the poor Dutch effort with the thriving *Statistik* discipline in German universities. His lecture course "*statistiek* or *staathuishoudkunde*"

43 Ibid., 95–98, 239–47.

44 Ibid., 189–90.

45 Incidentally, he also mentioned the high price of raw materials and of labor as causes of the lower sales of some products: ibid., 192, 197–99.

46 On Kluit's career see Ida Nijenhuis, "Captured by the Commercial Paradigm: Physiocracy going Dutch," in *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. by Steven L. Kaplan and Sophus A. Reinert (London: Anthem Press, 2019), 635–36 and the literature mentioned there.

was modeled after both the *Statistik* program as developed by Otto's intellectual heirs G. Achenwall and A.L. von Schlözer in Göttingen and J.H.G. von Justi's cameralistic *Staatswirtschaft*. Like Achenwall and Schlözer, Kluit defined *statistiek* as a science separated from history, politics, and public law, examining the household of a country in all its elements. *Statistiek* should locate a nation's historical and actual (economic) strengths in order to elaborate their efficacy for the future.[47] In the complicated Dutch case, the *regnum mixtum* should take care of the state's household and through legislation influence the security, happiness, and well-being of its members. To meet their obligations in this respect, officeholders should acquire a thorough knowledge of their nation's physical and moral state by being taught *statistiek*.[48]

Consistent with *statistiek* principles, both Pestel and Kluit described the history and actual state of the Dutch constitutional body, the country's climate, territory, population, and its various means of existence. In comparison, Kluit treated the household more at length than Pestel, whose focal point was the political dimension of *statistiek*. Both were convinced of the continuous importance of commerce since agriculture could never be a primary source of existence.[49] Both emphasized the positive results of mild government on trade because of its protection of liberty, property, and peace.[50] Like his German colleague, Kluit related Dutch mercantile decline to increasing foreign competition. In both his lectures and his para-academic publications, he propagated the implementation of all kinds of solutions put forward by Van den Heuvel cum suis, partly repeated by Luzac in his *Hollands Rijkdom*.[51] However, as far as moral and political regeneration was concerned, before 1795 Kluit emphatically defended the stadtholder and Holland's commercial elite against Patriot accusations by advocating the *regnum mixtum*, arguing that coercive measures were futile and censuring the political opposition of the 1780s.[52] Only after the fall of the Republic, did Kluit admit to imperfections in its constitution, but even then he withheld any negative judgment on the stadtholderate and he still condemned the political dissension of the 1780s.[53]

47 Kluit's definitions of *statistiek* in his lecture notes, Library Leiden University (LLU), BPL 2789 (1806–1807) 3; BPL 2681 (1803) "Voorreede"; BPL 1844 (I–III) I, "Inleiding"; LTK 944 (I–VI) I, 83–88.

48 LLU, LTK 944, I, 102–03, 109–10, 257, 286.

49 LLU, BPL 2789 (1806–1807) 141–46, 235.

50 Pestel, *Vollständige Nachrichten*, 195–97, 234, 538, 641–42, 660. Kluit, LLU, LTK 944, I, 334; IV, 451.

51 Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog*, 337 ff. Pestel, *Vollständige Nachrichten*, 197, mentions the activities of the Economic Society.

52 Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog*, 350, 354.

53 LLU, LTK 944, V, 63; BPL 2789, 65.

Up to this point, Dutch discussions of the connection between state and economy prioritized the state over the economy, but a shift announced itself in the work of Dirk Hoola van Nooten (1747–1808). Though he shared their principles of liberty and security, this Leiden law graduate differed from the aforementioned *statistiek* adherents in propagating not more but less government involvement in economic affairs. Hoola van Nooten entered local politics in Schoonhoven, participated in the local department of the Economic Society, and translated several key works on commerce, including Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.[54] In the lengthy introduction to his edition of Smith, he partly acted as his master's voice: after the errors of mercantilism and the exaggerated ideas of the Physiocrats, statecraft now could profit from *oeconomie politique* or, in Hoola van Nooten's words, the political science of the household. This system prescribed restraint in a sovereign's dealings regarding the wealth of a nation. The sovereign should enable the greatest number of products to reach the greatest number of people and desist from anything that could diminish goods and their enjoyment. Freedom should be the guiding principle: the world as a marketplace in which every nation, every private person would be allowed to buy and sell goods competing only in quality and price. In fact, the tasks of the ruler were confined to securing the property and liberty of the citizen and to supplying an adequate infrastructure.[55] Private and national wealth procured and sustained by land and labor, would be the happy result of this free market system.[56]

4 Conclusion

Hoola van Nooten's translation of the *Wealth of Nations* was published as late as 1796 and covered only the first ten chapters of book I. The rest of the translation did not appear due to a lack of interest.[57] Kluit knew Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, but he did not appreciate the Smithian interpretation of wealth and

54 Details on Hoola van Nooten in Nijenhuis, "For the Sake of the Republic," 1214–15 and Nijenhuis, "Captured by the commercial paradigm," 646–48, and the literature mentioned there.

55 *Naspeuringen over de natuur en oorzaaken van den rijkdom der volkeren naar het Engelsch van den Heere Adam Smith door Dirk Hoola van Nooten*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Wouter Brave, 1796) xl, xlvi–xlviii.

56 *Naspeuringen*, xxviii–xxix, 53–54 note k.

57 In his introduction to the Dutch translation of F. Gentz's *Essai sur l'*état actuel de l'*administration des finances et de la richesse de la GrandeBretagne* (Haarlem: J.L. Augustini, 1802), xiii, Kluit expressed his hope that Gentz would meet with a more favorable reception.

prosperity.[58] Most likely, the statistical perspective prohibited him and others from looking beyond the description of a country's assets. *Statistiek* has been defined as an Orangist discipline, well suited to prove the merits of the ancient constitution i.e. of a kind of *regnum mixtum* with the stadtholder as the head of state. Indeed, most professors teaching *statistiek* were Orangists.[59] However, this does not mean that (economic) Patriots had no use for *statistiek* in principle. Apart from Van den Heuvel, Cornelis de Rhoer (1751–1821), who taught history and law at the University of Harderwijk, Johan Swildens (1746–1809), appointed in in 1797 as a professor of natural and public law at the University of Franeker, and Johannes Goldberg (1763–1828), the first director of economic affairs in the Batavian Republic, are proof to the contrary.[60]

Statistiek was a discipline capable of describing all sectors of the Dutch economy, dealing with trade as well as industry and agriculture and envisioning something like national wealth. The step towards economic analysis in terms of production, competition, market, and economic growth had yet to be made, but first, authors had to liberate themselves from the commercial paradigm. In a thorough overview of the eighteenth-century teaching of *statistiek* in the Dutch law faculties, its increasing occupation with economic topics is noted but remains unexplained.[61] Obviously, after the input of economic patriotism in the 1770s, *statistiek* became *the* academic attempt to come to terms with the changes in both state and economy. Kluit repeated Van den Heuvel's recommendation to teach *statistiek* in the universities and explicitly classified this as a means to counter decline.[62] *Statistiek* continued first and foremost the

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Similar remarks by H.W. Tydeman, *Theorie der Statistiek of Staats-kunde. Naar het Hoogduitsch van Aug. Ludw. von Schlözer* (Groningen: Wijbe Wouters, 1814[2]), 169.

58 Kluit refers to the Dutch translation amongst other in LLU, LTK 944 I, 101, 294; II, 304; III, 204, 220; VI, 13–14, 34. BPL 2789 (1806–1807) 64, 145, 216–17, 230, 54*, 65*–66*, 218*, 240*.

59 A.Th. van Deursen, "Geschiedenis en toekomstverwachting. Het onderwijs in de statistiek aan de universiteiten van de achttiende eeuw," in *Geschiedschrijving in Nederland*, ed. by P.A.M. Geurts and A.E.M. Janssen, vol. II (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), 113, 122–23; E.O.G. Haitsma Mullier, "Between Humanism and Enlightenment: the Dutch Writing of History," in *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment, and Revolution*, ed. by Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand W. Mijnhardt (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 179–80. Apart from Pestel and Kluit, Van Deursen points out M. Tydeman, J. de Rhoer and H. Tollius as Orangist professors.

60 See on Swildens the contribution of Niek van Sas in this volume. See on Goldberg W.M. Zappey, *De economische en politieke werkzaamheden van Johannes Goldberg* (Alphen aan de Rijn: Samson, 1967). C.W. de Rhoer was elected to the National Assembly in 1796: Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012) 118–19, 189–91.

61 Jansen, "Het achttiende-eeuwse onderwijs," 127.

62 Kluit, *Iets over den laatsten Engelschen oorlog*, 350–51.

time-honored principles of Dutch commercial republicanism. By describing not only commerce but every economic sector, by prescribing the treasured principles of the rule of law, and by emphasizing institutional safeguards and commercial sociability, *statistiek* ideally suited the needs of the Republic in crisis. It could be relevant for both republics and monarchies and therefore had its attractions for either Orangists or Patriots. Decline had made them question the soundness of the commercial paradigm, seriously tested by the transnational jealousy of trade, but in the end it survived as the core of a more balanced national political economy. Well into the nineteenth century, when belief in the need for public intervention had subsided, the transition took place to what has become known as classical political economy and academic economics. However, during the last decades of the Republic, neither Physiocrats nor Adam Smith held satisfactory solutions to the Dutch predicament.

CHAPTER 3

Becoming Spinoza: On the Failure of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*

Wiep van Bunge

The anonymous publication in 1670 in Amsterdam of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (*TTP*) was a disaster. The book was immediately attributed to Baruch Spinoza (1632–77) and severely criticized by all major philosophical and theological factions in the Dutch Republic. It ruined Spinoza's reputation as a philosopher, and, of course, it could not prevent the collapse in 1672 of the Dutch regime of "true liberty" it aimed to support. It probably also prevented his book from having a lasting impact on the Dutch republican tradition. In his correspondence, Spinoza tried to put on a brave face, commenting dismissively and even contemptuously about his critics. Although he wrote a number of "Notes" clarifying his intentions, he never composed a rejoinder. It would seem, however, that the *Opera posthuma* (1677) – in particular the fourth part of the *Ethics* but also the unfinished *Tractatus politicus* – contain a number of remarks on the way in which "free men" should cope with "outrageous fortune" and reflecting Spinoza's more intimate response to the calamitous effects of having published the *TTP*. This chapter sketches the purpose of the *TTP* and the reasons Spinoza may have had to turn to politics in the first place, and then shows that the *Ethics* contains an attempt to come to terms with the hostility provoked by the *TTP*. In the end, that is in the *Tractatus politicus*, Spinoza goes even further, arguing each and every citizen is bound to obey the "Commonwealth".

1 The Purpose of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*

According to Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677), IV, Pref.:

> If someone has decided to make something, and has finished it, then he will call this thing perfect – and so will anyone who rightly knows, or thinks he knows, the mind and purpose of the Author of the work.[1]

1 Benedict de Spinoza, *The Collected Works*, 2 vols, ed. and trans. by Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985–2016), I, 543.

What was Spinoza's "mind and purpose" in writing and publishing his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670)? We have two texts at our disposal revealing the author's intentions. First, there are the famous lines Spinoza wrote at Voorburg in October 1665 to Henri Oldenburg – Letter 30 –, in which he first announced "a treatise on my opinion about scripture," adding his "considerations" for doing so:

1. The prejudices of the theologians, for I know that they are the greatest obstacle to men's being able to apply their minds to philosophy; so I am busy exposing them and removing them from the minds of the more prudent;
2. the opinion the common people have of me; they never stop accusing me of atheism, and I am forced to rebut this accusation as well as I can; and
3. the freedom of philosophizing and saying what we think, which I want to defend in every way; here the preachers suppress it as much as they can with their excessive authority and aggressiveness.[2]

It would seem Spinoza felt compelled to clarify his intentions following Oldenburg's Letter 29, from September 1665, which referred to yet another letter from Spinoza, now lost. Oldenburg had been slightly bemused: "I see You are not so much philosophizing as (if it is permissible to speak thus) Theologizing; for you are recording your thoughts about Angels, prophecy and miracles. But perhaps you are doing this Philosophically …."[3] So apparently, Spinoza's original aim had both a public and a more private aspect: (a) reducing the hold of theologians over the public domain by advocating the superiority of philosophy; and (b) demonstrating that he, Spinoza, was no atheist.

In this chapter, I will argue that Spinoza failed on both counts, but that his *Ethics*, completed in 1675 but published only after his death in 1677 as well as the *Tractatus politicus*, left unfinished when he died, contain a number of observations on the fragility of life and politics, from which his response to this failure may be gathered. It would seem this response testifies to the close connection which to Spinoza's mind exists between philosophical and more strictly personal considerations. Facing failure actually allowed Spinoza to demonstrate the extent to which he was a Spinozist. But before we are able to assess the way in which he appears to have coped with the outcome of having published the *TTP*, we must first take a close look at the circumstances that propelled him to publish his treatise in the first place.

We know, or like to think we know, what Spinoza was referring to in his letter to Oldenburg. It would seem he was out to undermine the cause of the

2 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 14–15.

3 Ibid., 11.

strict Calvinists who were looking for a swift re-installment of the stadtholderate that had been suspended in 1650 following the sudden demise of William II. During the 1660s the opposition between *Orangisten* and *Staatsgezinden* that had reached its first climax at the Synod of Dordrecht (1619) was becoming ever more intense.[4] William III was reaching adolescence, and in October 1665 the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665–67), lamented by Spinoza in his Letters 30 and 32 to Oldenburg, had just got under way with a crushing defeat for the Dutch in June 1665 at the Battle of Lowestoft. As far as the more personal element of Spinoza's announcement is concerned, we know for a fact that at Voorburg dangerous rumors about his "atheism" had begun to spread.[5]

Not that long ago, Theo Verbeek, in a very ingenious book on the *TTP*, challenged the usual interpretation according to which the work contains an argument in favor of intellectual toleration in general. Instead, Verbeek argued, it is essentially an *oratio pro domo* on behalf of his *own* philosophy, and it is first of all a continuing discussion with Hobbes.[6] We should not be naive in our reading of Spinoza's correspondence, but as much as there is to admire in Verbeek's book – the chapter on The Impossibility of Theology is especially valuable – it seems hazardous to dispense with Spinoza's own comments on his "considerations" leading up to the publication of the *TTP*, the more so as we have a second source in which Spinoza tells us why he wrote the *TTP*, namely its Preface, which presumably was composed after its completion. Having achieved what he had set out to accomplish in the *TTP*, Spinoza in his Preface summarizes what will follow, but he does so by immediately launching an attack on superstition and pointing out the dangers it poses for religion, on the one hand, and for politics, on the other.

Apparently, "true religion" and "a free republic" both suffer from the proliferation of superstition, as is evident most clearly from the example set by "[t]he Turks," whose regime serves as the exact opposite to the Dutch Republic, which allows "complete freedom of judgement." According to Spinoza, however, "*the main thing I resolved to demonstrate in this treatise* (my italics)" is "that this freedom can be granted without harm to piety and the peace of the Republic" – by which he basically rephrases the subtitle of the *TTP*. In order

4 Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477–1806* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 739–95. See also Maarten Prak, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153–200 and Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan and Pieter de La Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 284–344.

5 Steven Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 245–46.

6 Theo Verbeek, *Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise*: *Exploring 'the Will of God'* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

to achieve this aim, Spinoza continues, two kinds of "prejudices" need to be discarded, again: "regarding religion" and "regarding the right of the supreme power."[7] As far as religion is concerned, "the temple itself became a Theater": "nothing has remained of the Old Religion but its external ceremony,"[8] with disastrous consequences not only for our understanding of what true religion amounts to, but also with regard to Philosophy *and* to Scripture. In order to gain a true perspective on religion, philosophy, and Scripture, or so Spinoza argues, we should return to what Scripture is actually telling us. This requires the construction of a method for interpreting Scripture, allowing us to reconsider such issues as prophecy, divine election, divine law, and miracles.[9] By now, of course, Spinoza is outlining the various chapters of the *TTP* and clarifying the logic of its composition, and there is nothing to suggest the arguments involved merely pertain to his own philosophy.[10]

It has often been remarked that there is something odd about this logic, in that the famous chapter 7 on the method for interpreting Scripture is situated after this very method had already been put to use in chapters 1 to 6.[11] But it could well be argued, of course, that, inversely, Spinoza's view on the status of Scripture is crucially dependent on his views regarding prophecy, election, law, and miracles: whatever else Scripture might be, it cannot possibly be a miraculous "gift" to a "chosen" people, whose "prophets" were awarded privileged access to the truth – or as the opening lines of chapter 12 have it "a Letter God has sent men from heaven."[12] According to the Preface of the *TTP*, it is at this stage already that a major blow has been delivered to the cause of anyone bent on curbing the freedom to philosophize, for even before chapter 7 it has been established, or so Spinoza avers, "that Scripture leaves reason absolutely free, and that is has nothing in common with Philosophy."[13] In fact, it would seem that by now Spinoza could have claimed to have achieved the purposes

7 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 68–69.
8 Ibid., 70.
9 Ibid., 72.
10 Cf. Steven Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell: Spinoza's Scandalous Treatise and the Birth of the Secular Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), esp. 17–35 and 200–14. See also for instance Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), 206–53; Justin Steinberg, "Spinoza's Curious Defense of Toleration," in *Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Yitzhak Melamed and Michael Rosenthal (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 210–30.
11 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 73 note 29.
12 Ibid., 248.
13 Ibid., 72.

put forward in his letter to Oldenburg. For at this stage, both "the prejudices of the theologians" and the need for "the freedom of philosophizing" have been established, and in chapter 6 the conclusion has been reached that it is not the denial of miracles that "would lead to Atheism," but rather belief in the possibility that things happen against "the order of nature."[14] Whatever may have been the occasion for the rumors concerning Spinoza's atheism, his denial of miracles should not be held against him in any way, or so the *TTP* implies.

Chapters 8 to 10 on the editorial history of the Old Testament and 11 on the authority of the Apostles appear to be largely supplemental support to the closing argument developed in 12–15 regarding the nature of Scripture (12–13) and faith (14), and, finally to the conclusion reached in chapter 15, "that Theology should not be the handmaid of reason, nor Reason the handmaid of Theology."[15] The opening lines of chapter 13, summarizing the results achieved so far, actually skip the chapters 8 to 12. Having briefly referred to chapters 2, 5, 6, and 7, they conclude: "From all this it follows that the doctrine of Scripture does not contain lofty speculations, or philosophical matters, but only the simplest things, which anyone, no matter how slow, can perceive."[16] The final comments of chapter 14 point in the same direction. Having established that "[f]aith [...] grants everyone the greatest freedom to philosophize," Spinoza concludes "the things we have shown here are the main points I have been aiming at in this treatise."[17] It is tempting to assume that considerable parts from chapter 8 onwards originated in an earlier text composed by Spinoza, that is: the "Justification" he was reported to have prepared following the 1656 *herem*. The Dordrecht minister Salomon van Til in 1694 claimed that parts of this text had found their way into the *TTP*.[18] The start of chapter 12, the fourth paragraph in particular, seems to confirm that the previous parts carry additional information supporting Spinoza's interpretation of the concept "Word of God," according to which it is the divine law "inscribed in our hearts,"[19] with which Spinoza means to say: universal principles enabling us to display religious or pious behavior.

14 Ibid., 159.

15 Ibid., 272.

16 Ibid., 257.

17 Ibid., 271.

18 Jakob Freudenthal, *Die Lebensgeschichte Spinozas*, vol. I, ed. by Manfred Walther and Michael Czelinski (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromann-Holzboog, 2006), 399; Piet Steenbakkers, "The Text of Spinoza's *Tractatus theologico-politicus*," in *Spinoza's Tractatus theologico-politicus*, ed. by Melamed and Rosenthal, 29–40.

19 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 249.

2 From Theology to Politics

So why did Spinoza not stop after having completed chapter 7 or, for that matter, 11? Spinoza's text suggests two reasons. First because he appears to have felt that the largely negative conclusions reached so far simply had to be completed by a positive account of what faith, religion, and theology did amount to – for that's the subject matter of the chapters 12 to 15. Second, the political chapters 16 to 20 meet the challenge Spinoza set himself by announcing in the subtitle of the *TTP* not only "that the Republic Can Grant Freedom of Philosophizing without Harming its Peace or Piety," but also that it "Cannot Deny it without Destroying its Peace and Piety." To all intents and purposes, this particular objective goes beyond the essentially defensive text of Letter 30. In fact, it is this additional objective which propels him into developing a political philosophy: peace and piety require the freedom to philosophize. This raises the question to what extent the ambition revealed in the latter half of the subtitle was actually the product of Spinoza's work on the claim expressed in the first half. Should we perhaps conclude that, again, as he went along, Spinoza felt the negative conclusion reached in the first fifteen chapters did not suffice and had to be supplemented with a positive account, demonstrating that the freedom to philosophize should be allowed not only because it will not hurt theology, but also because it is beneficial as such – that is to say, from a political perspective? "Now it's time for us," Spinoza writes in the opening lines of chapter 16, "to ask how far this freedom of thought, and of saying what you think, extends in the best Republic."[20]

This much seems certain: having completed an early draft of the *Ethics*, Spinoza in 1665 was about to further explore the moral psychology that he ultimately developed in *Ethics* Parts Four and Five. In Letter 28, written in June 1665, and addressed to Johannes Bouwmeester, he is referring to a manuscript of the *Ethics*, as it must have looked at the time he started writing the *TTP*:

> As for the third part of our philosophy, I shall soon send some of it either to you (if you wish to be its translator) or to friend De Vries. Although I had decided to send nothing until I finished it, nevertheless, because it is turning out to be longer than I thought, I don't want to hold you back too long. I shall send up to about the 80th proposition.[21]

Since the third part of the *Ethics* as it was completed in the summer of 1675 – evidenced by Letter 68 – includes only 59 propositions, it would seem Spinoza,

20 Ibid., 282.
21 Ibid., I, 396.

somewhere in the decade leading up to its final composition, decided to add two more parts and use some of the material destined for Part Three for what would become Part Four and possibly Part Five. As it happens, the social anthropology contained in the final version of the *Ethics* starts to come into its own from Part Four, proposition 32 onwards: "Insofar as men are subject to passions, they cannot be said to agree in nature." It would seem Spinoza's interest in the social and societal dimension of human existence was a relatively late development in his thought. Neither the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* nor the *Korte Verhandeling*, both dating from about 1660, let alone the *Cogitata Metaphysica* of 1663, has much to say on the subject.

Jetze Touber has recently argued quite convincingly that the essentially *external* critique of Scripture and theology popular among increasingly radical Dutch Cartesians active during the 1650s and 1660s represented only part of the background to Spinoza's exegetical intervention, as scholars from Scaliger to Vossius, formulating internal critiques of a philological nature, had actually preceded the introduction of Cartesianism in the Dutch Republic.[22] Touber is absolutely right, as was Eric Jorink earlier, emphasizing the largely autonomous dynamic of seventeenth-century Dutch philology.[23] Yet the reality of a significant, critical tradition in Dutch biblical scholarship only further confirms the fact that for Spinoza the publication of the *TTP* turned into a disaster. Over the past few years the early Dutch reception of the *TTP* has been studied in considerable detail. Soon it was common knowledge Spinoza was indeed the author of the anonymous treatise, purportedly printed in Hamburg, and within the Dutch Reformed Church a campaign got under way to have it banned. What is more, a considerable series of refutations of the *TTP* were issued, both in Latin and in Dutch, while no one rose to its defense. The argument put forward by Jonathan Israel that after Spinoza's death the *TTP* was also to receive considerable praise abroad does not alter the fact that during his lifetime, Spinoza saw his reputation crumble.[24]

22 Jetze Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology in the Dutch Republic, 1660–1710* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

23 Eric Jorink, *Reading the Book of Nature in the Dutch Golden Age, 1575–1715* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

24 Wiep van Bunge, "On the Early Dutch Reception of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*," *Studia Spinozana* 5 (1989): 225–51; J.J.V.M. de Vet, "On Account of the Sacrosanctity of the Scriptures: Johannes Melchior Against the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*", *Lias* 18 (1991): 229–61; Ernestine van der Wall, "The *Tractatus theologico-politicus* and Dutch Calvinism, 1670–1700," *Studia Spinozana* 11 (1995): 201–26; Jonathan Israel, "The Banning of Spinoza's Works in the Dutch Republic (1670–1678)," in *Disguised and Overt Spinozism around 1700*, ed. by Wiep van Bunge and Wim Klever (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3–14 and idem, "The Early Dutch and German Reaction to the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*: Foreshadowing the Enlightenment's More General Spinoza Reception?," in *Spinoza's Theological-Political*

What does seem clear is that well before the publication of the *Ethics* Spinoza was repeatedly accused of ridiculing Scripture and theology, and of skillfully promoting an atheistic and fatalistic metaphysics. Turning prophets into imaginative politicians, denying the reality and even the possibility of miracles, scoffing at the so-called election of the Jews, turning Scripture into an essentially chaotic assemblage of ancient chronicles packed with absurdities, portraying ministers as dangerous spin doctors, and reducing the professional competence of theology to promoting mere "moral certainty" concerning "obedience," while waxing lyrical about the "mathematical certainty" produced by philosophy – to Spinoza's many critics it all pointed in the same direction: the *TTP* ended up destroying the very foundations of the Reformed creed. It must have been particularly disappointing to Spinoza that the most detailed and most voluminous refutations of the *TTP* had been delivered precisely by representatives of those intellectual and religious factions, from which he may have expected to receive at least some support. For both the Remonstrants and the academic Dutch Cartesians, two parties intimately interested in the cause of liberty and toleration, produced scathingly polemical reactions to the *TTP*, and we now know that both books were very much the outcome of collective efforts. The Remonstrant minister Jacobus Batelier's *Vindiciae miraculorum* of 1673 was written with the assistance of the Remonstrant professor Philippus van Limborch, while Regnerus van Mansvelt's *Adversus Anonymum* (1674) was equally very much the "official reply" formulated by the Cartesian academics, especially at Utrecht.[25] In Letter 68, to Oldenburg, Spinoza specifically complains about "the stupid Cartesians" who continue "denouncing my opinions and writings everywhere. Even now they're still at it."[26] To make matters worse, even the Collegiant movement, arguably the most liberal faction of Dutch Protestantism and the spiritual home of some of Spinoza's most intimate Amsterdam friends, including Jarich Jelles and Pieter Balling, came up with two highly critical assessments as both Johannes Bredenburg and Frans Kuyper joined the fray in 1675 and 1676, respectively.[27] As will be only too familiar, the *TTP* was

Treatise, ed. Melamed and Rosenthal, 72–100; Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell*, 215–40; Henri Krop, *Spinoza. Een paradoxale icoon van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2014), 147–75; Albert Gootjes, "Le réseau cartésien d'Utrecht face au *Tractatus theologico-politicus*. Esquisses d'une campagne anti-spinoziste," *Bulletin annuel de l'Institut d'histoire de la Réformation* 36 (2015): 49–54; Touber, *Spinoza and Biblical Philology*, 76–123.

25 Jacobus Batelier, *Vindiciae miraculorum per quae divinae Religions et fidei Christianae veritas olim confirmata fuit* (Amsterdam: Johannes van Waesberge, 1673); Regnerus van Mansvelt, *Adversus Anonymum Theologo Politicum Liber singularis* (Amsterdam: Abraham Wolfgang, 1674).

26 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 459.

27 Johannes Bredenburg, *Enervatio Tractatus theologico-politici, una cum Demonstratione, geometrico ordine disposita, Naturam non esse Deum* (Rotterdam: Isaac Naeranus, 1675);

actually censored by the States of Holland in 1674, and indications are that in university cities such as Utrecht and Leiden it became indeed difficult to purchase a copy.

Arguably most frustrating of all is the fact that the outrage over Spinoza's intervention prevented him from publishing the *Ethics*. In a lost letter of July 5, 1675 to Oldenburg he had apparently announced his intention to publish his "Five-part Treatise."[28] In Letter 68, however, from late September, early October, he told Oldenburg how by the end of July he had "set out for Amsterdam, intending to commit to the press the book I wrote to you about," only to find out that since

> the Theologians were setting traps for me everywhere, I decided to put off the publication I was planning, until I saw how the matter would turn out. And I resolved to let you know what plan I would then pursue. But every day the matter seems to get worse, and I don't know what I should do.[29]

In the end, or so it would seem, the *furor theologicus* unleashed following its publication prevented the *TTP* from playing a substantial part in the Dutch republican tradition, brilliantly analyzed by Wyger Velema: Spinoza was virtually absent from eighteenth-century Dutch republican discourse from Lieven de Beaufort (1675–1730) to the violent disputes raging between Patriots and Orangists during the 1780s.[30] It may well have also served to caution Dutch republican authors to stay away from theology as much as possible. As the Dutch Enlightenment was overwhelmingly Protestant and during the eighteenth century the focus of debate shifted from theology to politics, its main representatives did not convey any ambition to take up Spinoza's lead.

3 Facing Failure

Spinoza tried to put on a brave face. In Letter 50 to Jarich Jelles, June 1674, we find a unique comment on his part, revealing rare bitterness and even some uncharacteristically dismissive resentment:

Frans Kuyper, *Arcana Atheismi revelata Philosophice et Paradoxe refutata* (Rotterdam: Isaac Naeranus, 1676).

28 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 435.

29 Ibid., 459.

30 Wyger Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

> I've seen in a Bookseller's window the book the Utrecht Professor wrote against mine, which was published after his death. From the few things I read at that time, I decided it was not worth reading, much less answering. So I left the book lying there, along with its author. I smiled to myself that the most ignorant are generally the boldest and the readiest to write.[31]

Spinoza had displayed similar anger in his reply to Lambert van Velthuysen's comments to Jacob Ostens on the *TTP*: "I could hardly bring myself to reply to that man's pamphlet."[32] By the autumn of 1675, however, having completed the *Ethics* and having decided to at least postpone its publication, Spinoza appears to have changed his mind. By this time he was in direct correspondence with Van Velthuysen, and as he was considering adding a number of notes to the *TTP*, "to clarify some more obscure passages," he now assured Van Velthuysen that he would love to include his new-found friend's critical comments: "For there is no one whose arguments I would be more pleased to weigh carefully."[33] The text of these *Adnotationes* was never published during Spinoza's life.[34]

Clearly, as Steven Nadler put it, it would be "an unfair judgement based on a shortsighted perspective" to conclude from Spinoza's inability to raise public support for his views and have the *libertas philosophandi* expanded that the *TTP as such* was a failure, since it "is one of most important and influential books in the history of philosophy, in religious and political thought, and even in Bible studies."[35] What is more, although the rumors concerning his atheism were now only growing stronger, the fact that during the 1670s the Dutch public domain lost much of its former opportunity to criticize reformed theology was, of course, the result not of any philosophical or theological development at all. Instead, the temporary suspension of the "true liberty" characteristic of the first stadtholderless age was due to William III's crackdown on the liberal elites ruling Holland following the French invasion and general chaos of 1672.

In a very real sense, Spinoza came to experience at first hand the radical contingency of everyday life – that is, the consequences of being a finite mode, existing in duration.[36] To Spinoza, it was axiomatic that "[t]here is no singular

31 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 407.
32 Ibid., 385.
33 Ibid., 460.
34 Spinoza, *Oeuvres*, vol. III, *Tractatus theologico-politicus/Traité theologico-politique*, ed. by Fokke Akkerman. trans. by Jacqueline Lagrée and Pierre-François Moreau (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999), 655–95.
35 Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell*, 240.
36 Wiep van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present: Essays on Spinoza, Spinozism, and Spinoza Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 101–18.

thing in nature than which there is another more powerful and stronger" (*E*, IV, ax. 1) and he next demonstrated that "the power of man is limited by the power of another thing and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes" (*E* IV, 3 dem.), from which he next deduces "that man is necessarily always subject to passions, that he follows and obeys the common order of Nature, and accommodates himself to it as much as the nature of things requires." (*E*, IV, cor.)[37] So on a metaphysical level Spinoza must have been fully prepared for the possibility that he would *not* be applauded, not to mention the potentially devastating effects on his affective constitution by the violence of his critics, despite his equally natural inclination to have been content with having completed the *TTP* in the first place. Faced with the question of Spinoza's personal reaction to the general dismissal of the *TTP* by the Dutch reading public, it is tempting to consult the *Ethics* in order to explore some of the terms in which he may have responded affectively. We know that much of Spinoza's moral psychology had been well prepared by the time he returned to the completion of the *Ethics*, for many of the terms involved already figure in the second part of the *Short Treatise*.

As a rule, experts have considered the moral psychology contained in the *Ethics* as a further development of the *TTP*, but why not consider the *Ethics* also as containing a further reflection on the fate of the *TTP* itself? There appears to be a special reason to turn to the *Ethics*, since we know that his friends were impressed most of all by the extent to which his life demonstrated his ability to practice what he preached. This is in fact the main message instilled by the short biography composed by Jelles and added to his *Opera posthuma*, published in 1677.[38] It would seem Spinoza was hardly inclined to humility, that is, the sadness of the mind imagining its own lack of power, "accompanied by the idea of our own weakness" (*E*, III, 55 schol.).[39] But then again, according to Spinoza, humility is no virtue (*E*, IV, 53), and neither for that matter is repentance (*E*, IV, 54). Yet initially at least he appears to have been genuinely angry, as he had turned into a man "who imagines he is hated by someone, and believes he has given no cause for hate," and who "will hate the other in return." (*E*, III, 40) We know Spinoza had something of a temper. Just recall the way he reacted to the assassination of the brothers De Witt in August 1672. According

37 Cf. *Tractatus politicus* II, 5: "Whether a man is wise or ignorant, he's a part of nature …." Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 509.

38 Wiep van Bunge, *From Bayle to the Batavian Revolution: Essays on Philosophy in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 273–90.

39 In the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza was more positive about humility: "Humility exists when someone knows his own imperfection." Spinoza, *Collected Works*, I, 111.

to Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Spinoza had informed him that his landlord in The Hague barely managed to prevent him from taking to the street, carrying a placard reading *Ultimi barbarorum*.[40] In the summer of 1672 Spinoza must have been beside himself with anger.

Perhaps after a while, however, Spinoza was prepared to recognize that his *pride* had been hurt. According to the *Ethics,* pride "is Joy born of the fact that a man thinks more highly of himself than is just." Perhaps he had come to realize that he had been mistaken in thinking he could singlehandedly turn the tide. "Pride," the *Ethics* reiterates, "is a species of Madness, because the man dreams, with open eyes, that he can do all these things which he achieves only in his imagination …" (*E*, III, 26 schol.). Perhaps Spinoza, in the end, came to realize that he had been too ambitious, ambition being "[t]his striving to bring it about that everyone should approve his love and hate." Being ambitious, however, is natural: "each of us, by his nature, wants the others to live according to his temperament" (*E*, III, 31 schol.).[41] And perhaps the *Ethics* can explain *how* Spinoza managed to come to terms with the anger besieging him as a result of the scathing reviews the *TTP* had provoked, including its official prohibition, if only because "(h)ate can never be good" (*E*, IV, 45) and that "[h]e who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as can, to repay the other's Hate, Anger, and Disdain toward him, with Love, or Nobility." (*E*, IV, 46)

If the *Ethics* can indeed be read as also containing an attempt to make sense of the poor fate of the *TTP*, it would seem *Ethics* IV, proposition 20 ff provide us with a clue: in a very real sense, Spinoza succeeded in coping with "outrageous fortune" precisely by becoming more of a Spinozist than he had ever been. From *E* IV, 20 onwards, Spinoza demonstrates the extent to which preserving one's being is tantamount to being virtuous, and that "[a]cting absolutely from virtue is nothing else in us but acting, living, and preserving [...] by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one's own advantage." (*E*, IV, 24). The guidance of reason is quite unequivocal in its objective: "understanding," and (*E*, IV, 26) nothing but understanding (*E*, IV, 27). In the final proposition of the Appendix to *Ethics* IV it is as if we are presented with a Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Man Coping with Failure:

> But human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which

40 Nadler, *Spinoza*, 302. See Van Bunge, *Spinoza Past and Present*, 87–100.

41 See also *E* III, 39 schol.: "The ambitious man desires nothing so much as Esteem and dreads nothing so much as Shame."

> happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power that we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e. the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this, and will strive to persevere in this satisfaction. For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true.

Returning to Spinoza's biography and in particular to his efforts of the early 1670s, when he had just moved to The Hague, where he was to witness at close quarters the downfall of the De Witts, we know exactly what those efforts amounted to. He managed to complete the one book he had been working on ever since the early 1660s, realizing and demonstrating to himself in a very literal sense *E* IV, 28: "Knowledge of God is the Mind's greatest good; its virtue is to know God." In short, the achievement of the *TTP* should perhaps be sought not just in the material insights it delivers, that is to say, in what it contributed to any particular debate raging during the 1660s and beyond, nor in the extent to which it forced him to further explore the social and ultimately political dimensions of man, but rather in the way in which its author succeeded in not being overcome by the negative affects resulting from its publication. Recall *E* V, 9 dem.: "An affect is only evil, or harmful insofar as it prevents the Mind from being able to think."[42] From this perspective the real triumph of the *TTP*, to put it differently, consisted in Spinoza's ability to come to terms with its failure, for its extremely hostile reception only further enhanced Spinoza's "nature" as a rational being, a philosopher that is, to whom understanding constitutes man's *nec plus ultra*.

It would seem, then, Spinoza's exploration of what a life under the guidance of reason looks like actually contains a reflection on the uproar caused by the publication of the *TTP* and its consequences for the author involved. It remains to be seen what to make in this context of *E*, IV, 35 dem.: "insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, they must always agree amongst themselves." Are we really to assume Spinoza felt his opponents were *all* "torn by affects which are passions," and that he was the *only* genuine philosopher

42 So, this would be a special instance of the issue dealt with in Susan James, "Spinoza on the Passionate Dimension of Philosophical Reasoning," in *Emotional Minds: The Passions and the Limits of Pure Inquiry in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. by Sabrina Ebbersmeyer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 71–89.

involved? The *Ethics* tells us that "very great Pride" indicates "very great weakness of mind." (*E*, IV, 56) Or does he take a meta-stance involving his own position as well? In the second scholium to *E*, IV, 37 Spinoza addresses the difference between "man's natural state and his civil state." By doing so, he returns in fact to chapter 16 of the *TTP*, on the foundations of a republic and the difference between natural and civil rights.[43] To all intents and purposes, the way in which he describes man's natural state reads very much like a portrayal of Spinoza-publishing-the-*Tractatus theologico-politicus*:

> Everyone exists by the highest right of nature, and consequently everyone, by the highest right of nature, judges what is good and evil, considers his own advantage according to his own temperament [...], avenges himself [...], and strives to preserve what he loves and destroys what he hates. [...]. If men lived according to the guidance of reason, everyone would possess this right of his [...]) without injury to anyone else.

But because men are subject to affects, "it is necessary for them to give up their natural right," and live in societies, ruled by laws, restraining the affects. It is only in civil states that men are bound to obey to laws made up "by common agreement." and that "obedience is considered a merit in a Citizen" (*E*, IV, 37 schol. 2).[44] And the "free man" is best advised to avoid dangers rather than overcome them (*E*, IV, 69), and to join "a state where he lives according to a common decision" instead of living in solitude, obeying only himself (*E*, IV, 73).

This looks very much like a philosophical justification of Spinoza's repeated assurance, at the end of the Preface of the *TTP* and reiterated in the final lines of chapter 20:

> that I do write nothing which I do not most willingly submit to the examination and judgment of the supreme Powers of my Country. For if they judge that any of the things I say are in conflict with the laws of my country, or harmful to the general welfare, I wish to withdraw it. I know that I am a man and may have erred.[45]

43 See esp. Susan James, *Spinoza on Philosophy, Religion, and Politics: The Theologico-Political Treatise* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 233–60.

44 Cf. *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, Chapter 17: "It's obedience which makes the subject, not the reason for the obedience." Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 297.

45 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 76. Cf. 353–54.

Coping with the effects of virtually being outlawed by the regime of the Republic he purported to support turned Spinoza into the philosopher *par excellence*, since it invited him to realize the attitude his philosophy aimed to instill. Looking back, Spinoza may well have smiled about his former anger, for why should the fate of the *TTP* have been a source of surprise? He must have been intimately acquainted with the horrific fate of Adriaan Koerbagh, prominent member of his Amsterdam circle of friends, whose books were also banned and who died in jail in 1669, after the aborted attempt to publish his semi-Spinozist *A Light Shining in Dark Places*.[46] It has often been remarked that the memory of Koerbagh renders Spinoza's praise for his native country – "we happen to have that rare good fortune that we live in a Republic in which everyone is granted complete freedom of judgment …"[47] – highly ironic, if not downright cynical.

4 Conclusion

In the end, it would seem Spinoza conquered despair, overcame his anger as well as his pride, and completed the *Ethics*, and subsequently decided to elaborate on the final, political chapters of the *TTP*, enabling his editors to include in his *Opera Posthuma* ten new chapters and the start of an eleventh, together entitled *Tractactus politicus*. Some commentators have argued it represents a definite further development of Spinoza's political thought and a departure from some of his former views, for instance regarding the "social contract" from which society originates.[48] Instead of exploring this issue, however, we should look for traces left by the political events of the 1670s, including the prohibition of his *TTP* in 1674. It has often been remarked that to Spinoza's mind the Art of Politics essentially is a balancing act: how to create a state powerful enough to allow its citizens as much freedom as possible?[49] This much seems

46 Adriaan Koerbagh, *A Light Shining in Dark Places to Illuminate the Main Questions of Theology and Religion*, ed. and trans. by Michiel Wielema, introd. by Wiep van Bunge (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 185–96; Nadler, *A Book Forged in Hell*, 36–51; Bart Leeuwenburgh, *Het noodlot van een ketter. Adriaan Koerbagh (1633–1669)* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013).

47 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 69.

48 See most notably Alexandre Matheron, "Le problème de l'évolution de Spinoza *du Traité théologico-politique* au *Traité politique*," in *Spinoza: Issues and Directions*, ed. by Edwin Curley and Pierre-François Moreau (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 258–70.

49 See for instance Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 214.

certain, that after 1672, having faced the vulnerability of the Republic he inhabited and cherished as well as its miraculous survival, in part due to William III's intervention, Spinoza tended to emphasize the necessity of powerful government.[50] As a rule, this is presented as illustrating Spinoza's Machiavellian "realism," famously expressed on the first page of the *Tractatus politicus*, where he chastises philosophers conceiving "men not as they are, but as they want them to be."[51] The results are clear:

> [N]o citizen is his own master. Each is subject to the control of the Commonwealth, and bound to carry out all its demands. He has no right to decide what's fair or unfair, pious or impious [...] So, the more a man is led by reason, i.e. [...] the more free he is, the more steadfastly he will observe the laws of the Commonwealth and carry out the commands of the supreme power to whom he is subject [...] If a man who is guided by reason sometimes, by the command of the commonwealth, has to do something he knows is incompatible with reason, that harm is far outweighed by the good he derives from the civic order itself. For it is a law of reason that we should choose the lesser of two evils.[52]

So here we have an author of a radical plea in favor of *libertas philosophandi*, prohibited by the very Republic he aimed to support, subsequently arguing in favor of the right of the state to curb the political initiatives of its citizens. In conclusion, it would seem there is every reason to assume that by the time Spinoza was writing the *Tractatus politicus* he had indeed triumphed over the failure of his own *TTP*.

50 Étienne Balibar, *Spinoza et la politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985), 63–90.

51 Spinoza, *Collected Works*, II, 503.

52 Ibid., 518–19. On the limits of Spinoza's plea in favor of freedom of expression, see also Daniel Garber, "Should Spinoza Have Published His Philosophy?" In *Interpreting Spinoza: Critical Essays*, ed. by Charles Huenemann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 166–87.

CHAPTER 4

Republicanism and Slavery in Dutch Intellectual Culture, 1600–1800

Freya Sierhuis

In Onno Zwier van Haren's tragedy *Agon, Sultan van Bantam* (1769), a play that dramatizes the defeat of the Banten Sultanate at the hands of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), the protagonist, the aged Sultan Agon (Sultan Ageng "the Great" Tirtayasa, 1631–95, ruled 1651–83), retorts with dignity when provoked by the arrogant words of a VOC legate:

> The Hollander who seeks to conquer Asia overall
> And, in Holland free, will here accept no freedom at all
> For whose fleet dominion over the Indies is the design
> Has never seen my pennant lowered for his ensign.
> And all those Christians who through such travail
> For the sake of vile gain to our lands have set sail
> Have not exported their quarrels to my domain
> And her restive nature here respects me, sovereign.[1]

Agon's adoption of a republican language of freedom as self-determination draws into relief the contradiction between the self-image of the Dutch as a freedom-loving people, and the effective reality of Dutch imperial power in the East.* Liberty and slavery are perhaps *the* fundamental oppositional concepts of republicanism as a political language. And yet, as many critics have pointed out, in Dutch political culture, the rights associated with political freedom were restricted to the citizens of the Republic itself and were not extended to the inhabitants of its colonies. This situation would remain a constant throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries up until the debates of the French

1 Onno Zwier van Haren, *Agon, sulthan van Bantam*, ed. by G.C. de Waard (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979) Act 3.1.11, 641–49.

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and Batavian Revolutions, when the boundaries of the nation and the conditions of citizenship became the subject of intense debate.[2]

When examining the paradox of Dutch domestic liberty and colonial unfreedom, as many critics have done following Seymour Drescher's influential article, "The Long Goodbye: Dutch Capitalism and Anti-Slavery in Comparative Perspective," it is good to remember that the language of law and the language of humanism, as John Pocock argued many years ago, are distinct: virtue, the linchpin of the republican discourse of liberty, is not reducible to right.[3] But neither, of course, are the two fully separable. In order to understand the seeming ideological contradiction between republicanism as a political language and the institution of colonial slavery, it is vital to understand the interaction between republican arguments and positions and the wider discussion on empire, citizenship and law. The debate on Dutch colonial history and the role of the Dutch in the transatlantic slave-trade has recently undergone something of a paradigm shift and contributions on anti-colonialism and abolitionism in Dutch political and literary culture have been growing steadily.[4] The historiography on Dutch anti-slavery argument is largely centred on the late eighteenth century, usually beginning with the "Patriot Era" of the 1780s, and yet arguments against slavery can be found much earlier and in a much wider range of

2 Angelie Sens, "La révolution batave et l'esclavage. Les (im)possibilités de l'abolition de la traite des noirs et de l'esclavage (1780–1814)," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 326 (2001): 65–68; René Koekkoek, *The Citizenship Experiment: Contesting the Limits of Civic Equality and Participation in the Age of Revolutions* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 7.

3 Seymour Drescher, "The Long Goodbye: Dutch Capitalism and Antislavery in Comparative Perspective," *American Historical Review* 99, no. 1 (1994): 44–69, reprinted in *Fifty Years Later: Anti-Slavery, Capitalism and Modernity in the Dutch Orbit*, ed. by Geert Oostindie (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1995); John Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History. Essays on Political Thought, Mainly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [1978]), 47.

4 A.N. Paasman, *Reinhart: Nederlandse literatuur en slavernij ten tijde van de Verlichting* (Leiden: Nijhoff, 1984); Angelie Sens, *Heiden, Mensaap Slaaf. Nederlandse visies op de wereld rond 1800* (The Hague: SdU, 2001); Simon Vuyk, "'Wat is dit anders dan met onze eigen hand deze gruwelen te plegen?' Remonstrantse en doopsgezinde protesten tegen slavenhandel en slavernij in het laatste decennium van de achttiende eeuw," *Doopsgezinde bijdragen*, nieuwe reeks 32 (2006): 171–206; Kwame Nimako, *The Dutch Atlantic: Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* (London: Pluto Press 2011); *Dutch Atlantic Connections, 1680–1800: Linking Empires, Bridging Borders*, ed. by Gert Oostindie and Jessica V. Roitman (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Pepijn Brandon and Karwan Fatah-Black, "'For the Reputation and Respectability of the State': Trade, the Imperial State, Unfree Labor, and Empire in the Dutch Atlantic," in *Building the Atlantic Empires: Unfree Labor and Imperial States in the Political Economy of Capitalism, ca. 1500–1914*, ed. by John Donoghue and Evelyn Jennings (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 84–108; Sarah Adams, "Slavery, Sympathy, and White Self-Representation in Dutch Bourgeois Theater of 1800," *Early Modern Low Countries* 2, no. 2 (2018): 146–68.

sources. Within the history of Dutch political thought, arguments against slavery have until recently received only limited attention. And yet many texts that shaped anti-slavery argument were equally vital to the renovation and transformation of eighteenth-century republicanism.[5] While necessarily limited in scope, this chapter seeks to make a contribution to this debate by placing republican and anti-slavery arguments in closer conversation.

1 Ideas about Slavery and Equality in the Seventeenth Century

Within the Dutch Republic, anti-slavery arguments first made their appearance in the context of the wider debate on the Dutch colonial possessions in the East and West Indies. The debate on the Republic's overseas expansion did not so much focus on whether or not the Republic should be a colonial power, but on how her colonial possessions should be administered, on whether the chartered companies should exercise a monopoly over colonial trade or not, and on the question of how she ought to behave towards the inhabitants of its colonial territories. While English republican writers such as James Harrington (1611–77) attempted to reconcile imperial expansion with republican liberty via a complex institutional machinery that was to ensure political stability, Dutch political thinkers such as the republicans Johan (1622–60) and Pieter de la Court (1618–85) set out to obtain the same goal by redefining the Dutch overseas possessions as a commercial empire, rather than a land-based, territorial one.[6]

These were the debates that framed the discussion on slavery and slave trade. Republicanism, as a classical-humanist political language centred around the struggle between virtue and corruption, did in itself not provide a sufficient intellectual foundation for a principled rejection of slavery and the slave trade. It certainly could, and sometimes was, used to denounce the institution of slavery. Yet as it analyses politics in terms of morality and thus makes positive freedom, the right to self-rule, dependant on the individual's capacity for virtue, rather than on rights, republicanism could equally be harnessed by

5 Exceptions include Karwan Fatah-Black, "Orangism, Patriotism, and Slavery in Curaçao," *International Review of Social History* 58 (2013): 35–60; Markus P.M. Vink, "Freedom and Slavery: The Dutch Republic, the VOC World, and the Debate over the 'World's Oldest Trade'," *South African Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2007): 19–46; Arthur Weststeijn, "Republican Empire: Colonialism, Commerce and Corruption in the Dutch Golden Age," *Renaissance Studies* 26, no. 4 (2012): 491–509.

6 Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age. The Political Thought of Johan and Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

those who regarded slaves as inferior, unfit for self-rule, and their own rule over slaves, when exercised with humanity and moderation as not only permissible, but as a virtuous work that saved the slaves either from certain death or a life of misery, and brought them under the influence of Christianity and civilization.

Such a perspective fitted well with the analysis of slavery found in the work of Hugo Grotius. In his *Mare liberum* (1609) Grotius had provided the intellectual legitimation of Dutch overseas expansion. His *De iure belli ac pacis* (1625) provided the agents of Dutch colonial expansion with an account of slavery that could legitimate the buying, selling, and owning of slaves while simultaneously introducing some minimal strictures to accommodate the demands of natural reason and intrinsic justice.[7] Although the institution of slavery, Grotius argued, is not found in nature, its presence has been a constant throughout human history, and can be justified on utilitarian grounds as a means of sparing the lives of prisoners of war.[8] Grotius' attempt to provide a secular and rational defence of slavery resulted in a rather problematic distinction between external right, derived from utility, and intrinsic justice derived from natural reason. To accommodate the tension between the two, he was willing to concede that a slave made subject to extreme cruelty would have the right to flight (but not to resist). Similarly, the descendant of a slave that had been taken prisoner in an unjust war would not be found guilty of theft if he should escape. Even with these minimal strictures, it should be clear that Grotius' account would allow the form of transatlantic slave trade and slave labour that was beginning to be an established feature of Dutch colonial possessions such as East Brazil. Many influential jurists whose work shaped the policies of the States of Holland, such as Grotius' brother Willem De Groot (1567–1662), and the Frisian jurist Ulrik Huber (1636–94), followed Grotius line of argument, creating what has been called "a slaving discourse with a Christian humanist face".[9] Even a text ostensibly more critical of Dutch colonial politics, Vondel's long poem *Lof der Zee-vaert* (In Praise of Navigation, 1623) which chastizes the ruthless actions of the then director of the VOC, Jan Pieterszoon Coen, nevertheless mystifies the cruel realities of colonial labour and transatlantic trade by describing it as a benevolent, civilizing force, to which the indigenous inhabitants of the Americas and the black Africans will submit voluntarily.[10]

7 On this topic, see Martine Julia van Ittersum, *Profit and Principle: Hugo Grotius, Natural Rights Theories and the Rise of Dutch Power in the East Indies 1595–1615* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

8 Grotius discusses slavery in many places in *De iure belli ac pacis*, especially in II.5.27-30 and III.7 and III.14. See also David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (London: Penguin Books, 1966), 133–35.

9 Vink, "Freedom and Slavery," 33–34.

10 Joost van den Vondel, *Twee zeevaart-gedichten*, ed. by Marijke Spies, vol. I (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsce UItgevers Maatschappij, 1987), 25 (verses 417–21).

There were also dissenting voices that utilized the resources of Christian humanist republicanism to criticize the institution of slavery. An example is the *Rerum per octennium in Brasilia gestarum … historia* (1647) of the humanist scholar and Remonstrant theologian Caspar Barlaeus (1584–1648), a one-time ally of Grotius. Barlaeus' work celebrates the *res gestae* of Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen (1604–79), who acted as governor of the Dutch colony in Brazil from 1637 to 1644. Barlaeus celebrates Dutch colonial power as an instrument of civilization and Christianisation, yet is also acutely aware of the dangers of empire to republican liberty through the corrupting influence of luxury. His solution consisted of a re-alignment of commercial enterprise with a Ciceronian virtue ethics, joining the *utile* with the *honestum* in the service of the commonwealth, an ethical model he had first expounded in his oration on the wise merchant, *Mercator sapiens*, and of which he regarded Johan Maurits as an exemplar.[11] Barlaeus nevertheless regarded the slave trade as a violation of the Stoic and Christian insistence on the natural equality of man, and as a desecration of the image of God in man.[12] The reality of Johan Maurits' governorship would prove different from Barlaeus' idealization. Indeed, as slavery became more entrenched in the Dutch colonial economies in the period between 1647 and 1672, critiques of slavery became fewer as profit, in the words of Markus Vink, gained the upper hand over principle.[13]

Barlaeus' rejection of slavery rested on the idea of human equality, grounded in Scripture and Stoic philosophy. The biblical argument against slavery was also heard among a group of Reformed ministers, mainly, although not exclusively followers of the influential theologian Gijsbert Voetius, including figures such as Festus Hommius (1576–1642), Cornelis Poudroyen (d.1662), Georgius de Raad (c.1625–77), Jacobus Hondius (1629–91), and Bernard Smytegelt (1665–1739). These ministers constituted a minority position within the Reformed Church. Defences of slavery based on the idea of the curse of Canaan (Genesis 9:25–27) and the distinction between spiritual and physical liberty were mounted both by moderated Calvinists and by the more "liberal" Cocceian theologians.[14]

Much more outspoken in their opposition to slavery were the dissident groups outside the public church, such as the Mennonites, Collegiants, and the Quakers.[15] In their writings, we find evidence of a more generalized notion of man's natural equality, founded on the idea of man being created in the image

11 Weststeijn, "Republican Empire," 505.
12 Ibid., 504.
13 Vink, "Slavery and Freedom," 30.
14 Ibid., 25.
15 Ibid., 32.

of God, and made free in grace by Christ. Observing the convergence between republican thought, radical religion, and anti-slavery argument during and after the English Civil War, Anthony di Lorenzo and John Donoghue have argued that it was precisely the antinomian convictions of the republicans, based on a conception of natural law grounded in the idea of free grace, that made a break with the English political tradition possible.[16] In the words of the Leveller John Lilburne, "All members of civil society" by right derived a "natural propriety" from Christ the King, who had created them in his own sovereign image and endowed them an inalienable set of "just rights" that formed the "prerogative of mankind".[17] While Lilburne's connection to the Dutch Republic is well known, the influence of the Republic's political culture on Lilburne's thinking has only recently drawn attention. Contacts between English and Dutch dissenters, including Quakers, Mennonites, and Fifth Monarchists were intensive, and extended beyond the Channel into the wider Transatlantic.[18]

In 1659, Pieter Plockhoy, a Mennonite Collegiant from Zierikzee in Zeeland, living at the time in England, published *A Way Propounded to Make the Poor in these and Other Nations Happy*, a blueprint for a co-operative society to be founded just outside of London. After the Restoration Plockhoy moved back to the Netherlands and from there to America where in 1663 he established, together with a group of followers, a model community called Zwanendael, in the Delaware estuary. The principles on which the settlement would be based included full religious toleration, communal labour, sobriety, and simplicity (the settlers would produce luxury goods, but only for the purpose of exporting them), and a rejection of all forms of religious or social hierarchy. The utopian vision of Plockhoy offered a model to the freethinker Franciscus van den Enden (1602–74), a Latin teacher from Amsterdam, who in 1662 published the *Kort Verhael van Nieuw Nederland* (Short Account of New Netherland). While Van den Enden did not share Plockhoy's religious inspiration, and would in fact ban all religious zealots, including Catholics, Puritans, Quakers, and

16 Anthony Di Lorenzo and John Donoghue, "Abolition and Republicanism over the Transatlantic Long Term, 1640–1800," *La Révolution française* 11 (2016), http://journals.openedition.org/lrf/1690.

17 Ibid., 2.

18 William I. Hull, *William Penn and the Dutch Quaker Migration to Pennsylvania* (Swarthmore: Swarthmore College, 1935); G.A.F. Nuttall, "English Dissenters in the Netherlands, 1640–1689," *Dutch Review of Church History* 59, no. 1 (1978): 37–54; *European Contexts for English Republicanism*, ed. by Dirk Wiemann and Gaby Mahlberg (London: Routledge, 2016); Jason Peacey, "Print and Principles: John Lilburne, Civil War Radicalism and the Low Countries," in *John Lilburne and the Levellers Reappraising the Roots of English Radicalism 400 Years On*, ed. by John Rees (London: Routledge, 2017).

Millenarians from his community, he nevertheless seems to have taken over Plockhoy's insistence on the abolition of all forms of inequality. Van den Enden in turn influenced Plockhoy, with much of Plockhoy's *Kort en Klaer Ontwerp* (Clear and Short Account, 1662), a pamphlet aimed at attracting new settlers to Delaware, echoing Van den Enden's *Short Account*. Both men emphatically rejected racial, as well as social, inequality. Van den Enden described slavery as incompatible with justice and human dignity. He would later systematize his ideas on the equality and rationality of all people in *Vrye Politijke Stellingen* (Free Political Propositions, 1665).[19]

In 1688, the inhabitants of Germantown, mainly German and Dutch Quakers, drafted a petition against the practice of slavery in their communities. The text of the petition appeals to the idea of natural rights, arguing that liberty of conscience is inseparable from liberty of the body:

> Now, tho they are black, we can not conceive there is more liberty to have them slaves, as it is to have other white ones. There is a saying, that we shall doe to all men like as we will be done ourselves; making no difference of what generation, descent or colour they are. And those who steal or robb men, and those who buy or purchase them, are they not all alike? Here is liberty of conscience, wch is right and reasonable; here ought to be likewise liberty of ye body, except of evil-doers, wch is an other case. But to bring men hither, or to rob and sell them against their will, we stand against. In Europe there are many oppressed for conscience sake; and here there are those oppressed wh are of a black colour.[20]

It is interesting, in view of the natural law argumentation we have encountered earlier, that the petition expressly refuses to condemn slaves who take up arms to reclaim their liberty. The emphasis on inalienable rights in early abolitionist discourse throws up interesting questions concerning the long lineage of the idea of human equality and the discourse of natural rights conventionally associated with the late eighteenth century, and more particularly with the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose fundamental contribution to

19 Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment, Philosophy and the Making of Modernity* 1650–1750 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 177–78. On Plockhoy, see also Henk Looijesteijn "'Born to the Common Welfare': Pieter Plockhoy's Quest for a Christian Life (c. 1620–1664)" (PhD thesis, EUI, 2009).

20 Germantown Friends' Protest against slavery, 1688, https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.14000200/?st=text. See also Katherine Gerbner, "Antislavery in Print: The Germantown Protest, the 'Exhortation', and the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Debate on Slavery," *Early American Studies* 9, no. 3 (2011): 552–75.

the debate was, as Annelien de Dijn has shown, to connect classical republican ideas about freedom as political self-determination to a theory of natural rights.[21] The explicitly religious inspiration behind the idea of natural rights in the writings of Levellers, Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, and Collegiants points to the intellectual connections between the English Civil War and the radical Enlightenment. As the complex interaction between republican and abolitionist argument in the Anglo-Dutch transatlantic shows, and as the exchange between Van den Enden and Plockhoy suggests, the characterisation of the radical Enlightenment as a predominantly secular phenomenon might stand in need of revision.

2 Commerce, Corruption, and Slavery in the Eighteenth Century

In the opening decades of the eighteenth century the utopian project of the radical Enlightenment began to recede into the background. As the Dutch Republic lost its hegemony in world trade and was overtaken politically, culturally, and economically by England and France, a discourse of cultural decline gained hold. Contrasting the Republic's present-day situation to its position in the seventeenth century, now construed as the pinnacle of national achievement, members of the Dutch political elite pointed to the corrupting effects that luxury and the fashion for foreign, especially French, manners, had had on Dutch Republican virtues. Luxury and extravagance had replaced sobriety, temperance and frugality, while new ideals of *politesse*, it was argued, imported from absolutist, court-centred France had eroded traditional, public-spirited values of honesty, frankness and simplicity.[22]

Critiques of the corrupting effects of the craze for colonial consumer goods were a significant factor in the development of the anti-slavery debate in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1775, an anonymous author writing for the spectatorial journal *De Vaderlander* (The Fatherlander) points to the connection between the insatiable thirst for overseas luxury goods such as coffee, tea, sugar and china, and the decay of domestic industry that has aggravated the economic decline of the Republic. He illustrates this by pointing to the languishing trade in traditional Delftware, now considered crude and

21 Annelien de Dijn, "Rousseau and Republicanism," *Political Theory* 46, no. 1 (2018): 59–80; Keith Michael Baker, "Transformations of Classical Republicanism in Eighteenth-Century France," *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (2001): 32–53.

22 Wyger R. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth Century Dutch Political Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), chapter 4, "Polite Republicans and the Problem of Decline," 77–91.

clunky by fashionable ladies who delight in delicate china porcelain, and the poverty and misery this has created among the workers of this once flourishing trade.[23] Honest labour that contributes to the general economic prosperity of the Republic is contrasted with colonial trade and the plantation economy, benefitting only a narrow elite. In this way, the anti-slavery argument appears to play a subordinate role to a more general critique of colonialism and corruption. The luxury goods of the colonial trade, coffee, tea, tobacco and sugar, are a root cause of the nation's declining physical and moral health.[24] The author's appeal to the readers to return to the simplicity and sobriety of their seventeenth-century forebears is combined with a passionate denunciation of the evils that the production of these luxury goods is responsible for. "Coffee," the author summarizes, "has led to the depopulation of America, to make space for plantations, and to the depopulation of Africa, for the production of slaves."[25] In order to drive the message home, the author gives a vivid description of the horrors of the slave trade, asking its addressee, a fashionable lady called "Alintera", to imagine herself in the position of a young black woman who has been sold on the slave market, forced to work on a plantation and bear her master children.[26] Rehearsing the abolitionist trope that sugar and coffee are tainted with the sweat and tears of slaves, it closes with an urgent plea to its heroine to join a consumer boycott.

Similar arguments can be heard in the "Letter of Kakera Akotie to his Brother Atta", published by the minister and playwright Cornelis van Engelen (1726–93) in two instalments in *De Denker* (The Thinker) between 1763 and 1764, in the wake of the slave rising in the Dutch colony of Berbice (Guyana) in 1761. The letter is written from the perspective of Kakera Akotie, a fictional character based at least in part on a historical fact, who is abducted by Dutch slave traders and brought to Curaçao to work as a slave.[27] In vivid detail, the letter recounts the dehumanizing effects of slavery and the miseries of daily life on the plantation. It narrates the backbreaking labour, the punishments and the structural abuse of slave women. It counters, or at least questions, the natural law arguments usually adduced in the defence of slavery. Discussing Christianity, it points to the utter lack of fit between the ethics Christians preach, and the ethic they practice.[28] But is also points out the devastating effects of

23 "De Oorzaak der Slavernij," *De Vaderlander* 1 (1775), 339.
24 Ibid., 337–38.
25 Ibid., 340.
26 Ibid., 341–43.
27 "Brief van Kakera Akotie, een Fantynschen Neger aan zynen Broeder Atta op de Kust van Guinea", *De Denker* no. 82 (1764): 234–40 and no. 83: 242–48.
28 Ibid., 242–43.

the trade in slaves on African, rather than European societies. The Europeans' insatiable demand for slaves, Akotie argues, has plunged the nations of Africa in a destructive cycle of fratricidal warfare. And all this misery is caused the desire for luxury items that have nothing to do with the necessities of life their survival, but for luxuries and trifles.[29]

The eighteenth-century critique of luxury suggests a synergy between republican and abolitionist discourses. To some extent, as we have seen, this was demonstrably the case. Yet other elements of eighteenth-century political argument about commerce and the progress of civilization as found in the work of Montesquieu, David Hume and Adam Smith, worked effectively to emphasize ideas about the superiority of western civilization, and to legitimize the status quo.[30] For the purposes of my argument, the example of Montesquieu will have to suffice, as an illustration of the complex way in which these debates were entangled.

As Wyger Velema has shown, Montesquieu's *L'Esprit des Lois* was avidly read by Dutch audiences, translated and commented upon by authors such as the conservative Elie Luzac (1721–96) and the Patriot Dirk Hoola van Noten (1747–1808). Montesquieu's classification of all political states into three types (despotic states, monarchies and republics, each with their own guiding principle), and his fundamental opposition between despotism and rule of law, redrew the boundaries of political debate. For the Dutch, moreover, his treatment of republicanism, and the difference between the virtue of the ancient republics and that of their modern counterparts, was of particularly urgent concern.[31] For Montesquieu, there was a world of difference between the simple virtue of ancient agrarian republics and its pale modern reflection: a virtue based on commerce, on which present-day republics depended. Some among Montesquieu's Dutch readers, such as Hoola van Nooten and Gerrit Paape (1752–1803), responded to this challenge with a vindication of modern civilized values, and a critique of classical virtue. Hoola van Nooten, who brought out a copiously annotated translation of *l'Esprit des Lois* in 1784, discussed the institution of slavery in Ancient Rome, and argued that it was not only inhumane, but also incompatible with modern European notions of liberty.[32] Similarly, conquest,

29 Ibid., 237–38.

30 Davis, *The Problem of Slavery*, ch. 13: "The Enlightenment as a Source of Anti-Slavery Thought: The Ambivalence of Rationalism," 423–55; Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), ch. 23: "Race, Radical Thought and the Advent of Anti-Colonialism."

31 Velema, *Republicans*, 98–100.

32 Montesquieu, *De Geest der Wetten*, trans. by Dirk Hoola van Nooten, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Willem Holtrop, 1783), 612.

another characteristic of ancient republicanism, was to be rejected. As Velema has argued, "[T]the fact that the ancient republicans were living in societies largely based on violence, Dutch readers of Montesquieu further observed, had also caused them to entertain excessively martial notions about civic virtue."[33]

On the institution of modern-day slavery, *l'Esprit des Lois* is notoriously ambivalent. In book XV.5, Montesquieu condemns the practice as contrary to nature and humankind's natural liberty. He follows his general reflections on the subject with a biting satire of arguments in favour of slavery, demonstrating their intellectual poverty and absurdity. This passage would recur frequently in eighteenth century anti-slavery argument, and is for instance quoted in its entirety, as an appendix to the "Letter of Kakera Akotie".[34] At the same time, Montesquieu's discussion of slavery in the context of institutions of despotic states, and his climatological determinism suggest that he regarded the institution as a regrettable, but perhaps inevitable fact of political life.

The tragedy *Agon, Sultan of Bantam* offers an interesting example of a how these tensions in Enlightenment thought play out in dramatic form. Van Haren's play consistently appeals to a republican ethos to articulate its critique of the VOC's imperial policies. Virtue is here embodied in Sultan Agon, characterized throughout as a wise, moderate and just ruler, who upholds the law and protects the poor. Feeling his strength decline, he has made a plan to divide his realms between his sons Hassan and Abdul. Abdul, as the eldest, will receive the crown domain, Hassan, who will receive the smaller part, will gain the hand of Fathema, a Makassar princess, who has been raised at Agon's court after the Dutch conquered the kingdom, killing her parents. Agon's "mistake" lies in trying to be, perhaps, too even-handed, and in not being able to see the murderous ambition of Abdul, an "unnatural" son of the type of Shakespeare's Edmund.

Corruption comes in the shape of a Dutch double agent, Van Steenwyk, who plots with Abdul to eliminate both his brother and father. With the help of a VOC navy, the city is stormed. At the head of his troops, Agon is stabbed by Abdul. He is carried into the palace and dies a calm, dignified death. Hassan and Fathema die fighting, in a final desperate attempt to safeguard the city's liberty. Throughout the play, a stark contrast is created between the Dutch representatives of the VOC, characterized as domineering, avaricious, and scheming, and Agon, Hassan and Fathema, who are dignified, honest, and brave. Even the VOC legate Saint Martin, who is initially described as a moderate and civilized man, soon resorts to bullying and intimidation when it becomes clear

33 Velema, *Republicans*, 85.

34 "Brief van Kakera Akotie," 247–48.

that his plan to install Fathema on the throne of Makassar as a puppet ruler for the VOC is not finding approval. When Agon asks why he as a sovereign ruler should agree to take orders from the Dutch, Saint Martin responds by enumerating the VOC's recent conquests. To this, Agon justifiably replies that boasts and brags cannot take the place of reasonable arguments. The Bantanese characters are, on the whole, scathing in their assessment of the Europeans, whose friendship, it is said, is always for the highest bidder, and for who gold is literally God. A particularly pernicious role is played by Van Steenwyck, who plays the renegado, a stage type that embodies the dangers of empire. He is a Dutchman who, it is said, has forsaken his country and religion for gain, and having become corrupted, he becomes a corruptor of others.

A reader familiar with the eighteenth-century debates on the influence of climate on political institutions, might be surprised to find a republican language of liberty and virtue adopted by Indonesian princes. Asia is not traditionally described as a bastion of liberty in Western sources. Van Haren was no doubt familiar with Montesquieu's analysis of the impact of geography and climate on political *moeurs*. The tragedy alludes directly to enervating effects of the tropical climate on political liberty, reflected in Agon's dying words: "Virtue and bravery have from the East been banned/ And I leave the craven Orient prey to its tyrants." And it would seem that the "tyrants", refers not, or at least not exclusively, to Oriental despots, but to the Dutch VOC overlords. For the play reveals how, even while Saint Martin is negotiating with Agon, a Dutch fleet is nearing the harbour, ready to resort to arms when diplomacy fails, making clear VOC rule in the East is based on might, rather than right and on violence, rather than law. Even so one should be wary of reading *Agon, Sultan of Bantam* as an anti-colonial text in a straightforward sense. Rather, the play registers the conflict between the love of liberty and a historical and climatological predisposition to political subjection and resolves it via the resources of tragedy. Freedom-loving Asian princes can be accommodated in this framework, but only in nostalgic, backward-looking mode, as latter-day Brutusses, tragically predetermined to glorious defeat.[35]

Yet regardless of the tragic perplexities of Van Haren's *Agon*, the reception of Montesquieu in the closing decades of the eighteenth century suggests that Montesquieu's insistence that slavery was incompatible with the institutions and ethos of republics resonated with his Dutch audience, and appears to have

35 On the performativity of republican virtue, see Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History,* 44; see also Amber Oomen-Delhaye, *De Amsterdamse Schouwburg als politiek strijdtoneel. Theater, opinievorming en de* (*r*)*evolutie van Romeinse helde*n (1780–1801) (Hilversum: Verloren, 2019).

forced them to confront the contradictions between a republican language of liberty and the defences of slavery based on utility, climate, and history, or natural law. This can be discerned in Hoola van Noten's annotations on Montesquieu's text, which often put a radical gloss on his critique of slavery. Van Noten also voices his disappointment that Montesquieu, following his wholesale condemnation of slavery in book XV.5 had found it necessary to discuss the institution so extensively – it would have been better, he argues, if the author had just left it there.[36] He counters Montesquieu's argument that in certain states, because of the degenerative effects of the climate and lack of political liberty, slavery is less in contradiction to reason. For while a measure of subordination is essential to all political societies, there can never be any social utility to the complete subordination of one person to another, as it is contrary to nature.[37] Hoola van Noten refutes the pro-slavery arguments found in the natural law tradition, for instance the individual's right to sell himself into slavery. Instead, he adopts a modern notion of individual rights derived from Rousseau's *Du contrat social* that insists, against Grotius, that personal liberty is inalienable.[38]

A similar constellation of ideas can be discerned in the anti-slavery arguments of "Philalethes Eleutherus", alias Jan van Geuns (1764–1834) and Willem de Vos (1738–1823), who cite with equal ease from Cicero, Montesquieu, Rousseau, as from the gospel of Matthew. Their *Over den slaaven-stand* (On the State of Slavery, 1797) argues that what had been said on the subject of slavery in the natural law tradition was at once so nit-picking and so utterly lacking in substance, that the authors had decided not to bother with it.[39] They concurred with Hoola van Noten who, contrary to Grotius and his followers but in line with the petition of the Germantown Quakers of 1688, insists on the corollary of an inalienable right to freedom, namely the right of the slave to resist their master.[40] A sign of the times was Raynal's *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissemens et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes* (1770), which contained a fiery passage calling for a new Spartacus, "who will not find his Crassus", to vindicate the liberty of the black slaves.[41] These words are echoed in Betje Wolff's 1777 adaptation of Mercier's utopian novel

36 *De Geest der Wetten*, 144.

37 Ibid., 125.

38 Rousseau, *Du contract social* I.4, in *Oeuvres completes*, vol. III: *Du contrat social. Ecrits politiques* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1964), 355–59.

39 *Philalethes Eleutherus over den slaaven-stand* (Leiden: Mortier, 1797), 45.

40 *De Geest der Wetten*, 119.

41 Guillaume-Thomas François Raynal, *Wysgeerige en staatkundige geschiedenis van de bezittingen en den koophandel der Europeanen in de beide Indiën*, vol. IV (Amsterdam: Schalekamp, 1776), 239.

L'an deux mille quatre cent quarant (*Holland in het jaar 2440*) that speaks of a coming avenger of the New World, who will help African slaves and native Americans to regain their inalienable rights, given to them by nature.[42] Yet it characterizes the ambivalences many felt on the issue that Pieter van Woensel (1747–1808) decided to drop this passage from his abbreviated version of Raynal's text.[43]

An examination of the historiography of slave resistance, moreover, shows the highly negative response of French, Dutch and English audiences to slave rebellions and the maroon warfare. Slave uprisings occurred throughout the early modern period but increased in frequency in the second half of the eighteenth century, giving rise to protracted conflicts, such as the rebellion of François Mackandal, a Haitian Maroon leader and houngan (voodoo priest) burned at the stake in Port-au-Prince in 1758.[44] The Haitian Revolution of 1791 equally provoked largely hostile responses among European commentators. The lawyer and publicist Pieter Paulus (1753–96) who chaired the Holland Assembly of Provisional Representatives insisted that the events on Saint-Domingue had demonstrated the wrongheadedness of revolutionary France's "abrupt" liberation policy. Giving the African slaves equal rights could of necessity only be done gradually.[45] In the historiography of Dutch abolitionism, attention has often been focused on the way in which the needs of the colonies framed and limited the discussion of slavery in the Netherlands during the Batavian Revolution. René Koekkoek has argued how Enlightenment theories of civilizational progress were used throughout the 1790s to exclude black slaves from citizenship, and to insist on a gradual, rather than immediate abolition of slavery. Hardly any abolitionist, Koekkoek reminds us, was in favour of immediate emancipation.[46] In the final section of my argument I will argue how such ideas found their way into the abolitionist drama of the period.

42 Inger Leemans and Gert Jan Johannes, *Worm en donder. Een geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur 1700–1800: de Republiek* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2017), 572.

43 Pieter van Woensel, *Précis de l'histoire philosophique & politique des établissemens & du commerce des Europiens dans les deux Indes* (Amsterdam: J.F. Rosart & Comp., 1782).

44 Mavis Campbell, *The Maroons of Jamaica 1655–1796: A History of Resistance, Collaboration & Betrayal* (Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988); Richard Price, *Maroon Societies: Rebel Slave Communities in the Americas* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1973); Crystal Nicole Eddins, "Runaways, Repertoires, and Repression," *Journal of Haitian Studies* 25, no. 1 (2019): 4–38; Jenna Gibbs, "Toussaint, Gabriel, and Three Finger'd Jack: 'Courageous Chiefs' and the 'Sacred Standard of Liberty' on the Atlantic Stage," *Early American Studies* 13, no. 3 (2015): 626–60.

45 Koekkoek, *The Citizen Experiment*, 79–80.

46 Ibid., 81, 85 and passim.

3 Sentimental Theatre and the Rebellious Slave

In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, a roll-call of slave liberators takes to the Dutch stage and to the pages of the sentimental novel. Many of these works were adaptations from works published in French or German.[47] Yet there were also many, like the poet Paul François Roos (1751–1805), who denounced the rebellious slaves and their white sympathizers.[48] One of the few original Dutch contributions to the genre of the abolitionist theatre play is *Monzongo, of de Koningklyke Slaaf* (Monzongo, or the Royal Slave, 1774).[49] Its author was the Amsterdam indigo merchant and poet Nicolaas Simon van Winter (1718–95), who often co-wrote his plays with his second wife, the Remonstrant poet Lucretia van Merken (-1789).

While the play was written, as Van Winter writes in the introduction, in response to the brutal suppression of the slave rising in Berbice, the play transposes the action to the relatively "neutral" time and space of Hispaniola in Brazil in the age of Spanish conquest. Despite this rather cautious approach, or perhaps because of it, the play seems to have been popular, being staged almost every year between 1780 and 1810, and after that, with intervals until 1846.[50] The play opens with the King of Veragua, Monzongo, captured in war and now known by his slave name "Zambiza", gathering gold from the mines for his master, the conquistador Cortes. Separated from his family, he has been given a wife by Cortes, Semire, with whom he has two children. When Cortes departs for Mexico, the pair's relative security is threatened by the appointment of the cruel and haughty Alvarado as Cortes' deputy. Alvarado has long begrudged Zambiza the favour in which he is held by Cortes and is seeking to orchestrate his fall. Matters are further complicated by the arrival of a delegation from a royal house whose princess, Melinde, has for years been searching for her lost husband. After an emotional scene of recognition between Monzongo and Melinde, the two women, who realize that neither of them carries any guilt, pledge each other their friendship. Meanwhile Alvarado has prepared to take Monzongo prisoner on accusations of conspiracy. After many turns and reversals, the captured Monzongo and Melinde are brought before Cortes, who, despite himself, is impressed by their bravery, loyalty to each other and contempt for death. The scene is interrupted by the news of a revolt,

47 Paasman, *Reinhart*, 136.

48 Ibid., 137–38.

49 Nicolaas Simon van Winter, *Monzongo, of de koningklyke slaaf: treurspel*, in Nicolaas Simon van Winter and Lucretia Wilhelmina van Merken, *Tooneelpoëzy*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Pieter Meijer, 1774).

50 According to the Onstage Online Datasystem of Theatre in Amsterdam from the Golden Age to the present, http://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/onstage/plays/1457.

orchestrated by Semire and Monzongo's friend Quantimoc, and supported by all the slaves who have been moved by Monzongo's plight. In the tumult, Semire is mortally injured by Alvarado. Carried into the palace, she pleads for the life of her husband and his first wife, commends herself to both, confesses to be a Christian and dies. Moved, Cortes decides not just to liberate both Monzongo and Melinde, but to restore them to their rightful throne.

While there are some powerful moments of dialogue, as when Monzongo challenges Cortes' argument that the Spaniards have conquered America to save its inhabitants from idolatry, the play approaches the problem of slavery through sentiment, rather than through legal argument. In line with the demands of the theatre of sensibility, the play uses intense emotion to un-shell ("*ontbolsteren*") the spectator, to re-sensitise them, and make them receptive.[51] In the same way as Cortes, the audience is moved, and gains insight. Yet the play also employs emotion to make abstract concepts like natural rights tangible. When taunted by Alvarado with his slave status, Monzongo retorts that we are all by nature free:

Zambiza (*bravely*)	Your people brought me by force to this lowly situation I was free, and used to be esteemed in my own nation But just as quick, even as one is born as a slave, Nature Will make the voice of love of spouse and children Be heard in every honest heart. Look at Cortez and his wife
Alvarado (*mocking*)	You think that you are their equal?
Zambiza	Oh yes. In this sense: Even though I lie in slavery I am a man, so is he, No dominion or servitude ever quells the plea of feeling Nature, who makes every mortal heed this voice Makes every pledge to which she binds precious to us Were my state yours, you would have found this to be true.[52]

This is how the play operates throughout: Catharina recognizes Semira's love for Monzongo because it mirrors her own love for Cortes; Cortes recognizes Monzongo's inborn bravery and nobility, and so on. The emphasis of this play, and other instances of abolitionist literature, is as much on the moral education of the slave-holder, as on the plight of the slaves.

51 Cornelis van Engelen, *Eene wysgeerige verhandeling over den schouwburg in 't algemeen* (Amsterdam: Pieter Meijer, 1775), 34–35.

52 Van Winter, *Monzongo, of de koninkyke slaaf*, Act 1.6.

Monzongo, Or the Royal Slave illustrates many of the reasons why much abolitionist literature, with its investment in the idea of the "good" slave-owner, who can be reformed and redeemed and its voyeuristic interest in the potential torture and degradation of human beings makes uncomfortable reading. Its essentially paternalist stance insist that the Indian characters need to prove themselves worthy of liberty. Only after both Semira and Monzongo have demonstrated themselves capable of almost superhuman feats of nobility and self-denial does Cortes grant them the freedom the play otherwise insists is theirs due by nature. And even then, it appears conditional. After they have been restored to royal dignity, Monzongo and Melinda accept Cortes as their "protector" and "father". Yet the play does nevertheless illustrate something interesting about the complex interaction between a republican idea of liberty, revolving around a binary opposition between liberty and slavery which thrives on moral heroics, and a political language based on natural rights, in which liberty is inborn and inalienable, and a cultural and moral ideal that insist that while equality is natural, individuals nevertheless need to prove themselves capable and worthy of freedom.

4 Conclusion

A long view of the interaction between republicanism and abolitionism demonstrates that the paradox identified by Drescher many years ago was in fact, remarked on by contemporaries. As early as the 1650s, a range of groups including godly republicans, Fifth Monarchists, Collegiants, and Quakers can be seen drawing on a theology of free grace to defend a theory of natural rights. In Dutch political debates on slavery, a secularized version of the idea of natural rights became dominant from the 1770s onwards. Yet the interaction between a republican language of virtue and abolitionist discourse remains, throughout this period, complex. The eighteenth-century discourse on the Republic's cultural and economic decline certainly lent force to the critiques of Dutch colonial power and the trade in goods produced through slave-labour. At the same time, the development of a complex set of theories concerning the different stages of progress of civilizations, imposed limits on the political application of newly articulated ideas concerning the natural rights of slaves. Such tensions and prevarications are made manifest in the contemporary vogue for stories of rebellious slaves. The emphasis on moral education towards liberty and citizenship in spectatorial literature, and in the sentimental novel and theatre play, with their complex strategies of moral and political education registers these tensions with particular clarity.

CHAPTER 5

The Problem of National Debt in Dutch Republican Thought: Joan Derk van der Capellen and Elie Luzac

Lina Weber

On the morning of September 26, 1781, numerous copies of a pamphlet called *Aan het volk van Nederland* (To the People of the Netherlands) were discovered on the streets of all large towns in the Dutch Republic. The names of its author and publisher were omitted from the imprint. François Adriaan van der Kemp (1752–1829), a Mennonite pastor from Leiden, had organized the secret dissemination. The pamphlet's content was explicit: its anonymous author explained to his readers that the established political order of a hereditary stadtholderate and a regent oligarchy was corrupt, and he called on citizens to assemble, protest, and arm themselves. The provincial authorities proclaimed the pamphlet subversive, forbade people to sell or possess it, and tried to discover the identity of the author. Yet, *To the People of the Netherlands* was reprinted several times. The authorship of Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (1741–84), a nobleman from Overijssel, became widely known only much later.

This famous pamphlet was a key text of evolving Patriotism, a movement that caused a major political crisis and was crushed by an Anglo-Prussian army in 1787. Its story is well known and has often been told. Interpreting the pamphlet's content, however, has proven more difficult, as has the characterization of the political thought of Van der Capellen, the Patriots, and their Orangist opponents. One strand of scholars identifies *To the People* as a plea for revolution. Van der Capellen and the Patriots emerge as harbingers of equality, democracy, and nationalism.[1] Other historians reject applying the label "revolutionary" to Dutch Patriotism. They claim that the movement was fairly moderate and adhered to well-established structures, traditions,

1 C.H.E. de Wit, *Het ontstaan van het moderne Nederland 1780–1848 en zijn geschiedschrijving* (n.p.: n.p., 1978); Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780–1813* (London: Fontana Press, 1992 [1977]); N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004); R.R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800: With a New Foreword by David Armitage*, Princeton Classics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

and arguments.[2] Defenders of the stadtholderate have received comparably little scholarly attention.[3] A more nuanced understanding of Patriots and Orangists has been reached by relating Dutch political thought to revisionist interpretations of early modern republicanism. In *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975), John Pocock described two paradigms, or political languages, of eighteenth-century republicanism that evolved in Britain in reaction to the financial revolution of the 1690s and were adopted by those discussing American independence. To criticize the new system of financing war by borrowing from the public, Country opposition writers used the language of classical republicanism that focused on virtue and liberty in the sense of active participation. They feared that the independent community was corrupted by the national debt, mobile property, the moneyed interest, and the standing army. An abuse of power could be prevented only by a mixed constitution and self-sustaining, land-owning, and arms-bearing citizens. This classical republican language was challenged by a modern republicanism of Court authors. Here, "modern" does not entail a normative judgment and does not refer to democracy, equality, or any such notion. These eighteenth-century "modern" writers focused on politeness and highly praised the achievements of commercial society such as civilization, sociability, progress, and moral refinement.[4]

The applicability of these republican paradigms to Dutch political thought has been rejected by Ernst Kossmann. Although he admitted that the Dutch adopted certain British ideas, Kossmann stressed that the differences were greater than the similarities. Patriots like Van der Capellen and Orangists like Elie Luzac (1721–96) eclectically used and mixed elements of mutually exclusive republican languages.[5] Yet, if a broader basis of sources is investigated in

2 Leonard Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution: History and Politics in the Dutch Republic 1747–1800* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973); L.H.M. Wessels, "Tradition et lumières in politicis: Quelques remarques sur l'argumentation et la position idéologique des patriotes aux Provinces-Unies à l'aube de la Révolution (1780–1787)," *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 19, no. 1 (1987); Maarten Prak, "Citizen Radicalism and Democracy in the Dutch Republic," *Theory and Society* 20, no. 1 (1991).

3 See, however, Wyger R.E. Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1721–1796)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993); idem, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 115–78.

4 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003 [1975]). For a recent historiographical overview on republicanism, see Rachel Hammersley, "Introduction: The Historiography of Republicanism and Republican Exchanges," *History of European Ideas* 38, no. 3 (2012).

5 E.H. Kossmann, "Comment II," *Theoretische geschiedenis* 9, no. 1 (1982); idem, *Political Thought in the Dutch Republic: Three Studies* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2000).

more detail, a different view of Dutch political discourse in the 1780s emerges. Applying the paradigms of classical and modern republicanism to Dutch discourse, as Wyger Velema has shown, helps us to discern what was traditional and what "modern" or "conservative" about Patriotism and Orangism. Thereby, new light can be shed on the relation of the Dutch case to broader transnational intellectual developments.

If the classical and modern republican paradigms are applicable to Dutch political discourse, a question about the Dutch perspective on national debt arises. Public borrowing was an important issue in eighteenth-century political debate because it was a decisively modern phenomenon, setting the early modern state apart from politics in antiquity. In Pocock's account, it was the introduction of a long-term, funded, national debt and a system of public credit during the financial revolution that revived classical republicanism in Britain. In the Netherlands, public debt had been introduced much earlier. Drawing on structures of public borrowing from the late Middle Ages, Dutch provinces took out loans from their subjects on a large scale to fight against the Habsburgs in the sixteenth century. By the eighteenth century, the provinces, and the province of Holland in particular, were highly indebted, but their interest rates were comparatively low. Historians explain this paradox by pointing to the abundance of capital in the Netherlands and to the lack of knowledge about the true state of the debt that helped maintain a public image of creditworthiness.[6] Ida Nijenhuis has therefore concluded that the Dutch did not share the classical republican concern about a moneyed interest and national debt of their Anglo-American contemporaries. Even for a Patriot landholder like Van der Capellen, public borrowing was an accepted means to finance war. Wantje Fritschy has made the contrary claim that Van der Capellen and other Patriots expressed the same resentment of financial modernity as Anglophone classical republicans, although she did not find any direct reference to national debt or stock trading in Van der Capellen's main publications.[7]

This chapter aims to shed new light on the relationship between republicanism and national debt in the Netherlands. Using Van der Capellen as an example for the classical republican perspective, I argue that the Patriots, like their Anglo-American contemporaries, worried about the corrupting effect

6 E.H.M. Dormans, *Het tekort. Staatsschuld in de tijd der Republiek* (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1991), 187–92; Wantje Fritschy, *Public Finance of the Dutch Republic in Comparative Perspective: The Viability of an Early Modern Federal State* (*1570s–1795*) (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

7 I.J.A. Nijenhuis, *Een joodse* philosophe. *Isaac De Pinto* (*1717–1787*) (Amsterdam: NEHA, 1992), 116f; J.M.F. Fritschy, *De patriotten en de financiën van de Bataafse Republiek. Hollands krediet en de smalle marges voor een nieuw beleid* (*1795–1801*) (The Hague: Stichting Hollandse Historische Reeks, 1988), 85f.

of debt. However, their concern was not caused by Dutch debt, but by Dutch holdings of foreign debt and that of Britain in particular. In the eighteenth century, inhabitants of the Netherlands lent money to foreign nations on a large scale. The most important debtor was Great Britain. The new role of the Dutch Republic in international finance, brought about by the investment activity of its citizens, caused the Patriots great concern. It was the Patriot's Orangist opponents who developed a more critical stance on the Dutch provinces' debt in the early 1780s, as an investigation of Elie Luzac, illustrative of the modern stance, will show. Rather than the classical republican fear of political corruption, Luzac warned about the economic effects of rising indebtedness, such as an increasing tax burden. The Dutch case with its general acceptance of commercial modernity is interesting for broader research into republicanism since it shows the adaptability of the paradigms established by Pocock.

1 Van der Capellen

Eighteenth-century Dutch political discourse was thoroughly republican. One of its strands, Velema has argued, can be identified as classical republicanism. Yet, to make fruitful comparisons, the focus on landed property must be given up.[8] Dutch authors used this language to emphasize the importance of virtue, liberty, and independent citizens. Although admiring the classics, Dutch republicans were highly aware of the differences between their own modern, commercial reality and the circumstances of antiquity and of the other existing republics. The Patriots, like earlier classical republican authors, interpreted liberty as active participation of citizens in politics and feared corruption and patronage. What set them apart from their predecessors and made them radical and revolutionary in the 1780s was that they combined this idea of liberty with the conceptions of popular sovereignty, of inalienable rights, and of enlightening the people.

It is well known that Dutch Patriot thought was strongly influenced by British writers. Van der Capellen read John Locke, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, and *Cato's Letters*. Andrew Fletcher's *A Discourse on Government with Relations to Militias* and Richard Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* and the subsequent *Additional Observations* seemed so important to him that Van der Capellen translated them into Dutch in the 1770s. In 1783, a translation of parts of Joseph Priestley's *Essay on the First Principles of Government* followed.

8 Velema, *Republicans*, 123.

From these British works, Van der Capellen adopted the idea that a concentration of power in the government endangered liberty and that an armed citizen militia could remedy the problem.[9]

What has received less attention is the fact that translating Price's *Observations* in 1776 served two purposes. In the preface to the translation, Van der Capellen states that he thought "this treatise was extremely suitable for explaining to my fellow countrymen the dangerous state of England's credit, as well as the true foundation of liberty and civil government, from within."[10] Price's political philosophy was general and could thus be applied to the Netherlands. Price's reasoning about national debt, by contrast, was considered to be specific to the British case. In the Netherlands, it served to warn investors about the precarious state of their money.

Arguing on the basis of general, natural rights, rather than historic jurisdictions, Price maintained that the people were the source of all power. Since power corrupted those who governed and introduced dependencies, citizens had to be alert to the abuse of political power. Van der Capellen applied this political reasoning to the Dutch case: "Has any people ever made more extensive use of its omnipotence than we Dutchmen?"[11] He explained that he did not refer to the deposition of Philip II, who had been a tyrant, but to the reinstatements of the stadtholderate in 1672 and in 1747. The governments that were abolished had been lawful and just, their unavoidable abuses could have been corrected. Van der Capellen admitted, "Yet, the people thought it was good to no longer be ruled by the same people; but to introduce a very new form of government that was fundamentally different from the earlier one."[12] Since sovereignty resided with the people, they could replace civil government.

In addition to Price's political philosophy, the translation "revealed" the true state of Britain's finances. Price argued that Britain's war against the American colonies was unjust and unaffordable. Britain's enormous debt had increased

9 Kossmann, "Comment II," 30; M. Evers, "Angelsaksische inspiratiebronnen voor de patriottische denkbeelden van Joan Derk van der Capellen," in *1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?*, ed. by Theo S.M. van der Zee and Joost Rosendaal (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1988); S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland* (*1766–1787*) (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 78–82.

10 Richard Price, *Aanmerkingen over den aart der burgerlyke vryheid, over de gronden der regeering, en over de regtveerdigheid en staatkunde van den oorlog met Amerika: Benevens een aanhangsel en naschrift, bevattende eenen staat van de nationaale schuld, eene begrooting van de geldsommen, die door middel der belastingen* [...] *geheeven worden, en eene bereekening der nationaale inkomste en uitgaave sedert den laatsten oorlog*, trans. by Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Poll (Leiden: L. Herding, 1776), 3f.

11 Ibid., 11.

12 Ibid., 11f.

taxes and devalued credit papers. The riches created by public banks were unreal and dangerous. In a classical republican manner, Price warned that credit papers could become powerful tools in the hands of ministers to increase their influence, to become less dependent on the people, and to "create a deceitful impression of common prosperity, while ruin is very close."[13] Britain was able to maintain this impression of creditworthiness only because of the American colonies. Consequently, Price suggested reforming the empire: in exchange for certain political and economic freedoms, America could contribute towards paying off Britain's national debt. He exclaimed, "May heaven soon send us an able statesman, who sees this, and pursues powerful remedies to save us and maintain us, if it is not too late already."[14]

To convince his readers that bankruptcy was looming, Price published lists reporting Britain's national debt and revenue in the appendix. These data stated that in 1775 the national debt amounted to £135,908,241. The enormity of the debt alone, according to Price, "was sufficient to sink all public credit."[15] Britain raised taxes on land, stamps, papers, card games, houses, windows, and goods but was still unable to meet the expenses of war. Price concluded, "Without doubt, such a situation is the most dangerous and dreadful in a large commercial state; but there is no redress as long as the national debt remains what it is…."[16] Published in 1776, when Britain was at war and its American colonies had declared themselves independent, the translation served as a warning in the Netherlands, the most important creditor nation of Britain. Warnings about the immediate ruin of Britain seemed more authentic and believable to the Dutch audience when they came from the inside. It is noteworthy that Van der Capellen applied Price's political ideas of civil liberty and popular sovereignty to the Dutch case but refrained from doing the same with national debt.

Dutch investments in Britain's debt became highly political in 1780 when George III declared war on the Netherlands. This is reflected in Van der Capellen's *To the People of the Netherlands*. The pamphlet told the history of the Netherlands in a classical republican fashion as a struggle between the original liberty of the Batavians and oppression by the Orangist stadtholders. The monarchical element in the mixed constitution had gradually exceeded its powers by introducing a standing army, making systematic use of patronage, and the display of decadence at court. Ever since the fight for independence, the stadtholder had been supported by an English faction. Van der Capellen

13 Ibid., 84.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., Appendix, 7.
16 Ibid., Appendix, 17.

maintained that this faction had continuously "spread its partizans everywhere, in every Province, in every assembly."[17] England had been jealous of Dutch commercial success and worked towards reinstating the stadtholder in 1747. He claimed that

> To lessen our happiness, to bring us to the ground, to ruin our commerce, to reduce us to a state of dependency, they [i.e. the English] gave us Stadtholders, who, as they were to *them* alone beholden for their exaltation, as they expected from *them* alone assistance for the further encroachments on our liberties, have always closely allied themselves with these our natural enemies, and have always, as true and faithful allies, been attached to their service; and who, as we again experience it too plainly now, would rather see this country ruined than quit their English party. This, Gentlemen! is the key to all that has happened in our days.[18]

Through the marriages between stadtholders and the royal family, England had caused all wars, all public debts, and all ruin that the Dutch Republic had experienced. The pernicious influence of England was not restricted to the stadtholderate itself. It had also infiltrated into the regent oligarchy, the aristocratic element of the mixed government. Many men of power were living at the stadtholder's court, became corrupted, and lost all interest in the public good. Van der Capellen added,

> Besides, most of our grandees and other men of consequence, have lent great sums of money to England. It is for that reason that they will not fall upon that country, and that they side with the Prince. They apprehend that England might be brought too low, and that she might stop payment. Many of them are so much attached to England, and so little to their own country, that even now they support, with their fortunes, that kingdom, our declared enemy. This is treason, and should be investigated and punished.[19]

17 [Joan Derk van der Capellen], *An Address to the People of the Netherlands: On the Present Alarming and Most Dangerous Situation of the Republick of Holland: Showing the True Motives of the Most Unpardonable Delays of the Executive Power in Putting the Republick into a Proper State of Defence, and the Advantages of an Alliance with Holland, France and America: By a Dutchman: Translated from the Dutch Original* (London: J. Stockdale, 1782), 22; [Joan Derk van der Capellen], *Aan het volk van Nederland* ([s.l.]: [s.n.], [1781]), 13.

18 [Van der Capellen], *An Address*, 70; [Van der Capellen], *Aan het volk*, 39.

19 [Van der Capellen], *An Address*, 30f.; [Van der Capellen], *Aan het volk*, 17.

By investing in English stock, these patricians (*regenten*) became attached to their debtor. Their interest in England's future willingness and ability to honor its debt guided patricians' political decisions. Even now that there was war between the two countries, Van der Capellen claimed, those who had lent money to England preferred England's wellbeing to the prosperity of their own country. Regent investors were thus diametrically opposed to the Patriot ideal of the independent and free citizen who acted for the public good rather than in his own interest, a point Van der Capellen underlined by accusing them of treason, the quintessential insult in Patriot rhetoric.[20]

According to Van der Capellen, the situation of the Dutch Republic was grave but could still be salvaged. To do so, the democratic element in the mixed constitution needed to be strengthened again. The Batavians had governed themselves, but, Van der Capellen acknowledged, the Netherlands had become too large for citizens to assemble and execute their sovereign power directly. His solution was the delegation of power, as in a joint-stock company:

> The inhabitants of a country, the landholders, the burghers and peasants, the boors and the rich, the great and the *small*, all of them together, are the true owners, lords, and masters of their country; these ought to appoint governors, and to establish laws. A nation is a great society, in political partnership; the rulers, the chiefs, the magistrates, the Prince, those, in short, who constitute the acting sovereignty, are but directors, commanders, and treasurers of that society; and, in their respective capacities, or collectively, they are of less consequence than its members, that is, than the collective body of the nation.[21]

Van der Capellen used the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company) as an example to illustrate the workings of such an institution. This passage has puzzled scholars. Kossmann argued that the usage of the joint-stock-company metaphor shows that the classical republican paradigm cannot be applied to the Dutch Patriots. Their conception of society and the state differed significantly from that of their Anglo-American contemporaries. Kossman remarked that, "The British and American Patriots did not, of course, regard the state as a joint-stock company."[22] What he did not take into consideration was the different functions of joint-stock companies in the

20 N.C.F. van Sas, "Drukpers, politisering en openbaarheid van bestuur in de patriottentijd. Enkele kanttekeningen," in *1787: De Nederlandse Revolutie?*, 176.

21 [Van der Capellen], *An Address*, 38; [Van der Capellen], *Aan het volk*, 21.

22 Kossmann, *Political Thought*, 188.

Netherlands and in Great Britain. All of them were colonial and commercial enterprises; their shares were traded on stock markets. The British *East India Company* and *South Sea Company* were involved in the country's national debt, although to a lesser extent than was the *Bank of England*. Dutch authorities, by contrast, took up loans directly on the market instead of using the *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie* as a mediator. Consequently, the metaphor of the joint-stock company had very different implications in the Netherlands than it would have had in Britain. Given their aversion to public borrowing, it was impossible for British republicans to use this metaphor.

Passages such as the one quoted are also used to present Van der Capellen as a democrat. Scholars of this persuasion state that his broad definition of the nation made him a harbinger of modern equality and the rule of the people. To explain the disparity between his political convictions and his own noble background, historians have diagnosed Van der Capellen with a bipolar disorder.[23] Such conclusions are unhistorical and do not further our understanding of what Dutch Patriots were trying to achieve. More insightful are the interpretations of Simon Schama and Wyger Velema, who have shown that Van der Capellen did not aim to establish a democracy in the modern sense but attempted to reestablish the balance in the mixed government by strengthening its democratic element. His understanding of the "people" was not modern and egalitarian but remained rather exclusive.[24]

To reestablish the proper balance in the Dutch constitution, Van der Capellen argued that the male and independent citizen needed to make his voice heard and check the government by making use of petitions, the press, and city assemblies. Most importantly, he was to arm himself. Van der Capellen

23 Jan Romein and Annie Romein-Verschoor, *Erflaters van onze beschaving. Nederlandse gestalten uit zes eeuwen* (Amsterdam: Em. Querido, 1977), 557–59; Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 248; Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Poll, *Aan het volk van Nederland. Het democratisch manifest van Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol 1781*, ed. by W.F. Wertheim and Hetty Wertheim-Gijse Weenink (Weesp: Heureka, 1981). For the diagnosis of bipolarity, see Murk de Jong, *Joan Derk van der Capellen. Staatkundig levensbeeld uit de wordingstijd van de moderne demokratie in Nederland* (Groningen: Wolters, 1922), 441–44; Leeb, *The Ideological Origins*, 159f.

24 Schama, *Patriots and Liberators*, 66; Wyger Velema, "Generous Republican Sentiments: The Political Thought of Joan Derk Van Der Capellen," in *A Marble Revolutionary: The Dutch Patriot Joan Derk Van Der Capellen and His Monument*, ed. by Arthur Weststeijn (Rome: Palombi, 2011), 56–58. See also Richard Price, *Nadere aanmerkingen over den aart en de waarde der burgerlyke vryheid en eener vrye regeering: Benevens een kort berigt van de schulden en middelen van Frankryk; en een nader verslag van Grootbrittanjes toestand met betrekking tot deszelfs schulden, inkomsten en koophandel* [...], trans. by Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Poll (Leyden: L. Herdingh, 1777), 49f.

demanded that "our burghers and boors should every one of them have a good firelock, bayonet, and sword, and learn the manual exercise."[25] This was no newly invented fantasy but a fundamental law, stipulated by the Union of Utrecht, and practiced by the Swiss and the Americans. As a result of strengthening the democratic element, Van der Capellen argued, trade would be revived, peace be established, the Dutch navy be strengthened, and alliances be made with France, "our old ally," and America.[26]

It is important to notice that Van der Capellen applied the classical republican fear of national debt to Dutch investments in British stock only. He encouraged the North Americans to take out loans to finance their war against the British motherland and participated in these loans himself. In 1781, *De maandelykse Nederlandische Mercurius* published a letter that Van der Capellen had written to John Adams in 1778. In this letter he stated that he had invested 20,000 livres in an American loan and was encouraging other people in the province of Overijssel to follow his example. He also advised Adams that the North American Congress, if it wanted to succeed with borrowing money from the Dutch, should guarantee payment independent from the outcome of the war.[27]

Other Patriots followed Van der Capellen in accusing Dutch investors in British debt of treachery and warning about a looming bankruptcy of Britain. The important Patriot confession of faith *Constitutional restoration* even went so far as to suggest excluding those who had invested a great part of their property in foreign stock from political offices.[28] For the Dutch Patriots, the corrupting effect of national debt came from holding foreign sovereign debt, not from their own financial liabilities. This crucial difference can be explained by pointing out the different experiences: in Britain, public borrowing was closely related to commercial and violent colonial expansion. The connection of this new financial system to powerful institutions caused great concern about opportunities for corruption. In the Netherlands, public credit and mobile property were well established by the eighteenth century. Since Dutch authorities contracted public debts primarily on the provincial level and directly on capital markets, state finance was too decentralized to be abused by a political institution or minister.

25 [Van der Capellen], *An Address*, 35; [Van der Capellen], *Aan het volk*, 19f.

26 [Van der Capellen], *An Address*, 49; [Van der Capellen], *Aan het volk*, 28.

27 *De maandelykse Nederlandsche Mercurius*, vol. 51 (Amsterdam: Bernandus Mourir, 1781), 38f.

28 *Grondwettige herstelling, van Nederlands staatswezen zo voor het algemeen bondgenootschap, als voor het bestuur van elke byzondere provincie* [...], vol. I (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1784), 364.

2 Luzac

To challenge the classical republican emphasis on virtue and active participation in politics, Dutch authors used elements of the modern republican paradigm. The spectatorial press, for example, developed a polite republicanism to tackle the perceived moral decline. In the 1780s, Elie Luzac, a publisher and supporter of the stadtholderate from Leiden, challenged the classical republican conception of men and political society by using natural jurisprudence. He took to extremes the praise of commerce, moral refinement, and the rule of law. It was Luzac who identified Dutch public debt as the reason for the country's perceived decline, and other Orangists followed him. However, like the Patriots he did not adhere to the classical republican idea that national debt was a source for corruption and patronage. For Orangist critics of Dutch debt, it was the economic impact of public borrowing that raised concerns, rather than any political effect.

The most sophisticated treatment of Dutch debt can be found in Luzac's *Hollands rijkdom* (Holland's Wealth). Published in four volumes between 1780 and 1783, it has been praised for its analytical quality and its international influence by both contemporaries and historians.[29] With a thorough analysis of commerce, Luzac aimed to uncover the reasons underlying Dutch decline and to find ways for its recovery. His view was an original take in the long-standing debate about the perceived decay of the Netherlands. Luzac claimed that manufacturing and trade had been harmed by the rise in taxation that resulted from a growing public debt. He traced the beginning of the "pernicious practice of burdening the state with debt" to the early sixteenth century, when Charles V gave a privilege to the States of Holland to borrow money from the public. The debt grew immensely through the subsequent wars fought by the supporters of "True Liberty" during the two stadtholderless periods (1650–72 and 1702–47).[30]

The growth of financial liabilities led to an increase of taxation. Thereby, according to Luzac, labor and commodities became more expensive, undermining commerce and manufacturing. As a result of this loss of international competitiveness, the Dutch started providing more and more financial services to foreign nations. Luzac explained that "it is entirely to be ascribed to the

29 For the assessment of *Hollands rijkdom*, see Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism*, 117f. For the work more generally, see ibid., 115–43; and idem, "Homo mercator in Holland. Elie Luzac en het achttiende-eeuwse debat over de koophandel," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 100, no. 3 (1985): 427–45.

30 Elie Luzac, *Hollands Rijkdom: behelzende den oorsprong van den koophandel en van de magt van dezen staat* [...], vol. IV (Leiden: Luzac en Van Damme, 1783), 54–64, 291.

decline of our shipping and trade that we have invested capital outside of our country which otherwise could have been used in commercial businesses."[31] Admitting that there was a certain advantage to be gained from commission service and investments in foreign stock, Luzac stated that financial involvement abroad had brought the Netherlands into a critical situation. The far-reaching consequences were revealed only by the current war. The problem was "that the Republic is at the same time very powerful and very powerless."[32] A part of the Dutch population had become enormously rich. The state, by contrast, had become poor. Since the Dutch government had no means to remedy the situation by a further increase in taxation, the ongoing Anglo-Dutch War humiliated the Republic. The money invested abroad constituted "a dead body for the state" because it neither circulated in the Netherlands nor was it available to Dutch enterprises in search of capital.[33] Additionally, Luzac warned, investing abroad transformed active merchants into idle rentiers and undermined the "spirit of commerce" on which trading republics relied. Consequently, young men lacked a good education in trade and encouragement to engage in business. They became lazy, reckless, and indebted.[34] Luzac's critique of idleness was crucially different from that of classical republicans. It was not citizens' virtue and political independence that he was concerned about, but their industriousness and involvement in commerce.

Like the Patriots, Luzac was critical of Dutch investments abroad and of Britain as a debtor. Although he admitted that Britain had greatly improved its trade, manufactures, and agriculture, Luzac warned that it had overstretched its natural power by using foreign money to finance excessive colonial expansion. In contrast to the Patriots, Luzac highlighted that the true inner state of Britain was difficult to assess in an informed manner, despite what the recent "libels" claimed to reveal.[35] His criticism of the ruinous effect of growing national debt was much more general than that of Van der Capellen, as he was of the opinion that France, America, and Spain had impoverished themselves in the same manner as Britain.

Despite the currently dire situation of the Dutch Republic, Luzac was hopeful. Limited natural resources, its geographical location, and the abundance of capital destined the country for international trade. Commerce relied on liberty in the sense of the rule of law, security of property, and freedom

31 Ibid., 298.
32 Ibid., 10–13.
33 Ibid., 314.
34 Ibid., 251.
35 Ibid., 297–99.

from duties and taxation. These preconditions were best protected under the stadtholderate. Luzac therefore suggested adopting a policy of neutrality and introducing a limited free port. The latter idea came from a proposition made in 1751 that suggested reviving the staple-market function of the Netherlands for international commerce by exempting certain goods from duties. If Dutch citizens shifted their focus back from financial services to the international carrying trade, Luzac hoped, their money would be used for the public good.[36] Devoting all efforts to trade, the Dutch Republic could become internationally competitive again and return to its former glory.

3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored Patriot and Orangist approaches to national debt and their relationship to the broader classical and modern republican paradigms. Although Van der Capellen used the language of classical republicanism and translated Price's apprehension about modern state finance, he applied it only to Britain's debt. His usage of the joint-stock company as a metaphor for the state and his involvement in American loans underline that he was not against commercial modernity itself, but against Dutch investments in Britain's debt. By lending money to Britain, he claimed, Dutch regents had become corrupted and betrayed their fatherland. This alleged attachment to the government in London conflicted with the Patriot ideas of virtuous citizenship, love of the fatherland, national independence, and active liberty. While the Patriots neglected the issue of Dutch debt, the Orangist Luzac, a fervent defender of commercial society, identified it as ruinous. But his argumentation, too, differed from the British classical republican rhetoric about debt. Instead of corruption, patronage, and the fluidity of property, he criticized the economic effects of growing debt, the rise in taxation, and loss in competitiveness. Since he propagated an idea of negative liberty, that is the rule of law and absence of interference, there was no need to fear a moneyed interest. Analyzing Patriot and Orangist thought with a focus on debt brings to the fore their fundamentally different ideas about the role of citizens in the republic.

The Dutch example shows the adaptability of the classical and modern republican languages as defined by Pocock. The Patriots translated important texts and shared important ideas with their Anglo-American classical-republican contemporaries, such as the active interpretation of liberty and armed

36 For Luzac's assessment of the Dutch situation, see Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism*, 135–43.

citizen militias. However, they applied only certain concepts to their own state and adapted them to their specific circumstances. The Orangists combined the praise of modern, commercial society with a critique of national debt. Yet, their grievance differed from that of classical republicans as it concentrated on the economic and systemic effects of public borrowing. Comparing the British and Dutch republican conceptions of national debt highlights the uniqueness of the Dutch case. Not only were the Dutch obsessed with the perception of decline, but they also accepted commercial modernity and mobile forms of property as the basis for a republic. The anxiety about the political effects of an excessively growing national debt expressed by Anglophone republicans was thus not a necessary consequence of the financial revolution.

CHAPTER 6

Polite Batavians: The Uses of the Past in Late-Eighteenth-Century Dutch Spectators

Eleá de la Porte

Petronella Moens's message to her readers of the late-eighteenth-century Dutch spectator *De Menschenvriend* (The People's Friend) was rather bleak. The Dutch Republic was in a terrible state of decline and the main cause was the moral corruption of its citizens. To solve this problem she turned to the ancient past. The earliest history of mankind had proven that virtuous behavior and modest needs were essential to happiness and a well-functioning state. Moens (1762–1843) illustrated her point with many historical examples. The Jewish nation had flourished when the Jews had lived as herdsmen and farmers and their morals had been outstanding. The same applied to the early Greek republics. The Spartans in particular had shown that courage was dependent on having few needs.[1] However, in all these states the arrival of luxury had eventually destroyed modesty and virtue, resulting in the decline and fall of these once powerful states. This pattern was now apparent in the Dutch Republic, where luxury had corrupted its formerly virtuous citizens. Only a quick revival of the "old simplicity of manners and morals" could remedy this decline.[2]

Moens fully understood that her message, written in 1797, needed to be amended to appeal to her readers living in a modern commercial republic. She echoed contemporary ideas in Enlightenment historical thought about the connections between international commerce, civilization and the progress of the arts and sciences. "Please don't think, my fellow citizens, that we want

1 Bernardus Bosch, Martinus Nieuwenhuysen and Petronella Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 30 (Amsterdam, 1797), 235. For more information about this Dutch spectator and its authors: Ans Veltman-van den Bos, "Menschenvriend (1788–1797)," in *Encyclopedie van Nederlandstalige Tijdschriften voor 1815,* ed. by André Hanou and Rietje van Vliet, https://www.ent1815.nl/m/menschenvriend-1788-1797/; Edwina Hagen, "Moens, Petronella" in: *Digitaal Vrouwenlexicon van Nederland*, Huygens ING, 2014, http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/PetronellaMoens; Inger Leemans and Gert-Jan Johannes, *Worm en donder. Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse literatuur, 1700–1800: de Republiek* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 205, 213–15 and 247.

2 Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 30 (1797), 239.

you to return to the simplicity of our forefathers who needed little, lived in huts and were hunter-gatherers." Enlightenment, civilization and progress distinguished the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic from previous times and were "jewels" to be treasured, Moens argued. Nevertheless, the progress of the human spirit had to be steered in the right direction – and that was possible only with "the art of morality."[3] By instructing her readers in weekly essays about the virtues that needed to be followed and the vices that were to be avoided, she hoped to improve the moral behavior of her Dutch readers and, thus, reverse the decline of the Dutch Republic.

Moens's spectatorial essay was one of thousands that appeared in the Netherlands in the eighteenth century. The spectator was a hugely popular genre in eighteenth-century Protestant Europe, especially in the Dutch Republic, where about seventy spectatorial magazines were published between 1720 and 1800. The word "spectator" refers simultaneously to the writer as a "neutral" observer of society and the periodical itself. In weekly or biweekly periodicals the writers of this spectatorial literature, who often remained anonymous, wrote normative commentaries about contemporary society.[4] To instruct their readers in manners and morals the writers often made use of the past, either for illustrating the importance of certain morals or by providing specific role models to highlight desirable behavior.

The spectatorial usage of the past differed from that of the centuries before, as the writers believed themselves to be the representatives of an enlightened century. During the Enlightenment the humanistic idea of the past as *historia magistra vitae* – wherein historical examples from whichever historical period could be used to instruct the present – gradually made way for an idea of history as a singular and causally connected process, exploring as its main subject the historical development and civilization of society. This historical progress of society was often conceptualized in consecutive stages which were based on cultural or socio-economic categories: "savage," "barbarian," and "civilized," or "hunting," "pastoral," "agricultural," and "commercial."[5] This framework

3 Ibid, 240.

4 See on Dutch spectators: Piet Buijnsters, *Spectatoriale geschriften* (Utrecht: HES, 1991), 9–32; Buijnsters, *Nederlandse literatuur van de achttiende eeuw. Veertien verkenningen* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 36–44; Dorothée Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht. Sekse en emotionele cultuur in de achttiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 31–35; Wyger Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 82–83.

5 John Robertson, "Europe's Enlightenment," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350–1750,* vol. II, *Cultures and Power*, ed. by Hamish Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 158–59; Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

was also visible in Enlightenment historiography, which tried to explain why Europe had advanced more than other societies in the world. These "Enlightened narratives" traced the beginnings of Enlightenment to classical antiquity and demonstrated how it had almost disappeared during the dark Middle Ages, but then analyzed how it had revived from the fifteenth century onwards to lead to an enlightened Europe in the eighteenth century.[6] This Enlightenment form of historical thought was at the core of the Dutch spectators. The inhabitants of eighteenth-century Europe had reached the highest stage in the history of mankind, that of civilization and commerce, and the spectatorial writings aimed at furthering this progress by discussing virtues that would benefit the current commercial society. When using the past as a means of educating their readers, they often preferred the national past because the moral *exempla* were well-suited for the Dutch character.[7]

While Dutch spectatorial literature has received ample attention in historiography, the usage of the past in these periodicals remains a neglected topic. The first historian to draw systematic attention to the historical outlook in Dutch spectators was Wyger Velema. He argued that the spectatorial writers were the first to reimagine the Dutch seventeenth-century past as a period of economic prosperity, commercial politeness and moral rectitude. Because they acknowledged that they lived in a commercial republic, ancient role models became unsuitable for instructing eighteenth-century Dutch readers. The Batavians in particular became less suitable moral examples because of their "barbarian" and warlike nature. Instead, the spectatorial authors constructed the concept of a Dutch Golden Age and urged their readers to return to the polite morals of the seventeenth century to counter the decline of the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.[8]

However, it has gone unnoticed in historiography that the usage of the national past changed significantly in the late-eighteenth-century spectators.

6 Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); John Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion,* vol. 11, *Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). See for the Enlightenment narrative in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic: Eleá de la Porte, "Verlichte verhalen. De omgang met het verleden in de Nederlandse Verlichting," (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2019).

7 Wyger Velema, "Beschaafde republikeinen. Burgers in de achttiende eeuw," in *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen,* ed. by Remieg Aerts and Henk te Velde (Kampen: Kok Agora, 1998), 80–99; Eleá de la Porte, "Verlicht verleden. Historisch denken in de Nederlandse spectatoriale geschriften" (Master's thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2012).

8 Velema, *Republicans*, 88–91.

Indeed, during the politically turbulent period of 1790–1800 the writers of the Dutch spectators had to face their national past anew and the Batavian past returned in the periodicals. As I will argue in this chapter, we should consider the eighteenth-century construction of the concept of a Dutch Golden Age and the fluctuations in the usage of the Batavian myth as connected – rather than separate – developments if we want to understand either of them. The perspective of Enlightenment historical thought enables us to comprehend that connection. Moreover, this perspective will help explain why the revival of the Batavian myth in the late-eighteenth-century Dutch spectators proved to be difficult for the authors. When the interest in the distant, Batavian past revived during the establishment of the Batavian Republic in 1795, the writers of the Dutch spectators struggled to create an image of their Batavian forefathers that they could use for their moralizing and educational agenda.

In this chapter I will first analyze the Enlightenment form of historical thought which lay at the heart of the Dutch spectatorial literature and which influenced how the writers perceived the national past. Second, I will investigate how the seventeenth-century and Batavian past were employed and contrasted in the Dutch spectators before the 1790s, and explain how this usage was shaped by the enlightened historical outlook of the spectatorial writers. In the third and final section I will explain why and in which ways the Batavian past was unexpectedly revived in the late-eighteenth-century Dutch spectators.

1 Enlightenment Historical Thought in the Dutch Spectators

The Dutch Enlightenment is often characterized by historians as a continuous tension between the belief in progress and the problem of national decline.[9] This same tension is present in the Dutch spectators. On the one hand, the spectatorial writers were obsessed with the problem of national decline. Already in 1732 Justus van Effen (1684–1735) stated that the Dutch Republic was

9 See on the Dutch Enlightenment: Niek van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004); Joost Kloek and Wijnand Mijnhardt, *1800: Blauwdrukken voor een samenleving* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2001); Wijnand Mijnhardt, "The Dutch Enlightenment: Humanism, Nationalism, and Decline," in *The Dutch Republic in the Eighteenth Century: Decline, Enlightenment and Revolution*, ed. by Margaret C. Jacob and Wijnand Mijnhardt (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 197–223; Wijnand Mijnhardt, "De Nederlandse Verlichting," in *Voor Vaderland en Vrijheid, De revolutie van de patriotten,* ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Wijnand Mijnhardt, and Niek van Sas (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1987), 53–81.

facing demise. He wrote in *De Hollandsche Spectator* that "the old and lovely simplicity and uprightness of our forefathers" had been replaced by "tyrannical fashion and horrible luxury and excess."[10] This statement was repeated again and again in the Dutch spectators, increasing in urgency as the eighteenth century progressed. Most authors argued that the economic and political decline of the republic was caused by the moral decline of its citizens.[11] On the other hand, the central premise of the spectatorial literature was the belief that this decline could be countered and that the Dutch Republic could be restored to its former glory. The Dutch spectators strove to educate their readers in becoming polite citizens, following the English examples of Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's *Tatler* and *Spectator*. The Dutch authors translated the original French concept of *politesse*, which revolved around pleasing the king through the art of conversation and pleasantries, to the republican context. While Piet Buijnsters stated that the eighteenth-century Dutch spectators were an apolitical genre, Velema and Alwin Hietbrink have convincingly argued that the spectators were political periodicals, aimed at "the education of the republican citizen."[12] The main part of this educational program was cultural. Van Effen and other spectatorial writers instructed their Dutch readers on how to become "polite republicans." By conversing, reading, honoring simplicity and honesty, they would become virtuous citizens who would favor the common good above all, which subsequently would help them "to distrust both arbitrary authority and the whims of fashion."[13]

The spectatorial writers were confident that the problem of national decline could be solved, and they derived this optimism in large part from their historical outlook.[14] They believed they were living in, and were the representatives

10 Justus van Effen, *De Hollandsche Spectator*, no. 112 (Amsterdam, 21 November 1732), 181–82.

11 See for the genre of the (Dutch) spectator: Buijnsters, *Spectatoriale geschriften*; Velema, *Republicans*, 82–88; Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, chapter 1; Alwin Hietbrink, "De deugden van een vrije republiek. Opvattingen over beschaafdheid in de achttiende-eeuwse Republiek," in *Beschaving. Een geschiedenis van de begrippen hoofsheid, heusheid, beschaving en cultuur,* ed. by Pim den Boer (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 197–211.

12 Velema, *Republicans*, 85–88; Velema, "Beschaafde republikeinen," 80–99; Hietbrink, "De deugden," 205–07.

13 Velema, *Republicans*, 87–88.

14 Another reason for this optimism was the spectatorial view of human nature. The idea of original sin was replaced by the idea of humans as inherently social beings that could be civilized by family, Enlightenment conversation and education. Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, 71 and 293; Knud Haakonssen and Michael J. Seidler, "Natural Law: Law, Rights and Duties," in *A Companion to Intellectual History,* ed. by Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 377–401.

of, a civilized and enlightened century.[15] Therefore, the writers argued, they were better than ever suited to morally reform their readers.

The historical narrative of progress – mostly the progress of the human spirit, of the arts and sciences – formed the core argument of most opening issues, in which the authors explained their reasons for publishing yet another Dutch spectator in an already saturated market.[16] In these first issues the authors firmly embedded their spectatorial projects within the narrative of European progress, especially in their field of expertise: the art of morality. An excellent example is the first issue of *De Denker* (The Thinker). The minister Cornelis van Engelen (1726–93) wrote a concise history of morality to situate the publication of his spectator, which closely resembled the narrative works of Enlightenment historiography. Van Engelen's history began in antiquity. Eastern, biblical, Greek and Roman writers and poets had been the founding fathers of the art of morality. They had succeeded in civilizing their readers through maxims and fables to a remarkable degree. However, during the Middle Ages the art of morality in Europe declined and disappeared into a "dark cloud of impenetrable ignorance." The art of morality revived with the "wonderful" work of Erasmus. In the wake of his excellent work, the study of ethics gradually progressed in the Netherlands. A new and enlightened morality now blossomed in modern commercial society – and the Dutch spectators provided the best example of this moral education in the long history of ethics.[17] Van Engelen repeated his message a couple of weeks later when he compared the moral philosophy of classical antiquity with the present day, stating that the progress of the arts and sciences in Europe had improved the art of morality, which therefore now far surpassed those of the ancients.[18]

Spectatorial writers continuously contrasted the rude behavior in ancient times with the civilized behavior in modern Europe.[19] Already in 1722 Joannes van Septeren (1699–1739) wrote that the idea of an ancient "golden age" was

15 This self-awareness of eighteenth-century historians and other contemporaries has been the subject of extensive historical research in the past decades. See Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*; Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion,* 11; O'Brien*, Narratives of Enlightenment*.

16 See for an estimation of readership and a list of Dutch spectators: Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, 60–65; Buijnsters, *Spectatoriale geschriften*, 104–07.

17 Nicolaus Bondt et al., *De Denker* no. 1 (Amsterdam, 3 January 1763), 3.

18 Ibid, no. 4 (24 January 1763), 25–27.

19 See for the trope of ancients and moderns in Enlightenment debates: Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011); Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Alexander J.P. Raat, Wyger R.E. Velema, and Claudette Baar-de Weerd, eds., *De oudheid in de achttiende eeuw* (Utrecht: Werkgroep 18e eeuw, 2012).

clearly a myth. Most ancient sources, including the Bible, revealed that in the earliest times men had lived more like animals without reason than as civilized and prudent people. "When One examines the morals of the first people, not a lot of Gold is to be found."[20] A similar statement was made in the 1730s by Justus van Effen. He used the Roman past to highlight contemporary manners and morals: "I would like to acknowledge that civility, during the government of Caesar and Augustus, was only in its infancy. Those proud masters of the world were still rude and uncivilized in comparison to contemporary Dutchmen."[21] He also criticized the assumption that the reign of Emperor Augustus could be characterized as a golden age. The eighteenth-century Dutch citizens were far more civilized than the Romans.[22] Johannes Petsch (1711–95), the most philosophical of the Dutch spectatorial writers, used geographical comparisons to describe the enlightened century in eighteenth-century Europe in the 1760s and 1770s. According to Petsch, even the rudest soldier from Europe could still be considered a Leibniz in comparison to the most intelligent Hottentot, Eskimo or Patagonian. He then contrasted the civilization of Europe with non-European parts of the world in various ways: primitive huts versus European cities, canoes versus ships and refined amusement versus spirited dancing.[23]

The reason that Europe had reached this exceptional status was due to its unique history. Petsch repeated the historical narrative of European progress and closely followed the Scottish historian William Robertson in combining this narrative with a Protestant outlook. Through Adam God had given mankind the predisposition to appreciate the arts and sciences. But while most peoples had lost this knowledge in their diaspora around the world, in Europe the Romans had safeguarded this gift. Although it temporarily disappeared during the Middle Ages under a layer of "barbarism and ignorance," this knowledge was rediscovered by the Crusaders and then brought back to Europe. Via international commerce it subsequently civilized all nations. Without the Greeks and Romans, wrote Petsch, the Europeans would still be crawling around "in the same darkness […] as the old Goths and Vandals."[24] In particular, the progress

20 Joannes van Septeren, *Bondelken van Fraaije Mengelstoffen* […], no. 1 (Amsterdam, 3 January 1722), 3–12.

21 Van Effen, *De Hollandsche Spectator*, no. 32 (15 February 1732), 55.

22 Ibid., 56.

23 Johannes Petsch, *De Opmerker*, no. 158 (30 October 1775), 9–10. See for the close relationship between space and time in Enlightenment historical thought: Siep Stuurman, "Tijd en ruimte in de Verlichting," in *De ongrijpbare tijd. Temporaliteit en de constructie van het verleden,* ed. by Maria Grever and Harry Jansen (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 79–96.

24 Petsch, *De Opmerker* no. 158 (30 October 1775), 12–16.

of the sciences had enabled people to "civilize manners, refine entertainment and perfect society."[25] Other Dutch spectators added that the Reformation formed a crucial turning point in the European history of moral progress. The anonymous author of *De Nederlandsche Spectator* wrote, for example, that ignorance, vices and superstition had reigned before the Reformation, but that the free use of God's Word had civilized church and society.[26]

This Enlightenment narrative about the progress of commerce, manners and morals in Europe was still visible in *De Menschenvriend* – a spectator published in the late eighteenth century, when the public debate about national decline reached its peak. The authors argued that history proved that knowledge and reason were the founding elements of a great and stable state. Why did the histories of the ancient Egyptians, Athenians and Romans "glitter" in "the fog" of antiquity? Because they had used and developed and evolved their capacities for reason. How could the ignorance and savageness of Africa be explained other than by a complete loss of knowledge? Without the arts and sciences, wrote the authors of *De Menschenvriend*, the savage forefathers of England would still be running around just as naked as Julius Caesar had found them when he arrived in England.[27]

2 From Rude Batavians to Refined Dutchmen

Embracing the historical narrative of European progress, the spectatorial writers highlighted the cultural dimensions of republican citizenship. This had consequences for their usage of the Dutch national past. The ancient past had little to offer to solve present-day problems, and this rendered the Batavian forefathers unsuitable for present-day purposes. The Batavian myth, which had become a powerful proto-national narrative during the making of the Dutch Republic in the decades around 1600, was notably absent in most spectators, until, as I will show below, it surprisingly returned in the 1790s.[28] Nevertheless, the national past remained important in defining the desired manners and

25 Ibid, 10.

26 *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, no. 61 (Leiden, 1751), 67–69. See for a similar essay about the relationship between God and progress: Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 15 and 17 (1790), 119 and 129.

27 Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 15 (1790), 120.

28 If spectatorial writers mentioned the Batavian past at all before 1790, they were brief or placed it in a negative light. See for example *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, no. 46 (1750), 152; Bondt et al., *De Denker*, no. 590 (18 April 1774), 124.

morals.[29] Dutch spectators now turned to the seventeenth-century history of the Dutch Republic. In trying to solve the problem of national decline, spectatorial authors construed for the first time the concept of a Dutch Golden Age.[30]

I concur with Velema and Niek van Sas that the concept of a Dutch Golden Age originated in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic; the idealization and construction of this part of the national past was stimulated by feelings of decline.[31] In the Dutch spectators the moral usage of the recent past always followed the same pattern: the seventeenth-century forefathers had combined excellence in international commerce with classical-republican virtues such as courage and love for the fatherland.[32] This had made it possible for the Dutch Republic to blossom in every way, but now vanity and luxury had entered the Republic and corrupted the formerly virtuous Dutch citizens.[33] The references to the seventeenth-century past in the Dutch spectators ranged from very abstract statements about polite virtues to a vivid commemoration of seventeenth-century events or persons.[34] Thus, the concept of the Dutch Golden Age was constructed in the wake of the dwindling appeal of the Batavian past.

Van Effen aptly summarized the perceived differences between the Batavian and seventeenth-century forefathers in 1731. He devoted multiple essays to the national character of the Dutch. In Van Effen's view, the Dutch had shown courage during every war they had waged from ancient times to the present. However, this virtue of courage had been a diamond in the rough and needed to be developed and refined. The true value of "courage" came to the fore only

29 See on the formation of Dutch national identity: Willem Frijhoff, "Het zelfbeeld van de Nederlander in de Achttiende Eeuw. Een inleiding," *Documentatieblad Werkgroep Achttiende Eeuw* 24, no. 1 (1992): 5–28; Niek van Sas, "Nationaliteit in de schaduw van de Gouden Eeuw," in *De Gouden Eeuw in perspectief: Het beeld van de Nederlandse zeventiende-eeuwse schilderkunst in later tijd*, ed. by Frans Grijzenhout and Hendrik van Veen (Nijmegen: SUN, 1992), 83–106; Dorothée Sturkenboom, *De ballen van de koopman. Mannelijkheid en Nederlandse identiteit in de tijd van de Republiek* (Gorredijk: Sterck & De Vreese 2019). See for national identity and character in Dutch spectators: Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*; Jacques Bos, "Verval, deugd en Nederlandse eigenheid. Karakter als politiek-antropologische categorie in de achttiende eeuw," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 39 (2007): 7–23; Velema, *Republicans*, 84–88.

30 Velema, *Republicans*, 88–91.

31 Velema, *Republicans*, chapter 4; Van Sas, "Nationaliteit," 83–106.

32 See for example: Van Effen, *De Hollandsche Spectator*, no. 20 (31 March 1731), 38; *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, no. 61 (1751), 70.

33 *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, no. 61 (1751), 70–71; and no. 135 (1754), 33–34; Van Effen, *De Hollandsche Spectator*, no. 9 (15 oktober 1731); Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 28 (1790); and no. 44 (1793).

34 See for an extensive analysis of the differing uses of the concept of the Dutch Golden Age in the Dutch spectators: De la Porte, "Verlichte verhalen," chapter 1.

when this virtue was connected with other virtues, such as reason and generosity. This idea of a "refined" courage was apparent in the vast historical gap between the Batavian forefathers and their eighteenth-century Dutch descendants. According to Van Effen, the ancient Dutch forefathers had inspired fear rather than respect and love "because of their savageness and stupidity."[35] However, when the arts and sciences flourished and reason progressed from the fifteenth century onwards – a process Van Effen described as the shaking off of "the dust of barbarism"– the courage of the Dutch finally fell in line with the civilized virtues that were necessary for it to reach its full potential.[36]

Van Effen was no exception in characterizing the Batavian forefathers as "barbarian." *De Menschenvriend* wrote that the Batavians belonged to the "infancy" of the world. They tended to drink too much, gamble, prefer "pomp and splendor," and their warrior nature would often lead to excesses of savagery and looting.[37] *De Denker* published an essay in which the patriotism of the Romans and Batavians was judged unsuitable for the patriotism that was needed in the eighteenth-century Republic. The ancient love for the fatherland had found expression in war and conquest, while modern patriotism was based on the love for commerce. Commerce and international contact could blossom only in times of peace, and they in turn would civilize society and the arts and sciences. Only this kind of patriotism, an economic love for the fatherland, could restore the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic.[38]

Enlightenment historical thought was at the heart of the spectatorial periodicals. In most Dutch spectators this led to a preference for the Dutch seventeenth-century commercial Republic. However, the call for political reforms and the increasingly urgent debate about the problem of national decline – and especially the establishment of the Batavian Republic in 1795 – put the Batavian forefathers again at the forefront of the late-eighteenth-century public debate.[39] This revival of the Batavian myth placed the authors of the Dutch spectators in a problematic position, as the moral example of the unrefined Batavians proved difficult to square with the moralizing attitude and educational agenda of the spectators.

35 Van Effen, *De Hollandsche Spectator*, no. 13 (12 November 1731), 97.

36 Ibid, no. 8 (8 October 1731).

37 Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 26 (1792), 202–03.

38 Bondt et al., *De Denker*, no. 590 (18 April 1774), 124.

39 The revival of interest in the Batavian forefathers coincided with a broader interest in the Greek and Roman past in *De Menschenvriend* and *De Vriendin van 't Vaderland*, in particular the histories of the Greek and Roman republics. See for example: Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 26 and 28 (1790); Petronella Moens, *De Vriendin van 't Vaderland* no. 7, 13, and 47 (Amsterdam, 1799).

3 The Return of the Batavian Past

The ancient Batavians had been a notable presence in Dutch public debates, historiography, literature and political treatises from the sixteenth century onwards. They were often used as political and moral role models for present times, and the historical distance enabled many contemporary ideals to be projected upon this distant past. Key components of this Batavian myth were the Batavians' courage in battle, love for independence and liberty, their simple life as farmers, and their democratic values as signified in their council meetings.[40] The usage of the Batavian past as a source of political or moral lessons continued into the Dutch Enlightenment, with writers referring to the Batavian forefathers in political pamphlets, plays and periodicals.[41] As we have seen, however, the Batavians were highly contested as role models in the genre

40 Eco Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse Mythe Opnieuw Bekeken," *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 111, no. 3 (1996): 346–48. For the Batavian myth in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlands see: Karin Tilmans, *Aurelius en de Divisiekroniek van 1517. Historiografie en humanisme in Holland in de tijd van Erasmus* (Hilversum: Uitgeverij Verloren, 1988); István Bejzy, "Drie humanisten en een mythe. De betekenis van Erasmus, Aurelius en Geldenhouwer voor de Bataafse kwestie," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 109 (1996): 467–484; H. van der Waal, *Drie eeuwen vaderlandsche geschied-uitbeelding 1500–1800: een iconologische studie,* vol. I (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), 210–38; E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier, "Grotius, Hooft and the writing of Dutch history in the Dutch Republic" in *Clio's mirror. Historiography in Britain and The Netherlands* ed. by A.C. Duke and C.A. Tamse (Zutphen: De Walburg Pers, 1985), 55–72; Mark Morford, "'Theatrum hodiernae vitae': Lipsius, Vaenius, and the rebellion of Civilis" in *Recreating Ancient History. Episodes from the Greek and Roman Past in the Arts and Literature of the Early Modern Period*, ed. by K. Enenkel, Jan de Jong and Jeanine De Landtsheer, (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 57–74.

41 For example, Gerrit Paape, Johannes le Francq van Berkhey and political periodicals such as *De Democraten* invoked the Batavian past in their publications: Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *De ontdekking van de Nederlander in boeken en prenten rond 1800* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2010), 91–108; S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland 1766–1787* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995). For the Batavian myth in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic see: Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse Mythe," 346–67; Ivo Schöffer, "The Batavian Myth During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Britain and the Netherlands,* vol. v, *Some Political Mythologies,* ed. by John Bromley and Ernst Kossmann (Den Haag: Nijhoff, 1975), 78–80; I.L. Leeb, *The ideological origins of the Batavian Revolution: History and politics in the Dutch Republic 1747–1800* (Den Haag: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973); Auke van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut. Verschuivingen in het beeld van de geschiedenis, 1750–1850* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1990), 30. For similar debates in eighteenth-century France on "Gallic" ancestors see: Annie Jourdan, "The Image of Gaul during the French Revolution: Between Charlemagne and Ossian," in *Celticism,* ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 183–206; J. Ehrard and P. Viallaneix, ed., *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois* (Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 1982).

of the Dutch spectators, because the authors aimed to instruct their readers in civilized moral behavior.

Auke van der Woud has claimed in his book *De Bataafse hut* (The Batavian Hut) that the Batavian myth – which had been paramount in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – disappeared abruptly after 1800.[42] He attributed this to the rise of archaeology, philology, and other scholarly disciplines, which in his view demystified the Batavian past. Van der Woud's book sparked a large response. Piet Buijnsters and Ivo Schöffer have shown that the Batavian past did not disappear after 1800 but lived on, for example in the nineteenth-century work of Aarnout Drost and Henri-Guillaume Moke, and even in the twentieth century during the celebrations after the end of World War II.[43] Eco Haitsma Mulier has pointed out that already in the early eighteenth century, antiquarian scholars critically researched the ancient past of the Republic and tried to separate truth from fiction, while at the same time the Batavian myth was used in political debates.[44] The prevailing assumption remains, however, that the Batavian forefathers constituted the dominant example until 1800 and became secondary to the idea of the Dutch Golden Age only in the nineteenth century.[45]

My diachronic analysis of Dutch spectators tells a different story. Up to the 1790s, the Dutch spectators mostly neglected the Batavian forefathers and preferred the seventeenth-century past. Even the authors of the spectator called *Het Bataafsch Musaeum* (1771) made no references to the Batavian past in their periodical.[46] Neither did Rhijnvis Feith in *De Vriend van 't Vaderland* (The Friend of the Fatherland, 1786), who, while preaching the dangers of luxury, made almost no use of the Batavian forefathers as role models.[47] The lack of interest in the Batavians was exacerbated in the 1780s by the fact that Dutch spectators were pushed to the margins of the market by political periodicals during the Patriot era (1780–87). However, the Dutch spectators returned in full force in the 1790s. In these later spectators, the Batavian past enjoyed a remarkable revival.[48]

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42 Van der Woud, *De Bataafse hut*, 30.

43 Schöffer, "The Batavian Myth," 78–80; Piet Buijnsters, "De Bataafse hut. Verschuivingen in het beeld van de geschiedenis (1750–1850)," *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 21 (1994): 56–59.

44 Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse Mythe," 357.

45 Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, 206; Van Sas, *De metamorfose*, 41–56; Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken," 367; Lotte Jensen, *De verheerlijking van het verleden. Helden, literatuur en natievorming in de negentiende eeuw* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2008), 11, 208.

46 *Bataafsch Musaeum* (Amsterdam, 1771).

47 Rhijnvis Feith, *De vriend van 't Vaderland* (Amsterdam, 1786).

48 Van Sas, *De metamorfose*, 196; Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, 52 and 373–76; Leemans and Johannes, *Worm en donder*, 205; Pieter van Wissing, *Stookschriften. Pers en politiek tussen 1780 en 1800* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2008).

This change is exemplified by the spectators *De Menschenvriend* (1788–97) and *Vriendin van 't Vaderland* (The Female Friend of the Fatherland, 1799). The authors of *De Menschenvriend* were the minister Bernardus Bosch and the medical doctor Martinus Nieuwenhuyzen, both of them Patriots. In 1793, after Nieuwenhuyzen had passed away, the almost blind but very active female journalist Petronella Moens joined the periodical; when Bosch was elected representative for the first Dutch parliament in 1796, Moens continued on her own. After *De Menschenvriend* was discontinued in 1797, she continued her endeavors with *Vriendin van 't Vaderland* in 1798–1799.[49]

Bosch and Moens were the driving force behind the return of Dutch spectators in the final decade of the eighteenth century more generally; they wrote and collaborated on six different titles. In this period the boundaries between political and spectatorial periodicals had become increasingly fluid. Bosch and Moens's moral tracts were more overtly political than those of earlier spectatorial writers.[50] Their usage of the Batavian past was shaped by the political climate of the 1790s. Bernardus Bosch was to become a leading Batavian revolutionary. In the pamphlet *Aan het volk van Nederland over de waare constitutie* (To the people of the Netherlands about the true constitution, 1793), he argued that the only period of "true" freedom and unity in Dutch history could be found in the Batavian past.[51]

Despite their increased attention to current political affairs, the authors of *De Menschenvriend* still explicitly identified their periodical as a spectator. The moral education of their readers remained the primary goal, and this was especially visible in their usage of the past. They still seemed to go by the maxim, formulated in *De Denker* in 1772, that while "[h]istorians [...] tell only what happened," it was up to spectatorial authors to reveal the moral message that was hidden in these histories.[52]

Both *De Menschenvriend* and *Vriendin van 't Vaderland* made references to the Batavian past in their essays, before and after the founding of the Batavian Republic in 1795. Sometimes their usage of the Batavian past was restricted to a simple historical parallel, for example when the authors discussed the history of customs. For instance, the writers of *De Menschenvriend* praised the Dutch custom of celebrating birthdays by emphasizing that this ritual had

49 Veltman-van den Bos, "Menschenvriend (1788–1797)."

50 Sturkenboom, *Spectators van hartstocht*, 52 and 373–76; Leemans en Johannes, *Worm en donder*, 205.

51 Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 34–36 and 39–42.

52 Bondt et al., *De Denker* no. 484 (Amsterdam, 6 april 1772), 106.

already been practiced by the Batavian forefathers. They had sung and danced during the celebration of their birthdays, using these days to rejoice in their freedom, independence and equality.[53] In another essay *De Menschenvriend* wrote about the custom of decorating liberty trees. In the wake of the creation of the Batavian Republic, liberty trees had been erected everywhere. This had reminded the author of the Batavian past. The free, stately and pure forests had been the sanctuary of the Batavian forefathers; it was where they had conducted their democratic meetings and where they had vowed to defend freedom and fatherland. However, the author was critical about these "centuries of ignorance" as well. The Batavian worship of nature had created all kinds of superstition, amongst other things the belief in the fortune-telling forest maiden Valeda. Thankfully, these superstitions were now absent as the present Batavians had progressed.[54]

The critical approach to the Batavian past became more pronounced when the writers of the Dutch spectators tried to use the Batavian forefathers as moral examples. *De Menschenvriend* published a historical biography of Julius Civilis in 1791, devoting two essays to the leader of the Batavian revolt against the Roman Empire in AD 69–70. They stated that the "immortal Hero" Civilis could offer useful points for reflection for contemporary readers, yet the author clearly struggled with the moral lesson.[55] The biography echoed the familiar themes of the Batavian myth, emphasizing the Batavian love for liberty and arguing that the Batavian revolt was inspired by this virtue. However, the author then acknowledged that the Batavians had consistently demonstrated unrefined behavior, stating that their "loyalty and virtuousness" were deeply tinged by "their rudeness."[56] The Batavian revolt offered many examples of such barbarian conduct. For instance, Civilis tried to restrain his armies at the battle near the army camp *Vetera*, but the Batavian soldiers attacked the Romans in a spontaneous and unorganized manner, inflamed by their anger, the heat and alcohol.[57] Moreover, the just decision of Civilis to let the defeated Roman soldiers leave their camp unscathed, was nullified by the disgraceful behavior of the Batavian soldiers who killed the departing Roman soldiers. Throughout the biography the author used the persona of Civilis to counterbalance the rudeness of the Batavian soldiers. This highlighted his achievement of leading a barbarous people to victory against their – in many ways better-equipped

53 Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend*, no. 34 (1796), 265.
54 Ibid., no. 38 (1795), 298–99.
55 Ibid., no. 26 and 28 (1791).
56 Ibid., no. 26 (1791), 202.
57 Ibid., no. 28 (1791), 220.

– Roman enemies. In the end, however, Civilis was not without shortcomings himself: even he never fully transcended his "ancestral rudeness."[58]

Similar struggles with the Batavian past were present in a critical history of Dutch morality that stretched across four essays.[59] The author started his history of Dutch civilization with the Batavian past and offered a highly critical evaluation of these forefathers. Although their rudeness fit the times in which they had lived, he stated that their "natural" rudeness was exacerbated by immoral behavior, such as their tendency to drink and gamble too much, which in turn had led to fighting. Although their well-known virtues of love for liberty and courage were useful in times of war, these qualities obstructed them in times of peace, when they were slow and neglected the basic conditions of their subsistence, like the development of agriculture and stock-raising. Moreover, their famous warlike spirit would often overflow into savageness and looting. The author concluded that he read the history of his Batavian forefathers with respect, but "I would not like to serve under the government of a Claudius Civilis and be his brother in arms."[60] Even the seventeenth-century past should be judged critically, the author added, for "if one adds enlightenment, religion and the civilization of the arts and sciences, have we not infinitely won?"[61]

Moens continued this critical appraisal of the Batavians in *Vriendin van 't Vaderland* in 1799. The Batavian forefathers were present in multiple essays, but almost always surveyed with a critical eye. Although Moens repeated the familiar statements that the Dutch Republic was in a state of decline and that its corrupted citizens "would make their forefathers blush," she was also optimistic. For instance, the system of national education that the Batavian parliament envisioned would educate and civilize Dutch citizens and teach them how to resist the vice of luxury.[62] Moreover, the present-day Batavians had already surpassed their ancient forefathers in the refinement of manners and mind.[63] Moens hailed the progress that had been made and was hopeful about the future. She stated that the doctrine of original sin, and the idea that mankind was corrupted and continued to deteriorate, was untrue. God had endowed mankind with the capabilities to develop itself, and humanity was on its path to moral perfection.

58 Ibid., 222–24.

59 Ibid., no. 26, 28, 30, and 34 (1792).

60 Ibid., no. 26 (1792), 201–03 and 205.

61 Bosch, Nieuwenhuysen and Moens, *De Menschenvriend,* no. 30 (1792), 237; Ibid., no. 26 (1792), 205. The brief response of *De Menschenvriend* to this letter struck a more familiar note, stating that eighteenth-century Dutch citizens should be more rigorously critiqued for their vices, because they lived in more civilized times: Ibid., no. 34 (1790), 271–72.

62 Moens, *Vriendin van 't Vaderland*, no. 47 and 49 (1799).

63 Ibid., no. 49 (1799), 385–87 and 392.

For the Dutch citizens this truth would become clear if they compared their manners and morals with their Batavian forefathers. The latter may have been characterized by simple and honest morals, but how could the present-day Batavians ever long to return to an ancient past where the blood of enemies was dripping from the altars? The Batavians could proudly look back on their own history and celebrate how the process of civilization had benefitted them. The art of morality, the arts, the sciences, everything had blossomed.[64] In her final essay Moens bade farewell to her readers and argued again that the modern Batavians had surpassed their ancient forefathers: "The Batavians, your first forefathers, were a quick heroic people; […] [yet] the path of true honor […] they did not know." Fortunately, "the dark ages of ignorance are long past; we finally understand our relationships as mankind, as members of society, and as the heirs of immortality, in the clearest way possible." Moens's message was clear. The present-day Batavians should not be war heroes, but "philosophical heroes; citizens of the world who strive for perfection of the self; members of society who strive for salvation; brothers who help all members of nature; honest, selfless patriots, and children of the unintelligible sublime, always working hard to reach perfection."[65]

These findings about the revival of the Batavian past in the late-eighteenth-century Dutch spectators put the historiographical debate about the disappearance of the Batavian myth in a new light. Rather than asking why it disappeared around 1800, we should ask why the Batavian forefathers returned in the spectators at the end of the eighteenth century. A substantial part of this answer can be found by answering the question: why did the concept of the Dutch Golden Age lose its appeal for eighteenth-century Dutch authors? As Wyger Velema and Mart Rutjes have demonstrated, the concept of the Dutch Golden Age was less useful to the Patriot and Batavian revolutionaries because they argued that the Dutch Republic of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had never been a truly democratic government. Therefore, the revolutionaries looked for and used other political examples. These role models included the contemporary republics of America and France, as well as *exempla* from the ancient past, ranging from the Greek and Roman republics to Batavian society.[66]

64 Ibid., no. 50 (1799), 393–400.

65 Ibid., no. 51 (1799), 411.

66 Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen,* 39–42 and 167–68; Rutjes, "'Niet geheel applicabel op deze tijd'. De klassieke oudheid in het politieke discours van de Bataafse Republiek, 1795–1801," in *De Oudheid in de Achttiende Eeuw*, 75–86; Wyger Velema, "Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse Revolutie, 1795–1798," in *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800,* ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas and

Dutch authors argued that the Batavian forefathers in particular had honored classical-republican virtues such as the love for the fatherland. This image of the Batavian past was especially attractive as the debate about national decline increased in urgency.[67] Still, many Dutch authors acknowledged the differences between past and present as well. The attitudes towards the Batavian past thus hovered between a strong idealization of the past and a more critical perspective on the ancient forefathers.[68]

My analysis of eighteenth-century Dutch spectators draws our attention to this remarkable shift and revival of the Batavian past but at the same time highlights the difficulties for the spectatorial writers in using the Batavian forefathers as role models. Because the genre revolved around the moral education of its readers, the writers of the Dutch spectators were most interested in the Batavian past's potential for moralizing, and this potential was limited. Within the Enlightenment perspective on the past, there was little use for the Batavian forefathers in an edifying sense.

4 Conclusion

The writers of the Dutch spectators viewed themselves as the representatives of an enlightened century where international commerce had led to refined manners and a shared European culture. This Enlightenment historical thought was present in most Dutch spectators, and was often used in the opening numbers to position the spectatorial project within the history of morality. At the same time the spectatorial writers worried about the problem of national decline and tried to induce a moral revival among their republican readers. Despite the ubiquitous presence of vanity and luxury, the authors were optimistic that the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic could be restored

Wyger Velema (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013), 27–63, in particular 29; Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 32–44.

67 Jan Rotmans, "Enlightened Pessimism: Republican Decline in Dutch Revolutionary Thought, 1780–1800" (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2020).

68 Koolhaas-Grosfeld, *De ontdekking*, 91–108; Klein, *Patriots republikanisme*. This tension is also present in the only full-length work about the Batavian past that appeared in the eighteenth century, *De Aloude Staat en Geschiedenissen van de Vereenigde Nederlanden* (1784–98) by E.M. Engelberts. See Eco Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse mythe in de patriottentijd: De Aloude Staat en Geschiedenissen der Vereenigde Nederlanden van E.M. Engelberts," *Theoretische Geschiedenis* 19, no. 1 (1992): 16–34; Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken," 344–367.

to its former glory. The European history of progress in the arts and sciences suggested in many ways the possibility of a better future.

The positive appraisal of civilization, manners and culture in Dutch spectators led to a specific usage of the national past in the moral instruction of their readers. First of all, the Dutch spectators created an idealized image of the seventeenth-century past. These forefathers had combined the classical-republican virtues of courage and a love for the fatherland with refined manners and commercial endeavors. Secondly, the spectators offered a more critical perspective on the ancient, Batavian past – in line with the Enlightenment historical thought that informed the entire genre. From the perspective of Enlightenment historical thought we can thus understand the construction of the concept of the Golden Age and the diminishing appeal of the Batavian myth as two sides of the same coin. Although the spectatorial writers respected their courageous and physically strong Batavian forefathers, they wanted to teach their readers how to fulfil their duty in society as sociable citizens, to stimulate their contributions to the development of the arts and sciences and instill an appreciation for peace. When the Batavians reappeared in the spectators in the final decade of the eighteenth century – having been notably absent before this period – the authors visibly struggled to use them as moral *exempla*: their unrefined manners were far removed from the commercial republic in which Dutch citizens now lived.

CHAPTER 7

Vulnerable Virtue: The Enlightened Pessimism of Dutch Revolutionaries at the End of the Eighteenth Century

Jan Rotmans

This chapter questions the common opposition between the moral pessimism of conservative philosophers and the Enlightenment optimism of progressive thinkers, examining the period in which the origins of this opposition tend to be located: the revolutionary end of the eighteenth century.[1] It claims that creative tensions between classical republican and Enlightenment ideas resulted in a considerable level of pessimism in the intellectual world of Dutch revolutionaries. A demand for radical political change in the Dutch Republic dominated the Patriot Era (1780–87), in which Patriots heavily criticized what had for a long time been considered to be a relatively well-balanced constitution: the Union of Utrecht (1579). Their increasingly violent resistance against the existing order was crushed by stadtholder William V with help from a Prussian army, but French revolutionaries came to the aid of their Dutch counterparts in the next decade, enabling the Batavian Revolution of 1795.[2] Enlightenment ideas such as political representation and inalienable rights played a central role in Patriot and Batavian thought, but Dutch revolutionaries simultaneously called for a classical republican solution to the perceived moral decline of their country: the cultivation of civic virtue. This virtue was inherently vulnerable in their eyes, because enlightened progress, notably the rise of commercial and civilized societies, was expected to cause its corruption.[3] Imagining a durable

1 This chapter owes much to my dissertation, titled "Enlightened Pessimism: Republican Decline in Dutch Revolutionary Thought, 1780–1800" (PhD thesis., University of Amsterdam, 2020).

2 For an English overview of the political developments in this era, see: Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands 1780–1813* (New York: Collins, 1977).

3 A discussion of the "Enlightened narrative" about the rise of commerce and civilization can be found in: J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. II, *Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For classical republican criticism of this narrative, see: J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion,* vol. III, *The First Decline and Fall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

existence for an enlightened republic was therefore a conceptual problem with immediate political relevance for Dutch revolutionaries.

The line of reasoning in this chapter is heavily indebted to the work of Wyger Velema, who has devoted his academic career to the study of eighteenth-century Dutch political thought from his *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic* (1993) onwards.[4] Confidence in enlightened progress and political conservatism are compatible, Velema shows, using the political thought of Elie Luzac (1721–96) as his main example. An Enlightenment demand for radical political change was also compatible with a considerable degree of pessimism about the course of history, this chapter argues. Its case for the enlightened pessimism of radical Dutch republicans is developed in a critical dialogue with Velema's most important contribution to the existing historiography: *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (2007).[5] Challenging some parts of his analysis, the argument here for the enduring relevance of classical republican concerns about inevitable political decline is predominantly in line with Velema's research, which emphasizes the important role of classical republicanism in eighteenth-century Dutch political thought.

The present chapter nevertheless questions the close relationship between optimism about the progress of the Enlightenment and radical Dutch republicanism in *Republicans*, which claims that Patriots displayed "a boundless confidence in a progressive and continuous process of popular enlightenment."[6] Velema understands them to be "representatives of a Revolutionary Enlightenment," which was characterized by a "limitless confidence in the political perfectibility of man and society and its forward-looking trust in the blessings of philosophical republicanism."[7] He discerns a similar level of confidence in the last decade of the eighteenth century. "As direct descendants of the radical Patriots of the 1780s, the radical Batavians combined natural rights theories, classical republicanism and enlightened optimism about the capacities and virtues of the people in their political discourse," Velema stresses in *Republicans*.[8] Its case for continuity between the classical republican worldviews of radical Patriots and radical Batavians is compelling, inspiring the choice in the

4 Wyger R.E. Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1721–1796)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993).

5 Wyger R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

6 Ibid., 123.

7 Ibid., 117, 183–84. This characterization of the "Revolutionary Enlightenment" is provided in the context of a discussion of the work of Thomas Paine.

8 Ibid., 195.

pages below to refer to them as "Dutch revolutionaries." An important dimension of the continuity between Patriot and Batavian radicals, however, is their deep-seated pessimism. To bring this to light, the classical republican limits to Enlightenment politics in Dutch revolutionary thought will be explored, after which the chapter turns to the problem that enlightened progress, in particular the rise of commerce and civilization, is predicted to increase the vulnerability of virtue.

1 Classical Republican Limits to Enlightenment Politics

"Studying the political discourse of the late eighteenth century Republic [...] is above all discovering discontinuities of meaning within the continuity of political vocabulary," Velema argues in *Republicans*.[9] Important changes indeed took place in the conceptual world of Patriots and Batavians, with the most striking example arguably being the concept "republic." Over the course of the 1780s, radical Patriots increasingly abandoned the classical ideal of a republican constitution in which democratic, aristocratic and monarchical elements are mixed, redefining a republic as a representative democracy. Instituting a new constitution becomes the priority of the Batavian revolutionaries, who demand the complete destruction of the old political order and the institution of a "republican democracy."[10] An entirely new constitution has to replace the Union of Utrecht as quickly as possible. Otherwise, their republic will continue to exist in a state of deep economic, political and moral decline.

Enlightenment ideas play a central role in this demand of Dutch revolutionaries for a new constitution, whose aim is to institute a representative democracy with the rights of man at its core. The influential Batavian periodical *De Democraten* (The Democrats, 1796–98) understands political representation to be a crucial Enlightenment invention, "the lack of which resulted in persistent unrests and confusions in ancient Democracies."[11] Edited by Willem Anthonie Ockerse (1760–1826), who would later become a prominent member of the National Assembly, this periodical considers enlightened progress to be a positive development for several reasons, in line with Dutch revolutionary thought

9 Ibid., 161.

10 Wyger Velema, "Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse Revolutie, 1795–1798," in *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800*, ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas, and Wyger Velema (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013), 27–64.

11 *De Democraten*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: J.A. Crajenschot, 1796), 98 (no. 13). For more on periodicals from the revolutionary era, see: Pieter van Wissing, ed., *Stookschriften. Pers en politiek tussen 1780 en 1800* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2008).

in general.[12] The progress of the Enlightenment has led to the spread of knowledge about the rights of man, which has in turn enabled the eighteenth-century revolutions in which tyranny can be exchanged for liberty. As the philosophical historian and political commentator Cornelis Zillesen (1736–1828) emphasizes in his *Wysgeerige Verklaaring der Rechten en Pligten van den Mensch en Burger* (Philosophical Explanation of the Rights and Duties of Man and Citizen, 1796), citizens ought to be enlightened about their rights.[13] He immediately adds, however, that education about their duties is equally important. A distinction becomes clear between the progress of popular enlightenment and moral progress, because, as revolutionaries such as Zillesen and Ockerse concede, the former will not immediately or even necessarily lead to the latter.

Enlightened optimism encounters clear limits in Dutch revolutionary thought. Just like Zillesen, Jan Konijnenburg (1758–1831) calls, in the important Batavian periodical *De Republikein* (The Republican, 1795–97) for the education of citizens about their duties as well as their rights, but warns that republican liberty "can neither be established nor maintained by anything but the purest virtue."[14] A classical republican demand for virtuous citizens occupies a central place in the intellectual world of many Patriots and Batavians, who call on citizens to place the common good above the satisfaction of their personal desires and the pursuit of their private interests. Active citizenship is necessary for the preservation of a republic, including the participation in citizen militias.[15] While the continuity of such a classical republican notion of citizenship in Patriot and Batavian thought has received considerable attention in the existing literature, this is not the case when it comes to another, related continuity: the classical republican problem of inevitable political decline as the result of the corruption of civic virtue.[16] Moral regeneration of the Republic is

12 There exists an excellent study on this parliament and its members: Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012).

13 Cornelis Zillesen, *Wysgeerige Verklaaring der Rechten en Pligten van den Mensch en Burger en een Ontwerp van de daar uit volgende Grondwetten van Staat, voor een één en onverdeeld Bataafsch Gemeenebest-bestuur* (Leiden: Herdingh en du Mortier, 1796).

14 *De Republikein*, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: M. Schalekamp, 1795), 82 (no. 9).

15 For a discussion of the various Patriot arguments for citizen armament, see: Velema, *Republicans*, 149–51; S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), 167–76.

16 Apart from Velema's work, also see: Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*; and Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012). These accounts of Dutch republicanism stand in an international historiographical tradition, with a central role for Pocock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

necessary to counteract the widespread corruption that has greatly contributed to its state of political decline. Like ancient republics, enlightened ones are expected to decline in the absence of virtuous citizens.

Dutch revolutionary thought, while making a case for radical political change, thus also shows important continuities with engrained republican conceptions, specifically when it comes to the existential danger that moral corruption is predicted to pose to a republic, even to an enlightened one. Considering it to be "morally impossible" for a republic to have a durable existence, the anonymous pamphlet *Vrye Gedachten van een Burger over het Verval van 't Gemeenebest der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Free Thoughts of a Citizen on the Decline of the Commonwealth of the United Netherlands, 1782) blames this on "the increase of the perversion of the human heart, the corruption of morals and the excessive presence of opulence and luxury, which destroy all societies."[17] In line with this analysis of the dire state of the country, the anonymous Patriot treatise *Grondwettige Herstelling* (Constitutional Restoration, 1784) aims "to revive the Republic from its weak and worn state" and "raise it to the highest peak of power and prestige that it can reach."[18] Cultivating a virtuous citizenry is necessary to achieve this aim. While the Dutch Republic will flourish again if "we improve our morals together with our Constitution," *Constitutional Restoration* cautions that changing only the constitution would be dangerous.[19] The moral character of individual citizens appears to become even more important in a democratic republic, which cannot rely on a mixed constitution for its stability.

The Batavian Revolution constitutes a radical break with the Union of Utrecht, but not with the classical republican problem that civic virtue is both vulnerable and indispensable. "A pure *Republic* or *Government by the People* cannot durably exist in places where virtue does not have the upper hand," *De Nieuwe Post van den Neder-Rhijn* (The New Post of the Lower-Rhine, 1795–99) argues in the first year of the Batavian Revolution.[20] Editor Pieter 't Hoen (1744–1828) continues to warn "that Governments by the People, no matter how wisely they are designed, have declined as soon as virtue was banished from them and luxury, lust and the corruption of morals have taken its place."[21]

17 *Vrye Gedachten van een Burger over het Verval van 't Gemeenebest der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (1782), 5.

18 *Grondwettige Herstelling, van Nederlands Staatswezen, zo voor het algemeen Bondgenootschap, als voor het bestuur van elke byzondere Provincie* [...], vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1784), iii.

19 Ibid., xi.

20 *De Nieuwe Post van den Neder-Rhijn*, vol. 1 (Utrecht: J. Mulder, 1796), 80 (no. 10).

21 Ibid.

The Dutch people should return to the simpler way of life of their ancestors. In a similar vein, *The Democrats* claims that a new constitution will be durable only in combination with moral regeneration. "Give the most excellent political institutions to a nation the character of which you leave unimproved; she will only seem happy, her improvement will be short-lived, but you will certainly not have prevented the complete downfall of this nation," the Batavian periodical insists.[22] From this perspective, a representative democracy will inevitably decline in the absence of a vigilant and virtuous citizenry.

Republican liberty can be maintained only by citizens who actively contribute to the common good in a political as well as a military sense, as Johan Valckenaer (1759–1821), professor of law and representative in the National Assembly, believed. "Which citizen was ever free apart from the one who carried weapons in order to help to maintain his liberty?," he rhetorically asked his fellow representatives in 1796.[23] In his inaugural lecture of that same year, Valckenaer raises the question how Dutch decline can be overcome if "not every human being exercises true civic virtue; places the common interest above his own; in one word, prioritizes the love for the fatherland over all other relations?"[24] Past and present examples reveal the need for citizen armament, from Athens and Sparta to Switzerland, the United States and France. While Dutch revolutionaries tend to be wary of too much involvement of the people in politics, they consider too much reliance on political representation to be at least as problematic. The satirical periodical *Janus Verrezen* (Janus Resurrected, 1795–98) warns that if the sovereignty of the Dutch people is reduced to regular elections of its representatives, "a form of government of this nature should not be given the name of a *democracy*, but of an *elective aristocracy*."[25] The case for a new constitution based on Enlightenment principles like representative democracy thus coexists uneasily with a classical republican demand for virtuous citizens in Dutch revolutionary thought.

For radical Patriots and Batavians, in short, republican democracy will continue to decline without moral regeneration, even under the best possible constitution. Institutional change alone cannot solve the problems of their country, revealing the limits of constitutionalism as well as those of

22 Ibid., 26 (no. 44).

23 *Dagverhaal der Handelingen van de Nationaale Vergadering, Representeerende het Volk van Nederland*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Van Schelle, 1796), 291 (no. 37).

24 Johan Valckenaer, *Redevoering over de Plichten van een Bataavsch Burger, vooral bij eene Staats-Omwenteling* [...], trans. by G.C.C. Vatebender (Gouda: H.L. van Buma, 1796), 8 of the unnumbered text.

25 *Janus Verrezen*, vol. 1, 38 (no. 9).

enlightened progress.[26] While the enlightenment of the Dutch people is certainly imperative from the perspective of Dutch revolutionaries, citizens who are properly educated about their rights will not automatically become virtuous. Enlightened progress should therefore not be equated with moral progress. On the contrary, the progress of the Enlightenment involves the rise of commercial, civilized societies in Europe, which complicates the cultivation of virtuous citizens. Dutch revolutionaries blame the moral decline of their country to a large extent on the consequences of commerce and civilization, which raises the question if their enlightened republic can have a durable existence.

2 Material Progress and Moral Corruption

From a classical republican perspective, commercial republics are characterized by internal tensions, because the cultivation of civic virtue is complicated by commercial activity and its consequences, in particular increased material inequality, wealth and luxury.[27] The virtue of citizens becomes extremely vulnerable under these conditions in the eyes of many Dutch revolutionaries, who are therefore confronted with a clear problem: the seemingly inevitable decline of their commercial republic. Of particular relevance in this context is the Dutch reception of Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des Lois* (The Spirit of the Laws, 1748), which considers virtue to be the main principle of republics. Citizens with fewer needs and desires are more likely to be driven by a selfless, virtuous love of country in his opinion. Insisting that "the less luxury there is in a republic, the more perfect it is," Montesquieu warns that "republics end in luxury," which means that agrarian societies are more suitable for republicanism than commercial ones.[28] Velema convincingly emphasizes the enormous popularity of *The Spirit of the Laws* in the eighteenth-century Dutch Republic,

26 A case for the importance of constitutional republicanism is made in: Benjamin Straumann, *Crisis and Constitutionalism: Roman Political Thought from the Fall of the Republic to the Age of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 303–41.

27 Much has been written on the (in)compatibility of wealth and virtue in eighteenth-century thought. A valuable introduction on the subject can be found in: Istvan Hont, "The Early Enlightenment Debate on Commerce and Luxury," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, ed. by Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 379–418. For more on the so-called 'luxury debate' in the Dutch Republic, with an emphasis on the period before 1780, see: I. Nijenhuis, "De weelde als deugd?," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 24 (1992): 45–56.

28 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 98 and 100.

but his claim "that commerce and virtue were entirely compatible" in the opinion of most Dutch commentators warrants closer scrutiny.[29]

Indeed, many revolutionaries inspired by Montesquieu can be characterized as classical republican critics of the consequences of commercial activity. In this regard, they closely followed Montesquieu, whose aim was not to imagine a stable commercial republic. "Commerce corrupts pure mores," *The Spirit of the Laws* acknowledges, claiming that "it polishes and softens barbarous mores."[30] As Velema points out, Dirk Hoola van Nooten (1747–1808), author of the four-volume translation of *The Spirit of the Laws* (1783–87), dismisses this "proposed *Antithesis*" between commerce and virtue in *The Spirit of the Laws*, arguing that citizens can be virtuous as well as productive in a modern, commercial republic.[31] Yet for Dutch revolutionaries, envisioning a stable existence for their republic appears to be more complicated. In line with the analysis of Montesquieu, many Patriots and Batavians identify material inequality as the main cause for decline in a democratic republic, but they also believe that the natural circumstances of the Dutch Republic explain its dependence upon trade and commerce.[32] Material equality will therefore be hard to maintain.

In *De Zedelijke Toestand der Nederlandsche Natie* (The Moral Condition of the Dutch Nation, 1791), the politically engaged theologian IJsbrand van Hamelsveld (1743–1812) subscribes to Montesquieu's position that commerce corrupts and civilizes morals at the same time.[33] His treatise on the corruption of Dutch virtue should therefore not be interpreted as "another rejection of Montesquieu's view on the effects of commerce" that is comparable to the

29 Velema, *Republicans*, 103. On the central place of commerce in seventeenth-century Dutch republican thought, see: Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age: The Political Thought of Johan & Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

30 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 338. For more on this position of Montesquieu, which has come to be known as the *doux commerce*-thesis, see the introduction to Anoush Fraser Terjanian's *Commerce and its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

31 Montesquieu, *De Geest der Wetten* [...], trans. by Dirk Hoola van Nooten, vol. 1 (Amsterdam: Willem Holtrop, 1783), 77.

32 Commerce had become too dominant in the Dutch Republic in their opinion, however, as is explained in: Ida Nijenhuis, "Republican Risks: Commerce and Agriculture in the Dutch Republic," in *The Republican Alternative: The Netherlands and Switzerland Compared*, ed. by André Holenstein, Thomas Maissen and Maarten Prak (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 259–277. Commercial activity may have been considered as necessary in the Dutch context, but republican citizenship was not completely detached from landownership in Patriot thought: Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme*, 182–83. On the Batavian appreciation for agriculture, see: Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen*, 142–43.

33 IJsbrand van Hamelsveld, *De zedelijke toestand der Nederlandsche natie, op het einde der achttiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1791), 159–60. Also see 389.

critique in Van Nooten's translation of *The Spirit of the Laws*.[34] "Civic Virtues" – the eighth book of *The Moral Condition of the Dutch Nation* – rather insists that the prominence of commerce and trade in the Dutch Republic has eroded the citizens' love of country. Van Hamelsveld warns "that luxury and splendor, the excessive and wasteful way of life, which has currently reached its highest peak, will sink *The Netherlands* into the same abyss into which many older and newer *Republics* that have surrendered to luxury have sunk."[35] He thus clearly presents a classical republican diagnosis of the ills of the Dutch Republic in which the rise of luxury constitutes one of the main causes for political decline. Following Montesquieu, Van Hamelsveld claims that luxury can play a constructive role in a monarchy, but will never do so in a republican context. A commercial republic is unstable, because increasing material inequality will inevitably weaken the commitment of citizens to the common good.

Civic virtue and commerce are not entirely compatible either from the perspective of *De Patriot in de Eenzaamheid* (The Patriot in Solitude, 1787). According to this anonymous Patriot treatise, a commercial society with substantial inequality should institute a representative rather than a direct democracy, because of the moral corruption that will characterize its existence. Material inequality will be absent only in a small community "of which almost all members live in line with the strictest rules of virtue and in voluntary poverty," enabling them to exercise their sovereignty themselves.[36] This cannot be the case "in a large, wealthy people drowned in luxury," in which considerable levels of material inequality will have taken hold and most citizens will not be virtuous, in other words: the Dutch Republic.[37] A few virtuous citizens may be enough to rule the country in a representative system, but *The Patriot in Solitude* nevertheless calls for the eradication of "excessive luxury" and "effeminate morals" to prevent the complete downfall of the country.[38] Like this Patriot text, the second volume of *Mijn Tijd Winst* (My Time Gain, 1790) – written by Jan Hendrik van Dongen (1766–89) – expresses deep admiration for the simple way of life in various contemporary as well as classical republics, notably the Swiss Republic and Sparta.[39] Continuously referencing *The Spirit of the*

34 Velema, *Republicans*, 105, n.44. In a more recent study, Velema rather acknowledges that commerce and civic virtue are hard to combine in the eyes of Batavian revolutionaries like Van Hamelsveld: Velema, "Republikeinse democratie," 52–54.

35 Van Hamelsveld, *Zedelyke toestand*, 284.

36 *De patriot in de eenzaamheid, of proeve van bespiegelingen, ter opwekkinge van vaderlands en vryheidsliefde*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: L. Nutbey, 1787), 186.

37 Ibid., 187.

38 Ibid., 297.

39 Jan Hendrik van Dongen, *Mijn tijd winst,* vol. 11 (Amsterdam: Wessing en Van der Heij, 1790), 10–11. This second volume was posthumously published by Van Hamelsveld.

Laws, Van Dongen extensively praises the laws against luxury in these agrarian communities, whose members eagerly participate in citizen militias. We may therefore wonder if "Dutch readers unanimously rejected Montesquieu's glorification of ancient republicanism," as Velema argues.[40]

Virtuous examples of a simpler time were also found in the Dutch past. Engelbertus Martinus Engelberts (1731–1807) stresses the love of country that characterized the Batavian ancestors of the Dutch people in his four-volume *De Aloude Staat en Geschiedenissen der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (The Ancient State and Histories of the United Netherlands, 1784–99). His message is not a subtle one: luxury has weakened his countrymen, who could become virtuous again if they "adhered more to the simple and frugal way of life that previously distinguished us."[41] However, a passionate devotion of citizens to the common good is hard to nurture in a society in which moral corruption has caused "all impulses to make way for a raging desire to collect riches in just as well as unjust ways," as the Athenian and Roman examples reveal.[42] *The Ancient State and Histories of the United Netherlands* celebrates the love of country of the Batavians, who proudly armed themselves in order to defend their liberty and their community. "The lure of wealth was unknown to them, and in many ways their morals remained untainted as a result," Engelberts stresses.[43] The progress of commerce is not a positive development from his point of view, but rather endangers a republic's existence.

A simple way of life is conducive to the cultivation of virtuous citizens in the opinion of Dutch revolutionaries, which makes them wary of the seemingly endless multiplication of needs and desires in a commercial society. According to *The Democrats*, a stronger love of country had been possible in ancient societies. "Man was less removed from the state of nature – he cultivated fewer impulsive desires, had fewer needs, fewer pleasures – all of this made him less attached to himself," the periodical explains.[44] Inspired by Montesquieu, its next issue points to "*the extreme disparity of riches*" and "*the excessive luxury that is the inevitable cause of this*" as the main causes for the weakening of the Dutch love of country.[45] *The Democrats* calls for legislation to limit material inequality, but complete equality is undesirable. The danger of moral corruption notwithstanding, the presence of wealth should be welcomed. Wealth

40 Velema, *Republicans*, 104.
41 E.M. Engelberts, *De aloude staat en geschiedenissen der Vereenigde Nederlanden*, vol. I (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1784), 40.
42 Ibid., 30–31.
43 Ibid., vol. III, 198.
44 *De Democraten*, vol. I, 320 (no. 80).
45 Ibid., 322 (no. 81).

can, and should, be combined with a simple way of life, however. "In the midst of abundance there can exist a great simplicity," the Batavian periodical claims, but this would require its countrymen to somehow limit their desires: "let us learn to be happy with fewer pleasures."[46] *The Republican* makes a similar case. "When a prevalent corruption of morals and widespread luxury are found in a nation, she surely and speedily moves towards her downfall," the periodical insists.[47] Riches are "usually obstacles to our virtue," but luxury should not be completely banned from the Republic for the sake of its productivity.[48]

In the end, a tension remains between material progress and moral excellence for the many radical Dutch republicans who are deeply concerned about rising inequality and the corrosive influence of luxury. *The New Post of the Lower-Rhine* criticizes the position "that luxury and splendor are necessary for the cultivation of arts, crafts and mills," because their presence would inevitably lead to "the corruption of a true republic and especially that of our national one."[49] Considering that the consequences of commercial activity are likely to compromise republican morality in the eyes of most Patriots and Batavians, commercial republics will be inherently unstable. The progress of commerce is closely linked to a limitless proliferation of needs and desires, turning active citizens into passive consumers who are neither willing nor able to defend their republic. The cultivation of a virtuous love of country becomes increasingly unlikely in this context. While it would be unattractive for Dutch revolutionaries to claim that commerce and civic virtue are completely incompatible, because this would doom their republic, commerce and virtue are certainly not entirely compatible from their perspective.

3 Civilized Virtue?

Montesquieu connects the progress of commerce to the rise of civilization, observing that "everywhere there are gentle mores, there is commerce and that everywhere there is commerce, there are gentle mores."[50] Commerce will encourage citizens as well as countries to engage in trade rather than warfare, which increases the peaceful, civilized interaction between them. The rise of "the notion of a modern and commercial republican politeness" in the Dutch

46 Ibid., 325.
47 *De Republikein*, vol. 11, 134 (no. 69).
48 Ibid., 187 (no. 75/76).
49 *De Nieuwe Post van den Neder-Rhyn*, vol. 1, 80 (no. 10).
50 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 338.

Republic plays a central role in the fourth chapter of Velema's *Republicans*, titled "Polite Republicanism and the Problem of Decline."[51] It locates the origins of a modern, polite version of republican virtue in the first half of the eighteenth century in the writings of Justus van Effen (1684–1735), whose laudatory account of seventeenth-century Dutchmen is presented as the main source of inspiration for similar praise in the work of revolutionaries from the end of the eighteenth century, like Zillesen and Van Hamelsveld. Velema draws a straight line from Van Effen's case for polite republicanism to their analysis of the deplorable state of the Dutch Republic, implying that the latter called for the cultivation of a modern, polite version of republican virtue in response to the moral decline of their country.[52] However, these Dutch revolutionaries do not appear to embrace a modern, polite version of republican virtue, but rather a classical republican one.

Acknowledging "that in our century humankind has risen to a peak of perfection in abilities and politeness, which it had never reached in earlier times," Van Hamelsveld immediately warns "that the happiest times already contain the seeds of decline and corruption."[53] A clear example of this historical rule can be found in the eighteenth-century revolutions: these attempts to overthrow despotism have resulted in license as well as liberty. While arts and sciences have become more sophisticated, *The Moral Condition of the Dutch Nation* insists that "the largest part of humanity appears to become neither wiser nor better."[54] The rise of civilization in the Republic has rather expedited its moral decline in the opinion of Van Hamelsveld, who criticizes Dutch elites for consuming products that are foreign as well as expensive: "now *luxury* and splendor are in two ways disadvantageous for *The Netherlands* and spur its decline and fall."[55] Like Zillesen and many others, Van Hamelsveld complains that French manners have replaced Dutch morals, but the corruption of his countrymen should also be viewed as part of a larger historical pattern:

51 Velema, *Republicans*, 7. The chapter builds upon his earlier article "Ancient and Modern Virtue Compared," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30, no. 4 (1997): 437–43. Also see: A. Hietbrink, "De deugden van een vrije republiek. Opvattingen over beschaafdheid in de achttiende-eeuwse republiek," in *Beschaving. Een geschiedenis van de begrippen hoofsheid, heusheid, beschaving en cultuur*, ed. by Pim den Boer (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2001), 197–211.

52 Velema uses the examples of Zillesen and Van Hamelsveld in his case for the continued relevance of a classically inspired version of virtue after the Batavian Revolution in "Republikeinse democratie."

53 Van Hamelsveld, *Zedelijke toestand*, 26.

54 Ibid., 55.

55 Ibid., 483.

"all commonwealths in *ancient Greece*, all empires and powers that have ever arisen and perished have had the causes of their downfall [...] predominantly in the decline of their morals."[56] From this perspective, the progress of civilization is yet another cause for the rise of luxury, leading to the inevitable decline of a country.

Zillesen, too, clearly distinguishes between the rise of civilization and moral progress. "Nations have generally become more and more civilized in external manners, but I would not aim to prove that the moral character of humanity improved as a consequence of this civilization," he emphasizes in the fifth volume of his *Onderzoek der Oorzaaken van de Opkomst, het Verval en Herstel der Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Inquiry into the Causes of the Rise, the Decline, and Recovery of the United Netherlands, 1782).[57] Zillesen certainly blames the deplorable state of his country to a large extent on the rise of luxury, as Velema points out, but his praise for the virtuous behavior of seventeenth-century Dutchmen is located within a larger historical narrative about the rise and decline of ancient and modern peoples.[58] This process is presented as inevitable, because the success of a country in war or commerce will create the conditions for its moral decline. While regeneration appears to be possible, at least in the Dutch case, Zillesen does not present the rise of "polite republicanism" as a solution to "the problem of decline," which has plagued countries from the beginning of time onwards. In his view, increasing desires and the refinement of tastes contribute substantially to the moral degeneration of the Dutch people. He proposes classical republican solutions to the decline of his country, claiming that "every citizen should be a Soldier."[59]

While trade is certainly preferable to war in the eyes of Dutch revolutionaries, they heavily criticize some of the other consequences of civilization. Building on Montesquieu's analysis in *The Spirit of the Laws*, Ockerse complains that a civilized version of luxury has arisen that, although more palatable than its ancient predecessor, is still detrimental to society. "Luxury, the introduction of foreign morals, an easy and lustful way of life all contributed to our increasing desensitization and to turn us into a weak, effeminate people," the co-editor of *The Democrats* laments in the third volume of his *Ontwerp*

56 Ibid., 542.

57 Cornelis Zillesen, *Onderzoek der oorzaaken van de opkomst, het verval en herstel der Vereenigde Nederlanden,* vol. V (Utrecht: G. van den Brink, 1782), 186.

58 Velema, *Republicans*, 78–79.

59 Zillesen, *Wysgeerige Verklaaring*, 21.

tot eene Algemeene Characterkunde (Design for a General Study of Character, 1797).[60] The vices of his countrymen have increased together with their desires, Ockerse warns. "Civilized vice" has entered the scene, moreover, which is even more dangerous than its uncivilized version, because it seems less objectionable.[61] The progress of civilization undermines the cultivation of virtuous citizens in this view, in which refined tastes and manners replace civic morals. As *The Democrats* explains, the rise of commercial politeness erodes the Dutch love of country. "The advancements of civilization, of arts, sciences, commerce and navigation, the invention of printing, the effortless interaction with each other in a sociable way over the furthest distance" weakens the emotional attachment of citizens to their country, this Batavian periodical warns.[62]

Dutch revolutionaries thus critically assess the rise of civilization, which in their view is detrimental to republican morality. Politeness appears to be part of the problem rather than the solution, for which they commonly draw inspiration from classical republican examples and models. Admiration for seventeenth-century Dutchmen should certainly not be overlooked, but neither should the importance of antiquity in the intellectual world of radical Patriots and Batavians, as more recent work of Velema convincingly argues.[63] Moreover, the Batavian past also continues to play a role in their critique of the rise of civilization and its consequences. According to Engelberts, "people can today not only see vices being practiced, but rule without shame, which were unknown to our Heathen, but honest, chaste, brave and upright ancestors."[64] The Batavian way of life is presented as morally superior to a civilized, Christian one. As Engelberts rhetorically asks: "have the peoples of *Europe*, have we become better as a consequence of all of this?"[65] In the end, the refinement of manners and tastes, on the one hand, and the cultivation of civic virtue, on the other, appear to be mutually exclusive, or at least hard to combine, in the opinion of most Dutch revolutionaries, who closely associate the rise of politeness with the spread of vice.

60 W.A. Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde,* vol. III (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1797), 41.

61 Ibid., 177.

62 *De Democraten*, vol. I, 320 (no. 80).

63 Important examples are: Wyger Velema, *Omstreden Oudheid. De Nederlandse achttiende eeuw en de klassieke politiek* (Amsterdam: Vossiuspers, 2010); idem, "Conversations with the Classics: Ancient Political Virtue and Two Modern Revolutions," *Early American Studies* 10, no. 2 (2012): 415–38; Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn (eds.), *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

64 Engelberts, *Aloude Staat*, vol. III, 204.

65 Ibid.

4 Conclusion

Dutch revolutionaries consider enlightened progress, including the progress of popular enlightenment, to be a positive development for a variety of reasons. It enabled the eighteenth-century revolutions in their opinion, and they welcome the spread of knowledge about the rights of man as well as the Enlightenment invention of political representation. Radical Patriots and Batavians also relate the progress of the Enlightenment to the rise of commerce and civilization, which has made the world a more peaceful, sociable place. At the same time, these revolutionaries are deeply concerned about the perceived moral decline of the Dutch Republic. While they advocate radical political change, notably the creation of a new constitution on the basis of Enlightenment principles, their country, even with the best possible constitution, will be doomed in the absence of a virtuous citizenry. Civic virtue is expected to be extremely vulnerable under enlightened conditions, because Dutch revolutionaries identify the consequences of commerce and civilization, especially the rise of luxury, as main causes for moral corruption. In other words, enlightened progress is predicted to lead to political decline. Enlightened pessimism, rather than enlightened optimism, therefore characterizes Dutch revolutionary thought.

The enlightened pessimism of radical Dutch republicans can be used to undermine the dichotomy between the moral pessimism of political conservatives and the enlightened optimism that is associated with a progressive worldview. Rather than celebrating or criticizing the Enlightenment for its confidence in the progressive course of history, we may choose to acknowledge its more complicated relationship to change. Dutch revolutionaries demanded radical political change, but their new, enlightened democracy would have to be maintained in a context in which historical change is not identical with progress. It may rather hasten the decline of their country. Conserving a democracy was broadly considered to be impossible without the restoration of civic morality. Neither the new constitution nor the course of history could therefore be relied upon to ensure the durable existence of a democracy, which requires the virtuous dedication of its citizens. Especially in the context of the current discourse on the decline of liberal democracies, we may do well to remember how politically radical, but at times deeply pessimistic republicans were thinking about the historical and moral challenge of maintaining an enlightened democracy.

CHAPTER 8

A Republican Patriot on His Own Pedestal: Joan Hendrik Swildens (1746–1809)

Niek van Sas

At the end of 1795, the first year of the Batavian Revolution, Joan Hendrik Swildens published the *Politiek belang-boek voor dit provsioneel tydperk* (Political Interest-Book for this Provisional Era),[1] his main contribution to the debate on the design of the new Batavian Republic. The book was published anonymously, but its writer identified himself as the author of the *Vaderlandsch A.-B.-boek* (Patriotic A.-B.-Book) of 1781 and the *Almanach en politiek zakboekje voor de Vereenigde Nederlanders* (Political Pocketbook) of 1782, claiming an impeccable Patriot pedigree. He called himself a "republican patriot," adding however: "But I stand on my own pedestal," not following the insights or interests of anyone.[2]

In this chapter I will analyze the outlook and opinions of this self-styled republican patriot by following his intellectual and political evolution. The *Patriotic A.-B.-Book,* with illustrations of his own invention, is Swildens's lasting claim to fame, if only because it is a very charming abecedarium with timeless appeal.[3] However, it is also of very topical interest for the early 1780s. It marks a clear shift in the mood of the Dutch nation from the Enlightenment cult of the fatherland, the "golden age of quiet and calm" between 1750 and 1780,[4] and the troubles of the 1780s, starting with the outbreak of the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War in December 1780. Though it was published only in September 1781, Swildens's *A.-B.-Book* had been several years in the making, reflecting the mood of those happy years just before the troubles began.

1 [J.H.Swildens], *Politiek belang-boek voor dit provsioneel tydperk* (Amsterdam: J.R. Poster, 1795).

2 Ibid., 117, cf. n.65.

3 N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), 74–75, 106–07; P.J. Buijnsters, L. Buijnsters-Smets, *Bibliografie van Nederlandse school- en kinderboeken, 1700–1800* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997), 19–21.

4 Van Sas, *Metamorfose,* 391.

1 Enlightened Patriotism

Swildens deliberately maintained an upbeat tone of Enlightenment thinking, ignoring the decline of the Republic which is usually linked to the advent of Patriotism. The *A.-B.-Book* was basically a schoolbook aimed at the moral rearmament of the Dutch people, starting with the education of children. It was the result of Swildens's carefully thought-out philosophy of education, beginning with his studies at Groningen University, but developed and matured during a prolonged stay in St. Petersburg and travels through Germany.[5] In St. Petersburg he studied the educational and legal reforms of Catherine the Great. In Prussia he made the acquaintance of men like Moses Mendelssohn, Friedrich Nicolaï and the educationalist Friedrich Weisse, who gave him the idea for his *A.-B.-Book*. Reading D'Alembert taught him that science should aim not only at innovation but also at simplification. In religious matters D'Holbach served as a warning to remain on the safe side of the line between atheism and deism.

The *A.-B.-Book* at first sight seems to be above politics narrowly understood. A crucial concept is *Eendragt* [letter E], the unity and harmony existing in the whole of society: within families, between the inhabitants of a town, between regents and burghers, between towns and villages, and between all seven United Provinces. Only when pursuing unity "can our whole fatherland flourish, be prosperous and prominent." Swildens emphatically states that "the United Netherlands [letter N, *Neêrland*] is my fatherland [...] and not just one province or another." He includes all seven provinces, together with the adjoining *Generaliteitslanden* Brabant and Limburg – Swildens himself was born there – in his definition of the fatherland: together they constitute "one prominent commonwealth." The accompanying illustration also contains maps of the Dutch colonies in the East and West Indies and the Cape, demonstrating that for Swildens these colonies were an integral part of a global Dutch fatherland.

However, this pronounced all-Netherlands feeling did not imply Swildens wanted the governance of the country altered, e.g. by making it more centralized, as had often been advocated during the eighteenth century. To Swildens, *Burger* [letter B] was still a political concept with an exclusively urban connotation, stemming from everyone's duty to protect and defend his city, a notable

5 W.B.S. Boeles, *De patriot J.H. Swildens. Zijn arbeid ter volksverlichting geschetst* (Leeuwarden: Meijer Kuipers en Wester, 1884), chapter 1. See also Barry J. Hake, "Between Patriotism and Nationalism: Johan Hendrik Swildens and the 'Pedagogy of the Patriotic Virtues' in the United Dutch Provinces during the 1780s and 1790s," *History of Education* 33, no. 1 (2004): 11–38.

republican precept. Citizen militias had an important role to play and every boy should start at an early age to exercise and learn how to handle a gun.[6] He wrote a detailed *Wetboekje voor de kleine schutteryen* (Manual for the Small Militias) in which this children's play is linked to grown-up concepts like freedom and republican sovereignty.[7] To Swildens "playing at soldiers" was both an educational ploy and a positive metaphor for Patriotism. In subsequent nineteenth-century historiography this was turned on its head to become a matter of ridicule and contempt.

The *A.-B.-Book* also contained a broad outline of the constitution of the Republic.[8] Swildens set great store by the Union of Utrecht of 1579 which had made the Seven Provinces into one country, with the States-General as their meeting place: "Yes, child, the whole Fatherland, that is all United Dutchmen, is always considered to be present in that most distinguished assembly," a maxim to which he reverted time and again.

Swildens showed off his republican convictions when treating virtue [*Deugd*, letter D]. Without virtue both the defense of the fatherland against its natural enemy the water and against foreign enemies will fail. Virtue writ large is the begetter of all those civic virtues which have made the Dutch great in the past and can make them great again: earnestness, loyalty, attentiveness, industriousness, parsimony, health, populousness. The significance of Law, Duty and Virtue should be impressed upon all children. Laws are commands which have to be obeyed, a duty is a deed obliged by law, and virtue, that "beautiful word" means "an enduring inclination to do his duties."

But the paramount virtue, surpassing all others, especially in republics, should be love of the fatherland. Summarized most briefly, the *A.-B.-Book* is an evocation of enlightened patriotism: "In every Dutch child patriotism should be cultivated in such a manner that he will always prefer his fatherland above all other countries…" Or, as he puts it elsewhere: "If there is one good passion [*drift*] in which excess is not just excusable but positively honorable to mankind, it is patriotism, or the passion for the wellbeing of the fatherland…"[9]

By a strange coincidence Swildens's *A.-B.-Book* finally appeared in September 1781 almost at the same moment when the anonymous pamphlet *Aan het Volk van Nederland* (To the People of the Netherlands), written as we now

6 This is also one of the ten children's games shown under J, *Jeugd*.

7 [J.H. Swildens], *Wetboekje voor de kleine schutteryen in de Vereenigde Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: D. Schuurman, n.d.). Cf. Boeles, *Swildens,* 77–78. In Amsterdam over 7000 copies of this manual were distributed for free among the urban youth. Swildens, *Wetboekje*, 20.

8 *Vaderlandsch A.-B.-Boek*, "Spel- en lees-oefeningen," 52–57.

9 [J.H. Swildens], *Amsterdam aan zyne Regenten* (1781), 7–8.

know by Joan Derk van der Capellen tot den Pol (1741–1784) was distributed stealthily all over the Republic in a single night. This pamphlet, containing a vitriolic attack on the stadtholder, transformed Dutch politics overnight, polarizing all relations, even within families, and leaving Swildens's own strategy of constructive nation-building little chance of success. Certainly with hindsight September 1781 is a critical juncture in Dutch politics. The change of mood is very palpable from the *Almanac and Political Pocketbook* with which Swildens followed-up his *A.-B.-Book*.[10]

This was an almanac with a difference and another project Swildens had been planning for years because he found the customary almanacs disgusting.[11] He used the almanac format to present a daily reminder of Dutch history with an extensive listing of holidays, anniversaries, commemorations and celebrations instead of the habitual saints' days and religious festivals. His calendar had a distinctly Loevestein-republican bias,[12] though it was far from anti-Orangist in the manner of *To the People of the Netherlands*. It contained great commemorations like the Union of Utrecht, naval exploits such as the Raid on the Medway (1667) and dark days like the beheading of Oldenbarnevelt (1619). Following-up on the earlier Santhorst cult of republican heroes,[13] it was also an anticipation of the need subsequently felt by the Batavians for public holidays and commemorations.[14]

Swildens extended the almanac proper with 120 pages elaborating on topics from the *A.-B.-Book*. He hoped the war crisis would strengthen national feeling in all provinces, in the true spirit of the Union of Utrecht, "as if they were but one single province."[15] Discussing the governance of the Republic in detail, there was no doubt original sovereign power resided everywhere with the "good inhabitants" themselves.[16] They had, however, transferred actual government to the regents, whom he dubbed "sovereign regents."[17] They were present all over the Republic, performing their duties close to the people. If by any

10 [J.H. Swildens], *Almanach en politiek zakboekje voor de Vereenigde Nederlanders* (Amsterdam: W. Holtrop, 1782).

11 Boeles, *Swildens*, 95. Cf. [J.H. Swildens], *Circulaire missive van eenen vryen Hollandschen burger aan de Representanten des Volks* (Haarlem: C. Plaat, 10 March 1795), 32 on the "publicly tolerated almanac-shame" at the beginning of each year.

12 "Loevestein" is shorthand for the republican States-Party opposed to the Orangists.

13 Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, 572–73.

14 Swildens himself re-used his list in two subsequent almanacs and it was pillaged by Pieter van Woensel in his *Lantaarn*-series. Cf. Ivo Nieuwenhuis, *Onder het mom van satire* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2014), 154 n. 87.

15 *Union of Utrecht*, art. 1.

16 [J.H. Swildens], *Almanach en politiek zakboekje*, 95.

17 Ibid., 116.

chance their actions might become obnoxious to the people, it was "impossible to assume the citizenry had consented in this."[18]

In the explanation added to the *Manual for the Small Militias*, he highlighted the crucial difference between republics and monarchies, focusing on the link between freedom and republicanism. "The people of the Netherlands is [...] in the truest sense a free people, it is its own lord and master and governs itself through its republican sovereign."[19] The reason why most republics in history had decayed, was that the people were not properly instructed about the "foundations of a true republican sovereignty."[20]

In the following years of escalating tension Swildens on his own account wrote "complete lists" of anonymous articles in various newspapers and political spectators such as the *Post van den Neder-Rhijn*.[21] He was closely involved in the composition of the chief handbook of Patriot reform, *Grondwettige herstelling van Nederlands staatswezen* (Constitutional Restoration of the Dutch Polity).[22] This was a collaborative effort of Patriot regents from all over the Republic, especially Van der Capellen and his circle. They helped to collect the information, whilst the actual editing was done by professional writers like Cérisier as the main editor and also Swildens, who was responsible for the first chapter of volume 1. Van der Capellen had taken an active part in

18 [J.H. Swildens], *Amsterdam aan zyne regenten*, 15.

19 [J.H. Swildens], *Wetboekje voor de kleine schutteryen*, second pagination, 13.

20 Ibid., 18.

21 Boeles, *Swildens*, 167. Sadly such lists have not been handed down. For a reliable bibliography of Swildens, probably supplied by himself, see S. Gratama (ed.), *Regtsgeleerd magazijn* (Groningen: W. Wouters, M.J. van Bolhuis, 1809), 331–36. Unfortunately, his biographer Boeles attributes various other publications to Swildens on rather loose grounds. Cf. the scathing comment by H.T. Colenbrander in his "Aanteekeningen betreffende de Vergadering van Vaderlandsche Regenten, 1783–1787," *Bijdragen en mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 20 (1899): 109 n. 1. Patriot-basher Colenbrander does not count Swildens among the "despicable but among the amiable sort of patriot hacks." See also the critical review of Boeles's biography by J.A.S[illem], *De Gids* 48 (1883): 383–89 and Boeles's reply, *De patriot J.H.Swildens gehandhaafd* (Leeuwarden: A. Meijer, 1884). Quite in contrast P.J. Buijnsters has declared the "law of the inhibiting headstart" applicable to the study of Swildens, as Boeles's "excellent" biography has had no follow-up so far: *De hele Bibelebontse berg* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1989), 200–03, 671 n. 36.

22 *Grondwettige herstelling van Nederlands staatswezen*, 11 vols. (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1784–86). I am quoting from the second edition of 1785–1786. See on Patriot thinking in general: S.R.E. Klein, *Patriots Republikanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland, 1766–1787* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); Wyger R.E. Velema, *Republicans: Essays on Eighteenth-Century Dutch Political Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Van Sas, *Metamorfose,* 175–274.

the preparations,[23] and *Constitutional Restoration* was sometimes called the "great plan" of Capellen.[24] He had, however, already died when the first volume appeared in 1784.

The programmatic introduction of the compilers outlined the mechanism of constitutional restoration, working from the bottom upwards. The role of the stadtholder was substantially reduced, taking away various powers he had assumed over time, especially concerning the appointment of urban regents. The original position and political involvement of the people at large was carefully scrutinized, in order to redress unlawful changes made in the past. The rights of citizens, republican freedom and the sovereignty of each province were considered "fundamental laws" which could never be altered.[25]

Cyclical thinking may have been a favorite trope of classical republicanism,[26] but *Constitutional Restoration* would have none of it: "Those prophets of doom should not be believed, who enjoy painting a bleak prospect as if the Republic had already completed its natural cycle." Restoration was thought quite feasible, especially when morals were also reformed. "Let us together with our constitution also improve our morals. […] Then the majesty of the people will triumph once more, the state will rise again, and its scattered members will unite themselves. […] From the bosom of a general virtuousness the courage, competitiveness, industry and patriotism will be reborn, and with these good qualities also the ancient honor and power of the Republic."[27]

In the first chapter of vol. I Swildens deduced some general principles from the variety of local and provincial arrangements. All these had to be restored to their "true republican shape," especially where relations between the representatives and the people they represented were at stake. Unless there was "a well-regulated popular influence," the net result of the Patriot movement would only be to increase the power of the aristocracy.[28] Putting paid to cyclical doom-mongering, he compared the Republic to an ingenious artifact that was basically sound though in need of careful revision: "We still have power and virtue."[29]

23 *Grondwettige herstelling*, vol. I, xvii.
24 *De Politieke Kruyer*, vol. IV (1784), 616.
25 *Grondwettige herstelling*, vol. I, vii.
26 Its continuing importance in late-eighteenth-century Dutch political thought is argued in Jan Rotmans, "Enlightened Pessimism: Republican Decline in Dutch Revolutionary Thought, 1780–1800" (PhD. thesis., University of Amsterdam, 2020).
27 *Grondwettige herstelling*, vol. I, viii.
28 Ibid., 6–7.
29 Ibid., 14.

2 The Dangers of Democracy

Swildens meanwhile also had his own political mouthpiece, writing the editorials for the twice-weekly *Holländische Zeitung,* created in 1785 to explain the complex Dutch politics of the day to a German audience but no doubt also meant for home consumption. Often he tried to take the edge off political antagonism, suggesting reasonable compromise. As to the much-discussed rights of the people, in his view the people at large was not yet fit to use its "natural freedom." Suddenly allowing it too much influence in public affairs would only create chaos and "Demokratische Verwirrungen."[30]

In an anonymous pamphlet addressed to his "misguided fellow-citizens," he was less circumspect.[31] He warned they were being misled by some "loudmouths calling themselves Patriots," who were only after their own benefit. The present cry for democracy and popular government was ill-considered and impractical: "How will this democracy be organized? Who will take part in it? Poor and rich? The knowledgeable and the ignorant? Women? Children? Servants and maids? Farmhands…?" If the answer would be: no servants, no women, no children, no Jews…, he asked: "Why not? Are not children part of the people, and women members of society?" And who would decide which persons could take part in popular assemblies and public affairs?

In the agitation of 1785 Swildens distanced himself from the increasingly active involvement of the people in politics. Though he had been an ardent advocate of citizen-armament in true republican vein, he now criticized the establishment of special exercise-societies as a source of strife and discord. Also the well-established practice of submitting petitions had gotten completely out of hand, signed as they were by hundreds of people with greatly diverging interests and motives. He concluded with a plea for mutual political tolerance, similar to the existing religious tolerance.

The moderate stance of the *Holländische Zeitung* got Swildens in serious trouble. He was sharply attacked in some newspapers linked with the Amsterdam publisher Verlem, who also published the radical weekly *De Politieke Kruyer*. In an *ad hominem* assault the anonymous editorialist was identified as the "Lawyer S…," who always "mumbles of creeping through the most noble houses and the humblest burgher cellars," but now revealed himself to be "flattering the prince and the aristocrats in turn, hoping to unite them, and going

30 *Holländische Zeitung* 50 (24 June 1785).

31 [J.H. Swildens], *Aan mijne misleide landgenooten en medeburgers* (Vlissingen: J. Roelofs, 1785). This outspoken pamphlet is not listed in Swildens's bibliography of 1809. However, Boeles has found a manuscript version among his papers. Boeles, *Swildens*, 129 n. 1.

about his own crooked ways, posing as a Patriot." In truth, he was no more than the plaything of some Amsterdam aristocrats.[32]

This attack shows the likes of Swildens in that critical year 1785 risked being caught in the middle between radical Patriots and their Orangist opponents. They mounted an all-out attack on Swildens's project of Constitutional Restoration. According to the Leiden law professor Adriaan Kluit (1735–1807), all this talk of "restoration" was only a feeble pretext to establish a full-blown democracy, based on equality and popular sovereignty.[33] The Patriot cry for freedom could be easily manipulated to show there had been any number of constitutional abuses and transgressions in the past. With this attack Kluit and others further polarized political debate, presenting the Patriot program in a more unified, consistent and aggressive manner than the Patriots had themselves.

At the turn of the year 1786–87 the radical weekly *De Politieke Kruyer* published its own update of Constitutional Restoration.[34] All over the Republic burghers and country people were now called upon to elect representatives – be they called "gecommitteerden," "geconstitueerden" or "gemeenslieden" – to make their demands known. This would effectively put representative democracy into practice, never mind its historical legitimation. All these demands were supposed to ensue from a shared *national* ambition, the term *national* being used repeatedly. Constitutional Restoration was presented as a national manifesto, in which the sovereignty of the people was all-important and regents were merely representatives. By now "republic" had become a highly charged political term: a true republic was one in which sovereign power resided in the people.

In 1787, the final year of the Patriot Revolution, Swildens published two synopses of Constitutional Restoration, one concerning the whole of the Republic, the other for Amsterdam only.[35] Once again he tried to find a workable middle ground, referring to the position he had already taken in 1781. Always endorsing popular sovereignty in principle, when it came to defining a representative democracy, he still saw the regents as the obvious representatives, though he wanted to deal with the abuses of "aristocratic" regent rule and "elect" the best regents available. At present, he considered a more active participation of the people in government an illusion.

32 *Nederlandsche Courant*, November 16, 1785.

33 [Adriaan Kluit], *De souvereiniteit der Staaten van Holland verdedigd* (1785). Cf. Velema, *Republicans*, chapter 7.

34 *De Politieke Kruyer*, vol. VIII (1786), 617–25.

35 J.H. Swildens, *Kort begrip van het geheele herstellings-werk der Republiek* (Amsterdam: Emenes en De Vries, 1787); idem, *Kort begrip van de verbeetering der Amsterdamsche regeerings-form* (Amsterdam: Emenes en De Vries, 1787).

Speaking of his hometown Amsterdam,[36] Swildens called it a "fundamental republican truth" that all rights of government were the collective property of the citizenry. But the peculiar Amsterdam arrangement by which burgomasters and aldermen together with their predecessors each year co-opted their successors betrayed not even a hint of popular representation, "as everything went round in a circle." However, in his view it was quite easy to restore a "true and visible popular representation" without unleashing popular chaos. Under the circumstances he suggested regarding the existing city council (which in Amsterdam was quite powerless) as the direct representation of the citizenry and giving it a formal say in the yearly appointment of burgomasters.

After the restoration of the Orangist regime by the Prussian army in the fall of 1787 Swildens started reflecting on what had gone wrong with the Patriot revolution. In 1789 he published a treatise of over a hundred pages "On the present situation of society in our Republic," which was almost surreptitiously placed before the Dutch translation (maybe by Swildens himself) of Knigge's well-known *Über den Umgang mit Menschen*.[37] Attempting to deal "scientifically" with the developments of the past decade, it opens with a meticulous attempt at periodization. After the undoubted highpoint of the Dutch Enlightenment between 1772 and 1778, Swildens distinguished a number of short periods during which the political situation gradually worsened. The moral of this "calmly discriminating" treatise was that the process of harmonious nation-building during the 1770s had been fatally undermined by the politics of the 1780s, destroying all previous societal gains. The most novel part of his argument was a careful dissection of the dynamics of modern politics, defining what politics was and what it did to people. According to Swildens, politicizing went hand in hand with party-building, with two important – and decidedly negative – consequences: too much familiarity within parties and outright hostility between them, all nuance being lost in the process. He blamed both Orangists and Patriots for this politicization run wild and for the destruction of the enlightened harmony of the 1770s, implying that in the war crisis of 1781 a wrong turn had been taken by following the lead of the aggressively political *To the People of the Netherlands* instead of his own strategy of enlightened nation-building.

36 The chapter on Amsterdam in *Grondwettige Herstelling*, vol. II, 77–95, stating that even in this big city Constitutional Reform should not remain a "Platonic building," was drafted by Cérisier, who brushed aside some criticism from Swildens on popular influence. The chapter was both more critical and more specific than Swildens's subsequent *Kort Begrip*. Cf. Boeles, *Swildens*, 147 n. 2.

37 Adolf Freiherr von Knigge, *Uber den Umgang mit Menschen* (1788); *Over de verkeering met menschen*, II vols. (Amsterdam: Johannes Allart, 1789).

3 True Republicanism

In 1795, after the French had "liberated" the Dutch Republic and made possible the Batavian Revolution, Swildens became one of the most vociferous opinion-makers, writing a number of pamphlets in quick succession. In the charged atmosphere of 1795 the stage was being prepared for a National Assembly, defining the issues to be dealt with in a new constitution. During the Restoration, especially in 1793, Dutch republican discourse had taken a critical turn.[38] Whereas Freedom had been the common denominator of Patriot thinking so far, the catchword now became Equality, taking its cue from Pieter Paulus's *Verhandeling over de vrage: in welken zin kunnen de menschen gezegd worden gelyk te zyn?* (Treatise on the Question in what Way Men can be said to be Equal, 1793).[39] The aim of Constitutional Restoration was now discarded by many former Patriots in favor of the clear-cut and seductive French example of unity and indivisibility.

Swildens, however, refused to go with the flow and tried to convince his compatriots they faced a choice between a constitution that was still recognizably Dutch and an altogether new constitution modelled on the French example. In the battle of words of 1795 two rival versions of republicanism emerged, both purporting to be the "true" one. The likes of Pieter Paulus (1753–1796) and Bernardus Bosch (1746–1803) favored a more rights-based, "modern" republicanism, linking the concept of equality with the French unity and indivisibility. Swildens was the most eloquent advocate of a more traditional, though still much-reformed republicanism, Dutch-style. In his view "we should erect a new building of state from our own materials," if only because of the huge differences between France and the Netherlands. He stressed he had been thinking about these matters for twenty years, not as a regent, because of his lowly birth, nor as a public servant, because he was not good at crawling or begging, but as a "quiet, patient, resigned private citizen."[40]

In this debate Swildens set himself up as the chief ideological opponent of Pieter Paulus, whose treatise on equality had become required reading in all

38 1793 is a turning-point in Swildens's updated and refined periodization. Swildens, *Politiek Belang-boek*, 26–40. Cf. van Sas, *Metamorfose*, 108, 278. For Dutch political debate in 1793 see I.L. Leeb, *The Ideological Origins of the Batavian Revolution* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973), chapter 5.

39 Pieter Paulus, *Verhandeling over de vrage: in welken zin kunnen de menschen gezegd worden gelyk te zyn? en welke zyn de regten en pligten die daaruit voordvloeien?,* 4th impr. (Haarlem: C. Plaat, 1794).

40 Theo-Demophilus [J.H. Swildens], *Memorie van zaaken wegens 's lands constitutie* (Amsterdam: J.R. Poster, 1795) 29.

Patriot clubs and societies and had given them a new sense of direction.[41] In view of Paulus's prestige and his leading position in Holland, Swildens had to operate with some caution. In practice he used all available rhetorical tricks, walking a tightrope between (over)praising Paulus as one of the cleverest statesmen in the land, subtly applying "the salt and pepper of satire" and outright criticism. In doing so he was assisted by Paulus himself, who, of course, was not only the author of the 1793 treatise on equality, but also the "shrewd dissector and clarifier of the Union of Utrecht" in his *Verklaring van de Unie van Utrecht* (History of the Union of Utrecht) from 1774–77.[42] Swildens did not leave an opportunity unused to play off these two Pauluses against each other, provoking him to such an extent that Paulus publicly called him a "suspect person."[43]

Swildens readily admitted the French model was much simpler and more rational, but he doubted whether such uniformity would benefit the Batavians. To prevent any misunderstanding he employed a baffling array of terms to question "this regular beauty of total, overall unity and central cohesion in the big whole […] with all that planned beauty and general unity and central indivisibility."[44] He reminded his fellow-Batavians that self-government on a small scale was fully compatible with republican freedom and equality, stressing the point that – unlike in France – here the constitution was "originally and fundamentally democratic," with "a truly representative popular government."[45]

In the Dutch case "active freedom" should be exercised close to home, with "less absolutism in the all-Dutch general popular representation," echoing some familiar precepts of classical republicanism. He considered the Netherlands very much a moral unity, but it did not have to be unitary in its representative system. Big republic France first of all had to prove its enduring viability as a republic, he added tellingly. In France, representative government was feasible only at a national level, leaving the citizens in their home departments mainly with the freedom to acquiesce.[46]

In his *Circulaire missive van eenen vryen Hollandschen burger aan de Representanten des Volks* (Circular Missive to the Representatives of the People) from March 1795, Swildens started out with a number of propositions on virtue, once more flaunting his republican credentials. Virtue should be the objective

41 J.H. Swildens, *Godsdienstig staatsboek*, vol. I (Amsterdam: J.B. Elwe, 1803), 11.
42 [Swildens], *Memorie van zaaken*, 22.
43 *Godsdienstig staatsboek*, vol. I, n. 34.
44 [Swildens], *Memorie van zaaken*, 14.
45 Ibid., 21.
46 Ibid., 36–37.

of the present revolution and of the New Order, "our wished-for republican government." Looking back on the 1780s, Swildens explicitly saw the Patriot and Batavian periods as two parts of the same revolution, as if to forestall later scholarly debate.[47] While many Batavians now scorned the Patriot revolution, Swildens – always the contrarian – did exactly the opposite. "All was joy" during the triumph of Patriotism, due to two main causes: the salutary and calming influence of reading societies and the new publicity of government, through all sorts of official announcements and publications.[48] As an appendix Swildens added the proclamation of the Amsterdam city council of February 11, written by Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck, with its call for moderation and national harmony, accompanied by extensive notes and comments of his own.[49] These amounted to a powerful plea for allowing different political opinions and avoiding the system of Terror which had just ended in France.

Like everyone else Swildens had been taken by surprise by the speed of the Batavian Revolution. He saw the Holland *Verklaring der Rechten van den Mensch en van den Burger* (Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizens) of January as a guideline for the present "provisional" phase, which should end with the framing of the constitution. To contribute to this outcome he wrote an essay on the rights and duties of men and citizens, declaring he had always been a champion of the "religious and natural rights of men and citizens." Already fourteen years ago he had been one of the first, if not the very first, he claimed, to have written meaningfully about such "inalienable natural rights," stating that the Dutch people were the original sovereign and proprietor of the Netherlands and "blunting a thousand pens to advocate the sovereignty of the people."[50] Writing about rights of men inevitably meant another encounter

47 Wyger Velema, "1795 en de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse republikanisme," and Stephan Klein, "De sprong naar '95. Van Patriots naar Bataafs republikanisme," *De Achttiende Eeuw* 28, no. 1–2 (1996): 29–46. Both authors refer to previous historiographical debate.

48 [Swildens], *Circulaire missive*, 16. Cf. N.C.F. van Sas, "Drukpers, politisering en openbaarheid van bestuur in de patriottentijd," in *De Nederlandse revolutie? 1787*, ed. by Th.S.M. van der Zee, J.G.M.M. Rosendaal, and P.G.B. Thissen (Amsterdam: De Bataafsche Leeuw, 1988), 174–184.

49 In his comments (59) Swildens distinguished four constitutional options: (1) The Old Constitution. (2) The Old Constitution proper, according to the Patriot program of Constitutional Restoration from 1782–1787. (3) A constitution modeled on the French example. (4) A constitution following some French guidelines but otherwise more in keeping with the character and nature of the Dutch. Swildens himself was in favor of the last alternative.

50 [J.H. Swildens], *De rechten van den mensch en burger door de Representanten van Holland vertoond, en de pligten van den mensch en burger door een opregten Patriot er tegen over geplaatst* (Amsterdam: J.B. Elwe, 1795), 9.

with Pieter Paulus, the main author of the Holland Declaration. Swildens supplied every "natural" right from the Declaration with a corresponding and no less "natural" duty. Balancing right with virtue and duty, he stressed the overarching importance of religion: "Without religion everything is just for show," he stated, condemning those "newfangled philosophers" who alleged you could have rights of man without a religious foundation.[51] He even stretched this religious dimension of rights and duties so far they seemed almost superfluous in view of established Christian thinking.[52]

Swildens genuinely admired the French Declarations for their clarity and elegance. However, it did not follow that the Dutch should refrain from writing their own Declaration. Whilst the French in their brilliant Voltairian era were still reveling in poetry, theater and novels, the Dutch had already been studying natural rights for half a century or more.[53] In his view, our new Declaration should be "more perfect" than the French one. "Dutch intelligence may be less brilliant and less trenchant than French genius; it has, however, thought through the rights of man more orderly, deeply and extensively than the French." We should therefore produce "an original masterpiece" as "an example for all Europe."[54]

This heartfelt cry did not bring Swildens the praise he may have hoped for. In an anonymous review in the *Vaderlandsche Bibliotheek* he was sharply rebuked, probably by its editor Bernardus Bosch.[55] Bosch, a former Protestant minister, was making his name as one of the main republican modernists, strongly influenced by the French example.[56] He called Swildens a coward and a meddler, showing off his own self-love rather than his patriotism. He particularly attacked Swildens's mixture of natural rights and religion and ridiculed his claim of having been an early advocate of popular sovereignty. Bosch challenged the anonymous author to make himself known "with all his science and without God" and he would be answered.

This nasty review was a turning-point in Swildens's contributions to the political debate of 1795. His three pamphlets from the spring were always

51 Ibid., 18.

52 Ibid., 18, 25, 28.

53 Ibid., 22, 30.

54 Ibid., 22–23.

55 *Vaderlandsche Bibliotheek*, vol. VII, *eerste stuk* (1795), 553–56.

56 Niek van Sas, "De Republiek voorbij. Over de transitie van republicanisme naar liberalisme," in *Het Bataafse experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800*, ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas, and Wyger Velema (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013), 66; Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland, 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 34–36; Joris Oddens, *Pioniers in schaduwbeeld. Het eerste parlement van Nederland, 1796–1798* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012), 80–81.

constructively phrased, whereas the *Political Interest-Book* and its brief sequel the *Zesdaagsche staatsbrief* (Six-Day State-Letter) from late 1795[57] were more defensively written and very critical. Perhaps he realized by now he was on the losing side of the argument. Almost directly replying to Bosch's criticism, Swildens insisted he had been an advocate of "true republicanism" all along, ever since his *A.-B.-Book* of 1781 which had been in the making since 1775.[58] He now called himself a republican "on his own pedestal." A carefully contrived frontispiece of his own invention summarized his argument, quoting Pieter Paulus on the merits of the Union of Utrecht. Once more Paulus was trotted out to play his double role of both chief authority, regarding the Union of Utrecht, and main target, where unity and indivisibility were at stake.

In the *Political Interest-Book* Swildens sharply criticized the new Batavian politics, scrutinizing revolutionary practices from all over the Republic. The *Interest-Book* was hastily written and rambling to such a degree that his biographer Boeles could hardly make sense of it.[59] Swildens nonetheless remained true to his "scientific" ambitions, trying to discover patterns and structures in the chaos of facts and occurrences. More than ever he resorted to a bewildering typography using all available typefaces, no doubt intending to suggest order of a kind, but creating rather the opposite effect of mirroring chaos itself.

"Virtuous popular government through the people's representatives" should not be confused with "personal popular government" or a dictatorship of the people.[60] With fifteen years of political experience behind him Swildens now distinguished sharply between the nation and the state. Though emphatically considering the Republic to be one nation, it did not follow that this one nation should be forced into the straightjacket of a single state. With disgust he called the unitary state of his opponents a "monarchized republic."[61]

Swildens blamed all this on misguided French influence, France now being the "thermometer for our country." Apart from the mistaken adoption of French terms like decree and municipality, this meant that political thinking and politicizing were becoming fundamentally un-Dutch. By now he had started to question everything "natural," explicitly rejecting the modernist turn

57 [Swildens], *Politiek Belang-boek*; [J.H. Swildens], *Zesdaagsche staatsbrief over's lands hoogste zaak* (Amsterdam: J.R. Poster, 1796). Cf. Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, 281–284; W.R.E.Velema, "Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse revolutie," in *Het Bataafse experiment*, ed. by Grijzenhout, Van Sas, and Velema, 42–43.

58 [Swildens], *Politiek Belang-boek*, 119.

59 Boeles, *Swildens*, 211. For a contemporary appreciation see *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (1796), 68–73.

60 [Swildens], *Politiek Belang-boek,* 94–95.

61 Ibid., 110; [Swildens], *Zesdaagsche staatsbrief*, 30.

Dutch republicanism had taken in 1793. Instead of natural equality he advocated equality before the law, instead of a natural order a civic order, instead of abstract theory tangible practice. And whereas in 1781 he saw republican Patriotism as "a virtue where excess was excusable," he now thought it high time to go back from "patriot passion" to "patriot reason."[62]

Swildens summarized his argument in the last days of 1795 in the *Six-Day State Letter*, addressed to the Gelderland deputy Vitringa (hoping perhaps to muster support from outside Holland) and dedicated to Pieter Paulus. French and Dutch republicanism were not, in his view, equally viable alternatives. Government close to home was the only option for this republic, which should be essentially confederative in order to remain a true republic and a commonwealth. Every individual citizen should be able to say with conviction: "I govern myself."[63] This was the essence of his republicanism, implying also a "continuous mandatory relationship," between the three layers of government – local, provincial and national –, instead of signing away the powers of government to a national collective deciding everything by itself, according to majority rule.[64]

In constitutional terms Swildens by now came out as a pronounced federalist. He even drove the federalist argument *ad absurdum* by claiming slower government was also better, and more cynically, seven provincial governments provided more public employment. Strongly favoring history over Enlightenment modernity, the overvaluing of counting and arithmetic actually made him sad.[65]

4 Private and Christian Virtues

The series of pamphlets he wrote in 1795 were Swildens's last attempt to influence political debate in the National Assembly, which started its work in March 1796, with Pieter Paulus as first president. In 1797 Swildens was appointed a professor of law in Franeker. He played no further part in Batavian politics, though he may have been considered for membership in the National Assembly.[66]

Looking back after the "nationalization" of the Batavian revolution in 1801, Swildens in the *Godsdienstig staatsboek* (Religious State-Book) of 1803 gave his

62 [Swildens], *Politiek Belang-boek*, 135.

63 [Swildens], *Zesdaagsche staatsbrief*, 15, with the qualification: "That is to say everything in a representative sense."

64 Ibid., 28–30.

65 Ibid., 38.

66 Boeles, *Swildens*, 223.

final verdict on Batavian politics. This meant settling scores with Pieter Paulus, who himself had died within weeks of the opening of the National Assembly. Swildens reminded his readers that Paulus's treatise on equality had been nicknamed "French Jacobinism in Christian attire," calling it his "oracular book," Paulus himself being "the greatest oracle of all."[67] Swildens considered himself vindicated by recent history that the "ill-fated" Paulus had been wrong all along in wanting to overturn the state completely and rebuild it from scratch.[68] However, he slyly separated this despicable Jacobinism from its professed Christian attire, which had made the Batavian Revolution (unlike its French counterpart) into a "Christian Revolution,"[69] at least until the fatal coup d'état of January 22, 1798.

Swildens had nothing good to say about this coup of his former "true republican" opponents, which ushered in the Batavian Terror, forcing through the unitary state with a centralist constitution. He called it a "Hague revolution" of a small vanguard, in which the experience of centuries had to yield to "the proud correctness of imaginary rules of government," calling it a "surviving Paulian defect of lunacy."[70]

In the meantime Swildens was already working on a *Deugdenboekje* (Little Book of Virtues),[71] which was probably intended to make his work as an educationalist, which had started with the *A.-B.-Book* of 1781, come full circle. This catalogue of virtues mirrored the profound change of atmosphere in the Netherlands after 1801. Domestic virtues were now highly valued, with a special emphasis on the role and position of women.[72] Swildens probably wanted not merely to evoke this atmosphere but also give it a personal twist, as he had so successfully done in 1781. Once more he started from the all-important triad of Law, Duty and Virtue, enumerating the duties and virtues to be expected of children. And whilst God in 1781 had already been prominent (G for God was awarded two pages in the *A.-B.-Book*), now he was omnipresent, reflecting the Christian turn Swildens's thinking had taken in recent years.

Of the public virtues of republicanism and his proud 1795 catchword "I govern myself" nothing was left. In the *Religious State-Book* of 1803 he already

67 Swildens, *Godsdienstig staatsboek*, vol. 1, 10. *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen* (1803), 641, deplored Swildens's "feud" with Paulus.

68 Swildens, *Godsdienstig staatsboek*, vol. 1, 8.

69 Cf. Boeles, *Swildens*, 195.

70 Swildens, *Godsdienstig staatsboek,* vol. 1, 33–34.

71 J.H. Swildens, *Deugdenboekje* (Amsterdam: J.B. Elwe, 1813).

72 Cf. Ellen Krol, *De smaak der natie. Opvattingen over huiselijkheid in de Noord-Nederlandse poëzie van 1800 tot 1840* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1997); Eveline Koolhaas-Grosfeld, "Voor man en maatschappij. Over vrouwen in de Bataafs-Franse tijd," in *Het Bataafse experiment*, ed. by Grijzenhout, Van Sas, and Velema, 185–213.

called popular influence on government a "miserable illusion."[73] Private and Christian virtues of the family and the home now took pride of place. As such the *Little Book of Virtues* was a faithful reflection of the much-changed times after 1801, with the eclipse of republicanism and its public virtues. Indeed, Swildens may well have tried with his *Little Book of Virtues* to convey the renowned "social and Christian virtues" of the Educational Act of 1806, which was to dominate Dutch primary education for half a century. On publication in 1813, the booklet had an immediate though short-lived success, often serving as a school prize.

5 Conclusion

It has always been difficult to define Patriot and subsequently Batavian republicanism in positive terms, without falling back on the negative image of Orangist opponents like Adriaan Kluit. Studying Swildens has the great advantage of looking at late-eighteenth-century Dutch republicanism from the inside, with all attendant distinctions and dilemmas. Whereas in the 1780s the Patriot mainstream increasingly adopted a language of opposition,[74] Swildens always remained true to his original inclusive conception of republicanism, focusing on nation-building not politicization. A belief in popular sovereignty was present from the beginning, phrased in rather general terms and never developing into the activist practices of the democratic Patriots of the mid-1780s. In the spring of 1795 he pleaded once again for a return to consensual politics.

Speaking from first-hand experience, Swildens saw the Patriot and Batavian eras as two parts of the same revolution. However, he sharply criticized the "natural," rights-based and French-inspired turn Dutch republicanism had taken in 1793. Setting himself up in 1795 as an ideological alternative to Pieter Paulus, he considered his own distinctive brand of republicanism better thought-out, truly native and more suited to the small commercial Batavian Republic.

The sometimes idiosyncratic views of Swildens were never a matter of politics alone, but also a consequence of his own contrarian character. He was certainly not the Grub Street hack C.H.E. de Wit made him out to be, in the pay of some Patriot regents.[75] Perhaps he is even worthy of that worn biographer's

73 Swildens, *Godsdienstig Staatsboek*, vol. II, 15.

74 Cf. Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, 147–50.

75 C.H.E. de Wit, *De Nederlandse revolutie van de achttiende eeuw* (Oirsbeek: C.H.E. de Wit, 1974), 24, 62.

sobriquet of having a "tragic" personality. Some revealing outpourings[76] present him as a quintessential loner, trying to keep up appearances in his continually changing Amsterdam lodgings, but in the meantime hardly knowing how to make ends meet. Likening himself to Job on the dung heap rings painfully true.

In his claim that in 1781 he was one of the very first to proclaim the sovereignty of the people, Swildens was more successful than he may have hoped for. One of the happy phrases in the *A.-B.-Book* is that the Dutch people in its entirety can always be considered to be present in the States-General. This formula found its way into the Batavian Constitution of 1798 and subsequently into Hogendorp's post-Napoleonic constitution of 1814. Surprisingly, it is still there in the present Dutch Constitution (art. 50), having weathered all constitutional storms since 1814.[77]

76 E.g. Boeles, *Swildens*, 118–19, 166–71.

77 N.C.F. van Sas, "De representatieve fictie. Politieke vertegenwoordiging tussen oude orde en moderniteit," *Bijdragen en mededelingen betreffende de geschiedenis der Nederlanden* 120, no. 3 (2005): 399–400; Th. Veen, *De Staten-Generaal vertegenwoordigen het gehele Nederlandse volk* (Nijmegen: Ars Aequi Libri, 1994).

CHAPTER 9

The Demise of Dutch Republicanism in the Nineteenth Century

Remieg Aerts

The Netherlands, the literary critic Cd. Busken Huet (1826–86) argued in January 1865, was "in fact since 1848 a democratic republic with a prince from the House of Orange as hereditary chairman." This was the consequence of the liberal constitutional reform of 1848, which had belatedly embraced the democratic spirit of the revolutionary period at the end of the eighteenth century. Huet addressed this sharp analysis to the liberal leader J.R. Thorbecke (1798–1872). As the architect of the constitution and as minister of the interior, Thorbecke had distanced himself from the idea of popular sovereignty. "Where and when have I ever invoked the word or principle of popular sovereignty?," he had asked the conservative opposition in the budget debate in parliament on November 25, 1864. In Thorbecke's view such a principle did not exist in the Dutch constitutional monarchy. The constitutional system was an organic, free cooperation of levels and powers of government, each with its own function. But for Huet this was a renunciation of the underlying principle. "Democracy, popular sovereignty, are these terms of reproach? So be a man, and bear that reproach."[1]

Half a century after the restoration of independence and the establishment of the monarchical state, Huet's provocation was tantamount to heresy. He did not care; a few years earlier he had resigned his position as minister of the Walloon church in Haarlem because he could no longer agree with the doctrine of the faith.[2] Was he right and had the Netherlands been a disguised republic with an Orange facade since 1848? Huet's article led to a break within the editorial board of the prominent general-cultural magazine *De Gids* that was the gathering place of the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia. In the same January issue, the Leiden professor of constitutional law J.Th. Buys, like Thorbecke, opposed the

1 Een Geabonneerde van het Bijblad [Cd. Busken Huet], "De Tweede Kamer en de Staatsbegroting voor 1865," *De Gids* 29, vol. 1 (1865): 42–63, quotations 62–63; *Parlementaire Redevoeringen van Mr. J.R. Thorbecke. Ministerie. Van September 1864 tot September 1865* (Deventer: Ter Gunne, 1870), 311.

2 Olf Praamstra, *Cd. Busken Huet. Een biografie* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2007).

suggestion from the conservative opposition that 1848 had reduced the king to a "Roi fainéant." The conservative Protestant leader G. Groen van Prinsterer, too, built his so-called "anti-revolutionary" opposition on the assumption that the liberal constitutional monarchy was in fact a democratic, revolutionary creation.[3] The majority of *De Gids*'s editors consisted of Thorbeckean liberals who disliked the demagogic simplifications with which Huet reinforced the conservatives in their misrepresentations.[4]

In view of later political developments, Huet's analysis may seem correct – nowadays he would encounter little contradiction – but in the mid-nineteenth century the concepts of "republic," "republican," "democracy," and "popular sovereignty" were taboo. In the first decades after 1814, almost this entire political vocabulary had disappeared from the public domain. Bringing back politicization to government and recognizing the function of party politics and ideology since the 1840s was a liberal reform program in itself. This is why Busken Huet's challenge caused such commotion. Half a century after 1814, the legacy of the revolutionary years and the relationship with the former Republic were still sensitive matters.

This situation raises two questions. How could republicanism disappear so completely in the nineteenth-century Netherlands? Few states had a longer or richer republican past. In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, republican momentum had even been at a peak. The values of classical republicanism had pervaded Dutch society; the public sentiment was anti-monarchical and anti-Orangist. The stadtholders had been denounced as wretched tyrants who did not belong in a free republic. Any true Dutchman, a contemporary later recalled, uttered "the word King with disgust." When in 1806 Louis Napoleon took office as the first king since Philip II's renunciation in 1581, pamphlets protested that the entire history of the nation opposed the principle of the monarchical form of government.[5]

3 Roel Kuiper, *'Tot een voorbeeld zult gij blijven. Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer (1801–1876)* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 2001).

4 The issue has been extensively covered in: Remieg Aerts, *De letterheren. Liberale cultuur in de negentiende eeuw: het tijdschrift De Gids* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1997), 295–302.

5 "Jubeljaar 1825," *De Weegschaal* 8, no. 1 (1825): 6; Bart Verheijen, *Nederland onder Napoleon. Partijstrijd en natievorming (1801–1813)* (Nijmegen: Vantilt: 2017), 101–04; Wyger Velema, "Lodewijk Napoleon en het einde van de republikeinse politiek," *De Negentiende Eeuw* 30 (2006): 147–58. About republican zeal and the Patriot and Batavian revolutions: *Het Bataafs experiment. Politiek en cultuur rond 1800*, ed. by Frans Grijzenhout, Niek van Sas, and Wyger Velema (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013); Mart Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen. Democratie, burgerschap en staat in Nederland 1795–1801* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2012); Stefan Klein, *Patriots republicanisme. Politieke cultuur in Nederland (1766–1787)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995); Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators. Revolution in the Netherlands 1780–1813*

The second question is whether there is nevertheless continuity between the Republic, the era of the revolution, and 1848. Was there a republican undercurrent in the nineteenth century? In what sense can 1848 be regarded as a masked restoration or continuation of old republicanism? In 1848, did Thorbecke take up the thread of the 1798 revolution that had taken place a week after his birth? His opponents consistently regarded him as a republican and even as "the worst of the Dutch Jacobins."[6] Or was the constitutional reform simply a further development of the system of government that had begun in 1814–15?

1 The Historiography of Nineteenth-Century Republicanism

The question of continuity between the Republic, the revolutionary period, the Restoration after 1814 and the constitutional revision of 1848 has only sporadically been the subject of historical scrutiny.[7] Experts on the eighteenth century and the revolutionary period seldom venture beyond the turn of the 1800s. Historians of the nineteenth century have long conformed to the seemingly self-evident framework of a modern history that begins with the establishment of the monarchy in 1813. In 1930 the Amsterdam professor J.S. Theissen made an original attempt to trace "the prehistory of modern Dutch liberalism" back to the Patriot movement of the 1780s, but his suggestion was not the fruit of systematic research. W. Verkade likewise looked for a relationship between the Patriot movement in the east of the Netherlands and later liberalism. The controversial historian C.H.E. de Wit believed that between 1780 and 1848 there had been an ongoing struggle of "democrats" against "aristocrats." For him Thorbecke, who more than his contemporaries had reflected on the time of the revolution, formed the link between the two periods. In his book on progressive liberalism (1992) S. Stuurman put forward the liberal reformer Donker Curtius (1792–1864) as a link between old and new political thinking.[8]

(New York: A.A. Knopf, 1977); A. Jourdan, *La Révolution batave. Entre la France et l'Amérique (1795–1806)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008)

6 Gerrit Schimmelpenninck, "Notanda," in: H.T. Colenbrander, "Bijdragen tot de kennis van het jaar 1848," *Onze Eeuw* 4, vol. 1 (1904): 173–210.

7 Cf.. Matthijs Lok, "The Bicentennial of 1813–1815 and National History Writing: Remarks on a New Consensus," *BMGN-LCHR* 130 (2015): 111–20.

8 J.S. Theissen, *Uit de voorgeschiedenis van het liberalisme in Nederland* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1930); W. Verkade, *Thorbecke als Oost-Nederlands patriot* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 1974); C.H.E. de Wit, *De strijd tussen aristocratie en democratie in Nederland 1780–1848. Kritisch onderzoek van een historisch beeld en herwaardering van een periode* (Heerlen: Winants, 1965); Siep Stuurman, *Wacht op onze dagen. Het liberalisme en de vernieuwing van de Nederlandse staat* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1992), chapter 3.

Over the past decades, Niek van Sas in particular has intensively studied this period, inspired by Reinhart Koselleck's thesis about the *Sattelzeit* (saddle period) running from around 1750 to 1850. He, too, could only conclude that there seems to be a void between the rapid rise and fall of a modern and enthusiastic political atmosphere in the late eighteenth century and the rediscovery of politics around 1848. The constitutional liberalism and financial opposition that emerged briefly in 1828–30 and again in the 1840s never referred to the era of the revolution or to republicanism. These forms of liberalism were related to a contemporary discourse that found expression in France, Belgium and a few states within the German Confederation. Van Sas could not discern a "transition from republicanism to liberalism."[9]

The recent Leiden research project *The persistence of civic identities 1747–1848* looked for continuity in the field of social organization, administrative culture and self-assured urban citizenship. The project questioned the modernization thesis that has come to portray the period around 1800 as a radical transition from old particularism and local forms of civic involvement to modern, national and political citizenship. Unmistakably there is continuity in administrative styles and in forms of civic engagement. The persistence of civic organizations seems likely in the then still fairly closed urban communities.[10] This is an interesting point, although the question remains to what extent this engaged citizenship still derived its impetus from a self-conscious classical republicanism.

Even internationally, relatively little attention has been paid to the study of republicanism in the nineteenth century. Studies that do exist focus on France or the United States, or are concerned with radical social republicanism and the rise of socialism in its many variants.[11] The general picture that emerges from the international literature is that the Revolutionary period passed down

9 N.C.F. van Sas, *De metamorfose van Nederland. Van oude orde naar moderniteit, 1750–1900* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004); Niek van Sas, "De Republiek voorbij. Over de transitie van republicanisme naar liberalisme," in *Bataafse experiment,* ed. by Grijzenhout, Van Sas, and Velema, 65–102.

10 NWO Free Competition research project *The Persistence of Civic Identities in the Netherlands, 1747–1848* (2015–2020). See Judith Pollmann and Henk te Velde, "Introduction. New State, New Citizens? Political Change and Civic Continuities in the Low Countries 1780–1830," *BMGN-LCHR* 133, no. 3 (2018): 4–23, as well as the other articles in this special issue.

11 Pamela Pilbeam, *Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century France 1814–1871* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995); Philip Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995); Jürgen Heideking, James A. Henretta and Peter Becker (eds.), *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German states, 1750–1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Bruno Leipold, Karma Nabulsi, and Stuart White (eds.), *Radical Republicanism: Recovering*

three distinct though coherent republican legacies to the nineteenth century. The first was the discourse of classical republicanism, which revolved around civil liberties, mixed government and balance of powers, and active citizenship in and for the community, based on a morality of voluntary sacrifice for the benefit of the common good. The second republican discourse focused on the idea of popular sovereignty, equality and democracy as an expression of a collective popular will. All kinds of popular democracy and socially oriented republicanism developed from this line of thought. In the third variant, republicanism transformed into constitutional liberalism, in a unified state with a representative system, separation of powers, constitutional safeguarding of civil liberties and recognition of the plurality of groups and interests in society. Although republicanism as such is not the subject of Bernard Manin's concise classic on representative government, he clearly shows how around 1800 in the United States and Europe early modern thinking about governance, participation and democracy found a new general foundation in the system of elected representative government and liberal constitutionalism.[12]

2 Depolitization Under the Restoration Regime

Transformation and transition then, but how can the Netherlands be situated in that process? The consensus view is that republicanism, which was the subject of intellectual and political debate and even ardent defense until 1801 and for some even until 1806, petered out from that year onwards and did not revive after 1813. With her much-read *Oproeping van het Bataafse Volk* (Convocation of the Batavian People) of March 31, 1806, the militant Maria Hulshoff became the "dying swan of Dutch Republicanism."[13] The generation that had lived through the Patriot years, the Orange Restoration and the Batavian changes of power joined the imposed monarchy under Louis Napoleon with fresh reluctance or pragmatic sense of reform from 1806. After the incorporation of the Netherlands into the Grand Empire in 1810, the breakdown of the revolutionary ethos was evident. Not only did the republican ideal or program disappear, the entire republican discourse, which had been formed over centuries, dissolved like a mist in the rising Orange sun.[14]

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the Tradition's Popular Heritage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Els Witte, *Belgische republikeinen. Radicalen tussen twee revoluties (1830–1850)* (Kalmthout: Polis, 2020).

12 Bernard Manin, *The Principles of Representative Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

13 Van Sas, "De Republiek voorbij," 94–95; Verheijen, *Nederland*, 102–03.

14 Velema, "Lodewijk Napoleon," 147–58.

Starting with G.K. van Hogendorp's proclamation in November 1813, with which the Netherlands broke away from the Napoleonic Empire, the prevalent motto became "forgive and forget": the pardoning and deliberate forgetting of former political positions, loyalties and differences of opinion. The "weathervanes" of various classes, who during the Batavian-French years had more or less formed a new ruling class alongside or beyond the old regent families, remained in the saddle as the first generation of rulers of the kingdom under William I, who soon took the lead in the process of governmental recovery. Of course, everyone knew who had taken which positions as official or publicist in recent years, but that knowledge took on a private character after 1813.[15]

Due to the ever-stricter censorship measures and the fading of the political press, public opinion disappeared after 1801. As the French tightened their grip, the political debate gave way to a cultivation of national feeling, clinging to memories of old glory and patriotic heroes. During the three years of incorporation into the French empire, even former political publicists devoted themselves mainly to literature, which gained ideological meaning.[16] The House of Orange, which for two centuries had been a political party opposed to the *Loevestein* or States Party of Holland, Amsterdam and the States-General, was now nationalized into a monarchy: the connecting force in the new state, even entrusted with sovereignty. Under William I, the image was cultivated of a benevolent, "paternal" rule over a country that was induced to regard itself as a "family" and to find its chief virtue in "domesticity."

The political language of the revolutionary years was melted down into a soft, depoliticized, moralistic and national discourse in which "order" and the kingship of William I were central elements. In the public discourse of the first half-century and well after that, the entire word field around politics took on a pejorative connotation. Conceived as partisanship and "passion," politicization had since the Patriot years divided the Republic and led it to ruin, which came in the guise of the ultimate incorporation into the Grand Empire by the bully Napoleon. This, in short, was the analysis of the generation that in 1813–15 made a new design for the unified state of the Netherlands. Until 1840, the

15 Matthijs Lok, *Windvanen. Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en Franse Restauratie (1813–1820)* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009); Jeroen van Zanten, *Schielijk, Winzucht, Zwaarhoofd en Bedaard. Politieke discussie en oppositievorming 1813–1840* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2004); Joke Roelevink, "Opklauteren naar het Binnenhof of rondbuitelen in de provincie: loopbanen van bestuurders 1750–1850," in *De leeuw met de zeven pijlen: het gewest in het landelijk bestuur*, ed. by Ida Nijenhuis, Joke Roelevink, and Ronald Sluijter (The Hague: Instituut voor Nederlandse Geschiedenis, 2010), 123–45.

16 Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, chapter 3; Lotte Jensen, *Verzet tegen Napoleon* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2013).

word "politics" appeared rarely in books, only sporadically in magazines, and even only a few hundred times per decade in all newspapers combined. When used, it was mostly in the sense of "administrative" or "official," sometimes in the classic sense of "social" or "civil," and occasionally as a synonym for "acting" (for example, of a physician). In reference to the conditions of the eighteenth century, "politics" was invariably accompanied by an aversion to "factions," "partyism," and "party struggle."[17]

The negative sentiment was even more pronounced in the verb "politicize": that was a dangerous, baneful disease, "worse than cholera." "Cowardly politicizing" was opposed to the truly Dutch composure. Politicizing could also be used as a synonym for "the Patriot movement." In *De Nederlander* of 1850, politicization stood for "promoting passions, hatred and envy and intrigue."[18] Politicization entailed the threat of revolution and disorder – which indeed erupted in Belgium, France and some German states after 1830.

The same was true of the word field around "republic," "republican," and "democracy." If used at all, those words appeared almost exclusively in reports about foreign countries and never in a positive sense.[19] One explanation for avoiding these concepts lies in self-censorship. An atmosphere of danger and subversion was constantly maintained around them. In the repressive press climate of the newly created United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the use of such words was even actively prosecuted. Authors and publishers could face corporal punishment and imprisonment for evoking a "spirit of republicanism."[20] If these concepts occurred in relation to the former Republic, it was seldom in a positive consideration of its form of government. The Golden Age remained an example when it came to mentality, wealth or power, but in the new monarchical state the former republican model of government was never put forward as an explanation for its success. In nineteenth-century retrospections on the Republic, the rejection of oligarchic rule, regional particularism and unfortunate party

17 Based on bibliographical search and word search in the Delpher online repository of books, newspapers and magazines in Dutch (https://www.delpher.nl).

18 "Losse gedachten," *Leeuwarder Courant*, June 28, 1831; *Algemeen Handelsblad*, June 7, 1838; *Utrechtsche Courant*, July 9, 1838; "De Boer en de Landheer," *Arnhemsche Courant*, June 14, 1832; *De Nederlander*, September 26, 1850.

19 Henk te Velde, "De domesticatie van democratie in Nederland. Democratie als strijdbegrip van de negentiende eeuw tot 1945," *BMGN-LCHR* 127, no. 2 (2012): 3–27, particularly 7–9; Henk te Velde, "Democracy and the Strange Death of Mixed Government in the Nineteenth Century: Great Britain, France and the Netherlands" in *Democracy in Modern Europe. A Conceptual History*, ed. by J. Kurunmäki, J. Nevers, and H. te Velde (Oxford: Berghahn, 2018), 42–64.

20 [J.B.D. Wibner], *Pleitrede van de schrijver der Utopiaansche Courant* (Amsterdam: A. Vink, 1819): 32; Van Zanten, *Schielijk*, 123–27.

strife prevailed. The democratic ideas of the late eighteenth century had been a dangerous "daze" that had fortunately passed.[21] Democracy, the *Encyclopedisch Woordenboek der Zamenleving* (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Society, 1836) taught, almost always ended in despotism, "mob rule" and rag-tag demands.[22]

Constitutionalism as such was an achievement of the revolutionary period. In the Netherlands, as in most post-Napoleonic Restoration states, some form of constitution was preserved. However, Van Hogendorp's 1814 constitution, amended in 1815, in every way intended to erase the memory of the democratic Batavian Constitution of 1798. It contained neither a catalog of constitutional rights, nor a single suggestion of popular influence. It was a document to create an entirely monarchical state, to establish a notable, conservative social order and to remedy the governmental deficiencies of the former Republic. In this new polity, the States-General represented "the nation," but functioned primarily as an advisory body, a kind of sounding board for the king's policy. Both Houses, as co-legislator, were supposed to support the royal administration. When the States-General occasionally rebelled, as in 1819, 1829 and 1839 when discussing the ten-year budget, it was about issues such as tax burden and state credit. For the rest, everyone within the system of the Restoration period understood politics or governance as administration or management. In the post-Napoleonic state, the administrative and executive powers were the key players. Poverty, rebellion, social and even religious problems – such as the Orthodox-Protestant Secessionist movement in 1837 – were regarded as local public-order issues, not as political matters.[23]

The constitution and public discourse depoliticized the idea of citizenship. The term "citizen" disappeared from the constitution altogether and made way for the neutral word "residents." In the new monarchical relationship, citizens became "loyal subjects." Or else, the old political concept of citizenship was transformed into "Dutchmen," in the sense of members of the national community.[24] Civil society was a social sphere, not a political community. "Exaggerated civic spirit" was all too easily equated with "republicanism."[25]

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21 According to the moderately liberal member of parliament J.G. van Nes in *Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1832–1833*, 581 (Bijlagen), quoted in Te Velde, "Domesticatie van democratie," 9.

22 P.G. Witsen Geysbeek, *Algemeen Noodwendig Woordenboek der Zamenleving* (Amsterdam: Diederichs, 1836), 428–29.

23 Matthijs Lok, ""Herwonnen vrijheid". 1813 als Nederlandse oorsprongsmythe," *Jaarboek Parlementaire Geschiedenis* (2013): 19; Ronald van der Wal, *Of geweld zal worden gebruikt! Militaire bijstand bij de handhaving en het herstel van de openbare orde 1840–1920* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003).

24 Cf. Witte, *Belgische republikeinen*, 87.

25 Ido de Haan, *Het beginsel van leven en wasdom. De constitutie van de Nederlandse politiek in de negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003), 101.

Furthermore, the conditions for the development of political activity or organization were lacking. After the explosive growth of public debate and civic self-organization in the late eighteenth century, the public sphere came to a standstill after 1802 and did not recover after 1814. In the repressive, restrictive climate of this period, the still flourishing sociability took on a semi-closed, inward character. The cities were no longer autonomous polities as they had been in the past. The municipality of the proud "city-state" of Amsterdam received a clear signal from The Hague that there was nothing left to "rule."[26] For a long time the only locus of politics was the office of the manager-king William I, and he was surrounded by a notable administrative class that managed the state like an estate. If there is continuity between the Republic and the Netherlands of the first half of the nineteenth century, it is in the deep routines of the notable style of governance, with its calm consultation, paternal attitude, consensus-oriented policies and the continuation of personal relationships and provincial interests.[27]

3 The Constitutional Turn

Several explanations have been offered for the evaporation of all interest in republicanism.[28] In the first place there was the fatigue of revolution, after 35 years of unrest and upheavals, and an understandable need for peace, order and reconciliation in a barely regained independent state. The discourse of reconciliation and the ending of factionalism had already started in 1801.[29] The generation that was born around 1750 and had played a role in the Patriot movement and the Batavian Republic was aged, disappointed and sidelined after 1813. The next generation had mainly experienced regime changes resulting in a shameful Annexation, and in middle age had a particular need for stability. Those who were even younger had no personal memories of the Republic.

Especially during the three odd years of Annexation, there was a widespread need for a return of "Orange," no longer as a party but as an emblem of national

26 Remieg Aerts, *Geschiedenis van Amsterdam*, vol. III, *Hoofdstad in aanbouw 1813–1900,* ed. by Remieg Aerts and Piet de Rooy (Amsterdam: SUN, 2006), 50.

27 Lauren Lauret, *Regentenwerk. Vergaderen in de Staten-Generaal en de Tweede Kamer, 1750–1850* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2020).

28 Velema, "Lodewijk Napoleon," 147–58.

29 Verheijen, *Nederland,* 30. Autobiographical reviews of the revolutionary period in: Arianne Baggerman, "De dynamiek van de herinnering. Autobiografische terugblikken op een tijdperk van revolutie," in *Bataafse experiment*, ed. by Grijzenhout, Van Sas, and Velema, 275–302.

unity. That sentiment had already been voiced by the former stadtholder's party, and their republican adversaries, too, had recognized that the party struggle itself had become the cause of the decline of the republican ideal. A constitutionally bound head of state from the House of Orange could be a solution upon a return to national independence.[30] In the popular Orangism that grew under the French occupation, Orange and Nassau became emblems of collective memories, national resistance and the hope of restoring independence. When in 1813 Hereditary Prince Frederick William actually returned as Sovereign Prince, the person was less important than the symbol. He knew that himself.[31] The allocation of sovereignty to the Prince of Orange was primarily a way of gaining foreign recognition for the regained independence.

The monarchical, paternal role had been prepared by the kingship of Louis Napoleon. Internationally, there has been a tendency towards the formation of monarchies with a constitutional element since 1805.[32] Thinking about the nature and role of kingship evolved. In 1814 Benjamin Constant presented a novel vision of the monarchy as a *pouvoir neutre*, exalted above the parties, powers and institutions.[33] Such a conception was attractive because it elevated a new kingship above the former parties. In theoretical reflections on the role and position of the king and the principle of ministerial responsibility, this idea would indeed come to play a role in the Netherlands around 1830.[34] It was also important that William I found the appropriate style with his managerial, enlightened, bourgeois and Protestant kinghood. It was felt to be truly national at a time that called for it.[35]

30 Verheijen, *Nederland*, 100, 193, 263.

31 Verheijen, *Nederland,* 263. On the reception of the king, see also: Jane Judge and Joris Oddens, "Father Figures and Faction Leaders: Identification Strategies and Monarchical Imagery among Ordinary Citizens of the Northern and Southern Low Countries (c.1780–1820)," *BMGN-LCHR* 133, no. 3 (2018): 72–97.

32 Martin Kirsch, *Monarch und Parlament im 19. Jahrhundert: der monarchische Konstitutionalismus als europäischer Verfassungstyp. Frankreich im Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

33 Benjamin Constant, *Principes de politique, applicables à tous les gouvernements représentatifs et particulièrement à la constitution actuelle de la France* (Paris: A. Eymery, 1815).

34 Pauline J.E. Bieringa, "Vrijheid in het Nederlandse politieke vocabulaire, 1814–1840" in *Vrijheid. Een geschiedenis van de vijftiende tot de twintigste eeuw*, ed. by E.O.G. Haitsma Mulier and W.R.E. Velema (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 305–24, in particular 321–22.

35 C.A. Tamse, "Plaats en functie van de Nederlandse monarchie in de negentiende eeuw" in *De monarchie in Nederland,* ed. by C.A. Tamse (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1980), 89–132; Joris van Eijnatten, "Oranje en Nederland zijn één. Orangisme in de negentiende eeuw," *De Negentiende Eeuw* 23, no. 1 (1999): 4–22; Jeroen Koch, *Koning Willem I 1772–1843* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2013).

Former republicans like Falck, Kemper, Wiselius and others saw in constitutional government the best guarantee for the preservation of republican values. In a constitutionally bound Orange monarchy, what had been achieved since 1795 could be perpetuated. As early as the late eighteenth century, radical Patriot thought had undergone a transformation from classical republicanism and the prevailing idea of a mixed system in the Republic to a new model of representative democracy. That seemed a major improvement on the old aristo-monarchical practice, but at the same time it was deemed wise to temper popular sovereignty with a representative system. In the 1790s, other groups also developed ideas about a constitutional system with balance through representation and a separation of powers.[36] Internationally, in the decades around 1800, beneath the surface of all political and revolutionary rhetoric, there was a general shift from both Montesquieu's mixed government and Rousseau's popular sovereignty to the concept of the centrally run unified state with a constitution guaranteeing civil rights and freedoms and curbing monarchical power, and with a parliament representing the interests of the nation.[37]

Although relatively little political reflection and discussion took place in the Northern part of the Netherlands in the first decades after 1813, a similar train of thought was displayed there, in brochures and in a magazine such as *De Weegschaal* (The Scale, 1818–32), which for more than a decade was virtually the only locus of public political opinion formation in the northern part of the United Kingdom. The "Wegers" had a more or less republican background, and that spirit was still evident in their emphasis on active citizenship, involvement in the public interest, and the guarantee of rights and freedoms.[38] What was new was that they defended those values within the accepted framework of the constitutional monarchy. *De Weegschaal* left no doubt that a new era had begun in 1813. The centuries of the Republic had become "barren" for the present in every respect. "The history of our former national existence belongs to a closed period."[39]

36 W.R.E. Velema, "Revolutie, Republiek en Constitutie. De ideologische context van de eerste Nederlandse Grondwet," in *De eeuw van de grondwet. Grondwet en politiek in Nederland, 1798–1917* ed. by N.C.F. van Sas and H. te Velde (Deventer: Kluwer, 1998), 20–44; Wyger Velema, "Republikeinse democratie. De politieke wereld van de Bataafse Revolutie, 1795–1798" in *Bataafse experiment*, ed. by Grijzenhout, van Sas, and Velema, 27–63, in particular 45–57; Rutjes, *Door gelijkheid gegrepen,* chapter 1.

37 Manin, *Principles*, chapter 5.

38 "De staatsburger is verplicht zijn gevoelen te zeggen over publieke zaken," *De Weegschaal* 2 (1819): 181–91. About the editors and readership of this magazine, see Van Zanten, *Schielijk*, chapter 5.

39 "Oud en Nieuw Nederland," *De Weegschaal* 6, no. 12 (1823): 421–31; "Publieke opinie," *De Weegschaal* 5 (1822): 235–42.

The spirit of the magazine was reverently monarchical; kingship under the House of Orange was regarded as a national choice and necessity. But the monarchy was never discussed otherwise than within the framework of the constitutional order. The Netherlands did not know "Kings who were anointed from a tiny jar of oil that was brought from heaven by a little dove."[40] According to the Wegers, only the "constitutional form of government" guaranteed a regulated public administration and all desired freedom of thought, speech, religion and business. Still it was the responsibility of the citizens to actively guard their interests and to critically scrutinize the government. After thirty years of tumbling between "Democracy, Aristocracy and Despotism," the constitutional monarchy as a treaty between king and people created the best conditions for the kind of citizenship that had been pursued since the Patriot movement. In this small set of politically conscious publicists, the attachment to the constitutional order was much more present than monarchical sentiment. According to other authors who were trained in classical political theory, the modern constitutional monarchies, in spite of their flaws, were based on citizens and rights, and therefore essentially republican or democratic in character.[41]

The political order realized in 1813–15, with a "presidential" type of monarchy, a notable governmental class and a represented "nation" still resembled Montesquieu's *gouvernement mixte*. It was also in line with the cherished self-image of the eighteenth-century Republic, which had taken pride in being the exemplary *regnum mixtum*. Despite the fierce aversion to the "pernicious aristocracy" in the revolutionary decades – a criticism that was still alive after 1813 among former republicans – the Restoration order was once again upheld by a new, mixed upper class that managed to present itself as essential for a balanced order. In France, Montesquieu's theory about the function of an intermediate aristocracy was still topical.[42] In the Netherlands his name only occasionally came up because of his praise for the civilizing and enlightening effect of commerce. Gradually he turned from a relevant theorist into a historical object of study.[43]

Nevertheless, the model of a composite government with three levels, or with an intermediate power between monarch and people, has long remained

40 "Populariteit," *De Weegschaal* 5 (1822): 243–48.

41 J.A. Bakker, *Beschouwing van de staatkundige instellingen der Oudheid in derzelver toepassing op die der hedendaagsche Maatschappijen* (Rotterdam: Arbon & Krap, 1825).

42 Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

43 S.J. Fockema Andreae, "Montesquieu in Nederland," *De Gids* 112, no. 4 (1949): 172–83; "Koophandel," *De Weegschaal* 5 (1822): 225–34; J. Heemkerk Azn., *De Montesquivio* (Amsterdam: Van Heteren, 1839).

a leading principle in the Dutch constitutional system. Montesquieu's political philosophy had been fully internalized, as it were. The new political order offered a constitutionally bound kingship, a notable governing class and the "modern type of liberty" as it was given its classic formulation by Constant in 1819: civil liberties and rights in combination with a politically passive citizenship. Many of the older and younger heirs of the revolutionary period agreed with this political and social model. The nineteenth-century political system evolved from this compromise, although from the start there have been divergent interpretations of the nature of monarchy and of who actually formed the intermediate layer.

4 Republicanism in the Margins

What was left of the republican heritage, in terms of the spirit of anti-monarchism, aversion to the aristocracy, and the ideals of civic self-government, active citizenship and the right to form civic militias? In the Southern Netherlands, especially in Brussels, after 1815 all sorts of French and other refugees found a more or less safe shelter: republicans, regicides, Bonapartists and after 1824 also Philippe Buonarotti, the leader of the Carbonari.[44] There were radicals from different generations who still adhered to the Jacobin ideology. Their clubs, societies, lodges and magazines spread older and current French political ideas and formed centers of agitation and opposition, which gradually turned against William I's restoration regime in the course of the 1820s. In these circles, a new romantic liberalism developed, revolving around such demands as constitutional guarantees, freedoms and rights, ministerial responsibility and a regulated kingship. Although the old republicanism was still present in the militant spirit, the democratic orientation and the rejection of William I's monarchism, the new liberalism mainly sought its course within the structure of the constitutional monarchy.[45]

The first wave of opposition in the Northern Netherlands, in The Hague and Amsterdam, exemplified by new magazines such as *De Bijenkorf, De Standaard* and *De Noordstar* (1828–31), also honored this new constitutional liberalism,

44 Witte, *Belgische Republikeinen,* chapter 1; E. Lemmens, "'Une terre hospitalière et libre?' Franse migranten tussen restauratie en revolutie in het Brussel van Willem I (1815–1830)," *De Negentiende Eeuw* 36, no. 4 (2012): 263–84.

45 A critical analysis of the differences between liberalism in the Northern and the Southern provinces in Stefaan Marteel, *The Intellectual Origins of the Belgian revolution: Political Thought and Disunity in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 1815–1830* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

without the republican sentiment that was still strongly prevalent in the South. It was anti-oligarchic and stood for open government and ministerial responsibility, but it was rather pragmatic and merely wanted constitutional improvement.[46]

A particular form of opposition resounded in the radical utopian magazines and "Lilliputians" that appeared all over the country, especially in the 1840s. These mini-sheets voiced social discontent and resistance to the establishment. Their tone and content were democratic. Their authors and ideas were in contact with international radical movements of republicans, social revolutionaries and utopians in France, England and Belgium. The radical magazines were socially concerned, they denounced abuses and social hypocrisy, and they called for club formation, organization or resistance. They stood up for the "oppressed working class" and rejected "aristocratic despotism."[47] But their readership and influence were limited. Besides, these opponents, too, remained within the constitutional framework. They demanded democratic reform of the constitution and placed their hopes more on a "people's king" who understood their needs than on a republican system.[48] Their *bête noire* was the notable class. Occasional expressions of republicanism sounded unsteady and without a clear ideological foundation. They took their inspiration from the recent French and Belgian revolutions, not from the Dutch republican tradition. All in all, the republican voice remained marginal.[49]

5 Liberalism and Republicanism

Elements of republicanism were mainly included in liberalism. Indeed, even after 1848 liberalism was suspected by conservatives of having a hidden republican agenda. Politicization as such was believed to revive party strife and political agitation. The liberal insistence on ministerial responsibility was seen as an infringement of the monarchical system, and the call for openness, accountability, direct suffrage and extension of the right to vote as stirring up dangerous popular forces. Whereas "liberality" as open-mindedness and moderation could still be appreciated as an old national virtue, and a little more control over the state finances also seemed sensible, the formulation of an

46 Van Sas, *Metamorfose*, chapter 25; Van Zanten, *Schielijk*, 217–34.

47 M.J.F. Robijns, *Radicalen in Nederland 1840–1851* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1967) chapter 2, 3, quotations 107.

48 Ibid., 136.

49 Ibid., 112–13.

extensive program of constitutional reform and attempts to activate society were generally rejected as "ultra-liberalism." In the first decades of the nineteenth century, liberalism was tainted with the vices of factionalism, disbelief and revolt.[50] After 1830, it was always linked with the Belgian and French revolutions. Among conservatives, Thorbecke's program of reform drew direct associations with the "Red Republic."[51] Until the 1840s, liberals preferred to refer to themselves as constitutionalists.

Liberal publicists always placed the constitution at the center of political issues, as a covenant and as an expression of the balance of powers according to the ideal of "mixed government." In this presentation, no appeal was ever made to Rousseau or suggestions of an underlying popular sovereignty, as if the "social contract" was a fact *sui generis* or a consequence of the equilibrium model according to the classical theory, Montesquieu or Constant.[52] Liberals avoided any thought of popular sovereignty and preferred to translate the concept into national sovereignty, as an expression of unity and solidarity.[53]

The men of the 1848 constitutional revision committee, Lodewijk Luzac, Dirk Donker Curtius, J.M. de Kempenaer, Lambert Storm and J.R. Thorbecke, all had some relationship with the revolutionary period at the end of the eighteenth century, personally or through their family. However, they were mainly shaped by their experiences with the Restoration regime and their knowledge of French, British, Belgian and, in part, German political literature. In Donker Curtius's political beliefs, elements of the republican sentiment were perhaps most present, although he was no less a staunch supporter of the modern constitutional-monarchical state than the other members.[54] Before 1848, liberal publicists in the circle of the monthly *De Gids* sometimes revived the views of the former *Loevestein* or States Party in their historical analyses of the Revolt and national history. That sentiment was Patriot and republican rather than royalist. Around 1860 it gave way to a historical reflection that resulted

50 For instance in "Liberaliteit en Liberalismus," *De Weegschaal* 6 (1823): 261–76; Henk te Velde, "'Liberalism' and 'Liberality': The Liberal Tradition in the Netherlands" in *In Search of European Liberalisms: Concepts, Languages, Ideologies*, ed. by M. Freeden, J. Fernández-Sebastián, and J. Leonhard (New York: Berghahn), 213–32.

51 Anonymus acrostic on the name of Thorbecke, in the family archive Huyssen van Kattendijke. With thanks to K. Huyssen van Kattendijke, April 29, 2019.

52 Bieringa, "Vrijheid," 314–15; cf. the discussion in 1848, in Diederik Slijkerman, *Het geheim van de ministeriële verantwoordelijkheid. De verhouding tussen koning, kabinet, Kamer en kiezer 1848–1905* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2011), 62–72.

53 Cf. Witte, *Belgische Republikeinen*, 87.

54 Stuurman, *Wacht op onze daden*, chapter 3; Mathijs van de Waardt, *De man van 1848. Dirk Donker Curtius* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2019).

in a defense of the constitutional monarchy, although still without Orangist sentiment.[55]

Thorbecke, who was to become the principal architect of the 1848 constitution, was the youngest member of the revision committee charged with this task. Yet, as Leiden professor of constitutional law and as political commentator he had more often than his colleagues reflected on national history and the Batavian-French period.[56] Thorbecke showed little interest in the republican legacy. He regarded the former Republic as a rotten oligarchy and a governmental anomaly. However disconcerting it might sound given public sentiment, in the professor's analysis it had been the Napoleonic interventions that had transformed the decrepit Republic into a modern state. Although he rejected the democratic premise of the Constitution of 1798, he tacitly honored its most important results: the establishment of the unitary state and equal citizenship, the separation of church and state and the guaranteeing of civil rights and liberties. Thorbecke's political thought was shaped by romantic historicism. His liberalism was based on the idea of evolution. He did not deduce it from the enlightened philosophy of universal rights and equality. Rights, freedoms, institutions and functions had to be in accordance with what society at a certain stage required.

Contrary to what Busken Huet suggested in 1865, Thorbecke's rejection of popular sovereignty was indeed fundamental. What he and fellow members of the revision committee created in 1848 was not a republic in disguise with a hereditary Orange king. It was a regulated, constitutional state with the character of a *regnum mixtum* and a separation and balance of powers and functions. In Thorbecke's conception of ministerial responsibility, the king as the dignified part or moral anchor of the government was still essential, to counterbalance parliament as the representative of the people. Difficult as it was to work with a personality like King William III, Thorbecke still defended the monarch's position in his equilibrium system.

The constitutional revision of 1848 built on the structure of 1814–15, not that of 1798. Only the placing of fundamental rights in the first chapter still recalled the Constitution of 1798. The constitutional revision intended to improve the system of 1814–15, to regulate kingship and to promote active citizenship. The middle class became politically and socially the new intermediary power,

55 Aerts, *Letterheren*, 118–25, 261–65.

56 About Thorbecke's political philosophy, see Aerts, *Thorbecke wil het. Biografie van een staatsman* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2018); Jan Drentje, *Thorbecke. Een filosoof in de politiek* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2004).

which was supposed to exercise a kind of guardianship over the rest of the population.[57]

Active and political citizenship had been the core of classical republicanism. Research continues to investigate the extent to which the old urban citizenship disappeared as a result of the abolition of the guilds, the town militias and urban independence.[58] Although all kinds of sociability and civic organization continued to function at the local level after 1814 and urban pride persisted alongside the sense of nationhood for a long time, the Restoration system in no way encouraged active citizenship, let alone political citizenship. "Abstinence seemed civil duty," Thorbecke later summarized the period.[59]

Perhaps the main objective of the 1848 Constitution and the ensuing liberal policies, then, has been to empower civil society, to activate citizenship through direct suffrage, the broadening of the right to vote at the urban level and the establishment of the right of association and meeting. By promoting education and removing all kinds of obstacles, an ever-broader class of citizens would be formed. As a result, political and socio-economic citizenship would not grow apart, but converge. That liberal program was the legacy of the old republicanism, within the new framework of the constitutional monarchy.

6 Conclusion

In the Netherlands, republicanism did not revive until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when it made its comeback as an element of socialism. At the beginning of the century, working-class neighborhoods had been strongholds of Orangism. Social discontent usually turned against the bourgeois establishment, not against the king or the monarchy.[60] In the absence of an

57 A somewhat different view in Te Velde, "Democracy," 47.

58 See the articles in the special issue "New State, New Citizens?", *BMGN-LCHR* 133, no. 3 (2018), especially the introduction: Pollmann and Te Velde, "New State, New Citizens?," 21–23; and Carolien Boender, "Old Citizenry' in a New State: Civic Militias and Political Crises in Haarlem and Groningen in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *BMGN-LCHR* 133, no. 3 (2018): 24–47. A different view in Maarten Prak, *Stadsburgers* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2019) and Maarten Prak, *Citizens without Nations: Urban Citizenship in Europe and the World, ca. 1000–1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

59 J.R. Thorbecke, "Anton Reinhard Falck" (1861) in J.R. Thorbecke, *Historische schetsen* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1861), 171–91.

60 Verheijen, *Nederland*, chapter 9; Anne Petterson, *Eigenwijs Vaderland. Populair nationalisme in negentiende-eeuws Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2017); Dennis Bos, *Waarachtige volksvrienden. De vroege socialistische beweging in Amsterdam 1848–1894* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2001).

organized social movement, people of the working class and their spokesmen sometimes even put their hopes in a "people's king."[61] After the 1870s, the socialist workers' movement began to offer an ideological alternative, but it did imply a choice between Orangism and the republican consequence of the socialist ideology. Socialism was fundamentally anti-monarchist. On the occasion of national celebrations in the 1880s and 1890s, this led to hard confrontations between Orangists and republican-minded socialist workers.[62]

From the 1870s on, republicanism and socialism were occasionally discussed in theoretical considerations in learned social-liberal magazines such as *Vragen des Tijds*. After 1879, a firm and militant republicanism regained a permanent platform in the more popular social-democratic weekly *Recht voor Allen*. In this journal, republicanism roughly coincided with democracy or universal suffrage. Confronted with such demands, the confessional parties, liberals and conservatives began to elevate the monarchy into an emblem of nationalism and of the rejection of revolution and socialism; for the socialist workers' movement it became the personification of the despised establishment.

The tone and rhetoric of socialist and anarchist authors was somewhat reminiscent of that of their Patriot and Batavian predecessors a century earlier. Yet this revived republicanism never actually drew its inspiration from the national tradition of the Republic. While a historiographical consensus grew that liberalism and the bourgeoisie in general were the heirs of the French Revolution, the image of the former Republic and its political system remained essentially negative, except for the glory of the Golden Age. Socialism was a transnational ideology that entered the Netherlands through France, Germany and England. How the revolution of Patriots and Batavians might have provided inspiration for contemporary republicans would become apparent only much later, in the historical research of the end of the twentieth century. But by then national history had long ceased to be a source of ideological inspiration. Modern republicanism is a consequence of the theory of democracy and no longer refers in any way to two and a half centuries of indigenous political heritage.

61 Henk te Velde, "'Geheimzinnig schijnende diepte'. De volkskoning en de omstreden band tussen volk en koning in de negentiende eeuw," *Groniek* 150 (2000): 7–24.

62 Petterson, *Eigenwijs vaderland*; Frans Groot, "Vlaggen in top en stenen door de ruiten. De natie in de steigers, 1850–1940," in *De Verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw,* ed. by J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 2000), 17–200.

CHAPTER 10

Braving the Batavians: Classical Models and Countering Rebellion in the Spanish Empire

Lisa Kattenberg

Identifying with the ancient Batavians as fierce and liberty-loving ancestors was part of the Dutch republican tradition from the late sixteenth century onwards. The "Batavian myth" gained momentum in the newly established Dutch Republic as an anchor of national identity and legitimacy, with the Batavian uprising against the Roman Empire in the first century CE being hailed as an event foreshadowing the Revolt against Spain.[1] Hugo Grotius famously argued in *Treatise of the Antiquity of the Batavian now Hollandish Republic* (1610) that the Batavians had been the first to embrace true republican liberty, which the States had subsequently safeguarded against the (foreign) pretensions of kings, counts, and military commanders.[2] For Grotius and his followers, monarchy was the direct opposite of Batavian or republican liberty. Yet the Batavian myth was also present in writings from the monarchy of Spain. "The Dutch are those Batavians about whom Cornelius Tacitus makes so much mention in his books," Fernando Alvía de Castro wrote in 1629.[3] Far from championing republican liberty, Alvía de Castro embedded the Batavian ancestry in a memorandum for his master, King Philip IV of Spain, about how to finally defeat the Dutch.

This chapter explores the various ways in which authors from the Spanish monarchy used classical analogies to characterize their rebellious enemies.

1 Ivo Schöffer, "The Batavian Myth during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Britain and the Netherlands: Some Political Mythologies*, ed. by J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossmann (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 78–101; Sergio González Sánchez, "Roman-Barbarian Interactions and the Creation of Dutch National Identity: The Many Faces of a Myth," in *The Edges of the Roman World*, ed. by Staša Babić and Vladimir Mihajlović (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 5–18; David Onnekink, "The Body Politic," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Dutch Golden Age*, ed. by Geert Janssen and Helmer Helmers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 120–21.

2 Martin van Gelderen, *The Political Thought of the Dutch Revolt 1555–1590* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 206–07; Arthur Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age. The Political Thought of Johan and Pieter de la Court* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 42.

3 Fernando Alvía de Castro, "Oraciones y discursos políticos contra los Olandeses," Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona, MsA.72, f. 5.

Inverting the Batavian origin myth into a model of a drawn-out and destructive rebellion, the Spanish employed it to represent the Dutch as opponents and to accordingly devise suitable policies for the war in the Netherlands. Moreover, during the same period they were facing resistance on the northern borders of the empire, the Spanish were involved in a conflict of comparable duration and tenacity on its southern frontier. In the Chilean region Araucanía, what had begun as a war of conquest had turned into a protracted conflict with the native Mapuche. In the Spanish imagination, this Arauco War was a rebellion that seemed impossible to suppress, and because of its similarity to the war in the Netherlands in terms of longevity, cost, and character of the opponents, during the seventeenth century it came to be known as "American Flanders." I will show that beyond this general metaphor, the Spanish described the Mapuche in terms that were strikingly similar to those used to characterize the Batavians in the Dutch republican tradition: they were indomitable warriors with a great love of liberty, who would not suffer the yoke of monarchy or foreign domination.[4]

The use of classical parallels in early modern (colonial) Spanish writing about the "New World" of the Americas has received much attention over the past few decades, with monographs focusing on literary sources, histories, legal and ethnological texts, and soldiers' writing.[5] This body of scholarship has demonstrated the relevance of ancient models for coming to terms with the New World, and has revealed that this process was far from static or one-sided. Classical ideas and motifs travelled back and forth across oceans and enemy lines, carried by printed works and agents that moved between and within Europe, the Americas, and the wider world. Building on these insights, this chapter first outlines the background and implications of the analogy of

4 It should be noted that the Spanish rhetoric of Mapuche liberty stands in sharp contrast with practices of indigenous enslavement, which were widespread in colonial Chilean society. The insistence on the bellicose and rebellious nature of the Mapuche is, moreover, reminiscent of the ethnonyms that were often purposefully given to Americans by colonial powers in order to turn them into natural enemies who were subject to slavery. Classical models are only one of several contexts within which the Spanish characterizations of the Mapuche can be understood, but they are central to the analogy of "*Flandes indiano*". See Nancy Van Deusen, "Indigenous Slavery's Archive in Seventeenth-Century Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (2021): 1–33.

5 David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Sabine MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time: Rome, the Incas, Spain, and Peru* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); David Lupher, *Romans in a New World: Classical Models in Sixteenth-century Spanish America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003); Miguel Martínez, *Front Lines: Soldiers' Writing in the Early Modern Hispanic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

the Arauco War as a "second Flanders." Next, I analyze how Spanish authors projected onto the Mapuche a set of key characteristics which were familiar as a prototype of the Dutch rebels, and associated with their identity as Batavians: most prominently their great love of liberty. Finally, I show how the Batavian model helped shape Spanish ideas about moving forward in the wars both in Chile and the Netherlands. As Spanish authors projected neo-Roman republican principles of liberty and self-government onto both the Dutch and Mapuche, they experimented with incorporating ancient republican models into a political language of Christian monarchy and empire. Tracing the ways in which the Batavian model was inverted outside the Dutch republican context, this chapter deepens the understanding of the versatility of classical models and their ability to help conceive of, and turn into practice, countering rebellion and preserving monarchical traditions in the seventeenth-century world.

1 Second Flanders

The lands south of the Inca empire made a distinctly favorable impression on the first *conquistadors* when they arrived there in the first half of the sixteenth century, and this still resonated in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century descriptions. Chile was fertile and fresh, with a temperate climate, and "both in the fruits of the land, and in the ability of the natives, it more closely resembled the lands and peoples of Europe than any other in the Americas."[6] The Jesuit chronicler Diego de Rosales (1601–77) described the Biobío River, which would roughly demarcate the border between Spanish and Mapuche territories, as "equally renowned as the Rhine and the Scheldt in Flanders."[7] Chile's favorable climate was often connected to the reputed physical strength and resilience of its native inhabitants. It was because of this superiority that the mighty Inca empire had never managed to incorporate the Mapuche territory, a fact often dwelled upon in both Spanish and Dutch sources.[8] As the Augustinian chronicler Antonio de Calancha (1584–1654) observed in 1633, Chile had thus been for the Inca empire what the Netherlands were for the Spanish monarchy.[9] About a decade later, the Jesuit Alonso de Ovalle (1603–51) marveled at the fact that

6 Johannes de Laet, *Nieuwe wereldt, ofte beschrijvinghe van West-Indien* (Leiden: Elsevier, 1625), 357. De Laet based this description on the work of Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas.

7 Diego de Rosales, *Historia general del reino de Chile, Flandes indiano*, vol. 1, ed. by Benjamin Mackenna (Valparaiso: Mercurio, 1877), 265.

8 Laet, *Nieuwe wereldt*, 364.

9 Álvaro Baraibar Echeverria, "Chile como un 'Flandes indiano' en las crónicas de los siglos XVI y XVII," *Revista chilena de literatura* 85 (2013): 165.

the Spanish, "after having so swiftly conquered the powerful empires of Montezuma in Mexico and the Inca in Peru, have never been able to subject the brave warriors of Chile." For Ovalle, this was proof of their "invincible spirit."[10]

Viewed from the vantage point of the Hispanic world, the Arauco War and the war in the Netherlands were two border conflicts that were connected on both practical and intellectual levels. In reality the differences between them were obviously numerous. The Spanish Habsburgs had acquired the rule over the Netherlands through dynastic union, for example, whereas their involvement in Chile was essentially a war of conquest. Yet in every contemporary Spanish text, the Arauco War was characterized as a rebellion (*rebelion*).[11] Authors generally emphasized that the *conquistadors* had subjected the native Mapuche to royal authority and the Catholic Faith, and that they had subsequently, in the words of the soldier and chronicler Santiago de Tesillo (born 1607), gone "from Christians to apostates, and from vassals to rebels." The Spanish now needed to guide them back "to the Church as children, and to the king as vassals."[12] This depiction, however far removed from reality, encouraged the association of Chile with the Netherlands. Spanish authors had already been known to express fear of a "new" or "second Flanders" during episodes of unrest or revolt in Spanish dominions in Europe, for example in Aragon in 1591, in Catalonia in 1643, and in Messina in 1673.[13] "Flanders" had come to signify a rebellion impossible to suppress, which had turned into a lengthy and costly war, and which was complicated by the distance from the Iberian Peninsula. It was the place where many soldiers lost their lives, or as the seventeenth-century Spanish saying went, "Spain is my nature, Italy my fortune, and Flanders my graveyard."[14]

Many decades before Diego de Rosales in 1674 coined the association with this traumatic Flanders, Santiago de Tesillo already referred to Chile as "the new Flanders," where the wars seemed "irremediable."[15] The report of the censor in another of Tesillo's pamphlets referred to "that new Flanders," which was

10 Alonso de Ovalle, *Historica relacion del Reyno de Chile y de las missiones y ministerios que exercita en él la Compañía de Jesus* (Rome: Francesco Cavalli, 1646), 83–84. Ovalle based his account of the Mapuche history prior to the arrival of the Spanish on Garcilaso de la Vega's *Royal Commentaries of the Incas* (1616).

11 For example Antonio de Herrera, *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas y Tierra Firme del Mar Oceano*, vol. VIII (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1615), 193.

12 Santiago de Tesillo, *Epítome chileno o ideas contra la paz* (Lima: Jorge Lopez de Herrera, 1648), f. 12r-v (quotes); f. 22v.

13 Baraibar, "Chile como un 'Flandes indiano'," 160.

14 Ibid., 161.

15 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 17v.

troubled by "bitter and tenacious" wars.[16] The comparisons between Chile and Flanders did not cease after the signing of the peace treaty between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish monarchy in 1648. In 1651 the Franciscan chronicler Diego de Salinas y Córdoba (1591–1684) noted that the "uprising" in Chile "lasts until today, and this nation has become so bold and unassailable, that today Chile has become for America what Flanders was for the noble house of Austria."[17] Thus the analogy of "American Flanders" had been established when Rosales fully explored it in *Historia General del Reino de Chile, Flandes Indiano* (1674). "The Spaniards who have discovered and populated this realm of Chile," Rosales wrote, "have had the chance to exercise their courage, for what they found there was an Indian Flanders, a bloody war, a brave opposition and bold resistance in the natives of those lands."[18]

It was not just the Spanish who saw Chile as a "second Flanders." In the Dutch imagination a special affiliation existed with peoples across the Atlantic who, like them, had suffered the yoke of Spanish dominion. Benjamin Schmidt has pointed out that Chile occupied a special position in this cultural geography. In the early 1600s a Dutch sailor reported an uprising of the "valiant warriors" of Chile who "raised their cups to avenging the tyranny and slavery under which Spain would have them suffer." Reports like this presented the native Chileans as a militant people who bravely continued to fight for their freedom and who would be pleased to learn of the Dutch war against the Spanish, "as they were enemies of the same."[19] Some Dutch authors even extended the notion of their Batavian ancestry to the native peoples of the Americas. In his history of Brazil Caspar Barlaeus (1584–1648) suggested a vague affiliation between the American and Teutonic races, and inferred a descent of these Americans from the ancient Batavians. Grotius spelled out the Batavian-American connection even more clearly. Based on presumed common customs and imagined linguistic affinities, he argued that sea-faring Germanic peoples had migrated to North America, perhaps by way of Iceland and Greenland.[20]

16 Santiago de Tesillo, *Restauración del Estado de Arauco y otros progresos militares conseguidos por las armas de S.M.* (Lima: Juan de Quevedo, 1665), aprobación.

17 Diego de Salinas y Córdoba, *Crónica franciscana de las provincias del Perú*, ed. by Lino Gómez Canedo (Washington: Academy of American Franciscan History, 1957), 1100.

18 Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. 1, 18–19.

19 Olivier van Noort quoted in Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad: The Dutch Imagination and the New World, 1570–1670* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 205; Laet, *Nieuwe wereldt*, 364.

20 Grotius's claims were based on presumed common customs and imagined linguistic affinities. They were challenged by fellow scholar Johannes de Laet, which led to a neo-Latin pamphlet war. Benjamin Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 388 and idem, "Space, Time,

This idea of the native Chileans as the fellow-suffering "Batavians of the New World" was enforced by the appearance of a Dutch translation of the epic poem *La Araucana* by the Spanish soldier-poet Alonso de Ercilla in 1619, which became an instant publishing success.[21] Originally published between 1569 and 1589, *La Araucana* celebrated the Spanish conquest of Chile and the first confrontations with the Mapuche. Even though they were the enemies of Spain, Ercilla had championed the "Araucanian" love of freedom and invincible spirit in verses such as:

> Never has a king subjected
> Such fierce people proud of freedom,
> Nor has alien nation boasted
> E'er of having trod their borders.[22]

The Dutch translation, moreover, was tailored to a domestic audience. Several cantos that celebrated Spanish bravery were removed, and the Dutch editor added special praise for the love of "patria" among the Chileans. These exemplary warriors were zealous enough to avenge the death of their fathers in carrying on a war which by 1619 had already lasted over seventy years.[23]

2 Anatomy of a Rebel

From the perspective of the Spanish empire, the Arauco War had been the first conflict in the New World which no amount of war effort seemed able to bring to a satisfying conclusion. This confronted authors, administrators, and soldiers with pressing questions. Who were the native Chileans and what motivated them to resist Spanish dominion so fiercely? Why had a mighty power such as the Spanish empire not been able to subdue what was in Spain's eyes but a small nation of pagan natives? The imagined connection between Chile and the Netherlands aided in approaching some of these quandaries. The translation of the Arauco War into an "Old World" conflict embedded it in

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Travel: Hugo de Groot, Johannes de Laet, and the Advancement of Geographic Learning," *LIAS* 25, no. 2 (1998): 177–99.

21 For Ercilla, see Martínez, *Front Lines*, 29–31.

22 Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, *The Araucaniad*, trans. Charles Lancaster and Paul Manchester (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1945), 37.

23 Alonso de Ercilla y Zúñiga, *Historiale beschrijvinghe der goudtrijcke landen in Chile ende Arauco, ende andere provincien in Chile ghelegen*, trans. by Isaac Jansz. Bijl (Rotterdam: Jan van Waesberghe, 1619).

a familiar discourse on empire and rebellion, which was based to an important extent on classical comparisons. The ancient analogies which Spanish authors selected for the Arauco War always featured a minority taking a stand against a much more powerful opponent, usually the Roman Empire. Authors who admired the Mapuche tended to liken Araucanía to ancient Numantia, a Celtiberian stronghold that rose up against the Romans in the second century CE ("Today Chile has become for America what Numantia was against the power of Rome").[24] The Numantian Celts, renowned for their valor and fighting skills, have sometimes been presented as the earliest ancestors of the modern Spanish, and like the Batavians for the Dutch, they featured in nationalist discourses from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[25] Authors who were more hostile to the Mapuche, on the other hand, believed that they were inconstant in their valor. Santiago de Tesillo likened them to the ancient Gauls or the modern French: keen to fight, and quick to give up. Quoting Julius Caesar, Tesillo observed that like the Gauls, the Mapuche were "in the first instance more than men, and in the end less than women."[26]

Despite their varied identities, all these minority opponents were ascribed a common set of characteristics, which were similar to how Tacitus had described the Batavians. In Tacitus's writings the Batavians appear as a fierce and brave people, who were accustomed to self-rule and did not suffer oppression by foreigners; according to Tacitus, the self-proclaimed reason for Julius Civilis to start his rebellion was that the Batavians were now "treated like slaves."[27] Because the Batavians valued their freedom above everything else, they were prone to conspire against anyone who tried to impose dominion over them. Spanish authors used Tacitus as a source when they compared the Dutch to the ancient Batavians. The agent and counsellor Fernando Alvía de Castro, who in his unpublished *Political Discourses Against the Dutch* had called the Dutch "those Batavians," vowed to present his advice "only with authorities of Cornelius Tacitus, the inexhaustible ocean of politics."[28] Alvía explained

24 Salinas y Córdoba, *Crónica franciscana*, 1100.

25 See Francisco Gracia-Alonso, "The Invention of Numantia and Emporion: Archaeology and the Regeneration of Spanish and Catalan Nationalisms after the Crisis of 1898," in *In Search of Pre-Classical Antiquity: Rediscovering Ancient Peoples in Mediterranean Europe (19th and 20th c.)*, ed. by Antonio de Francesco (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 64–95; and Barbara Simerka, *Discourses of Empire: Counter-Epic Literature in Early Modern Spain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 77–78.

26 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 13v.

27 Tacitus, *Histories* 4:14. See also Fernando Martínez Luna, *Een ondraaglijk juk. Nederlandse beeldvorming van Spanje en de Spanjaarden ten tijde van de Opstand, 1566–1609* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2018), 31.

28 Alvía de Castro, "Oraciones y discursos," f. 1v and see above, note 3.

the motivations of the Dutch to rebel in terms of the Batavians. They were bold and audacious, and according to Alvía, the "old and natural ambition" of Civilis had led the Batavians to conspire against the Romans as the Dutch had done against the Spanish. Most of all, the "Batavian liberty" in the Dutch corrupted them into resisting foreign dominion.[29] This image was largely a negative version of the seventeenth-century Dutch imagination of their own Batavian ancestry. However, whereas Alvía characterized decision-making among the Batavians mostly as "conspiring," Dutch authors tended to give them more credit for political organization. Grotius had even argued that the Batavians had possessed constitutional arrangements similar to those of the Dutch Republic.[30] Their love of liberty here became a specifically republican asset, the polar opposite of monarchy. Thus from the early modern Spanish and Dutch readings of Tacitus, a set of "Batavian" characteristics emerges: people who were fierce and brave; governed themselves through an assembly of equals and were apt to conspire against any foreign dominion; and had a great love of liberty, refusing to suffer monarchical rule.

Spanish authors projected these "Batavian" characteristics not just on the Dutch, but also on the Mapuche. Firstly, in every Spanish text the Mapuche are described as brave and resilient. Even Santiago de Tesillo had to admit that although they were "undoubtedly barbarians," they were also "undoubtedly brave."[31] Other authors distinguished their martial spirit and their great endurance in the face of personal discomfort.[32] According to Diego de Rosales, the valor and warlike nature of the Mapuche were unrivalled. No Spanish governor or general should underestimate them, for "even among the great captains of Flanders, who have seen them fight, they have caused admiration."[33]

Secondly, Spanish authors depicted the Mapuche resistance as conspiracies organized by a general assembly of warriors.[34] Dominant accounts of their political organization portrayed the Mapuche as having developed a basic yet effective system of decision-making. It was clear that they would not submit to the permanent authority of a king, but if the preservation of their freedom was at stake, the Mapuche were able to unite behind a temporary leader elected by an assembly of commoners. Once this leader and the assembly had decided on a proper course, they selected "the means that appear most effective for the

29 Ibid., f. 7v, 41v.
30 Weststeijn, *Commercial Republicanism*, 42.
31 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 3v-4.
32 Ovalle, *Historica relacion*, 86, 88; Salinas y Córdoba, *Crónica franciscana*, 1100, 1094.
33 Diego de Rosales, *Historia general del reino de Chile, Flandes indiano*, vol. III, ed. by Benjamin Mackenna (Valparaiso: Mercurio, 1878), 248.
34 For example Ovalle, *Historica relacion*, 85 and Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 9v.

purpose."[35] Similarly, the royal chronicler of the Americas Antonio de Herrera (1549–1625) acknowledged that "the rebels wage war with judgment and reason," and that their generals governed with prudence.[36] Herrera also observed that the Chileans had in no way accepted the presence of the Spanish, and that they "lost no time in convening and conspiring" to expel them from their territory.[37] This description was copied by the Dutch geographer and director of the Dutch West India Company Johannes de Laet (1581–1649) in his own account, but De Laet depicted the assemblies more strongly as secret and conspiratorial (*onderlinghe ende secrete by-een-rottinghen*). De Laet also emphasized that the Spanish were foreigners (*dese vreemde natie van Spaegniaerden*) and intent on imposing their dominion or yoke (*jock*).[38] Diego de Rosales echoed this rendition of the Mapuche conspiring to resist foreign oppression, like the Batavians:

> The Indians were disgruntled and united into secret gatherings in order to shake off the yoke which the Spanish had imposed upon them. And because they considered themselves free by nature and they had never been subjected to a king, lord or any other form of dominion, they took this [dominion] by a foreign nation very badly.[39]

Finally and most importantly, what distinguished the native Chileans in the eyes of both the Spanish and the Dutch was their all-overriding love of liberty. This went hand in hand with their inability to suffer a yoke of (foreign) dominion. "They despise subjection," Tesillo wrote, "as much as they love freedom."[40] In de words of Diego de Salinas, the Mapuche "put all their happiness and reputation in defending their liberty, without yoke or other dominion."[41] This was love of liberty of the kind Grotius had ascribed to the Batavians: it signified a refusal or inability to accept monarchical rule, and a yearning to rule the *patria* without being subjected to foreign dominion. José de Acosta argued in his *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (1590) that of all the native inhabitants of the Americas, the Chileans are the best example of a people that "do not suffer kings or absolute lords."[42] Alonso de Ovalle explained that this was the very reason the Mapuche had always resisted the Inca, for "they never wanted to

35 Ovalle, *Historica relacion*, 85–86 (quote).
36 Herrera, *Historia general*, vol. 8, 199.
37 Ibid., 197.
38 Laet, *Nieuwe wereldt*, 364. See also Schmidt, *Innocence Abroad*, 206.
39 Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. 1, 476.
40 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 9v. See also Tesillo, *Restauración del Estado de Arauco*, f. 3.
41 Salinas y Córdoba, *Crónica franciscana*, 1100.
42 José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ramon Anglés, 1894), 172.

admit a king from their own nation nor from another, because the love and regard for their own liberty always prevailed over reasons of state."[43]

This liberty-loving spirit provided excellent literary opportunities. The soldier-poet Alonso de Ercilla praised the brave "Araucanians" in moving verses that were often quoted by subsequent authors, including Diego de Rosales.[44] Ovalle even dramatically imagined the speech a Mapuche leader could have delivered before going to battle, to energize his comrades and remind them of what they held most dear:

> Are you not all sons and descendants of those brave captains and soldiers who won so many battles, risking and disregarding their lives for the defense of the same fatherland and liberty that we defend? [...] We all have to die, and in this equality in fortune there is no other advantage than that of a glorious death, for the beloved liberty of the fatherland, our children and descendants. Remember [...] that in your veins runs the blood you have inherited from those who have never allowed the shameful yoke of servitude to be placed on their necks.[45]

3 War or Peace?

The "Batavian" model was thus present in Spanish discourse both on the "first" and the "second Flanders" because of the identification of the Dutch as Batavians, and the established parallel between the Dutch and Chilean wars. In the Dutch imagination, the "special relationship" with the fellow-suffering Chileans came with a moral obligation and political motivation to seek an actual alliance, and in 1641, an expedition was mounted to establish contact with the people south of the River Biobio.[46] Although the expedition ended in failure and the alliance never materialized, Benjamin Schmidt has pointed out that the Araucanian reputation persisted in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth century. From the perspective of the Spanish, the Batavian frame was instrumental in situating these unfamiliar opponents, and explaining the difficulty in subduing them. For most authors who wrote about Chile these

43 Ovalle, *Historica relacion*, 85.

44 Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. I, 478.

45 Ovalle, *Historica relacion*, 87–88.

46 See Hendrik den Heijer, *Goud en indianen: het journaal van Hendrick Brouwers expeditie naar Chili in 1643* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2015); Benjamin Schmidt, "Exotic Allies: The Dutch-Chilean Encounter and the (Failed) Conquest of America," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (1999): 441–73.

concerns were not just theoretical: many were actively involved in the wars with the Mapuche. Alonso de Ercilla and Santiago de Tesillo were soldiers, Alonso de Ovalle worked as a missionary and Diego de Rosales spent years on the front line as an army chaplain. How did their ideas about the nature of this conflict and the enemy translate into opinions about if, or how, the war should be continued?

A parallel which contemporary authors did not tend to discuss is that both the war in the Netherlands and the Arauco War were interrupted by several stretches of peace and truce. Both in Flanders and in Chile, negotiations or parlamentos were frequently held parallel to the fighting. Many of these talks were unsuccessful, but some led to treaties such as the Twelve Years' Truce of 1609–21 in the Netherlands or the short-lived truce in Arauco in 1611. This meant that Spanish administrators, soldiers, and counsellors, including the chroniclers of the Arauco War, regularly reflected upon the potential harm or benefit of a truce, or debated the shape it should take. Diego de Rosales, for example, was present at peace talks with the Mapuche as a counsellor and interpreter around 1640.[47] An important argument in favor of a truce was that the cause of the Catholic faith might be better served in peacetime. Also during the war in Netherlands, theologians who acted as counsellors pointed out that, for the sake of the religion, the King should not allow a desperate military position to deteriorate. If the Spanish were to continue the war effort without being able to raise enough money to do this effectively, they ran the risk of also losing the provinces that were still obedient, and "the day we lose the loyal provinces, the Catholic religion will be lost in them."[48] In the case of Chile, especially the counsellors who were trained as theologians pleaded for a ceasefire, mostly because this would allow missionaries to act more effectively in Mapuche territory. Both in Flanders and Chile theologian-counsellors assured the king that accepting the continuation of some paganism or heresy was not incompatible with his duties regarding the Faith: doing his utmost for the Catholic cause would clear his conscience.[49]

The most frequently discussed concern and argument for a peaceful settlement in both wars was their long duration. What was the point in continuing if the experience of many years of warfare had yielded so little gain? Defending the 1607 armistice with the Dutch Republic, the soldier-banker Ambrogio

47 See the notes by Benjamin Vicuña Mackenna in Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. III, 159.

48 "Voto Obispo de Segovia," in Consulta Consejo de Estado, 1 August 1628, Archivo General de Simancas (AGS) Estado Leg. 2042, f. 97.

49 See also Diego de Rosales, *Historia general del reino de Chile, Flandes indiano*, vol. II, ed. Benjamin Mackenna (Valparaiso: Mercurio, 1878), 527.

Spinola declared that "considering that in 41 years of costly warfare we do not have any more than on the first day," a truce now seemed the more convenient solution.[50] In 1628, another counsellor observed about the Netherlands that "the experience of sixty years of warfare" had proved the war in Flanders to be so "lengthy, costly, bloody, and interminable" that the Spanish had "lost all hope of ending it by way of arms."[51] The reasoning and vocabulary applied to Chile is strikingly similar. According to Diego de Rosales, King Philip III's counsellors reasoned in 1611 that

> It is now seventy years that we have been fighting this war in one way or another and the royal coffers have been spared no cost, yet we see how little yield and how much damage there has been in the loss of many men and cities; and there is no prudent hope that with many more years and with many more men and with many more millions it will be brought to an end.[52]

It was only prudent to at least try another, more promising, approach, "and to abandon the one we have followed so far with little benefit and much damage."[53] Over three decades later, Diego de Salinas observed that the wars in Chile "have dragged on so much that they have lasted about a hundred years," and the result of all this investment and loss of life was that "the Indians have remained free and masters of the best lands in the Americas, and the Spanish have conquered no more than a disastrous graveyard for their lives."[54] These considerations were vital, because as Tesillo argued, "the examples of the past predict the events of the future: nothing can deceive us, because time is an honest counsellor."[55]

The idea of the nature of the Mapuche and the Dutch as rebels with a "Batavian" spirit was at the heart of considering ways to end both wars, in particular their great love of liberty and inability to suffer foreign rule. In the case of the Netherlands, according to Alvía de Castro, the conflict needed to be resolved as swiftly as possible, for "the Dutch will grow stronger every day" and "the more time is wasted discoursing about it, the more the Batavian liberty will corrupt

50 Summary of a letter from Spínola dated 19 May 1607, in Consulta Consejo de Estado, 6 June 1607, AGS Estado Leg. 2138, f. 73.

51 "Voto Don Fernando de Girón," in Consulta Consejo de Estado, 1 August 1628, AGS Estado Leg. 2042, f. 97.

52 Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. II, 523.

53 Ibid., 524. See also 527.

54 Salinas y Córdoba, *Crónica franciscana*, 1100.

55 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 11v.

them, and their extravagances and powers will grow, as Tacitus observes."[56] As we have seen, many authors believed that the nature of a people was closely connected to the land they inhabited, and was therefore considered unlikely to change. This had serious consequences for the hopes of ever ending these rebellions. "Neither the climate of a land, nor the nature of its inhabitants ever change," observed the third Duke of Lerma in 1635, and because the Dutch were treacherous and liberty-loving, the Spanish should seriously doubt "the utility of this war."[57] The love of liberty was perhaps even greater in the Mapuche, who had been fighting for their freedom since long before the arrival of the Spanish. If the chief objective of a society was to maintain their own liberty, and if liberty was understood as having no permanent head of state and least of all a king, how could the Spanish ever hope to keep the Mapuche subjected to royal authority? In the words of Diego de Rosales:

> Because they have not been subjected in the sixty years of warfare that happened before nor in the sixty years of warfare that happened next, they will not subject themselves for many centuries [...], because the Indians are warlike, [...] they are offended by the Spanish and they do not forget their grievances. They fight for liberty and for their homeland, and they have more to gain by war than by peace, because with war they keep themselves free, masters of their own lands, without servitude nor subjection, and they have none who harm them. And so by way of war they will never be subjected.[58]

4 Conclusion

As Wyger Velema has demonstrated throughout his oeuvre, ancient models were crucial for early modern republican writers to help clarify and legitimate the republican form of government in a world where they were surrounded by much larger monarchies.[59] For the Dutch Republic, the Batavian model naturally figured as the local variant of an ancient republican past. The ideal of Batavian liberty and virtue persisted well into the eighteenth century

56 Alvía de Castro, "Oraciones y discursos," f. 41 and 41v.

57 "Voto del Duque de Lerma sobre la tregua con Holanda," 2 October 1635, AGS Estado Leg. 2050, f. 87.

58 Rosales, *Historia general*, vol. II, 618.

59 See Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn, "Introduction: Classical Republicanism and Ancient Republican Models," in *Ancient Models in the Early Modern Republican Imagination*, ed. by Wyger Velema and Arthur Weststeijn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 7–8, 13.

and culminated in Patriot republican writing, even though contemporaries increasingly started to point out the anachronisms of championing the "savage" Batavians as a model of orderly democracy and virtuous citizen militia.[60] This chapter has provided a first exploration of the presence of classical republican models in the seventeenth-century conflict and interaction between the Dutch, Spanish, and Mapuche. Evidence strongly suggests that in the patchwork of rhetorical connections, the model of Batavian liberty is a leading and unifying theme. This classical frame can thus be added to the considerable number of parallels between the Arauco War and the Dutch Revolt, noted by contemporary authors but less frequently by present-day scholars.

In Spanish discourse the Batavian myth was inverted and adjusted, and it helped frame rebellions in the Spanish empire on both sides of the Atlantic. Here it inevitably touched on questions about the nature of liberty and its relationship to monarchy. Santiago de Tesillo hinted at this when he suggested that as far as he was concerned, true liberty was possible only in the next life, and man could attain it exclusively by practicing prudence, justice, and obedience to God and the king.[61] This was directly opposite to the Dutch and Mapuche conception of liberty, which emphasized self-rule and rejected foreign dominion as a form of slavery. Both by Spanish authors and by the Dutch themselves, the ancient Batavian nation as well as the contemporary Mapuche were represented as self-governing in the purest form: they were ruled by a general assembly of armed men, upon whom the elected leader was never allowed to impose his will and act like a monarch.[62] This emphasis resonates with what Quentin Skinner has characterized as neo-Roman republicanism, which depended on a Roman distinction between liberty and slavery and emphasized a nation's capacity for self-government.[63]

It should not surprise us that the Dutch projected a Batavian variant of neo-Roman republicanism on the native Chileans, as self-ruling warriors threatened with subjection to the slavery of the Spanish monarchy. The sense of shared identity derived from the ancient past underlined the idea of a natural alliance and strengthened the claim to potentially lucrative ties. But why did writers in the monarchical tradition employ this neo-Roman republican vocabulary when reflecting on the Dutch and the Mapuche, and thus appear

60 Wyger Velema, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac (1721–1796)* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 168.

61 Tesillo, *Epítome chileno*, f. 15v.

62 Eco Haitsma Mulier, "De Bataafse mythe opnieuw bekeken," *BMGN-Low Countries Historical Review* 111, no. 3 (1996): 355, 359–63.

63 Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018 [1998]), 25–32.

to willingly adopt the role of the Roman antagonist? The Chilean case implies that Spanish authors acknowledged and incorporated, but did not necessarily appreciate neo-Roman republican principles. Compared with the rational, civilized, and Christian monarchy which the Spanish empire embodied, republican self-rule was considered chaotic, barbaric, and ultimately ineffective. Many authors in fact believed that in the Netherlands, self-governance would ultimately descend into chaos. This led Justus Lipsius in 1595 to argue in favor of seeking a truce with the Dutch Republic in an open letter to the king of Spain: once bereft of an external enemy, Lipsius predicted, the liberty-loving Dutch would fall out amongst themselves and soon be ready for re-incorporation into the imperial fold.[64] Especially across the Atlantic, Christian monarchy was considered a powerful civilizing force, which would bring true and civilized liberty to the brave yet primitive warriors on the fringes of empire.

The case of Chile as "*Flandes indiano*" speaks to a broader tradition within imperial political discourse of comparing European conflicts to colonial ones. A prominent example is the analogy established after 1793 between the French war in the Vendée and the slave revolution in Saint-Domingue. Not only did the Vendée exert a lasting influence over the contemporaneous understanding of colonial events but, over time, the analogy also came to have concrete impact on French strategies for "pacifying" the Haitian Revolution.[65] In the case of the deliberations of Spanish agents who were involved in both the Arauco War and the war in the Netherlands, the Batavian model helped shape arguments in favor of peace on both sides of the Atlantic. Although these debates engaged with principles of obedience, conscience, and religion, reasoning was deeply pragmatic. If logic dictates that people with such an indomitable and liberty-loving character can never be subjected, what is the use in trying? In the end, the gloomiest of the Spanish predictions turned out to be correct. The peace treaty of Münster acknowledged the Dutch Republic to be a free and independent state, and the Araucanía was never durably pacified. Thus from the perspective of the Spanish empire, imagining the Mapuche as "Batavians of the New World" might have explained the nature and tenacity of their "rebellion," but the analogy did not appear to yield any solutions towards winning the war. Rather, it provided arguments that helped accept defeat.

64 Nicolette Mout, "Justus Lipsius Between War and Peace. His Public Letter on Spanish Foreign Policy and the Respective Merits of War, Peace or Truce (1595)," in *Public Opinion and Changing Identities in the Early Modern Netherlands: Essays in Honour of Alastair Duke*, ed. by Judith Pollmann and Andrew Spicer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 141–62.

65 See Malick W. Ghachem, "The Colonial Vendée," in *The World of the Haitian Revolution*, ed. by David Patrick Geggus and Norman Fiering (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 158–59.

CHAPTER 11

Reshaping the Republican Ritual: The Entry of the Procurators of St Mark in Early Modern Venice

Alessandro Metlica

The Venetian republican tradition stands out in the early modern European context in terms of both politics and culture. Besides inspiring a sophisticated, multi-layered oligarchical government, in which power was distributed among a multitude of short-time offices and institutions, in Venice republicanism nourished what has been called the "myth" of the Serenissima: a system of symbols, or "an accumulation of inherited beliefs and meanings,"[1] offering a self-portrait of the ruling elite, the Venetian patriciate.[2] A city blessed by God and protected by St Mark, whose body was brought to the Lagoon in 828, Venice boasted of having enjoyed undisputed liberty since its foundation. This claim became even more distinctive in the sixteenth century, in a Europe dominated by kingdoms and empires. Works like Gasparo Contarini's *De magistratibus et republica venetorum* (1543) and Donato Giannotti's *La republica de' Viniziani* (1540), which were widely read throughout Europe, consciously built the "myth" of a unique republican constitution, guaranteeing the perfect balance between monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The "myth" famously led John Pocock to speak, with regard to Contarini's model, of a "mechanisation of virtue": in a state regulated so severely by accurate laws, ethics and politics seem to transform in a clockwork device.[3]

1 Ian Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 325.

2 The "myth" of Venice is a much-debated topic. For a comprehensive overview, see Elizabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venise triomphante. Les horizons d'un mythe* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1999) and the essays included in John J. Martin and Dennis Romano (eds.), *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297–1797* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). For the imagery displaying the "myth," see David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and Giorgio Tagliaferro, "Le forme della Vergine. La personificazione di Venezia nel processo creativo di Paolo Veronese," *Venezia Cinquecento* 30 (2005): 5–158.

3 See John G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975) and, more recently, the chapter by Vittorio Conti, "The Mechanisation of Virtue: Republican Rituals in Italian Political Thought in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in *Republicanism: A Shared*

Civic ritual played a substantial part within the "myth" of Venice.[4] The sovereign authority of the republic was staged through a series of highly codified performances, following a tight agenda that combined secular and liturgical events. Processions held to mark a religious occurrence, festivities celebrating a key historical date, receptions welcoming foreign guests, elections, popular games, and regattas helped to visualize the power of the state and republican ideology. During the solemn parades that crossed St Mark's Square, for example, the symbols of Venetian power and independence (the *trionfi dogali*) were exhibited, including the sword, the banners, and the umbrella granted by Pope Alexander III in 1177.[5] These processions pivoted on the figure of the doge, the "prince" of the republic and the chief character in most ceremonial displays. It should be noted that in early modern times the *dogado* was a mostly representative office, for it was subject to strict limitations: the doge had little political autonomy, could not manage freely his own property, and even needed the permission of the Senate to leave Palazzo Ducale. While performing civic rituals, however, his role remained fundamental, because his body came to personify the body politic of the republic, i.e. the patriciate as a whole. For instance, on the Feast of the Ascension (*Sensa*) the doge sailed out to the open sea and symbolically married the Adriatic by dropping a golden ring into the water. He thus claimed the maritime supremacy of Venice.[6]

Both the "myth" of Venice and its civic ritual have been widely studied. Yet, a major issue arises when considering the existing literature. Scholars have focused almost exclusively on the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, i.e. the centuries when the power of Venice was at its peak. Even if the Republic was fully independent until 1797, when it fell at the hands of Bonaparte, no comprehensive analysis has been dedicated to Venetian civic ritual with regard to the last two hundred years of the Serenissima.[7] The reasons for this

European Heritage, ed. by Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73–84.

4 See Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Matteo Casini, *I gesti del principe. La festa politica a Firenze e Venezia in età rinascimentale* (Venice: Marsilio, 1996); L. Urban, *Processioni e feste dogali. Venetia est mundus* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1998).

5 See Francesca Ambrosini, "Cerimonie, feste, lusso," in *Storia di Venezia dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, XII vols. (Rome: Treccani, 1991–2002), vol. V, *Il Rinascimento: società ed economia*, ed. by Alberto Tenenti and Ugo Tucci (1996), 441–520.

6 See Evelyn Korsch, "Renaissance Venice and the Sacred-Political Connotations of Waterborne Pageants," in *Waterborne Pageants and Festivities in the Renaissance*, ed. by Margaret Shewring and Linda Briggs (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 79–97.

7 The only remarkable exception, as far as civic ritual is concerned, is Matteo Casini, "Cerimoniali," in *Storia di Venezia*, vol. VII, *La Venezia barocca*, ed. by Gino Benzoni and Gaetano Cozzi (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1997), 107–60.

gap in the literature are manifold. On the one hand, this is due to a broader critical paradigm, assuming a "decline" or a "repudiation" of ritual in early seventeenth-century Europe. From this period onwards, social and cultural transformations would erode the value of both religious and profane ceremonies, making civic ritual politically uninfluential as part of a wider process of secularization.[8] On the other hand, as regards the Republic of Venice in particular, most scholars argue that the Serenissima itself would "decline" throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. During this endless decadence, "the Venetian elite carefully adjusted the rhetoric of the myth so that it remained effective,"[9] but never altered or modified it. According to these studies, then, the patriciate simply preserved the tradition of the "myth," as if any major change made to this symbolic capital was unbearable.

This chapter aims to challenge this thesis by questioning the idea of a "ceremonial city" frozen for two centuries in its Renaissance etiquette. I assume, on the contrary, that there was a metamorphosis in seventeenth-century Venetian pageantry and encomiastic production, and I argue that this new representation of power hinged on a new social basis. Indeed, this shift is primarily due to the power relationships within the patriciate, which radically changed after the end of the Renaissance. The economic and political crisis affecting Venice in the seventeenth century, culminating in the Ottoman-Venetian wars of Candia (Crete, 1645–69) and Morea (the Peloponnese, 1684–99, 1714–18), exacerbated the contrasts between rich and poor noblemen. Although nominally equal in rights and power, the two parties had increasingly different prerogatives, depending on the private fortune of their houses (*casate*).[10]

This process deeply affected the "myth" of Venice. According to the "myth," the patriciate was an estate without internal contrasts, whose decisions were unanimous and highly coherent. Even Pocock's idea of a "mechanisation of virtue" in early modern Venice comes from this political tradition. Starting in the 1630s, however, the most wealthy and powerful patricians openly challenged this vision, as they claimed an unprecedented protagonism both in politics and culture, from poetry to architecture. Several collections of eulogies were printed, glorifying this or that patrician with words and metaphors foreign to the republican tradition, and churches arose with façades adorned by the

8 See Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 331.

10 See Gaetano Cozzi, "Dalla riscoperta della pace all'inestinguibile sogno di dominio," in *Storia di Venezia*, *La Venezia barocca*, 3–104; and Guido Candiani, "Conflitti d'intenti e di ragioni politiche, di ambizioni e di interessi nel patriziato veneto durante la guerra di Candia," *Studi veneziani* 36 (2008): 145–275.

portraits of the patrons in place of angels and saints.[11] Sculptures portraying statesmen and captains of the Serenissima, which were quite rare before the 1620s, now appeared in squares, churches, and private palaces.[12] A good example are the images of sea captains, whose role stood out during the Candia and Morea wars.[13]

Civic ritual also played a key part in the process, as this chapter shows. By way of example, I examine a ceremony that, despite being neglected in the literature so far, was central in seventeenth-century Venice: the entry of the procurators of St Mark.[14] My analysis takes into consideration the texts printed when a *procuratore* was elected and focuses on the festival books describing the performance of the ritual. These texts were built to mirror the novel forms of the ceremony, to "represent" the entry in the sense of "presenting it again" and even "re-creating it,"[15] and, of course, to honor the procurator himself. In doing so, they pursued a form of individual celebration that was unparalleled, at least to this extent, in the republican tradition.

1 The Procurators' Election: Ritual, Ceremony, and Literature

In a letter sent on September 17, 1732 to Francesco Maria Zanotti, his dear friend and former teacher at the University of Bologna, the Venetian poet and philosopher Francesco Algarotti (1712–64) bitterly complains about the situation of contemporary poetry. In order to comply with social standards, writes

11 On seventeenth-century church façades, see Martin Gaier, *Facciate sacre a scopo profano. Venezia e la politica dei monumenti dal Quattrocento al Settecento* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2002); and Massimo Favilla and Ruggero Rugolo, "Frammenti della Venezia barocca," *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* 163 (2004–05), 47–138.

12 Matteo Casini, "Some Thoughts on the Social and Political Culture of Baroque Venice," in *Braudel Revisited: The Mediterranean World 1600–1800*, ed. by Geoffrey Symcox, Teofilo Ruiz, and Gabriel Piterberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 180.

13 Matteo Casini, "Immagini dei capitani generali," in *Il "Perfetto Capitano". Immagini e realtà (secoli XV–XVII)* ed. by Marcello Fantoni (Rome: Bulzoni, 2001), 219–70.

14 The best essays on the topic are Reinhold C. Mueller, "The Procurators of San Marco in the 13th and 14th Centuries: A Study of the Office as a Financial and Trust Institution," *Studi veneziani* 13 (1971): 105–220; and David S. Chambers, "Merit and Money: The Procurators of St Mark and their *Commissioni*, 1443–1605," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 60 (1997): 23–88. However, these two studies do not consider the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See also the recent contribution by Maartje van Gelder, "The People's Prince: Popular Politics in Early Modern Venice," *The Journal of Modern History* 90 (2018): 249–91.

15 See Benoit Bolduc, *La Fête imprimée. Spectacles et cérémonies politiques (1549–1662)* (Paris: Garnier, 2016), 9–40.

Algarotti, poets have to celebrate in their works all kinds of public events. For instance, he and Zanotti have been asked to compose laudatory verses for a young noblewoman forced to become a nun, and to praise a patron whose name and face they do not know.[16] It can get even worse, Algarotti continues.

> What could be more ridiculous than this flow and this incredible dysentery of sonnets and of any other kind of poems, which we have seen pouring into Venice these days for this new procurator?[17]

Here the target of Algarotti's sharp criticism is clear, for he refers to the recent election (June 5, 1732) of Carlo Pisani as procurator of St Mark. The appointment of a new procurator was one of the most significant political events in Venice. As top-ranked magistrates in charge of the church, treasury, and legacies of St Mark's basilica, the *procuratori* held the most prestigious office in the Republic after that of doge. Just like the doge, and unlike all other Venetian offices, *procuratori* were appointed for life, and they entered the senate (*pregadi*) without the need of being re-elected annually. Most of the doges themselves were selected among the procurators.[18]

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the position of procurator was as relevant as ever. The office was created in the eleventh century, and over time had grown both in number – from two (1231) to nine members (1443) – and in power, for the *procuratori* had accumulated more responsibilities throughout the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries. Besides the upkeep of the basilica and the Piazza area, where they were entitled to private accommodations (the *procuratie*), procurators distributed alms, took care of orphans, executed wills, and administrated perpetual trusts made by private testators. As of 1319, such demanding tasks were distributed among the *procuratori* as follows. Three procurators *de supra Ecclesia* kept their duties related to St Mark's basilica; three procurators *de citra canale* ("from this side of the Grand Canal") retained financial functions in the *sestieri* of San Marco, Castello, and Cannaregio; and three procurators *de ultra* ("on the other side") performed the same job regarding the *sestieri* of Dorsoduro, Santa Croce, and San Polo. Their financial duties granted the *procuratori* a large influence over the Venetian

16 See Francesco Algarotti, *Opere*, vol. XI (Venice: Carlo Palese, 1794), 363–67.

17 Ibid., 364. "Ma qual più ridicola cosa che quel flusso e quella dissenteria incredibile di sonetti e d'ogni altra maniera di poesie, che si è veduta a questi dì sgorgare in Venezia per questo nuovo procuratore?". Translations are all mine.

18 See Peter Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 14.

economy and money markets, and even if the sway they exerted on politics was to some extent limited (for example, they did not take seats in the Maggior Consiglio after their election) they certainly were among the most powerful men of Venice.[19]

The *procuratori* played a major role within Venetian rituality as well. Since 1459, the ceremonial books outlined that four of them had to accompany the doge to all the solemn masses he attended away from St Mark's.[20] The most ritualized moment in their career was their election. The entry of a new member was accurately staged and performed, and gave rise to various celebrations throughout the city. When the news of the election broke, bells rang for three days in celebration. Drums and trumpets sounded in the streets, as the newly elected handed out wine, bread, and money near the *traghetti* (ferry stops) at his own expense. By night, churches and buildings were decorated with lamps, and there were fireworks in many parts of the city.[21] Then the actual entry was scheduled. This ceremony could be held a few days as well as several months after these public rejoicings, because procurators could be away from Venice as ambassadors at the time of their election. The performance was at once physical and symbolic: the day the *procuratore* officially started his office, he also received the keys to his new apartments on the Piazza. In other words, his "entry" into service matched his "entry" to the *procuratie* palace.

The entry took place as follows.[22] On the appointed day, friends and relatives picked up the newly elected procurator in front of his house, and took

19 A more detailed list of procurators' duties can be found in Chambers, "Merit and Money," 30–32.

20 Ibid., 31.

21 On these rejoicings, see Sabrina Minuzzi, *Il secolo di carta. Antonio Bosio artigiano di testi e immagini nella Venezia del Seicento* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2004), 29–33; and Paolo Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva. Il ritratto di rappresentanza nella Venezia del Settecento* (Verona: Cierre, 2009), 14–24.

22 The most exhaustive source is a letter by a Florentine courtier describing the entry of procurator Lorenzo Tiepolo in 1713: Giovan Battista Casotti, *Da Venezia nel 1713. Lettere a Carlo Tommaso Strozzi e al canonico Lorenzo Gianni* (Prato: Guasti, 1866), 7–11. Further information can be found in the contemporary treatises by Fulgenzio Manfredi, *Degnità procuratoria di San Marco di Venetia* (Venice: Domenico Nicolini, 1602); and Vincenzo Maria Coronelli, *Procuratori di San Marco, riguardevoli per dignità e merito nella Repubblica di Venezia, colla loro origine e cronologia* (Venice: n.p., 1705); as well as in the manuscript work by Giancarlo Sivos (BMV Ital 1978, which is an eighteenth-century copy of the 1587 original; see Chambers, "Merit and Money," 23). We can also lean on several accounts in the Venetian gazettes. The pages of the "Pallade Veneta" related to the entry of the procurators are indexed in the catalogue by Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 301–48. On this gazette, see Eléanor Selfridge-Field, *Pallade Veneta: Writings on music in Venetian society, 1650–1750* (Venice: Fondazione Levi, 1985).

him by boat to the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, near the Rialto, on the Grand Canal. The group landed here because of its proximity to the church of St Salvador, where a first solemn mass was celebrated, allowing the crowd to gather. Afterwards, the *procuratore* left St Salvador in an imposing procession, consisting of up to five or six hundred people and including servants and foreigners, musicians and soldiers, captains and knights from the *Terraferma* (the mainland of the Republic of Venice), as well as the other procurators and a large part of the Senate. Arranged in pairs, the cortège marched past the Mercerie (the street where the most refined shops in Venice were located), and paraded from the Rialto to St Mark's Square. Another mass, combining sacred and civic ritual, was celebrated in St Mark's basilica. The procurator stepped to the altar, swore a personal oath (*commissione*) written for the occasion, and left generous alms. Then he entered the ducal palace for his formal investiture in the presence of the doge. He delivered a brief oration to congratulate the Collegio; finally, he received a velvet purse containing the keys to the office. Those who had marched with him from St Salvador to St Mark's either received four *pani di zuccari* (Venetian sweets) as a gift or joined the banquet that ended the celebrations.

As the literary sources constantly stress, superb decorations adorned the ceremonial route, which was transfigured by ephemeral arches and structures bearing the coat-of-arms of the *procuratore's* family.[23] The *campo* of St Salvador was filled with priceless tapestries, and the surrounding streets and alleys, as well as the Rialto Bridge, were papered with festoons. Persian drapes hung from the windows, and several paintings, including allegorical compositions and portraits of the elected, were exhibited along the path taken by the procession. The shops on the Mercerie played a main role too, because the owners put their most polished items on display. Gems, pearls, mirrors, rare feathers, and precious fabrics were arranged to compose the procurator's crest. Sumptuous laceworks, decorated in gold and silver and bearing the procurator's name, were placed next to the engravings with his portrait, which many shops displayed in the window.

These ephemeral decorations included even literature. Like the engraved portraits of the procurator, printed sheets with sonnets and other eulogies hung on the walls or were distributed among the crowd attending the entry.

23 A good example is the festival book for the entry of procurator Girolamo Basadonna in 1682: Cristoforo Ivanovich, *Minerva al tavolino. Lettere diverse di proposta e risposta a varii personaggi, sparse d'alcuni componimenti in prosa e in verso. Concernenti per lo più alle vittorie della Lega contro il Turco sino questo anno. Parte seconda* (Venice: Nicolò Pezzana, 1688), 118–30.

Storekeepers on the Mercerie showcased such texts as if they were rare merchandise. This is the textual "dysentery" Algarotti talks about in his letter. In the *Lettere inglesi*, a satirical work of fiction that mockingly describes the Venetian society of the time, Saverio Bettinelli (1718–1808) subscribes to Algarotti's opinion in full.

> Especially in Venice, poetry seemed to be a curious craft, a new manufacture, a wool mill. […] Poets worked on them just like carpenters, painters, plasterers and machinists did; the only difference was their salary, which was the lowest of them all. […] I have seen eight different books of poems published for a single procurator of St Mark. They were printed with pomp and huge expense. I have not seen such luxurious prints for scientific and important works.[24]

2 The Expansion of the Ceremony in the Seventeenth Century

During the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was a key moment in the ritual agenda of the republic of Venice. As such, the event was widely celebrated both by ephemeral texts, like the leaflets despised by Algarotti and Bettinelli, and by longer, more refined works. In the thirty-five years of the Morea wars (1684–1718), this literary production was massive: a preliminary survey, far from exhaustive, numbers among the works singularly printed for the entry of a *procuratore* three festival books, four books of poetry, six orations, and eight panegyrics, beside the accounts in the gazettes. The publication rate seems even to increase over the eighteenth century.

But was this an actual tradition in the republic of Venice? Was the entry of the procurators a codified part of the civic ritual that largely contributed, during the sixteenth century, to the "myth" of the Serenissima? Was the role of typography always crucial in representing this passage of status? Printed sources tell a different story. Before the 1680s, books celebrating a single procurator were very rare. Moreover, the shift in terms of publications mirrors a

24 "Mi pareva la poesia, massimamente a Venezia, un curioso mestiere, una nuova manifattura, un lanifizio. […] I poeti vi lavoravano al pari de' falegnami, de' pittori, degli stuccatori e de' macchinisti, col solo divario che aveano paga più discreta di tutti gli altri. […] Otto diversi ne ho veduti [di libri] per un solo procurator di San Marco, e stampati con pompa e spesa grandissima. Maggior lusso di stampe non vidi in opere scientifiche ed importanti". See Saverio Bettinelli, *Versi sciolti* (Venice: Giovan Battista Pasquali, 1766), VIII–IX.

surprising difference in ritual. Indeed, throughout the sixteenth century, and at least until the 1630s, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was a much more modest affair. Not only had the performance less relevance, but even the route travelled by the procession was not the same.

To follow the evolution of the ceremony, we can turn to the famous work by Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare*. This sort of touristic guide *avant la lettre*, describing the most distinguished palaces, institutions, and festivities in Venice, was first published in 1581. Due to the huge success of the book, a couple of updated versions were published in the seventeenth century, adding to the original account subsequent events and new information. Thus, Sansovino's *Venetia* was reissued by Giovanni Stringa in 1604 and by Giustiniano Martinioni in 1663.

Sansovino's original from 1581 is very frequently quoted on the subject of the three-day rejoicings that followed the election of a *procuratore*. The short paragraph on the topic in *Venetia* was rewritten by Sivos (1587), Manfredi (1602), and even Molmenti (1892).[25] Nevertheless, Sansovino's account is not very detailed, especially because he does not mention the entry, which was the final part of the election process, and was surely the most important one from the 1630s onwards. In *Venetia* there is no record of it. Even the three-day rejoicings seem to be a marginal issue compared to the historical origins and duties of the office. As evidence of this, Sansovino deals with the procurators in book 7 (*Delle fabbriche publiche*, "On public palaces") rather than in book 10 (*De gli abiti, costumi e usi della città*, "On city clothes, customs, and habits"). Venetian rites and ceremonies, such as the spectacular festivals organized to welcome foreign kings and princes, are described in the latter, while the rejoicings for the procurators are briefly evoked in the first, when discussing the *procuratie* (the palace on the Piazza). Apparently, then, the entry of the procurators of St Mark was not a crucial matter in sixteenth-century Venice, as far as civic ritual was concerned. Testament to this are the pages that Sansovino devotes, precisely in book 10, to the festivities held after the battle of Lepanto (1571):[26] the Rialto splendidly papered and covered with precious textiles, the paintings hanging on the Mercerie, the goods exhibited by the storekeepers clearly point to the future ritual, but the entry of the procurators has nothing to do with it yet.

This does not mean that the ceremony of the entry did not exist at all. The reedition of *Venetia* edited by Stringa (1604) actually feels compelled to fill the

25 See Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta in XIIII libri* (Venice: Giacomo Sansovino, 1581), 108r; and Pompeo Molmenti, "I Procuratori di San Marco," in *Studi e ricerche di Storia e d'Arte* (Turin and Rome: Roux, 1892), 62.

26 See Sansovino, *Venetia*, 158rv–159r.

gap, by adding a description of the procession as it was performed in Sansovino's times.[27] However, the event looks quite different from the one reported a century later. Firstly, the order of magnitude is different. About three hundred people (and not five or six hundred) attended the procession; at the end two (and not four) *pani di zucchero* were given. Secondly, the ceremonial route was not only sensibly shorter, but also, and more importantly, radically dissimilar, for the parade started from the church of St Moisè instead of from St Salvador, and it did not include the Mercerie. During the sixteenth century, the Mercerie were already the most famous streets in Venice, and many cardinals and ambassadors explicitly asked the Venetian authorities to visit the shops, which were at the heart of the European luxury market.[28] Still, the street had a secondary role in the framework of civic ritual, for the axis St Salvador – St Mark's (although it could be used, as in 1571) was less travelled than the one of St Moisè – St Mark's. As this route was a more direct way with less shops on it, it can be assumed that at the time neither the profusion of ephemeral decorations nor the exhibition of luxurious goods were deemed mandatory to execute a ritual like the entry of the procurators of St Mark.

Most of the literature, assuming that the procession had always left from St Salvador, has not noticed the change of route.[29] Yet, this is clearly indicated in the third and last reedition of *Venetia* (1663), in which Martinioni adds a new paragraph, explaining that senators and procurators "do not gather anymore in the church of St Moisè, as Stringa said, but in the church of St Salvador."[30] We can assign a more accurate date to the substitution, which happened shortly after the plague of 1630–31. Indeed, the first document attesting that St Salvador was papered for the entry of a procurator dates back to the election of Francesco Molin in 1634.[31] The new itinerary was quickly codified, and in 1641, when Giovanni Pesaro was elected, the first festival book entirely devoted to the entry of a *procuratore* appeared, describing in detail the arrangements on

27 See Francesco Sansovino and Giovanni Stringa, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta già in XIIII libri* [...] *et hora con molta diligenza corretta, emendata e più d'un terzo di cose nuove ampliata* (Venice: Altobello Salicato, 1604), 211r–213r.

28 Filippo De Vivo, "Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Mobilizing the Early Modern City," *I Tatti Studies* 19 (2016): 125.

29 See for example Ambrosini, "Cerimonie, feste, lusso," 450.

30 Francesco Sansovino and Giustiniano Martinioni, *Venetia città nobilissima e singolare, descritta in XIIII libri.* [...] *Con aggiunta di tutte le cose notabili della stessa città fatte e occorse dall'anno 1580 sino al presente 1663* (Venice: Steffano Curti, 1663), 306.

31 See Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 19. Delorenzi quotes Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Archivio privato Correr, reg. 165, "Sumario delle spese fatte nell'occasione di procurator di San Marco dell'eccellentissimo signor Francesco Molino, creato adì XI genaro 1633 stil veneto."

the Mercerie.[32] A few years later, an exceptional witness like Francesco Pannocchieschi d'Elci, the nephew of the then papal nuncio Scipione, stated that the entry of the procurators of St Mark was "the most relevant" (*la più rilevante di tutte*) among the lavish festivities that struck him when he was in Venice in the wake of his uncle (1647–52).[33] In the span of two decades, the ritual had undergone a sea change: it not only transformed in forms and locations, but also expanded, in terms of both performance and writing.

3 Luxury between the Republic and the Family

The expansion of the ceremony of the entry in the central decades of the seventeenth century is alien to the "myth" of Venice and to the image of the Venetian patriciate as a concordant and communal body politic. Instead, it seems to be connected with a new individualism, which targeted magnificence as means for a celebration of either self or family (*casata*). The massive expenditures staged on the Mercerie aimed to project the exceptional status of the few houses that could afford such spectacle. In this respect, it should be noted that in the period considered a very rich man could also buy his access to the college of procurators. While there were only nine *procuratori* "by merit" (*per merito*), since 1516 additional positions were on sale for twenty thousand ducats. The sale of the office was an exceptional measure to finance the state treasury; hence, it was not done regularly. Nevertheless, the rising costs for the wars of Candia and Morea persuaded the Senate to adopt this measure on several occasions, so that respectively forty-one (1645–69) and twenty-four (1684–1703) procurators "by means" (*per mezzi*) were elected.[34]

The measure echoed the one taken in 1646, which was even more radical. For the first time after the *serrata* (lockout) of 1297, the patriciate welcomed into its ranks some new families, as long as they could pay an enormous amount of money (one hundred thousand ducats). This policy called into question the balance between economic and political power, and gave rise to tensions within the patriciate.[35] As regards the entry of the procurators, such tensions

32 Domenico Vincenti, *Gli apparati veneti, overo le feste fatte nell'elezione in procuratore dell'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Giovanni da Pesaro cavalier* (Venice: Pietro Miloco, 1641).

33 Francesco Pannocchieschi D'Elci, "Relazione sulle cose di Venezia," in *Curiosità di storia veneziana*, ed. by Pompeo Molmenti (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1919), 315.

34 For a complete list see Coronelli, *Procuratori di San Marco*, 196–202. See also Pannocchieschi, "Relazione," 313–14.

35 See Roberto Sabbadini, *L'acquisto della tradizione. Tradizione aristocratica e nuova nobiltà a Venezia* (*secc. XVII–XVIII*) (Udine: Gaspari, 1995); Dorit Raines, *L'invention du mythe*

emerged from the sumptuary laws promulgated by the competent authorities, the *provveditori alle pompe*.[36] On April 10, 1683, a petition was addressed to the Signoria, denouncing the luxurious decorations on the Mercerie as detrimental to republican values. The report filed by the *provveditori* convinced the Senate and the Maggior Consiglio to propose a law in this regard, which was voted on June 16 and July 4, respectively. The law aimed at making the entry of the procurators more sober: the fleets of boats escorting the elected to the Fondaco, as well as the public fanfares and the portraits hanging on the Mercerie, were formally forbidden. The *provveditori* reiterated the prohibition seven times between 1687 and 1692.[37]

This legal process, however, did not entail major consequences. Actually, the most lavish entries date precisely to these years, as shown by the encomiastic literature proliferating in the 1680s. According to the festival book by Michelangelo Mariani (1624–96), four huge portraits of procurator Leonardo Donà were put on a display during his entry in 1688, in spite of the 1683 interdiction. The first painting, portraying the *procuratore* on horseback, hung in *campo* St Bartolomeo, at the beginning of the ceremonial route; the second was at the end of the Mercerie, on the back of St Mark's clock tower; the third, an oval painting, hung in the Piazza; and the fourth, which was even bigger than the others, stood over the entrance to the *procuratie*.[38] Even the purchase of the office could become a source of literary pride: the title of a booklet printed in 1690 for procurator Sebastiano Soranzo (*L'oro divenuto più glorioso del merito*, "The gold made more glorious than the merit") confirms that seventeenth-century wit did not flinch from such a paradoxical *topos*.[39] More generally, all these texts are hyperbolic, both in terms of quantity (there are many texts, and they are often long-winded) and quality, for their pages constantly move towards figures of augmentation such as anaphora and iteration. Authors increase their rhetorical devices, multiplying the metaphors and the classical *exempla* to reflect (to represent) the luxury of the performance.

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aristocratique. L'image de soi du patriciat vénitien au temps de la Sérénissime (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere e Arti, 2006).

36 On these magistrates, see Giulio Bistort, *Il magistrato alle pompe nella Republica di Venezia. Studio storico* (Venice: n.p., 1912).

37 I would like to thank Dr. Giovanni Florio, who checked the original documents in the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni, Registri, Registro 42, cc. 260r-261r and Provveditori alle Pompe, b. 2 e b. 3.

38 Michelangelo Mariani, *L'ingresso trionfale dell'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Leonardo Donato procurator meritissimo di San Marco* (Venice: Pietro d'Orlandi, 1686).

39 Girolamo Frigimelica Roberti, *L'oro divenuto più glorioso del merito, nel farsi procurator di San Marco l'illustrissimo et eccellentissimo signor Sebastiano Soranzo* (Padua: Francesco Brigonci, 1690).

Such luxury was not intended to celebrate the Republic, nor the patriciate as a whole. A value that could not belong to the "myth" of Venice, splendor rather applies to a single procurator or to his house. A good example of this rhetorical scheme, which breaks ties with sixteenth-century republican imagery, are the *Apparati veneti* published by Domenico Vincenti in 1641. Before narrating the entry of Giovanni Pesaro, as well as the rejoicings that accompanied the main event (pages 31–53), Vincenti outlines the procurator's career in what looks like a short political treatise (5–31). Indeed, as professed at the beginning of the book, the topic should be the virtuous relationship between republican values and elective offices, for holding the office of procurator, in the Serenissima, is the reward for "a life lived heroically, working hard for the common good."[40] According to republican ideology, Pesaro does not owe his success to his noble descent, but only to his merits; the Venetian institutions, working fairly and equitably as usual, have simply recognized them. Later in the text, however, this idea is spelled out in a quite equivocal way. Indeed, Vincenti argues, Pesaro could have boasted about his "blood" (*sangue*), because his family is one of the most wealthy and powerful of Venice, but he did not. Now, the whole passage is a counterfactual conditional, built on a strong anaphora (*poteva*, "he could have," which is repeated four times). So, the hypothesis to be discarded (that is to say, Pesaro "bragging about a family that has always been a site of magnificence, a school of religion, a remarkable scene of royal greatness and an ever-shining glory of its Republic"[41]) is actually discussed in details, and allows Vincenti to write a four-page encomium of house of Pesaro (8–11).

4 Conclusion

After the end of the Renaissance, Venetian republican imagery and rhetoric radically changed, mirroring an evolving society. Both the economic context and the political arena were quite different from those of the sixteenth century; therefore, new laudatory strategies proved to be necessary to support government decisions and to glorify those responsible for them. The new importance accorded to public luxury was one of the consequences. Civic ritual was clearly affected, and festivals became even more lavish and spectacular, as shown by the paintings devoted to these events (another novelty from

40 "Una vita in continui sudori a publico beneficio heroicamente trascorsa," Domenico Vincenti, *Applausi veneti*, 6.

41 "Poteva gloriarsi di una Casata, che fu albergo di magnificenza, scuola di religione, teatro cospicuo di grandezza reale, splendor non mai ecclissato della sua Republica," Domenico Vincenti, *Applausi veneti*, 8.

the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries). The entry of the procurators of St Mark is a remarkable example of this process.

There is more, however, than a mere shift of scale. Indeed, this transformation primarily concerned the ways in which the body politic of the republic was represented. The "myth" of Venice depicted the patriciate as an estate regulated by clockwork mechanisms: all patricians were equal before the law, and only the doge was considered a *primus inter pares*. While welcoming a foreign ruler or performing a ritual procession, the doge did not act for himself nor for his house, but he rather embodied the whole patriciate (i.e. the Maggior Consiglio); for this reason, he was the only exception to the rule. Things gradually changed after the 1630s (and especially from the 1670s onwards), when several treatises spreading within the nobility, both prints and manuscripts, openly contested the "myth."[42] These texts criticized the wide-ranging influence exerted on Venetian politics by a few prominent *casate*, and countered the countless literary (poems, orations) and artistic (portraits, monuments) works extolling the members of these houses. The "myth" of Venice simply could not bear the new protagonism of the *grandi*, whose princely celebration is no longer centered exclusively on the republican tradition.

It is perhaps going a bit too far to talk of a veritable "cult of personality," because these manifestations of pride normally included the whole *casata*. Even before the seventeenth century, the cult of ancestors was a widespread phenomenon in Venice, and almost every palace had family portraits hanging in the *portego*. In this respect, the *Applausi veneti* emphasized a rather common approach. Besides, as has been stressed, the lavish patronage of individuals was officially tolerated as a means to celebrate the whole Republic, even if the principles of such celebration radically changed.[43] However, there is no denying that a sort of hero worship, unprecedented in the republican iconography, raged in seventeenth-century Venice. Public luxury became a way of exhibiting private wealth and personal grandeur, and the celebration of the republican office of procurator served as a pretext to celebrate the men who held it. Thus, the simmering tension "between exaltation of the individual and the acceptance of the rules of an aristocratic community"[44] actually reshaped the representation of the patriciate. As the entry of the procurators of St Mark attests, civic ceremonies were no exception, for these opposing drives did reshape even the republican ritual.

42 On the "antimyth" of Venice, see Pietro Del Negro, "Forme e istituzioni del discorso politico veneziano," in *Storia della cultura veneta*, vol. IV, *Il Seicento*, ed. by Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1984), 420–21.

43 Delorenzi, *La galleria di Minerva*, 3–4.

44 Casini, "Some Thoughts," 195.

CHAPTER 12

Greek Political Models in the German Enlightenment Press

Hans Erich Bödeker

> Everybody has yet found in antiquity, what he wanted, or longed for, particularly himself.
>
> FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL, 1798

Around the middle of the eighteenth century, enthusiasm for antiquity inspired people all over Europe to associate their own times with the ancient world. The German Enlightenment stood out for its intense veneration of Greek culture, neglecting Roman culture to a large extent.[1] This distinct idealization of Greek antiquity, which brought about "The Tyranny of Greece over Germany,"[2] was initiated, as is well known, by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–68).[3] He broke with the prevailing reading of Roman-Greek antiquity as a unity and initiated the interpretation of a strict difference between Greece as a nation

1 Walther Rehm, *Griechentum und Goethezeit. Eine Geschichte eines Glaubens* (Leipzig: Die derichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1936); Volker Riedel, *Antikenrezeption in der deutschen Literatur vom Renaissance-Humanismus bis zur Gegenwart. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2000); Marlene Meurer, *Polarisierung der Antike. Antike und Abendland im Widerstreit – Modellierungen eines Kulturkonflikts im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2017).

2 Elizabeth M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935). See Samira J. Peacock, "Struggling with the Demon: Eliza M. Butler on Germany and Germans," *History of European Ideas* 22 (2000): 98–115.

3 Thomas W. Gaethgens, ed., *Johann Joachim Winckelmann 1717–1768* (Hamburg: Felix Meiners Verlag, 1986); Elisabeth Décultot, *Johann Joachim Winckelmann. Enquete sur la genèse de l'histoire de l'art* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002).

of culture and Rome as a purely political one.[4] The German attention to the legacies of Greek antiquity was predominantly conceived and manifested in the arts – painting, sculpture, and architecture as well as in literature. Greek art was consequently understood as a means for *Bildung*.

Winckelmann's paradigm has been convincingly interpreted as the mode of "discovering of one's peculiarity in otherness."[5] The Germans' enduring admiration for the Greeks has been extensively analyzed as the emergence of a "bourgeois individualization." Winckelmann's interpretation of the ancient statues as a promise of mastered passions, of shape and steadiness, of calm, naturalness, and estimable personal dignity, quite obviously offers an ideal formula for dealing with the anxieties arising from the process of individualization and modernization.[6] In this respect the Greek paradigm could be seen as the ferment of "bourgeois emancipation," since it enabled the educated classes to develop identity and self-consciousness.

This cultural mode of appropriation of Greek antiquity stood at the center of research until quite recently. The turn to Greek antiquity, however, was, on closer inspection, a political as well as an aesthetic turn.[7] In contrast to the still-prevailing interpretation, this chapter argues that the German appropriation of Greek antiquity should be considered an integral element of the emerging politicization of the German Enlightenment in the second half of the eighteenth century.[8] The press, which was undergoing significant change

4 Conrad Wiedemann, "Römische Staatsnation und griechische Kulturnation. Zum Paradigmawechsel zwischen Gottsched und Winckelmann," in *Deutsche Literatur in der Weltliteratur – Kulturnation statt politischer Nation? Akten des VII. Internationalen Germanisten Kongresses. Göttingen 1985* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1986), 173–78.

5 Conrad Wiedemann, "Deutsche Klassik und nationale Identität. Eine Revision der Sonderwegs-Frage," in *Klassik im Vergleich: Normativität und Historizität europäischer Klassiken. DFG-Symposium 1990,* ed. by Wilhelm Vosskamp (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1993), 541–69; Conrad Wiedemann, "Montesquieu, Hölderlin und der freie Gebrauch der Vaterländer. Eine französisch-deutsche Recherche," in *Nation als Stereotyp. Fremdwahrnehmung und Identität in deutscher und französischer Literatur*, ed. by Ruth Florack (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2000), 79–115.

6 Helmut Pfotenhauer, "Vorbilder. Antike Kunst, Klassizistische Kunstliteratur und Weimarer Klassik," in *Klassik im Vergleich*, ed. by Vosskamp, 42–62.

7 Kurt Wölfel, "Prophetische Erinnerung in der deutschen Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts als utopische Gesinnung," in *Utopieforschung. Interdisziplinäre Studien zur neuzeitlichen Utopie*, ed. by Wilhelm Vosskamp, vol. III (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1982), 191–217.

8 Hans Erich Bödeker, "Prozesse und Strukturen politischer Bewußtseinsbildung der deutschen Aufklärung," in *Aufklärung als Politisierung – Politisierung als Aufklärung*, ed. by Hans Erich Bödeker and Ulrich Herrmann (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 10–31.

and expansion in this period, was a distinct vehicle of this development.[9] In a range of journals the protagonists of the German Enlightenment began to discuss political issues by referring to Greek history.

In order to elaborate on this hitherto neglected political appropriation of Greece I will first address the emergence and the political importance of journals in the German Enlightenment. I will then investigate the multifarious interpretations of Greek history in these journals focusing on three dominant topics.[10] First, by referring to Lycurgus and Solon, eighteenth-century commentators debated the qualities required of a legislator who sought to found a new system of government. Second, in alluding to Athens, authors reflected on democracy as a political formation and its potential risks. Third, the radical phase of the French Revolution was increasingly interpreted as a revival of Sparta. By way of concluding I would like to bring to prominence the German Enlightenment's growing consciousness of the fundamental difference between antiquity and the present, as a result of which ancient Greece could no longer function as a political model. Since natural jurisprudence was the dominant political language the Enlightenment journalists used in interpreting Greek history and politics, this chapter rejects the approach of construing the detailed theoretical considerations of ancient Greek republics as manifestations of civic humanism.[11] These considerations tend to equate knowledge of Greek history and civic humanism as a political language, they greatly overestimate the meaning of political Aristotelianism in the late eighteenth century, and they fail to recognize that political liberty was not only a moment of civic humanism but also of natural jurisprudence.[12]

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9 Hans Erich Bödeker, "Zeitschriften und politische Öffentlichkeit. Zur Politisierung der deutschen Aufklärung in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts," in *Aufklärung/Lumières und Politik. Zur politischen Kultur der deutschen und französischen Aufklärung,* ed. by Hans Erich Bödeker and Etienne François (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1996), 209–31.

10 An indispensable source for my research has been the *Index Deutschsprachiger Zeitschriften. MDCCL–MDCCCXV* (*1750–1815*), ed. by Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen (Hildesheim: Olms, 1989).

11 Paul Nolte, "Bürgerideal, Gemeinde und Republik. 'Klassischer Republikanismus' im frühen deutschen Liberalismus," *Historische Zeitschrift* 254 (1992): 610–56; Brian Vick, "Of Basques, Greeks, and Germans: Liberalism, Nationalism and the Ancient Republican Tradition in the thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt," *Central European History* 40 (2007): 653–81.

12 Diethelm Klippel, *Politische Freiheit und Freiheitsrechte im deutschen Naturrecht des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1976); Hans Erich Bödeker, "The Concept of Republic in Eighteenth-Century German Thought," in *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States, 1750–1850*, ed. by Jürgen Heideking and James A. Henretta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 25–52.

1 German Enlightenment Press and the Formation of Public Opinion

Enlightenment thinkers who felt that the lack of a German capital city as a center of intellectual, cultural, and literary life was their greatest disadvantage compared to France or England clearly realized the significance of the press.[13] They considered this medium as necessary for creating a collective discourse throughout the Holy Roman Empire, which was characterized by territorial, social, and religious fragmentation. Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811), who, as an editor, bookseller, and author in Berlin, was one of the central proponents of Enlightenment, expressed a widely held opinion when he wrote in 1772: "In this our common fatherland, where literature is not confined to a single capital, literary contacts can only be maintained by written means and through printing […] For this reason, journals are much more important for literature in Germany than they are, for example, in England or France."[14]

The continued growth in the number of new journals in the German-speaking world, from 64 in the first decade of the eighteenth century to 1225 in the century's final decade, speaks for itself. Up to the middle of the century, journals were predominantly scholarly in nature. The Enlightenment gave rise to a specific type of journal, the moral weekly.[15] The 110 moral weeklies appearing between 1720 and 1770, like other German Enlightenment media, initially mostly deliberated on the emerging bourgeois world and engaged a broad literary public. The second half of the century was the age of the general magazine, which regaled readers with information on discoveries, inventions, nature, history, statistics, practical matters, and occasional medical advice.

The emerging body of literary journals also began to attach greater importance to political reports, indicating that the interest of the contemporary educated classes in public life was growing in the 1770s. This development is exemplified by the journal *Teutscher Merkur* (1773–1810).[16] In introducing this

13 Joachim Kirchner, *Das deutsche Zeischriftenwesen, seine Geschichte uns seine Probleme*, 11 vols. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1958–1962); *Von Almanach bis Zeitung. Ein Handbuch der Medien in Deutschland, 1700–1800*, ed. by Ernst Fischer, Wilhelm Haefs, York-Gothart Mix (München: C.H. Beck, 1999).

14 Friedrich Nicolai cited in Günther Ost, *Friedrich Nicolais Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* (Berlin: Emil Ebering, 1928), 7. See also *Friedrich Nikolai & die Berliner Aufklärung*, ed. by Rainer Falk and Alexander Kosenina (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2008). All translations of passages cited are my own.

15 Wolfgang Martens, *Die Botschaft der Tugend. Die Aufklärung im Spiegel der deutschen moralischen Wochenschriften* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1968).

16 "*Der Teutsche Merkur*" *– die erste deutsche Kulturzeitschrift?,* ed. by Andrea Heinz (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001).

publication, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813) promised to provide a summary of political events in each volume, marking the beginning of an entirely new program.[17] The two editors of the *Deutsche Museum* (1776–91) explicitly declared that they would lend the German Enlightenment society "a more overtly political voice."[18] In their argument they severed the German word "public" (*Publikum*) from its original literary connotations and used it instead in the sense of "public opinion."

Most important were the political and historical journals founded after the 1770s, which differed significantly in form and orientation from their forerunners.[19] Early eighteenth-century journals with baroque titles had focused their attention on the princely court; by the latter part of the century journals increasingly discussed issues such as progress in the economy, culture, and social emancipation. The new function of the press as an institution of public critical reflection can be identified in, inter alia, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's *Deutsche Chronik* (1774–93) and, in particular, August Ludwig Schlözer's *Briefwechsel* (1776–82) and *StatsAnzeigen* (1783–93). The poet and musician Schubart (1739–91) became an important journalist active in the southern parts of Germany while Schlözer (1735–1809), professor of politics and history at Göttingen, was without any doubt the most influential journalist of the German Enlightenment.

Between 1770 and 1790 approximately 35 journals and 50 newspapers extensively dealt with political topics and increasingly deliberated over Enlightenment concepts of state and society, including discussions on the sovereignty of the people, doctrines of social contract, and modes of representation. These political journals were among the most widely circulating organs of the Enlightenment press. For example, Schubart's *Deutsche Chronik* started out with a circulation of 1,600 copies in 1775, reached 2,400 by 1789, and 4,000 by 1791. The *Politisches Journal* (1781–1804) of Gottlob Benedikt von Schirach (1743–1804), who left his chair at the university of Helmstedt to start a career as a successful right-wing journalist, may have had a circulation of 8,000.[20]

This large readership confirmed the authority of the press and rendered it an institution that had to be taken seriously by princely courts. As a result,

17 *Deutscher Merkur* 1 (1773): viii.

18 Heinrich Christian Boie and Christian Wilhelm Dohm, *Deutsches Museum* 2 (1777): 4.

19 Margot Lindemann, *Deutsche Presse bis 1815* (Berlin: Colloquium, 1969), 188 ff; Hubert Max, *Wesen und Gestalt der politischen Zeitschrift. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des politischen Erziehungsprozesses des deutschen Volkes bis zu den Karlsbader Beschhlüssen* (Essen: Essener Verlagsanstalt, 1942); Heinz-Dieter Fischer, *Handbuch der politischen Presse in Deutschland* (Düsseldorf: Schwan, 1981).

20 Albert Ward, *Book Production, Fiction, and the German Reading Public, 1740–1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 81 f.

during the final decades of the eighteenth century, journals became the major stimulus behind societal debates. This development showed that educated citizens in German society fundamentally believed the decisions of princes to be susceptible to rational judgment. The educated strata cherished the hope that "public opinion" would have a direct moral and political impact, and expected to be able to exert pressure on their rulers. They wanted to have a say in affairs of state, and ultimately to be part of that state.

2 Lycurgus and Solon and the Purpose of the State

After the middle of the eighteenth century, the German educated classes increasingly took offense at the vested privileges and the outdated customs of the estate society. Pleading for legal, social, and economic reforms, they discussed the qualities of a legislator, since for them reforms were realized by laws, by endeavors settled by law or which have legal effects. To them any reform was a legal reform.[21]

Ancient political models played a significant role in these discussions from the 1750s on. German Enlightenment journalists demonstrated an aloofness concerning Rousseau's veneration of Lycurgus, the mythical Spartan legislator.[22] In a review essay from 1756, Thomas Abbt (1738–66) harshly criticized Lycurgus's legislation.[23] According to Abbt, Lycurgus arranged that a tiny patrician urban elite could live in equality and liberty to the detriment of an exploited and despised majority of the Spartan population. The dispossession and powerlessness of this majority guaranteed the privileges of the Spartan elite. Spartan society, Abbt argued, resembled to a large extent the medieval feudal social and political order. A small stratum of warriors formed the peak

21 Diethelm Klippel, "Legal Reforms: Changing the Law in Germany in the Ancien Regime and in the Vormärz," in *Reform in Great Britain and Germany 1750–1850,* ed. by Timothy C.W. Blanning and Peter Wende (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 43–59.

22 Barbara Bauer, "Der Gegensatz zwischen Sparta und Athen in der deutschen Literatur des 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts," in *Staatstheoretische Diskurse im Spiegel der Nationalliteraturen von 1500–1800,* ed. by Barbara Bauer and Wolfgang E. Müller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998), 42–94.

23 Thomas Abbt, "Drey hundert und zwanzigster Brief, " *Briefe die neueste Litteratur betreffend* 21 (1765): 93–144; Richard Thiele, "Thomas Abbts Anteil an den Briefen, die neueste Literatur betreffend. Eine literaturgeschichtliche Studie," in *Beiträge zur Deutschen Philologie. Julian Zacher dargereicht als Festgabe zum 28. October 1879* (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauese, 1880), 149–90; for the context see Hans Erich Bödeker, "Thomas Abbt: Patriot, Bürger und bürgerliches Bewußtsein," *in Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im Zeitalter der Aufklärung,* ed. by Rudolf Vierhaus (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1981), 221–53.

of Spartan social hierarchy, constantly exercising military skills, while a growing number of slaves worked for the maintenance of that elite. "To do nothing and to owe nothing" seemed to be the safeguard of the privileges of the Spartan elite of noble descent.[24] The equality among these privileged Spartans was upheld by the law that prohibited individual property and thus luxury. Sparta's civil laws were, according to Abbt, an offense against humanity. Lycurgus's "constitution [...] was established for 7 or 8,000 human beings and thus did wrong to the majority of mankind." A society organized as "a fortified camp" systematically underestimates, even suppresses, the personal interests of its members. In conclusion Abbt vehemently criticized the Spartans' neglect of the arts and sciences. The Spartan military state based on the exploitation of slaves meant a lack of any civilizing moments that could be achieved by trade and commerce.[25]

In 1773 and 1774 two issues of the *Hannoversches Magazin* expounded a detailed interpretation of Lycurgus's and Solon's legislation.[26] The constitutions they had founded were scrutinized from the point of view of establishing the principle of the separation of powers in order to prevent the state from being dominated by a single ruler or a small ruling elite while at the same time keeping in check the unpredictable power of the people. Lycurgus was depicted as a clumsy legislator because he had established a new political order neglecting human habits, which he had been able to do only by resorting to the use of excessive power. The anonymous author argued that Lycurgus had built the Spartan constitution on a *pia fraus* that served to keep the subjects in a paralyzing infancy. Like Abbt, he believed that Lycurgus's civil laws offended the prevailing rules of humanity. Since Lycurgus provided only for the "formation of the body" and totally neglected "the education of the mind,"[27] his constitution did not at all merit attention from posterity, since he prevented the Spartans from developing culturally. The longevity of Sparta's legislation was seen not as a proof of its appropriateness and universal adequacy but as a symbol of Spartan intellectual and cultural stagnation.

Whereas Lycurgus had established Sparta's distinct economic order (*spartanische Communionswirthschaft*) through land reform, Solon had provided for the "security of private property" in Athens.[28] He had regarded protection of

24 Abbt, "Drey hundert und zwanzigster Brief," 117.

25 Ibid., 132 ff.

26 "Erinnerungen über die Gesetze des Lykurgus," *Hannoversches Magazin* 100.–102. Stück (1773): 1586–1622; "Von dem Solon und seinen Gesetzen," *Hannoversches Magazin* 9.–12. Stück (1774): 130–186.

27 "Erinnerungen über die Gesetze des Lykurgus," 1593–94.

28 "Von dem Solon und seinen Gesetzen," 183.

property as one of the principal tasks of the state. Solon could therefore serve as a model of a politician who reconciled the distinct interests of the individual citizens, unlike contemporary politicians who were estranged from the needs of their subjects. He represented the different traits of "the hero, the patriot, the statesman, the soldier, the scholar, the judge of human character, the honest man, the delicate father, the warm-hearted friend, the prudent housekeeper." The Athenians rightly venerated Solon as the founder of "democratic institutions." After having expelled Peisistratos, the Athenians, by sticking to Solon's laws, provoked the "envy of their neighbors and the admiration of more distant peoples."[29] Solon's liberal laws, later adopted by the Romans, belonged, the author argued, to the European heritage of a democratic order.

Deeply interested in the legislators' room for maneuver at the threshold of establishing a new political order, Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) also compared Solon and Lycurgus.[30] In an essay published in 1790 in the journal *Thalia*, which he edited, Schiller examined to what extent the legendary legislators had met the requirements of being responsible for and to the people, of taking into account the commonwealth, and of avoiding arrogating power to themselves. He considered the question whether these mythical legislators had succeeded in educating the people in political maturity and responsibility as the touchstone of assessing the quality of their leadership. The value of their accomplishments could not be assessed by looking at the longevity of the laws they had passed or at the socio-political order they had established, but by considering the extent to which every citizen felt responsible for the commonwealth.

According to Schiller, Lycurgus's constitution that put all citizens under the state's command could be interpreted as a political masterpiece when it was viewed in its own terms. His mixed constitution that intertwined monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements had successfully met both the interior and the exterior threats to the state. However, the very moment "one confronts the aim that Lycurgus had in mind with the purpose of mankind, sophisticated criticism should replace admiration." Lycurgus had subscribed to the dangerous doctrine of conceiving of human beings as means and not as ends in themselves. He thus made the mistake of raising the state to an end in itself instead

29 Ibid., 185.

30 Friedrich Schiller, "Die Gesetzgebung des Lykurgus und Solon," *Thalia* 3.1 (1790–91): 30–82, cited after Friedrich Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. IV, ed. by Gerhard Fricke and Herbert G. Göpfert (München: Carl Hanser, 1989), 808–36. See Alexander Schmidt, "The Liberty of the Ancients? Friedrich Schiller and Aesthetic Republicanism," *History of Political Thought* 30 (2009): 286–314.

of making it the means to provide for its inhabitants. Everything could be sacrificed for the good of the commonwealth, Schiller argued, except the human being. "The state as an end in itself is, however, only important as a provision in order to realize the purpose of mankind. The state never ever is the end in itself; it is only important being a condition, under which the purpose of the mankind can be realized." For Schiller this purpose was nothing less than "the formation of all the strengths of the human being, [...] an evolution of the mind."[31] Lycurgus's law paralyzed the "spirit of the people" and did not reckon with their ability to improve.

Solon's constitution, Schiller argued, was based on totally different principles than that of Lycurgus, since "the state" served "the human being": Solon understood that "laws are given only to serve formation (*Bildung*)," and that styles of leadership should differ according to their emulation. Laws, thus, should accommodate to the civilizing process. For Schiller, the "Athenian legislator unlocked all possibilities for the imaginative power and the diligence of all Athenian citizens [...] Therefore in Athens all virtues ripened, all trades and arts flourished, diligence awoke, and thus all fields of knowledge were cultivated." At the same time, however, "shameless ingratitude to its outstanding statesman" and "cruelty toward its conquered neighbors" emerged. The people of Athens, depraved by "the adoration for their orators, often haughtily oppressed their confederates and neighbors and, governed by light-minded sensations, often failed the endeavors of their wisest statesmen and thus put the state on the edge of its ruin."[32]

Schiller's questions and his preference for Solon's legislation were by no means original. Any comparison between Solon's and Lycurgus's legislation ventilated anew the central issue in the contemporary political debates, namely the question of the purpose of the state. However, when Schiller used the concept "mankind," he did not mean to contribute to a redefinition of the purpose of the state. He did not participate in the efforts of contemporaries to derive from that concept rights such as the right of self-preservation, the right of self-improvement, and freedom of speech. These efforts sometimes resulted in the drafting of catalogues of human rights, which often also included political liberty or the right to participate in political decision-making.[33] For Schiller, mankind amounted to "progress of culture" or "progress of the human mind," and his use of the concept had no direct political dimension.

In 1788, the Göttingen professor Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729–1812) published a critique of his contemporaries' interpretation of Lycurgus's legislation

31 Schiller, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. IV, 814–15.

32 Ibid., 832–34.

33 Klippel, *Politische Freiheit.*

and of the Spartan state.[34] He was suspicious of any complete condemnation as well as inexpert admiration of Sparta. When commentators either extolled Lycurgus's legislation or blamed the totalitarian state, they had distinct deficiencies of contemporary states in mind and expounded the sources in line with their interests. Heyne turned against both the glorification of Sparta in the Rousseau tradition and against the prevailing negative interpretation of the Spartan constitution. He especially disapproved of Cornelis de Pauw's criticism of Sparta's institutions,[35] and aimed at an understanding of that constitution in its historical context by taking into account the circumstances of its origins. He thus interpreted Lycurgus's legislation as a timely response to both internal and external social and political requirements of an archaic society and considered Lycurgus's reforms, the land reform, the reform of the education system, and the safeguarding of Spartan economic self-sufficiency as measures that enabled the Spartans to defend themselves against their enemies.

Heyne, of course, mentioned the Helots and the Messenians because of their function in Sparta's society. For him slavery was not only an institution of ancient history.[36] His understanding of ancient slavery informed his understanding of contemporary slavery, and he criticized modern slavery and the contemporary slave trade by comparing them to ancient practices. For Heyne the ancient legislators no longer represented everlasting wisdom, as they had a large share in the theoretical as well as practical restrictions of their own times. They lacked the experiences modern legislators could have acquired and they were "not yet outstanding speculative philosophers."[37] Contemporary legislators were superior, since they could make use of the theories of their ancient forerunners in order to achieve beneficial effects for their states.

For Heyne, Schiller, the anonymous author of the *Hannoversche Magazin*, and Abbt, Athens and Sparta were not simply different geographical locations, but they represented different windows of opportunity, which allowed them to confront contemporary political rule with the history of its origins. Even if they preferred Athens over Sparta, thus siding with arts and sciences, with polite lifestyle and with modest luxury, they emphasized how the frailty of Athens's

34 Christian Gottlob Heyne, "De Spartanorum republica et institvtis ivudicivm sine cvpiditate et ira fctvum. Commentatio pior, recitata," *Consessv Societatis Regiae Scientiarum* 21 (1788): 1–24. See Marianne Heidenreich, *Christian Gottlob Heyne und die alte Geschichte* (München: Saur Verlag, 2006).

35 Christian Gottlob Heyne, "Rezension de Pauw, Recherches philosophique," *Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen*, vol. 1 (1788), 867.

36 Johannes Deissler, *Antike Sklaverei und Deutsche Aufklärung im Spiegel von Johann Friedrich Reitemeiers "Geschichte und Zustand der Sklaverey und Leibeigenschaft in Griechenland"* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 321 ff.

37 Heidenreich, *Heyne*, 187.

democratic constitution posed serious threats. They historicized the ancient Greek republics with the purpose of putting to use the differences and similarities between antiquity and the present.

3 Ancient Athens and the Problem of Democracy

The authors of these interpretations of the ancient legislators continuously referred to conceptions of a constitution that would guarantee civil liberty, civil laws, and civil independence. Critically comparing the monarchical absolutism then still prevalent in Germany with contemporary or ancient republics, they developed their position vis-à-vis the existing political order. Beyond Athens, no other commonwealth that in ancient times was termed a "democracy" played a role in these Enlightenment discussions.[38] Direct democracy in the tradition of Athens was associated with disposition to tyranny, with the despotism of a minority that would infringe individual liberties and private property. In the various German contexts, democracy was discussed less in terms of collective rights and of self-determination than as the deterrent example of domination by the populace.

Discussions of a democratic order focused on the susceptibility of the uneducated masses to political promises and their continued inclination to superstition and religious delusion. A good example is the *Teutscher Merkur*, in which Wieland published, in 1781, a polemical essay against the credulity of the Athenian population.[39] He wanted to make the point that the people, when they lived in a democracy, ran the risk of falling prey to either the promises of a demagogue or the instigations of a foreign ruler. He used the example of the philosopher Athenion, who had established himself in 88 BCE as a despot after having suggested that King Mithradates VI would liberate the Athenians from Roman oppression. A demagogue like Athenion, Wieland argued, had an easy task because he could gain the favor of the Athenian population solely by his eloquence, since the Athenians were at odds with themselves and without any political guidance because they lacked political leadership.[40]

Like many of his contemporaries, Wieland insisted on the self-destructive tendencies of the democratic political order. To him Solon's legislation was

38 Hans Maier, "Zur neueren Geschichte des Demokratiebegriffs," in *Theory and Politics, Theorie und Politik. Festschrift für Carl Joachim Friedrich,* ed. by Klaus vom Beyme (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 127–61.

39 *Teutscher Merkur* (1781), vol. III, 13 ff.

40 Ibid., 18.

designed to accommodate the "light-minded, hasty and unsettled character"[41] of the Athenians. Solon may have assured the Athenians of their rights of political self-determination, but at the same time he introduced a mixed constitution – in particular by installing a senate and a supreme court – that kept in check the people's share in the legislation as well as in the juridical power. An unrestricted democratic order did not emerge until the reign of Themistocles and Aristides, when all citizens obtained access to political offices and when the archontes could be elected by all Athenians. It is true that Wieland saw the Pericleian period as a transient époque of cultural efflorescence. This notwithstanding, he believed the Athenian commonwealth to be on its way to destruction from the moment Themistocles and Aristides started the process of transforming Solon's constitution into a system of direct democracy.[42]

For Wieland the history of Athens was a striking example of the great harm that can be afflicted by a democracy based on the despotism of people swayed by demagogues. The decay of the Athenian democratic culture had already begun during the reign of Pericles who destroyed all aristocratic elements of the constitution and ceded sovereignty to the people. The loss of its political independence then consequently sealed Athens's fate. For Wieland, the majority of the Athenian citizens had not yet matured into living in a democracy. The extreme frailty of the democratic order remained unquestioned, as did the permanent danger of its liberty being jeopardized by incompetent representatives. In his view, a democratic order called for virtuous human beings who continuously identified themselves with the commonwealth, which was asking too much of citizens.[43]

Heyne, too, interpreted the blossoming of the Athenian democracy during the reign of the "glad-hander Pericles" as the beginning of its decay.[44] He also shared Wieland's belief that a democracy overburdened its citizens: "if Jean-Jacques Rousseau ever told a truth, then it happened the very moment he stated that a democracy needs gods as its citizens!"[45] Indeed, most German Enlightenment writers had little respect for the democratic order as a means of ensuring civil and political freedom. They considered the small oligarchical

41 Christoph Martin Wieland, "Kurze Darstellung der innerlichen Verfassung und äusserlichen Lage von Athen in dem Zeitraum, worin Aristofanes seine nochvorhandenen Komödien auf die Schaubühne brachte," *Teutscher Merkur* (1794), vol. I, 19–49.

42 Ibid., 28.

43 Ibid., 39 f.

44 Christian Gottlob Heyne, "Libertatis et aequilitas ciuilis in Atheniensium republica delineato ex Aristophanes," in Christian Gottlob Heyne, *Opvscvla academia collecta*, vol. IV (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1796), 402 ff.

45 Cited after Heidenreich, *Heyne*, 200.

city republics of both antiquity and their own times to be highly corrupt. They claimed that those urban republics based on the principle of corporative freedom belonged to an older, outdated stage of the development of the state.

In 1793 Johann Erich Biester (1749–1816), co-editor of the journal *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, also called into question the democratic character of the Athenian constitution.[46] He first alluded to the difference between Athenian citizens and inhabitants, that is the difference between those who could participate in political decision-making and those who could not. Biester, of course, referred to the Athenian system of slavery, and he explicitly interpreted the Athenian citizens as noblemen. "One would fiddle with words, if one would not term those Greek citizens noblemen […] since those citizens of Greek democracies were granted their privileges by blood."[47] In this context Biester explicitly made a comparison with the oligarchical regime of the city of Berne.

For Biester, the ancient Greek polities were not at all democracies, since they all failed to establish equality. Implacable hatred between the privileged rich and the poor, Biester stated, was the incurable disease of the Greek city-states. These states were not democracies because they were based on the idea of a two-chamber system. "In all Greek states and cities, there existed two different assemblies that were concerned with the interests and the affairs of the different political entities: the senate and the popular assembly." Like most of his contemporaries Biester concluded that it was not the structure of the constitution but its content, not the legal definition of a form of government but its character, the spirit of its actions which determined the success of a polity. What mattered was not the degree of freedom but the degree of legal security. "It is the administration of a state, not its form of government that matters."[48]

Biester's essay indicated the shift of the German debate on constitutional issues from the comparison between "free states" and "monarchies" at the end of the Seven Years' War to the demand for a constitutional state that could be realized under any form of government. The enlightened educated classes shared theoretical reservations about the feasibility of a democratic political order. They considered the lack of control of a popular government the crucial shortcoming of such an order, and believed that it would necessarily bring upon itself its own destruction. In constitutional terms most German Enlightenment

46 Johann Erich Biester, "Einige Nachrichten von den Griechen über die Staatsverfassung," *Berlinische Monatsschrift* 23 (1793): 507–37, cited after *Berlinische Monatsschrift. Eine Auswahl*, ed. by Peter Weber (Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jun., 1986) 278–86.

47 Ibid., 282.

48 Ibid., 284, 286.

thinkers pleaded for a system of mixed government, in which the people were guaranteed limited participation in political decision-making.[49]

4 The French Revolution in Light of Ancient Examples

In the 1790s German journalists extensively commented on the revolution in France.[50] They compared the French and German national characters, inquired into the causes of revolution and the reforms needed in the Holy Roman Empire, and they measured the advances and the setbacks of the revolutionaries who were in the process of transforming the French constitution by considering the examples of both Athenian democracy and the Spartan military state.

Between 1789 and 1795 Heyne, among others, often compared different aspects of the French Revolution with similar phenomena in antiquity. In 1794, for instance, he brought up the fatal effects of the rhetoric and the activities of the demagogues in Athens when he wrote about the revolutionary events in France.[51] He went so far as to interpret the ferocious rule of the "Thirty Tyrants" not as an antitype of Athenian democracy but as its inevitable consequence. "These tyrants behaved in the same manner as the members of the French national assembly. The acts of violence and despotism practiced in Athens were similar to those of contemporary France."[52]

In the same year, Heyne's Göttingen colleague, the historian Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760–1842), compared the decision taken by the Athenians to punish and destroy the city of Mytilene in 427 BCE with the French National Convention's decision, in 1793, to punish the counterrevolutionary city of Lyon.[53] The "Athenian populace and its commanders-in-chief" were "no

49 Rudolf Vierhaus, "Politisches Bewußtsein in Deutschland vor 1789," *Der Staat* 6 (1967): 175–96; Jürgen Schlumbohm, *Freiheit – Die Anfänge der bürgerlichen Emanzipationsbewegung in Deutschland im Spiegel ihres Leitwortes (1760–1800)* (Düsseldorf: Schwan, 1975); Thomas Würtenberger, "An der Schwelle zum Verfassungsstaat," *Aufklärung* 3 (1988): 53–88.

50 *Kulturtransfer im Epochenumbruch. Frankreich – Deutschland 170–1815*, ed. by Hans-Joachim Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1997).

51 Christian Gottlob Heyne, "Über die bürgerliche Freiheit und Gleichheit in der Republik der Athenienser," *Politische Annalen* 4 (1794): 9–106, 181–97.

52 Ibid., 182.

53 Arnold Herrmann Ludwig Heeren, "Mitylene und Lion," in Arnold Herrmann Ludwig Heeren, *Vermischte historische Schriften*, vol. IV (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1821), 241–52.

better, perhaps even more savage and murderous" than their French counterparts.[54] Heeren saw the character of the demagogues in the Athenian democracy in a new light when comparing them with the Jacobins in the French National Convention. For example, he named Cleon the "Athenian Robespierre."[55] The philosopher Christian Garve (1742–98) equated the Athenian popular assembly with the French National Convention, considering the members of both assemblies to be pure demagogues instead of accountable politicians.[56] To Garve, the drawbacks of the democratic order were evident in the past as much as in the present.[57]

German contemporaries of the French Revolution drew parallels between Lycurgus's attempts to establish an all-embracing state and the political activities of the French Jacobins, especially when news about the terror led them to question the veracity of the rhetoric of the *Comité du Salut publique*. German journalists discussed the "Spartan attitude" of revolutionary France when dealing with the Jacobin constitution of 1793 and with the revolutionary armies. Robespierre had developed the "ideal of a deistic Sparta" in order to realize this model in contemporary France, an essay stated in 1795.[58]

In 1793 Johann Wilhelm von Archenholtz (1741–1812)[59] and Friedrich Gentz (1764–1832)[60] analyzed what they considered the demagogic promises of Robespierre and Saint-Just, who, they argued, used the Rousseauian terms "virtue," "liberty," and "constitution" to obscure the present and to perpetuate the Jacobin despotism. The constitutions of Lycurgus and Solon, the Spartan republic and the Athenian democracy, were held up as mirrors to the members of the *Comité du Salut publique* in order to demonstrate the distance

54 Ibid., 243.

55 Ibid., 251.

56 Christian Garve, "Übersetzung und Erläuterung der Rede Kleons, eine atheniensischen Demagogen, im 37sten Kapitel des 3ten Buches des Thukydides," in Christan Garve, *Vermischte Aufsätze, welche einzeln oder in Zeitschriften erschienen sind* (Breslau, 1796), 447–515.

57 Ibid., 455.

58 George Wilhelm Bartholdy, *Berlinisches Archiv der Zeit und ihres Geschmacks,* cited after *Deutschland und die Französische Revolution 1798–1806*, ed. by Theo Stammen and Friedrich Eberle (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 328.

59 Johann Wilhelm von Archenholtz, "Stellenkommentar zur Rede Robespierres vom 7. Februar 1794: Über die Grundprinzipien der jetzigen französischen Verfassung, nach Robespierre's und St. Just's Darstellung derselben," *Minerva* (1794) 2. Stück, 166–89; 232–64; see Ute Rieger, *Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz als „Zeitbürger". Eine historisch-analytische Untersuchung zur Aufklärung in Deutschland* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1994).

60 Friedrich Gentz, "Kommentar zur Rede von St. Just," *Minerva* (1794), 2. Stück, 272 ff; see especially Günther Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht. Friedrich Gentz als politischer Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994).

between them and their self-proclaimed ancient models. When Saint-Just, for instance, extolled the Spartan constitution because of its simplicity and praised the "liberty of Sparta," Gentz, who translated Edmund Burke's critique of the French Revolution, sneered that those political ideas of archaic societies "which had barely outgrown their infancies"[61] were not fit to administer the more complicated modern societies. He cautioned against any uncritical usage of Lycurgus's concept of liberty, which was fashioned for a pre-modern society that valued the autonomy of collective public interest more highly than the self-determination of individuals.

Equations between Sparta and revolutionary France were made not only by authors who had opposed the revolution from early on, but also by those who had defended the first phases of the revolution and deeply regretted the emergence of the system of *terreur*, the *dérapage* of the revolution. After the fall of the Jacobins their opponents maintained that they had tried to judge their contemporary times according to ancient standards. Eventually, after about 1795, discussions of Spartan, Athenian or Roman history became bogged down in theoretical reflections on constitutional issues, while more attention was paid to the violent overthrow of the French Ancien Régime and the subsequent efforts to establish a new republican order.

5 Conclusion

Elaborating on the political life of ancient Greek republics, German Enlightenment authors agreed that republican rule was destined to eventual decline and fall. In their arguments, institutional moments – the instability of public institutions – overlapped with moral moments – the tension between virtue and corruption. They exceeded the particularistic critique of individual politicians or distinct groups of citizens and institutions in view of the process of decline. Their reasoning also involved prognostic moments and increasingly emphasized the difference between the past and the present. Wieland made this point clearly in 1775: "Our constitutions, customs, religion, national characters, interests, circumstances, all are fundamentally different from ancient Greece."[62] In their interpretations, the authors clearly distinguished between ancient Greek republics, on the one hand, and contemporary monarchies (as

61 Gentz, "Kommentar," 272.

62 Wieland cited after Irmtraud Sahmland, *Christoph Martin Wieland und die deutsche Nation. Zwischen Patriotismus, Kosmopolitismus und Griechentum* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1990), 317.

well as a few republics) on the other. Two aspects stood out in these debates: size and socio-economic structures.

German journalists insisted on the difference in size between the small ancient republics and the modern, mostly monarchical states.[63] Schlözer put it most forcefully: "Solon and Lycurgus's states are villages." Schlözer shared with his contemporaries the conviction that the self-government of ancient citizenries depended on their small size. "For nearly all republics of the ancient times," he wrote, "it can be assumed that their liberty derived from the small size of their territories."[64] Only in small states were the citizens able to permanently engage in political decision-making. A small size was seen as a prerequisite for a direct democratic order. Larger states could not perform as democracies. In these states political participation could be exercised only indirectly, by a system of political representation that the ancient Greeks did not know yet.[65]

In addition to the difference in size, German Enlightenment journalists emphasized the divergent social and economic structures of the ancient "free states" and the modern monarchies. The ancient republics, they argued, lacked the complexity of modern commercialized societies. Unlike ancient societies, modern societies were characterized by a division of labor. They represented a stage of economic development that ancient societies, permanently involved in wars, could not reach. "Most Greek states were small and powerless and had an unfortunate democratic form of government; these moments [of war] prevented them from doing the business of large states over a long period."[66]

Schlözer's views were widely shared. His assertion "that such societies could not all at assure neither liberty nor happiness of a distinct kind"[67] paradigmatically hinted at two further essential differences between Greek republics and modern states as they were perceived by his generation: the separation between state and society and the difference between ancient and modern liberty. Schlözer, who like many of his contemporaries tended to equate happiness and civil society, believed that the distinction between state and society had become a fundamental characteristic of the present times. Civil society's main feature, he argued, was the establishment of a separate sphere for the

63 Eduard Sieber, *Die Idee des Kleinstaates bei den Denkern des 18. Jahrhunderts in Frankreich und Deutschland* (Basel, 1920); Werner Kaegi, "Der Kleinstaat im europäischen Denken," in Werner Kaegi, *Historische Mediationen* (Zürich: Fretz & Wasmuth: 1942), 251–313.

64 August Ludwig Schlözer, *Vorstellung seiner UniversalHistorie* (2nd ed., Göttingen: Johann Christian Dietrich, 1775), 62.

65 Hasso Hofmann, *Repräsentation. Studien zur Wort- und Begriffsgeschichte von der Antike bis ins 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1974)

66 Schlözer, *UniversalHistorie*, 63.

67 Schlözer, *StatsAnzeigen* 4 (1783): 149.

citizenry that was largely free of state influence and state intervention. Since the Greek republics did not discriminate between state and society, they had subordinated the citizens' individual rights to the common good.

When Herder in 1765 asked, "Do we still have the public and the fatherland of the ancients?", he explicitly stated that in ancient republics political liberty worked to the detriment of the liberty of the individual to pursue individual self-development.[68] Herder did not claim his opposition to ancient and modern liberty to be original. His decrying of the primacy of political liberty is omnipresent in German Enlightenment debates on Greek republics. The participants in these debates anticipated the argument about ancient and modern liberty later famously advanced by Benjamin Constant.[69]

The growing awareness of the difference between antiquity and the present was a prerequisite for the historicization of ancient republics. Thus, in 1795, Herder apodictically stated: "To want to go back into the times of Greece or Rome would be foolish [...] It is hardly likely that we, if an exchange were possible, would profit from that exchange."[70] And Heyne, for his part, explicitly denied the possibility of learning from ancient legislators.[71] This detachment from antiquity was fully realized after the French Revolution, when the Enlightenment journalists left their readers in no doubt that the ancient Greek republics represented outdated political models. Yet although they repudiated classical republics, they did not renounce political liberty. The constitutional question they now attempted to address was how to achieve a balance between ancient and modern liberty, between political and individual liberty.

68 Johann Gottfried Herder, "Haben wir noch das Publikum und Vaterland der Alten?" in Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 1, ed. by Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1897), 23.

69 Luciano Guerci, *Libertà antichi e libertà dei moderni* (Naples: Guida, 1979).

70 Johann Gottfried Herder, "Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität," in Herder, *Werke in zwei Bänden*, vol. 11, ed. by Gustav Gerold (München: Hanser, 1953), 483.

71 Heidenreich, *Heyne*, 212.

CHAPTER 13

The European Republic from the Enlightenment to the Counter-Revolution

Matthijs Lok

Between 1787 and 1792, the Mainz historian Niklas Vogt (1756–1836) published his multivolume work *Über die Europäische Republik* (On the European Republic). In five volumes, Vogt analyzed the "European republic" from different perspectives: as a political system of independent states with moderate constitutions, as a mixed political economy, as the product of legal, moral, and religious pluralism, and finally as a balanced set of military counterweights (*Gleichgewicht*).[1] Within this wider "European republic," cities, provinces, states, empires, as well as religious communities, could develop in their own unique way. According to Vogt, this supposedly exceptional European pluralism had evolved over several centuries, determined by Europe's climate and steered by providence and destiny.[2] The original founders of the European republic had been the ancient Germans in the sixth and seventh centuries. However, it was only during the sixteenth century that the European political system became fully developed. Vogt believed that the unique spirit of freedom of this republic was threatened in his own lifetime, by power-hungry and self-interested great powers with their pernicious ambition to build new universal empires, as well as by the radicalism of atheist *philosophes* and the spiritual oppression of the intolerant Jesuit order.

The only historical precedent for the European republic could be found in Ancient Greece. Vogt compared the unity in diversity of the Greek world with medieval and modern Europe, contrasting both worlds with the stifling uniformity of the Roman Empire. Like Greece, Europe for Vogt did not consist of one culture but was the result of the intermingling of different cultures and

1 Niklas Vogt, *Über die Europäische Republik*, v vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Varrentrapp, 1787–92). On Vogt: Ursula Berg, *Niklas Vogt (1756–1836). Weltsicht und politische Ordnungsvorstellungen zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1992); Heinz Duchhardt, "Niklas Vogt (1756–1803)," in *Europa-Historiker. Ein biographisches Handbuch*, vol. III, ed. by Heinz Duchhardt et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2007), 43–62; Steven Stargardter, *Niklas Vogt, 1756–1836: A personality of the late German enlightenment and early romantic movement* (New York: Garland, 1991).

2 Vogt, *Republik*, I, Vorrede.

peoples.[3] In the eighteenth-century *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* Vogt characteristically took a middle position. Instead of claiming the superiority of either the ancient Greeks or the modern Europeans, he wrote that they were on equal footing in terms of cultural and scientific development. The comparison with ancient Greece also contained a warning. Classical Greece had over time become corrupted and decadent as a result of moral degeneration and the wrong kind of philosophy. Eventually the Greek world was submerged by first the Hellenist, and finally by the hegemonic Roman universal Empire.[4] Vogt did not claim any originality for his ideas. He declared himself to be at the end of a tradition of a wide variety of authors from different European countries, including Mirabeau, Montesquieu, Necker, and Adam Smith.[5] He also professed to be inspired by classical historians, in particular Tacitus and the Hellenistic Greek Polybius, who witnessed the rise of the Roman Empire and the demise of the independent Greek states in his lifetime.

In this essay, I will examine the conceptualization of the "European republic" from the middle of the eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. This period in European and world history was characterized by the dramatic events of the revolutionary and Napoleonic decades. Ideas of European order, crafted by Enlightenment *philosophes*, were suddenly reformulated and given different meaning. I will focus attention on the parallels drawn by authors between the "modern" European republic and the classical world, in particular ancient Greece. I will discuss authors from the Francophone, Anglophone, and Germanophone traditions, which during this period functioned as models for authors writing in other languages and came to constitute a canon of experts on Europe and European history.[6]

Studying the conceptual history of the "European republic" in this period gives us insight into at least three important scholarly debates in the field of eighteenth-century political thought. To begin with, the eighteenth century has often been credited (or blamed) for the invention of the idea of "modern Europe," based on ideas of progress and urban and commercial civilization.[7] As we shall see, the modern state system was conceptualized through

3 Ibid., III, 62.

4 Ibid., 81–84.

5 Ibid, II, preface.

6 M.M. Lok, "A Revolutionary Narrative of European History: Bonneville's 'History of Modern Europe' (1789–1792)," *History* 103, no. 3 (2018): 434–50.

7 Olaf Asbach, ed., *Europa und die Moderne im Langen 18. Jahrhundert* (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2014); Matthijs Lok, "La Construction de l'Europe moderne, entre esprit des Lumières et des Contre-Lumières," in *Histoire de la conscience européenne*, ed. by Antoine Arjakovsky (Paris: Salvator, 2016), 179–92.

the prism of the ancient world, but increasingly also by distancing "new" from "old" Europeans.[8] Studying the conceptual history of the "European republic" between ancients and moderns will teach us more about the transition, or its absence, from cyclical to linear historical thinking.[9]

Moreover, conceptual histories of the "European republic" are often missing from studies on the history of republicanism.[10] Pre-revolutionary historical republicanism is usually studied from the perspective of the state, not from the prism of the state system and the international order.[11] As we could observe from the synopsis of Vogt's multivolume work, his concept of a European republic differed fundamentally from the interpretation of the "republic" in the tradition of classical republicanism as most prominently defined by John Pocock and Quentin Skinner. Vogt shared with classical republicans the Polybian pre-occupation with political freedom and the threat of losing this liberty through moral corruption and self-interest, resulting in a decline and fall of the political community.[12] For Vogt and other counter-revolution-

8 See for this similar mechanism of drawing upon as well as distancing from past models: Matthijs Lok, "'A much superior situation': The ambivalent memory of the Dutch Revolt and the construction of the Dutch Restoration regime," in *A History of the European Restoration*, vol. II, *Culture, Society and Religion,* ed. by Michael Broers, Ambrogio Caiani, and Stephen Bann (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 28–37.

9 Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1979); idem, "Einleitung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland,* vol. I, ed. by Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cota, 1979), 13–27. Cf. Erika Kuijpers and Judith Pollmann, "Introduction: On the Early Modernity of Modern Memory," in *Memory before Modernity: Practices of Memory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Erika Kuijpers et al. (Leiden: Brill 2013), 1–24.

10 A chapter on the "European republic" is for instance absent from the standard work on European republicanism: Quentin Skinner and Martin van Gelderen, eds., *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, II vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

11 For cosmopolitan republicanism: Pauline Kleingeld, *Kant and Cosmopolitanism: The Philosophical Ideal of World Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). Kant's federal republicanism, however, is very different from the concept of the "European Republic" examined in this essay. Cf. Frank Ejby Poulsen, "A Cosmopolitan Republican in the French Revolution: The Political Thought of Anacharsis Cloots" (PhD thesis, European University Institute, 2018).

12 In this sense, this kind of republicanism has similarities with the neo-Roman idea of freedom: Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); see more extensively: Matthijs Lok, "'A Just and True Liberty': The Idea of (Neo-Roman) Freedom in Francophone Counter-Revolutionary Thought (ca. 1780–1800)," in *Rethinking Liberty Before Liberalism,* ed. by Annelien de Dijn and Hannah Dawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). On Polybius and classical republicanism: John Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 77–85.

aries, however, "freedom" was not in the first instance guaranteed by the political participation of virtuous citizens or by the precise form of the sovereign. Instead he believed liberty was best guaranteed by institutional pluralism, in the sense of the absence of a centralized political, economic, religious, or cultural power, combined with ideas of moderation, balance, the rule of law, and cultural diversity.[13] By looking at this particular strand of "republicanism" beyond the state, if we can indeed call it by that name, we are able to broaden the definition of republicanism and study the concept of "republic" in entirely different political and ideological contexts.[14] We can also start examining the (dis)continuities between the eighteenth-century Enlightenment idea of the European republic and liberal and conservative internationalism and Europeanism in the nineteenth century.[15]

To a certain extent the notion of the European Republic drew on the humanist idea of the "Republic of Letters," as well as the even older concept of the *respublica christiana*.[16] Its eighteenth-century Enlightenment formulation differed, however, from these older concepts in the sense that it referred not in first instance to an intellectual continent-wide network of learned individuals or a religious community, but primarily to a set of institutions that had developed over time. The defining characteristic of these institutions was their pluralist and fragmented nature with a common cultural, legal, and moral framework, resulting from a long historical evolution.[17]

I will argue that the European republic evolved from a moderate Enlightenment notion into a key concept of the counterrevolutionary and conservative

13 Matthijs Lok, "'The Extremes Set the Tone': Counter-Revolutionary Moderation in Continental Conservatism (ca. 1795–1835)," in *The Politics of Moderation in Modern European History,* ed. by Ido de Haan and Matthijs Lok (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 67–88.

14 Cf. Rachel Hammersley, *The English Republican Tradition and Eighteenth-Century France: Between the Ancients and the Moderns* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 203.

15 For instance: the eighteenth-century roots of J.S. Mill's "principle of systematic antagonism"; cf. Georgios Varouxakis, "Guizot's Historical Works and J.S. Mill's Reception of Tocqueville," *History of Political Thought* 20, no. 2 (1999): 292–312.

16 On the concept of the "Republic of Letters": Anthony Grafton, "A Sketch Map of a Lost Continent: The Republic of Letters," https://arcade.stanford.edu/rofl/sketch-map-lost-continent-republic-letters. Cf. Floris Solleveld, "Afterlives of the Republic of Letters: Learned Journals and Scholarly Community in the Early Nineteenth Century," in *Erudition and the republic of letters* 5 (2020): 82–116.

17 On the "Enlightenment narrative," see Karen O' Brien, *Narratives of the Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); John Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, vol. 11, *Narratives of Civil Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); on the Dutch variation of the "Enlightenment narrative," see Eleá de la Porte, "Verlichte verhalen. De omgang met het verleden in de Nederlandse verlichting" (PhD thesis, University of Amsterdam, 2019).

ideological war against the French revolutionaries.[18] As has been pointed out by Wyger Velema on many occasions, Enlightenment and conservatism do not pose a contradiction or dichotomy, but merged in several ways in the revolutionary era.[19] Focusing on the pluralist European republic as counterrevolutionary concept provides us also with a fresh approach towards early conservatism. This view counters the cliché of early conservatism as the defense of the local, the regional, or the national against revolutionary cosmopolitanism and universalism.[20] The idea of the European republic or commonwealth became one of the ideological foundations of the post-Vienna monarchical order.

1 Matrices of Enlightenment Europe

In *Über die Europäische Republik,* Vogt used a wide variety of authorities from different countries.[21] One of his most important sources was Charles Louis de Secondat, baron de Montesquieu. This is perhaps not surprising, as according to Celine Spector and Antoine Lilti, Montesquieu's oeuvre formed the "matrix of the enlightened reflection on Europe."[22] Like Vogt, Montesquieu had explicitly linked what he regarded as Europe's unique freedom to its pluralist, that

18 Counter-revolutionaries are defined here as the self-declared opponents of the French Revolution and its legacy. The concept of Counter-revolution, however, was used by contemporaries in various ways and carried different meanings. See: Friedemann Pestel, "On Counter-revolution: Semantic Investigations of a Counterconcept during the French Revolution," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 12 (2017): 50–75; F. Pestel, "Contre-révolution," in: *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680–1820,* ed. by J. Leonhard, H.-J. Lüsebrink, and Rolf Reichhardt (forthcoming).

19 Wyger Velema, "Enlightenment against Revolution: The Intellectual Origins of Dutch Conservatism," in *Cosmopolitan Conservatisms: Countering Revolution in Transnational Networks, Ideas and Movements* (*c. 1700–1930*), ed. by Matthijs Lok, Friedemann Pestel, and Juliette Reboul (Leiden: Brill, 2021); idem, *Enlightenment and Conservatism in the Dutch Republic: The Political Thought of Elie Luzac* (*1721–1796*) (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993). For the concept of 'conservatism', see the introduction by Lok, Pestel and Reboul, *Cosmopolitan conservatisms*, 1–40.

20 See for instance the still influential work of Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

21 Vogt also referred to Germanophone authors such as Leibniz, Pufendorf en Von Justi.

22 Antoine Lilti and Céline Spector, "Introduction: l'Europe des Lumières, généalogie d'un concept," in *Penser l'Europe au XVIIIe siècle. Commerce, Civilisation, Empire,* ed. by Antoine Lilti and Céline Spector (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2014), 1–9; Jean Goldzink, 'Montesquieu et l'Europe', in *L'idée de l'Europe au fil de deux millénaires*, ed. by Jacques Perrin (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), 141–59; Alberto Postigliola and Maria Bottaro, eds., *L'Europe de Montesquieu: actes du Colloque de Gênes, 26–29 mai 1993* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995).

is politically and institutionally fragmented, character.[23] Already in his earlier work, *Réflections sur la monarchie universelle en Europe* (Reflections on the Universal Monarchy in Europe), written around 1734, Montesquieu had argued that universal empires based on military hegemony were no longer compatible with modern civilization in Europe, nor with contemporary warfare. Centralized empires could exist only in "archaic" societies such as still existed in Asia.[24] Imperial states ruled by a despot as a rule strove for uniformity, whereas in moderately sized states powers counterbalanced each other. Due to climate and geography among other factors, Europe was characterized by small republics and medium-sized commercial monarchies, and this made freedom in this part of the world possible.[25] Montesquieu continued this argument in his magnum opus *De l'esprit des lois* (The Spirit of the Laws, 1748), stating, in the tradition of classical republicanism, that freedom is best guaranteed in small and medium-sized states, such as existed in Western and Central Europe. Montesquieu equated Europe with freedom and "moderation," and Asia with an unrestrained exercise of power.[26]

Montesquieu was critical towards the Roman legacy: in his view the Roman Empire had lost its freedom as a result of its imperial conquests, causing its decline and fall.[27] The Germanic tribes, no doubt less developed than the Romans, had, by contrast, retained their freedom and independence by experimenting with an early form of representative institutions. Although Europe's history was according to Montesquieu characterized by the absence of a unitary authoritative structure, this did not mean that pluralism was always self-evident, and that Europe was immune from despotism.[28] In his *Réflec-*

23 On Montesquieu's aristocratic idea of freedom: Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); idem, *Freedom: An Unruly History* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2020).

24 Montesquieu, *Réflexions sur la monarchie universelle en Europe* (1734), ed. by Michel Porret (Genève: Droz, 2000).

25 Montesquieu, *Réflexions*, 94; Céline Spector, *Montesquieu. Liberté, droit et histoire* (Paris: Michalon, 2010).

26 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 283.

27 Montesquieu, *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence,* ed. by Catherine Volpilhac-Auger (Paris: Gallimard, 2008). In this earlier work (published in Amsterdam in 1734) Montesquieu explained the decline and fall of the Roman Empire as the result of the establishment of a Roman universal monarchy that destroyed Roman freedom, the foundation of Rome's rise. Catherine Volpilhac-Auger, "Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence," *A Montesquieu Dictionnary,* http://dictionnaire-montesquieu.ens-lyon.fr/en/article/1376399421/fr/.

28 Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 136. Cf. chapter 11.

tions sur la monarchie universelle, Montesquieu referred to Europe as a "nation composed of several nations," but the concept of Europe itself as a "republic" did not seem to figure prominently in his works.[29] He did, of course, advance the "federal republic" as an ideal solution for republics that were too small in scale to survive in a political world dominated by monarchies, based on the model of the federations of the ancient Greek republics. This federal republic constituted an "agreement by which many political bodies consent to become citizens of the larger state that they want to form. It is a society of societies that make a new one, which can be enlarged by new associates that unite with it."[30] But Montesquieu was primarily thinking here of the Republic of the United Provinces, the German empire, and the Swiss federation as modern federal republics, rather than conceiving of Europe as a whole as such.

Voltaire, by contrast, whose *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* (Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of the Nations, 1756) became the most influential articulation of the "Enlightenment narrative" of European history, did define Europe as a great "republic." In *Le siècle de Louis XIV* (The Age of Louis XIV, 1751), Voltaire, like Montesquieu, characterized the "European republic" as, on the one hand, politically fragmented and comprising a diversity of regimes, but, on the other, as sharing a common culture, religion, and morals:

> For a long time, Christian Europe (with the exception of Russia) could have been viewed as a large republic split into several states, some of which were monarchies, other mixed; some aristocratic, other popular; but all corresponding with each other; all having a same basis of religion, though they were divided in several sects; all having the same principles of public law and politics, unknown in other parts of the world.[31]

British authors also influenced Vogt's pluralist idea of the European republic in important ways. David Hume, to begin with, published an important interpretation of European pluralism in his *Historical Essays,* comparing modern

29 "L'Europe n'est plus qu'une nation composée des plusieurs." Montesquieu, *Réflexions,* 105.

30 Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws,* 131. Lee Ward, "Montesquieu on Federalism and Anglo-Gothic Constitutionalism," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 37, no. 4 (2007): 551–577. Ward discusses Montesquieu's federalism only on a national level. On Europe as a "federation": Lilti and Spector, "Introduction," 6.

31 Voltaire, "The Century of Louis XIV (1751)", quoted in *The Idea of Europe: Enlightement Perspectives*, ed. by Catriona Seth and Rotraud von Kulessa (Open book publishers, https://books.openedition.org/obp/4281). Antoine Lilti, "La civilisation est-elle européenne? Ecrire l'histoire de l'Europe au XVIIIe siècle," in *Penser*, ed. by Lilti and Spector, 139–66.

Europe with the ancient Greeks.[32] In his essay "Of the rise and progress of the arts and sciences" (1742), Hume tried to find general explanations for the development of the arts and sciences. Cultural achievements could not be ascribed only to the exceptional talents of a few men, he argued. Instead he tried to uncover "general causes and principles," which could be found in peoples as a whole.[33] Hume's first observation was that the arts could flourish only among people who enjoyed a free government: "these refinements require curiosity, security and law not to be found in despotic governments."[34] More freedom could be found in a system of smaller and medium-sized states than in large empires that tended towards despotism. For Hume, however, it was not the republic but a moderate, medium-sized mixed monarchy, such as Great Britain, that was most conducive to freedom.[35]

In Hume's view, a system of smaller states was also more beneficial to the arts because it created an atmosphere of cultural competition necessary for intellectual and artistic creativity.[36] Ancient Greece was a good example: "Greece was a cluster of principalities, which soon became republics; and being united by their near neighbourhood, and by the ties of the same language and interest, they entered in the closed intercourse of commerce and learning [...] Their contention and debates sharpened the wits of men."[37] According to Hume, the relation between the states in ancient Greece was based on the principle of the "balance of power," although it was a cruder and more violent version of the modern European one.[38] The rise of the Roman Empire and the coming of Christianity ended this Greek cultural pluralism by imposing political and religious uniformity. The Catholic Church could be regarded as "one large state" or empire. The end of political fragmentation in Greece was for Hume the main reason for the decline of the arts and sciences, as well as freedom in the ancient Greek world.

Modern Europe was described by Hume as a restored Greece on a much larger scale: "mankind having at length thrown off this yoke (of the church) affairs are now returned nearly to the same station as before, and Europe is at

32 James Harris, *Hume: An intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

33 David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," in: idem, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (Carmel, Ind.: Liberty Fund, 1985), 114.

34 Ibid., 119.

35 Hume, "Of the Liberty of the Press," in idem, *Essays*, 10. According to Hume, sciences generally flourished most in republics, the arts in monarchical states: Hume, "Rise," 124.

36 Ibid., 119.

37 Ibid., 120.

38 Hume, "Of the balance of power," 338.

present a copy at large, of what Greece was formerly a pattern in miniature."[39] The competition and lack of a central authority in Europe resulted in increased freedom and the flourishing of the arts and sciences. No philosophical system could attain a hegemonic position. Hume contrasted modern Europe with China, where the imperial administration had imposed Confucianism as the dominant philosophy, resulting in the slow development of sciences in that state.[40] The fact that Europe had seen more ruptures and crises than China had been advantageous to the cultural and philosophical development of Europe, as religious and political authorities had been challenged more fundamentally, "dethroning the tyrannical usurpers over human reason."[41] Although Vogt disagreed with Hume on the role of Christianity, they both considered ancient Greece as well as modern Europe pluralist and free political worlds.

Hume's countryman, the moderate Protestant historian and minister William Robertson (1721–1793), was the representative of the Scottish Enlightenment most cited by Vogt.[42] In particular his three-volume *History of the Reign of Charles V* (1769) had an enormous influence on the writing of European history on the continent.[43] Building on the work of Montesquieu and Voltaire as well as on that of Hume, Robertson wrote a history of the European state system. In the extensive prologue, Robertson described the long prehistory of the state system. Like Montesquieu, Robertson argued that Europe's unique development started with the destruction of the hegemonic and repressive Roman Empire by the crude but freedom-loving Germanic tribes. Over the course of the Middle Ages, the European institutions slowly developed. Despite its reputation for intolerance and fanaticism, the era of the Crusades gave an impetus to the development of trade and the rediscovery of ancient knowledge due to contacts with the Arab world. Robertson had a nuanced view of the role of the Catholic Church: on the one hand, he described intolerant popes' attempts to hinder progress and suppress knowledge, while, on the other hand, he acknowledged the role of the Church in civilizing Europe.[44]

39 Hume, "Rise," 121.

40 Ibid., 122.

41 Ibid., 123.

42 For instance: Vogt, *Republik*, 1, 62.

43 William Robertson, *The History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V with a View of the Progress of Society in Europe, from the Subversion of the Roman Empire, to the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century*, 111 vols. (London: W. Strahan, 1769); Jeffrey Smitten, "William Robertson: The Minister as Historian," and David Allen, "Identity and Innovation: Historiography in the Scottish Enlightenment," in *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, ed. by Sophie Bourgault and Robert Sparling (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 101–32 and 307–42.

44 Robertson, *The History*, 1, 10–81.

Robertson particularly underscored the importance of the growth of cities on the development of states as well as on the rise of commerce and freedom. These cities enabled, for instance, the European kings to become relatively independent from nobility. The increasing centralization of medieval states stimulated progress and development. Representative institutions developed all over Europe and legal systems became more uniform and rational. The growth of commerce "polished the manners of the European nations."[45] At the end of the fifteenth century, the different European kingdoms increasingly became integrated, "the affairs of the different kingdoms becoming more frequently, as well as more intimately connected, they were gradually accustomed to act in concert and in confederacy."[46] This development culminated in the rise of a continental, European balance of power in the sixteenth century as a result of the rivalry between the Habsburg emperor Charles V and Francis I of France: "it was only during the reign of Charles V that ideas on which this system is founded became first to be fully understood."[47] Robertson's narrative of European history, as an unfolding of freedom and progress in relation to the development of a balanced state system, found its way into many other histories of Europe written by British and continental historians.[48]

2 A Balanced System

We return to Vogt in Mainz now to see what happened to his typically Enlightenment idea of the pluralist "European republic" in the turmoil of the revolutionary decades. Like many of his fellow Germans, Vogt had, as an Enlightenment reformer, initially welcomed the outbreak of the French revolution as an opportunity for the renewal of society. However, when his works were used as propaganda by the Mainz revolutionaries in 1792, he turned against the revolution. After a period of indecision, he eventually fled Mainz and went into exile. As a result of the invasion of French revolutionary armies, he emigrated for good in 1797, becoming an advisor to Karl Theodor von Dalberg, the last elector of Mainz and chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire. Vogt followed his

45 Ibid., 81.
46 Ibid., 90.
47 Ibid., 90.
48 For instance: [William Russell], *The History of Modern Europe, with an Account of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire and a View of the Progress of Society from the Fifth to the Eighteenth Century*, V vols. (London: Robinson, 1779–84); on the adaption of Russell's history by the French revolutionary historian Nicolas de Bonneville: Lok, "Revolutionary Narrative," 438–39.

patron in supporting Napoleonic rule in the German lands: in 1804 he even attended the coronation of Napoleon in Notre Dame. After the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire, Vogt became a senator in the city of Frankfurt. He was buried on the estate of his old student from his days as history professor of the University of Mainz, the architect of the post-Vienna Restoration order, Clemens von Metternich.[49]

In his widely sold *System des Gleichgewichts und der Gerechtigkeit* (System of Balance and Justice, 1802), the work he himself later regarded as his magnum opus, Vogt was decidedly more pessimistic and cynical about the possibility of a state system based on the principles of law rather than power play. Whereas in his book on the European Republic, he had been critical of the role of the clergy as an obstacle to progress, he now saw the Catholic Church primarily as a bulwark of social and political order. Abstract French philosophy was generally blamed for the revolutionary chaos. The European "republic" was in this work called a "commonwealth" (*Gemeinwesen*), rather than a "republic," as the word "republic" had been discredited as a result of the French radical republic of 1792–94.[50] He still defended a pluralist idea of European order, warning against excessive patriotism as well as cosmopolitanism. He also advocated active public involvement by adult middle-class males, harnessing classical republic ideals for the counterrevolutionary course.[51]

From 1804 onwards, he would place his European pluralist ideals in service of a new cause: the Napoleonic Empire.[52] Rather than the product of the French revolution, Vogt regarded Napoleon as a new Charlemagne, a restorer of Christian traditions and order. Napoleon's empire would safeguard the institutional diversity and plurality of Europe, and Germany in particular, against the boundless materialism of the British and the aggressive militarism of the Russians, and to a lesser extent the Prussians. Ultimately, Napoleon was for Vogt not only a military conqueror or an empire-builder, but the regenerator

49 Berg, *Vogt.*

50 Edmund Burke also referred to Europe as a "commonwealth": Edmund Burke, *Revolutionary Writings,* ed. by Ian Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Richard Bourke, *Empire & Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014).

51 [Niklas Vogt], *System des Gleichgewichts und der Gerechtigkeit,* II vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Andreäischen Buchhandlung, 1802). Cf. Niklas Vogt, *Historische Testament,* vol. II (Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1815), vii.

52 Vogt could be termed a "political weathervane," or political survivor, a familiar persona of this era. Cf.: Pierre Serna, *La République des girouettes. Une anomalie politique: la France de l'extrême centre* (*1789–1815… et au-delà*) (Seyssel: PUR, 2005); Matthijs Lok, *Windvanen. Napoleontische bestuurders in de Nederlandse en de Franse Restauratie, 1813–1820* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009).

of a civilization.[53] Napoleon would renew and reinvigorate the corrupted and decadent European civilization, ushering in an era of true Christian Enlightenment.[54] The revolutionaries had tried to destroy the pluralism and diversity of European states and thus also almost destroyed European culture itself. By protecting Europe's unique political pluralism, Napoleon would herald a new European cultural Renaissance.[55] After the collapse of the Empire, Vogt would project his pluralist Europeanism onto the new order created at Vienna, which in his view should be modelled on the ancient Germanic and Christian constitution. Eventually Vogt was disappointed with what he regarded as the failure of Vienna to build a regenerated European moral and religious civilization and order.

Vogt was not the only Germanophone historian who would use an Enlightenment pluralist narrative to advance a counterrevolutionary agenda. In his *Über den Ursprung und Charakter des Krieges gegen die Französische Revoluzion* (On the Origin and Nature of the War against the French Revolution, 1801), the influential counterrevolutionary and anti-Napoleonic publicist Friedrich von Gentz (1764–1832), a former student of Kant, described the European state system as a "European Republic" or a "political federation."[56] This European republic consisted of a great variety of individual states with their unique characteristics and political trajectory, which nonetheless all formed a community (*Gemeinschaft*) as a result of numerous connections (*Verbindungen*), and a uniformity (*Gleichförmighkeit*) of customs, laws, way of life, and culture.[57] The foundation of this European Republic was for Gentz a careful balance (*Gleichgewicht*) of different states and nations within a common institutional, legal, and cultural framework. This fragile balance was being threatened by the fanaticism of the French revolutionaries and their armies. In his later works,

53 Cf. Vogt, *Historische Testament*, vol. I, 5; [N. Vogt], ed., *Europäische Staats-Relationen,* XIV vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Andreäischen Buchhandlung, 1804–1809), vol. XI, 128.

54 This argument was also implicitly made by Archchancellor Karl Theodor von Dalberg in his essay on Charlemagne. Vogt wrote the preface to the German translation. Karl von Dalberg, *Betrachtungen über den Charakter Karl des Grossen*. Translated from the French, with a preface by Niklas Vogt (Frankfurt: Der Andreäischen Buchhandlung, 1806).

55 [Vogt], *Staats-Relationen*, vol. III, 13.

56 Friederich Gentz, *Über den Ursprung und Charakter des Krieges gegen die Französische Revoluzion* (Berlin: Heinrich Fröhlich, 1801), 19. On Gentz as an Enlightenment cosmopolitan: Raphaël Cahen, *Friedrich Gentz 1764–1832. Penseur post-Lumières et acteur du nouvel ordre européen* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017). On Kant and Gentz: Jonathan Green, "Fiat Justitia, Pereat Mundus: Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Gentz and the Possibility of Prudential Enlightenment," *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 1 (2015): 35–65.

57 Gentz, *Ursprung*, 19.

Gentz framed Napoleonic aggression and despotism as the main threats to the existence of the European Republic.

A comparable argument can be found in the works of the Göttingen historian Arnold Hermann Ludwig Heeren (1760–1842), whose roots lay in the city republic of Bremen. Since the mid-eighteenth century, the newly founded University of Göttingen in the electorate of Hanover had become the most important academic center of knowledge about "Europe" and its (political) history, and the model for other German universities. Vogt and Heeren both had a positive but not uncritical regard for the Holy Roman Empire, which they considered the cornerstone of a pluralist European order. Coming from smaller states, they were critical of both Prussia and Vienna's desire to dominate the German empire and foreign powers' attempts to dominate the European state system.

Like many other German historians of modern Europe, Heeren was trained as a classical philologist and also inspired by the works of Polybius.[58] When he was hired by the university, he was first appointed an extra-ordinary professor of philosophy, mainly teaching and publishing on ancient history and comparative literature.[59] At the end of the 1790s, his interests started to turn from ancient to modern European history. He first wrote about the impact of the Crusades and the Reformation on the development of European history in a vein similar to other Enlightenment historians such as Robertson. In 1809 he published the first edition of his *Handbuch der Geschichte des Europäischen Staatensystems und Seiner Kolonien* (Handbook of the History of the European State System and its Colonies).[60] In this work he described the development of the European "state system" in three distinct stages: its rise in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, its consolidation in the era of Louis XIV and the

58 Suzanne Marchand, "Ancient History in the Age of Archival Research," in *Science in the Archives: Pasts, Presents and Futures,* ed. by Lorraine Daston (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 137–58.

59 Arnold Heeren, "Ideen über die Politik, der Verkehr und den Handel der vornehmste Völker der alten Welt," in *Historische Werken*, vols. X–XV, ed. by Arnold Heeren (Göttingen: J.F. Röwer, 1824–26). On Heeren: Chrisoph Becker-Schaum, *Arnold Ludwig Heeren. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993).

60 Arnold Heeren, *Handbuch der Geschichte des Europäischen Staatensystems und Seiner Kolonien, von der Entdeckung beider Indien bis zur Errichtung des französischen Kayser Throns* (Göttingen: Röwer, 1809). I have used the version in the collected works: Arnold Heeren, *Historische Werken*, vols. VIII–XIX (Göttingen: J.F. Röwer, 1821–22).

early eighteenth century, and finally its decline, fall, and (in the later version) restoration.

Although Heeren used the word "state system," as well as "association" (*Verein*) or "society of states" (*Gesellschaft*), rather than "European republic," his analysis was similar to Vogt's and Gentz's, in the sense that he regarded the state system as the result of the interaction of political, cultural, religious, moral, military, and economic factors, rather than prioritizing only one aspect. The key concept underlying the European international system was also for Heeren the *politische Gleichgewicht* or equilibrium. He considered the European state system unique in world history due to its freedom and the independence of the states that jointly formed the political balance within a common cultural and moral framework. This assemblage of states formed a historical and concrete entity. In his study, Heeren explicitly aimed also to examine the development of "Europe" within the wider global and, in particular, the colonial context.

When Heeren published his Handbook in 1809, he somewhat melancholically described a world that in his view no longer existed. The state system described in his book had been destroyed as a result of the rise of the Napoleonic Empire. Although he did not explicitly mention Napoleon in the foreword, it was clear that he, unlike Vogt, regarded the emperor as a despotic ruler and his empire as a "universal monarchy."[61] The foreword of the third edition of 1819 was written in an entirely different tone. The seemingly invincible empire had collapsed in 1814–1815. Heeren's advice to the crowned heads and their secretaries, assembled at Vienna, had been that the new order should not be built from scratch, as the revolutionaries had mistakenly done, but it should instead respect centuries-old lineages. The main lesson from his Handbook was that the peace-makers should not strive for uniformity but for pluralism, as diversity (*Mannichfaltigkeit*) had been the cornerstone of this free system.[62] Heeren also drew explicit parallels between the Greek pluralist world and the politically fragmented European state system, both in the classical period and in the Hellenistic phase.[63] At the same time he emphasized the unique nature of the European state system, which surpassed the ancient world in its historical importance and scale, but also in the degree of freedom and independence of its member states.[64]

61 Heeren, *Handbuch*, "Vorrede," x.
62 Heeren, *Handbuch*, "Nachschrift," xiv.
63 Heeren, *Handbuch*, 13.
64 Heeren, *Handbuch*, v–vi.

Historians have credited – or blamed – Heeren for inventing the modern concept of the international system as part of a counterrevolutionary agenda.[65] However, it would in my view be incorrect to characterize Heeren as a mere "reactionary" inventor of the modern state system. In spite of his opposition to the French revolution, Heeren made clear that he was not opposed to written constitutions or reforms per se, but to the radical nature of revolutionary state-building and the revolutionaries' use of abstract and universalizing concepts. Throughout his work, Heeren championed the idea of a plural and free state system consisting of independent and individual nations who together formed a commercial network as well as a cultural and political community based on historical institutions. European monarchies were ideally characterized by moderation, but even absolutist European monarchies, which guaranteed their subjects private liberties whilst refusing them political rights, were in his view not despotic: it was the revolution that led to despotism, radicalism, extreme violence, and universal monarchy in the name of abstract ideals.

3 Conclusion

In this essay I have traced a part of the history and some uses of the concept of the "European republic" and its related ideas such as the European "commonwealth," "association," and "state system" from the late Enlightenment to the counterrevolution. I have been able to examine only a few examples to hint at the transnational nature of this language. I have not looked at the uses of the concept of the European republic by revolutionaries, but it seems that it was above all counterrevolutionaries who adapted the idea of (historical) Europe for their own purposes.[66] "Europe" in the revolutionary discourse existed, beyond the purely geographical, mainly as a theater and laboratory for humanity as a whole and a promise for future peace. Revolutionaries envisaged their

65 Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14–26; David Armitage, *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 40–41.

66 On the (Francophone) counterrevolutionary idea of a European order: Marc Belissa, *Repenser l'ordre Européen (1795–1802). De Société des Rois aux Droits des Nations* (Paris: Kimé, 2006), 48–64; Gérard Gengembre, "La Contre-Révolution: Europe française ou Europe?" in *L'idée de l'Europe au fil de deux millénaires*, ed. by Michel Perrin (Paris: Beauchesne, 1994), 161–74; Matthijs Lok, "The Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity: Conservative Visions of a New European Order after Napoleon," in *Securing Europe after Napoleon. 1815 and the New European Security Culture,* ed. by Beatrice de Graaf, Ido de Haan, and Brian Vick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 56–72.

idea of international order primarily as a universal federation or as a system of "sister-republics" under French imperial dominance, although plans for a federal republic of the United States of Europe or a European confederation were certainly proposed.[67]

Counterrevolutionaries in the 1790s and 1800s, by contrast, reinvented the idea of a "historical Europe" as part of their ideological war against what they perceived as a radical, universalist, and despotic revolutionary republic that had abruptly and violently severed all ties with the historical institutions that constituted the moderate and pluralist "European republic." We may call this strand of thought "pluralist republicanism," as it shared the pre-occupation with (the loss of) political freedom and corruption, in the vein of Polybius, but also differed fundamentally from the much-studied "classical republicanism." This pluralist type of republicanism was not confined to the boundaries of one state, and it was defined by moderation, the rule of law, and freedom from foreign dominion as well as internal arbitrary power. In Vogt's writing, pluralist republicanism was combined with an emphasis on the duty of middle-class males to actively participate in the affairs of the state. As we have seen, it morphed easily into a monarchical and even imperial ideology.

Also, we have observed that the characteristics of the European republic, system, or commonwealth were often described through the prism of the ancients. In particular the world of the ancient Greeks, politically fragmented but united by a common culture and commerce, was regarded as a Europe "in miniature." As the same time, the "modern" European balance was increasingly seen as superior to its Greek predecessor due to its scale, development, and worldwide effects, as well as, after 1815, the supposedly relative lack of violence and warfare. The stifling hegemony of the Roman Empire was generally decried and, for instance by Heeren and Gentz, compared to the contemporary Napoleonic Empire. Finally, following the lead of Wyger Velema, I have questioned the persisting opposition between "Enlightenment" and "Counterrevolution" by examining a transnational strand of Enlightenment conservative Europeanism. The concept of the pluralist European republic, system, or commonwealth, forged by *philosophes* in the eighteenth century, became a key counterrevolutionary concept in the polarized decades after 1790.

67 Pierre Serna, "Introduction. L'Europe une idée nouvelle à la fin du XVIIIe siècle," *La Révolution française* 4: *Dire et faire l'Europe à la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (2011): 2–16; Sophie Wahnich, "L'Europe dans le discours révolutionnaire," *Tumultes* 7 (1996): 11–28; Belissa, *Repenser*; Andrew Jainchill, *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); on the "sister republics": Joris Oddens, Mart Rutjes, and Erik Jacobs, eds., *The Political Culture of the Sister Republics, 1794–1806: France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Italy* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

CHAPTER 14

Conservatism, Republicanism, and Romanticism: Thomas Mann's "Conversion" to Democracy in 1922

Wessel Krul

In October 1922, Thomas Mann surprised his friends and admirers with a forceful declaration of adherence to the newly founded German Republic.[1] His speech *Von deutscher Republik* (On a German Republic), ostensibly a tribute to the dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann on his sixtieth birthday, was unusual for various reasons. In the first place, it was a direct political statement, whereas Mann had until then prided himself on being an "apolitical" author. Secondly, Mann had only recently defended the empire and its authoritarian style of government as the best guarantee of German *Kultur*, that is of an intellectual life that went beyond the superficial divisions of party politics. Now he transferred his allegiance to the unstable and controversial Weimar Republic.

Mann's unexpected "conversion" caused an outcry among the public. In right-wing circles he was branded as a traitor to the national cause. What was the moral authority of an author who proved to be such a shameless turncoat? In December 1922, after his lecture had appeared in print, Mann felt obliged to publish a rejoinder to the effect that he had not become untrue to himself or to the nation.[2] There had been no change of principle, he said, only a natural evolution. His thoughts on the Republic were a logical and necessary consequence of his earlier point of view. It was an ambiguous defense, as his 600-page long and convoluted *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Reflections of an Unpolitical Man) of 1918 was at least clear on one point: Germany was different from Western Europe, in mind, culture and mentality; it was fighting a war to maintain this difference, which was incompatible with the adoption of something like Western democracy.[3]

1 Thomas Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," in Thomas Mann, *Gesammelte Werke in dreizehn Bänden*, vol. XI, ed. by Hans Bürgin and Peter de Mendelssohn (2nd. ed., Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1974), 811–52. In the following, all translations from the German are my own.

2 Ibid., 809–11.

3 Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918), in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XII, 7–589. Mann defended his rejection of democracy at length in the chapter "Politik."

When his *Reflections* were reprinted in 1928, Mann decided to eliminate a number of pages he now thought outdated. This led to loud protestations from readers who admired his former nationalist stance, and who found his present political position hard to digest.[4] Mann, always eager to manage his own reputation, repeated his earlier explanations: there was no general change of ideas, even if he had deleted some inconvenient passages; then as now his aim had been the cultivation of a higher *Humanität*, a humanism that in his opinion had been the hallmark of the German tradition since the eighteenth century. He no longer believed in the "educating, morally uplifting power of war," and felt justified to omit those and similar expressions. But did these corrections turn the new edition into a "democratic revision," as his opponents claimed? He rejected this kind of criticism as "a lie and a crass untruth."[5] During the ten years that had passed since the first publication of his *Reflections*, he had continued to live and think, that was all.

Nonetheless, although Mann insisted on the continuity in his thinking, his speech on the Republic of 1922 was a decisive moment.[6] As was evident from the reactions to the reprint in 1928, the *Reflections* circulated almost exclusively among a right-wing audience. To all intents, the work seemed to justify an undemocratic and revanchist position. How thorough was Mann's change of mind? And what was his vision of the German future? Even today, the question remains a matter of debate. On the one hand, it is often argued that his wartime *Reflections* are a deeply ambivalent work. Below the self-assured nationalistic surface Mann introduced many ideas on politics and culture that lent themselves to a cosmopolitan and more or less democratic interpretation. The argument, on the other hand, can be reversed: if his allegiance to the Weimar Republic was based on the sentiments that dominated the *Reflections*, then perhaps his new loyalty was only pragmatic and superficial. At heart he remained attached to authoritarian and elitist conceptions of government.[7]

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4 A number of reactions were published in Munich in 1928 by Arthur Hübscher as *Der Streit um Thomas Manns Betrachtungen*. The volume included attacks from the Nazi press, and a private letter by Mann, reprinted without his permission. See his rejoinders, three in all, in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XIII, 600–13. Arthur Hübscher later became a well-known editor of Schopenhauer's works, as well as a faithful National-Socialist.

5 Thomas Mann, "Antwort an Arthur Hübscher," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XIII, 605–606.

6 That his change of mind was both gradual and decisive is pointed out in H.W. von der Dunk, "De kentering in het politieke denken van Thomas Mann," in Idem, *Cultuur en geschiedenis. Negen opstellen* ('s-Gravenhage: SD Uitgeverij, 1990), 175–92.

7 This is the conclusion of Manfred Görtemaker, *Thomas Mann und die Politik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2005). Hermann Kurzke, in his long afterword to his annotated edition of Mann's *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, II vols. (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2009) argues that Mann already became a democrat during the war years. See also John Evan Seery, "Political Irony

In the next pages, I will take an intermediate position. Mann did indeed embrace democracy, but his arguments were not based on ideas about rights and representation. They were derived from an idiosyncratic interpretation of Romanticism – the same Romanticism that served conservative purposes in his *Reflections*. From his wartime writings to his *The Magic Mountain* of 1924, Mann followed a complex intellectual trajectory during which he looked for support to Goethe and Tolstoy, Whitman and Novalis. The outcome was the recognition that political power could only function as a guarantee of culture, if it was informed by the same culture. To safeguard his identity, his values and his role in society, the "apolitical man" should take part in political life. After all, Mann now concluded, "we are the state."

1 Culture, Reason, and Humanism

The problem is of more than biographical interest. Mann's example shows how a deeply conservative instinct and an attachment to traditional values can be reconciled with modernity, democracy and social responsibility. One familiar notion must be addressed from the outset. Mann's speech in 1922 was not the work of a so-called *Vernunftrepublikaner*. The expression was coined slightly later to describe those intellectuals who only half-heartedly accepted the existence of the Weimar Republic.[8] Reason (*Vernunft*) urged them to support the new political arrangements as the lesser of many evils, but at the back of their minds they had no confidence in democracy at all, and were willing to abandon it sooner or later. Mann did not appeal to reason, but to ideas, moods and sentiments that, in his opinion, transcended it.[9] Reason, he now thought, was an all-too-dominant feature of his *Reflections*. His defense of the German cause had been a long, concentrated and exhausting intellectual effort. It was a simple matter of reason, "*eine einfache Vernunftsache*," he contended in an open letter to the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in March 1917, that a defeat would lead to a narrow-minded, vindictive, nationalistic and revanchist Germany. Only a victory could preserve the greatness of German *Kultur*, which he defined as the

and World War: A Reading of Thomas Mann's 'Betrachtungen'," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 73, no. 1 (1990): 5–29.

8 See on this concept Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), 24–29.

9 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 852: the Republic is not a matter of "narrow-minded rationalism" ("*Vernunftphilisterei*").

maintenance of "values that surpass the sphere of the state, the sphere of ideas (*Geist*), the arts, and all higher morality and humanity."[10]

Mann's brief public letter of 1917 neatly summarized many of the contradictions prominent in his massive *Reflections*. Most conspicuous are the use of political statements in order to safeguard a non-political sphere; the appeal to reason in support of suprarational, mainly aesthetic values; and the assumption that a military victory would not result in the triumph of militarism, but would guarantee the survival of cultural humanism. Perhaps there was an element of guilt as well in Mann's wartime writings. Although he had greeted the war with enthusiasm in the summer of 1914, he had taken care to get himself exempted from military service. As the campaign dragged on and the number of victims mounted, he must have felt that he had been sadly lacking in patriotism. He therefore sought to defend the fatherland with his pen, assuring himself that his work as a novelist, and the German *Kultur* it represented, would also benefit from his exertions.[11] Mann's *Reflections* appeared in print in late September 1918, a few weeks before the armistice was signed. By that time, his defense of German exceptionalism already seemed something of the past, while the sphere of culture had become more and more precarious.

The social and political turmoil of the immediate postwar years left Mann confused, insecure and sometimes almost helplessly groping for intellectual and moral support. His private diaries offer a detailed account of his growing distress.[12] Of course, he loathed the attitude of the Western Allies during the peace conference, with their humiliating insistence on an exclusively German war guilt. He also despised the radicalism from the Left, which in the spring of 1919 culminated in his home town of Munich in the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic. His disgust with the Western democracies filled him with a wave of sympathy for Russia, even with its recent communist government. At least, he thought, Russia shared with Germany a belief in the profundity and superiority of culture.[13] He tried hard to fit the course of things into the scheme of anti-politics he had developed in his *Reflections*: "'Communism,' as I see it, contains much that is good and human; its ultimate goal, after all, is the

10 Thomas Mann, "An die Redaktion der Frankfurter Zeitung" (1917), in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XIII, 559.

11 In the introduction to his *Reflections*, Mann spoke of his "intellectual service in arms" ("*Gedankendienst mit der Waffe*"): Mann, *Werke*, vol. XII, 9.

12 Mann destroyed all his diaries dating from before his exile in 1933, but kept the volumes from 1918–21 as a possible source for his novel *Dr. Faustus*.

13 Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1979), 178 (March 24, 1919).

dissolution of the state as such, which will always be an instrument of power, the humanizing and depoisoning of the world by depoliticizing it."[14]

When he was actually confronted with communist rule, however, he showed the predictable reactions of the affluent bourgeois. He had some literary friends among the intellectuals who constituted the revolutionary council in Munich, but still he was deeply anxious for the safety, not only of his family, but also of his income and his possessions. In April and May 1919, during the Bavarian revolution and the following violent repression, he sided wholeheartedly with the forces of the right.[15] In his creative writing, he deliberately turned to the private, the intimate and the archaic. "After concluding the *Reflections*," he explained, "I practically abjured the writing of essays (I was and am terribly tired of it) and firmly resolved to concentrate myself from now on on the artistic projects I still might want to finish."[16] He spent much of his time trying to escape (he used the term himself) into two literary "idylls," a prose meditation on life with his dog, and a story in verse about the first days of his youngest daughter.[17]

Still, even if he wanted to stay away from politics, he found some use for the humanitarianism he so readily invoked. In May 1919, a number of German writers published an appeal to the authorities to abstain from revenge and to show mildness towards the former revolutionaries. Mann was one of the signatories.[18] This was the first sign that he was beginning to distance himself from reactionary politics. It was not the Left, he now found, but the Right that carried out an excess of violence. In the circumstances, even the desire to remain unpolitical depended on political action.

2 The *Decline of the West*

At first, Oswald Spengler looked like a welcome ally. The first volume of his *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West) was published in

14 Thomas Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 1889–1936, ed. by Erika Mann (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1961), 158 (March 20, 1919, to Josef Ponten).

15 Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, 196 (April 13, 1919): "I would have no objection when they [the revolutionaries] were shot as harmful creatures"; 227 (June 5, 1919): "I find one can breathe much more freely under the military dictatorship than under the government of the rabble."

16 Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 163 (June 26, 1919, to Kurt Martens).

17 Thomas Mann, "Herr und Hund. Ein Idyll" and "Gesang vom Kindchen. Idylle," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. VIII, 526–617, 1068–1101.

18 The document is quoted in Jürgen Kolbe, *Heller Zauber. Thomas Mann in München* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), 323–24.

1918, only a few weeks before Mann's *Reflections*. Mann read it with growing enthusiasm in the spring of 1919.[19] Spengler tried to demonstrate that in the course of the centuries only a limited number of high cultures had existed, each with its own, self-centered and non-exchangeable world views, and each with a similar life-cycle of growth, flowering and decline. What struck Mann most in Spengler, however, was his use of the opposition between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. This was one of the fundamental ideas in his *Reflections*. According to Spengler, *Kultur* was the stage in which a society attached the highest value to artistic, philosophical and intellectual creativity. Over the course of time, the originality and intensity of the culture in question inevitably ebbed, making way for a *Zivilisation*, a social context in which practical concerns, such as technology, money, politics and journalism, took center stage. The striving for profundity and greatness in art and thought, with all the struggle and unease it entailed, was exchanged for a long, superficial, less demanding but often more comfortable aftermath. Throughout his *Reflections*, Mann maintained that in Germany the ideal of *Kultur* had been kept alive, whereas Britain and France had nothing to offer but a watered-down *Zivilisation*. Now that the war was lost, other ways should be sought to safeguard Germany's identity as a *Kultur*. Mann read Spengler's *Decline* as a warning: behind his prediction that German society inevitably would degenerate into a *Zivilisation*, he harbored a deep concern about the future of the national cultural heritage.

"Presently to occupy oneself with art is very problematic, now that the downfall of Western culture as such seems imminent," he wrote despondently in a letter of June 1919.[20] And a month later: "One should tune oneself into a contemplative, as well as cheerful-fatalistic mode, read Spengler, and understand that England and America's victory confirms and completes the civilization, rationalization, utilization of the West, which is the fate of every ageing culture. [...] What now is at hand, is the Anglo-Saxon world dominance, which is the final stage of civilization."[21] He recommended *The Decline of the West* with abundant praise for the literary Nietzsche Prize of 1919. The following February, however, he had a long conversation with one of the teachers of his eldest daughter, the clergyman Georg Merz, who made him see that Spengler was deadly serious in his prophecy of a future *Zivilisation*.[22] His work contained no irony, no nostalgia, no attempt at halting a deplorable development; on the contrary, Spengler decidedly supported the idea of *Zivilisation*. It was futile, he

19 Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, 271–79, 283 (June-July, 1919). See also Kolbe, *Heller Zauber*, 333–37.

20 Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 163 (June 6, 1919).

21 Ibid., 165 (July 5, 1919).

22 Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, 386–87 (February 26, 1920); see also Kolbe, *Heller Zauber*, 336.

thought, to put any faith in artistic creativity. He encouraged the youth of Germany to become engineers and entrepreneurs, not poets and thinkers.

This abdication of culture was precisely what Mann had feared and predicted in his wartime writings. He had not fought a battle in favor of *Kultur*, as he saw it, just to see *Zivilisation* triumph after all. That he rejected democracy as a side effect of *Zivilisation* implied no preference for an authoritarian but uneducated military-technological government. Once he realized his mistake, he began to see Spengler as a renegade, as someone who should have known better but willfully betrayed the cause. In his republican confession of 1922, he took him to task as "wrong and arrogant," as a man who taught his readers to despise "things of culture."[23] Shortly after delivering this lecture he composed a "Letter from Germany," intended for an American audience. It turned into a long refutation of Spengler. At heart, he continued to believe, Spengler was a conservative, but a "complicated perversity" led him to abandon the ideal of culture, and to incorporate *Zivilisation* with "fatalistic anger" into his system.[24]

Mann's "Letter" shows that he had learned a lesson, while still remaining true to his principles. He now saw that the sphere of high culture could not exist in isolation. The idea of *l'art pour l'art* proved to be untenable. "One cannot keep the problems separate; one cannot, for instance, exist as a politician without knowing something about intellectual things, or as an aesthete, a 'pure artist,' and not care the devil about one's social conscience."[25] This was, indeed, a long way from the *Reflections*. But at the same time he left no doubt that his recent political engagement stemmed from the same concern for cultural values that had always motivated him. "We may even nowadays call ourselves republicans, in a sense that goes far deeper than the juridical and constitutional, under the assumption that republicanism means responsibility, a sense of having to account for ourselves."[26]

3 Overcoming Decadence

At first, Mann continued to see democracy as something alien. Early in 1920 he welcomed the plans by Count Hermann Keyserling (1880–1946) to open

23 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 841.

24 Mann, "Briefe aus Deutschland, I," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XIII, 270; see also Mann, "Über die Lehre Spenglers," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. X, 178.

25 Mann, "Briefe aus Deutschland, I," 264; "Über die Lehre Spenglers," 173.

26 Mann, "Briefe aus Deutschland, I," 265; the sentence was omitted from "Über die Lehre Spenglers."

a school in cosmopolitan and humanitarian philosophy. He realized that its international outlook was at variance with some of the ideas in his *Reflections*. In a public letter in praise of Keyserling's project, he referred to his wartime meditations as "this constrained and laborious artistic composition, this piece of German non-academic philosophy, which I hardly understood while composing it." "The work lies behind me," he concluded, "and today I would be unable to write it."[27] But he thought it no coincidence that this attempt at educating a new generation in Germany originated with an aristocrat, and was sponsored by another aristocrat, the Grand Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt. "'Democracy' may be the latest word in fashion – it certainly is not Germany's last word."[28] At this point, he obviously hoped that the country would turn into a federation of regions led by a highly cultured, preferably titled elite. It took a long literary detour to discover that the Weimar Republic was no obstacle to these ideals.

In the spring of 1919, Mann resumed work on his great and highly intellectual novel *Der Zauberberg* (The Magic Mountain). Although he claimed to be tired of essay writing, he needed a more systematic analysis to clarify his thoughts. Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche had been the intellectual heroes of his *Reflections*. However, he had also frequently underpinned his opinions by references to authors like Goethe, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. When he was invited to give a lecture in the autumn of 1921 in Lübeck, his place of birth, he elaborated a comparison between Goethe and Tolstoy, which turned into an extended continuation and revision of his wartime propositions.[29] Both Goethe and Tolstoy could be seen as masters of ironic detachment. Goethe refused to be involved in the politics of his day and always maintained a dignified aloofness; Tolstoy depicted his world in a kaleidoscopic manner, through the eyes of a great variety of characters, as if from an impersonal distance. Both writers were aristocrats, Tolstoy by birth and Goethe through his career. It was not difficult to fit them into the arguments of the *Reflections*, and to celebrate them as examples of the non-political artist, as representatives of an exclusive dedication to *Kultur*.

This time, however, Mann took a different approach. In the first place, Goethe and Tolstoy were "healthy" authors. They were energetic men of long-lasting vitality. They had a positive attitude towards human existence and were inspired by ideals of progress, peace and balance. His immersion in Goethe and Tolstoy after the First World War was a decisive attempt to turn

27 Thomas Mann, "Brief an Hermann Grafen Keyserling," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XII, 595, 596.
28 Ibid., 603.
29 Thomas Mann, "Goethe und Tolstoi," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. IX, 58–173.

away from the morbidity of the fin-de-siècle, from the Schopenhauerian pessimism and the Wagnerian flirtation with love-in-death that he had long thought of as the pinnacle of *Kultur*. Secondly, Goethe and Tolstoy were great educators. They were driven by an impulse to investigate, explain and teach, but above all they constantly commented upon their own life as a lesson for others. Their pedagogical intentions as well as their autobiographical impulse had a model in an earlier, immensely influential author: Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[30] Mann and Rousseau! The combination deserves an exclamation mark. For Rousseau was not only the author of the pedagogical *Émile* and the autobiographical *Confessions*, he was also a confirmed democrat, a radical, and one of the fathers of the French Revolution.[31]

Of course, Mann was perfectly aware of this, and he hastened to put Rousseau aside as an unattractive character, a hypocrite, even a sort of madman. Nonetheless, he had to admit that his example, transformed in the works of Goethe and Tolstoy, was a valuable contribution to what he called "humanism." Both had shown a sympathy with mankind as such, an understanding of a shared background, of human failings as well as their greatness, that at least partially was derived from Rousseau. If this sense of a common destiny in the modern age had to take the form of democracy, then so be it. From now on, Mann's insistence on *Kultur* was accompanied by an insistence on "humanism," a concept that, however vague, opened a space for political engagement. His essay "Goethe and Tolstoy" – published in 1923 as a separate book, and later expanded even further – was subtitled *Fragmente zur Problem der Humanität* (Fragments on the Problem of Humanism).[32]

4 Back to Romanticism

"I believe it myself," Mann wrote to Keyserling in January 1920, "in the end nature restores itself somehow, and 'the German *is* conservative' – in this Wagner will forever be right. Therefore nothing is more important than to raise the spiritual level of German conservatism."[33] At this point he still expected a "conservative revolution" to bring about a national revival. But after his experiences with the political repression in Munich he had to admit that the forces

30 Ibid., 67–68.

31 In Mann's *Reflections*, Rousseau figured as one of the great antagonists, as one of the figureheads of the Western conception of politics: Mann, *Werke*, vol. XII, 29, 305, 386.

32 Mann, "Goethe und Tolstoi," 58.

33 Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 173 (January 18, 1920, to Hermann Keyserling).

of the Right were shockingly uncultivated. While he himself moved slightly to the left, he began to look for allies among former radicals, who were willing to meet him halfway. A remark in a letter of October 1921 shows his changing attitude: "Salvation can come only from those who, without rigid conservatism, want to maintain something, and who, at least some of them, in the past thoughtlessly used to blow the revolutionary horn, not from real conviction, but because they were unsatisfied with the present."[34]

In April 1922, he made a discovery that, in his own words, "mightily impressed" him.[35] He was asked to review Hans Reisiger's selection of works by Walt Whitman. The book struck him like a revelation. Whitman's evocation of the cosmic unity of mankind, his ecstatic appeal to a universal sympathy, answered exactly to his own longing for a new social harmony. Whitman made him feel once again connected to human destiny at large. A similar desire had been an important element in his *Reflections*. It now reemerged in the context of republican and democratic politics.

Looking for an equivalent to Whitman in the German tradition, he thought of Novalis. Of all people! At first sight, few poets seemed more remote from Whitman's rhapsodic republicanism than precisely Novalis, whose manifesto *Die Christenheit oder Europa* (Christianity or Europe), written in 1799, proposed a return to the medieval church as a remedy for the political divisions of his time. Was he not simply a reactionary? His entire biography seemed to brand him as one of the haziest of Romantics, whose unfinished novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* centered on the quest for a blue flower, and whose emotional life was dominated by his love for a very young, but incurably consumptive girl. Nonetheless, Mann set Whitman and Novalis side by side as inspiring figures in his defense of the Republic in October 1922. It was a sign of his own deep affinity with German Romanticism, but also of his ability to see through conventional preconceptions. There are two sides to Novalis. On the one hand, there is the sentimental, almost angelic young lyricist of the standard long-haired portrait. But the testimonies of his friends and contemporaries present the image of someone who liked to be witty and ironic, and who, in addition to his exuberant fantasies, could be surprisingly sober and practical.[36]

In his lecture, Mann presented Novalis as a cultural socialist. What attracted him was not a nebulous mysticism, but the poet's quest for human solidarity

34 Ibid., 193 (October 8, 1921, to Georg Müller Publishers).

35 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 832.

36 This aspect is stressed in Ricarda Huch, *Die Romantik. Ausbreitung, Blütezeit und Verfall* [1899–1901] (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich, 1951), 64–80. See also Rüdiger Safranski, *Romantik. Eine deutsche Affäre* (München: Hanser, 2007), 109–32.

in the service of cultural improvement. In his *Reflections*, Mann identified German conservatism with German *Kultur*, and German *Kultur* with the legacy of Romanticism. He now became convinced that the Romantic ideal of self-realization extended into the political sphere. The concept of *Kultur* therefore was not incompatible with democracy and the Weimar Republic.

Romanticism was a central theme in the last chapters of his still unfinished *Magic Mountain*. By way of documentation, Mann made an effort to refresh his knowledge of the movement. "I read diligently in Brandes' *Romantic School in Germany* these days, astounded to find ideas in Novalis that arose whilst I was immersed into the world of the Magic Mountain, without any consciousness of perhaps having absorbed them earlier."[37] This remark in his diary in the summer of 1920 again shows how he interpreted his sources from his own perspective. The Danish scholar Georg Brandes (1842-1927) was one of the founding fathers of the study of comparative literature. He was also a staunch defender of literary Naturalism, and politically very much a man of the Left. His *Romantic School in Germany* of 1873 was a long indictment of German Romanticism, which in his opinion was little more than a breeding ground of irrationalism, obscurantism and reactionary politics. He treated Novalis at some length, but systematically contrasted him with P.B. Shelley. "For Novalis the truth was poetry and dreams, for Shelley it was freedom."[38] He left no doubt which of the two he preferred.

Mann thought otherwise. Brandes' reactions to Romanticism were useful as a source for the discussion he wanted to stage in his ever-expanding novel, but he did not take them at face value. It may be true that he read Novalis' *Christianity or Europe* for the first time in 1920. He was right, however, that he had encountered his ideas before. Mann's view of Romanticism was based on a much more positive appreciation than the one by Brandes: the two-volume history of German Romanticism by Ricarda Huch, published in 1899-1901. In 1924, on her sixtieth birthday, he published an open letter of congratulations. Her work on Romanticism introduced a perspective that still contained a lesson for the present. It stressed the intellectual side of Romanticism, and it showed the cultural value of aspects of life and thought that were traditionally seen as feminine. Mann echoed Goethe and Novalis in acclaiming the female principle as "the principle of consciousness and insight."[39] In Huch he found a

37 Mann, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, 450 (July 5, 1920).

38 Georg Brandes, *Die romantische Schule in Deutschland* (Berlin: Franz Duncker, 1873), 262.

39 On the appreciation of the feminine in Novalis and Goethe, see Huch, *Romantik*, 85–86, 188, 203.

fellow combatant against standard German prejudice, which saw "the ideal of womanhood in the cow and that of manhood in the brutal killer."[40]

Mann's open letter to Huch almost came down to a defense of "gender-bending," of a world in which the spheres of the sexes were no longer opposed, but complementary and exchangeable. This was the world of art, the world the Romantics had created for themselves; it recognized the fact that women were more sensitive, not because they were closer to nature (art is the opposite of nature), but because they were gifted with "consciousness, solidarity, purpose."[41] Mann pointed out that Huch had made him discover the forward-looking side of Novalis: "He, who said that the actual better world was the future, can never have meant this as a reactionary."[42] In Huch he could find quotations from Novalis that exactly fitted the humanist program he had recently made his own: "Germanness is cosmopolitanism mixed with the strongest individuality."[43] This kind of open-minded patriotism was, he now thought, what he had been defending all along in his *Reflections*. Nonetheless, he still hoped to keep his right-wing readers on board. His ideal was the coming of a Third Reich, he said, the reign of a "religious humanism."[44] The term was popular in conservative circles. Soon it would be one of the most successful slogans in Nazi propaganda.

5 A German Republic

Mann also referred to a utopian Third Reich in his lecture on the German Republic of October 1922. The postwar German youth was, in his experience, both deeply conservative and Romantic. This was something he wanted to encourage. At the same time he wanted to show that the Romantic tradition did not necessarily imply revanchism, militarism and a narrow nationalism. The great Romantic writers all had entertained visions of a democratic, republican future, if one took these concepts in a broad humanist sense. The Weimar Republic was too often regarded as a product of shame and defeat. German

40 Thomas Mann, "Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag Ricarda Huchs," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. X, 430–31.

41 Ibid., 431.

42 Ibid., 435. According to Huch, Novalis was not looking backwards, but aimed at "a conscious and free unity," a new and commonly shared belief (Huch, *Romantik*, 323).

43 Huch, *Romantik*, 225.

44 Mann, "Zum sechzigsten Geburtstag Ricarda Huchs," 434. Mann's use of the term predated *Das dritte Reich* (1923) by Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, a major inspiration for National-Socialism.

Romanticism offered inspiration to embrace it as a new beginning, with pride and honor.[45]

Considering the future of the German Republic, Mann must have remembered the wonderful passage about republicanism in his own *Buddenbrooks*.[46] The scene is the revolutionary upheaval in 1848. A crowd has gathered in front of the town hall in Lübeck. The insurgents call out: "We want a republic!" One of the burgomasters answers from the window: "Go home! You already have one!" And indeed, the city-state of Lübeck was an age-old republic. It was an aristocratic republic, governed by a narrow circle of distinguished families, with a constitution comparable to the former Dutch Republic, Venice or Geneva. Of course, Mann did not entertain the illusion that the Weimar Republic could return to the political style of the *ancien régime*. But it was hard to think of Weimar without thinking of Goethe. Mann's republic would be a republic of writers and artists. It was highly symbolic that he began his manifesto as a eulogy of Gerhart Hauptmann on his sixtieth birthday.

The playwright Hauptmann (1862-1946) was one of the most successful German authors of his time, winner of the Nobel Prize in 1912, and highly respected for the humanitarian tendency of his writings. Before 1914 Hauptmann was generally seen as a pacifist and a social-democrat, but during the war he took an ultra-nationalist position, for which he received a decoration from the Emperor. After the German defeat he returned to his previous pacifist stance. He was one of the first intellectuals in Germany to publicly declare his solidarity with the Republic, years before Mann did so. As he seemed an acceptable figure to nationalists as well as to the social-democrats, there was talk of appointing him president of the new German state. The project did not materialize, but in 1921 Hauptmann was offered the post of prime minister or *Reichskanzler*. He refused, mentioning personal reasons, and retired into private life, which he liked to conduct in a lavish style, in spite of his democratic leanings.[47]

Hauptmann was, if only through his physical appearance, an impressive figure. He looked a bit like Goethe, a fact of which he was very much aware. Mann voiced his slightly ironic respect as well as his ambivalence towards the Weimar state when he called Hauptmann "the king of the Republic."[48] Hauptmann, he

45 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 824.

46 Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, Part Four, Chapter Three (in Mann, *Werke*, vol. 1, 193).

47 At the end of the Second World War, Mann himself would be mentioned as a possible president of a new German Republic: Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher 1944–1946* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1986), 9, 49.

48 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 812.

stressed in his opening words of praise, was a democrat, a humanitarian, but also a nationalist. These were not contradictory ideals. Hauptmann had not been untrue to himself when he acclaimed the Republic, nor did he, Mann, want to diverge from the principles he had laid down in his *Reflections*. But it cannot have escaped his audience that there was a shift in accent. The former "unpolitical man" now regarded culture and politics as inseparable. He had seen the state as a safeguard of culture and discovered too late, as he admitted, that it was not in good hands. It was impossible to maintain a distance; after all, "we are the state."[49] The current president of the Republic, the Social-Democrat Friedrich Ebert (1871-1925), was a man of good will, who understood the unity of state and culture. For the state, Mann admonished his audience, was "the highest degree of humanity."[50]

Compared to his former point of view, Mann made massive concessions to politics. But it was characteristic that he, throughout his complicated argument, continued to see politics in cultural terms. As far he was concerned, politics should be an applied branch of culture. Already at the very beginning of his speech he noted with obvious satisfaction that "the immediate standing of the writer grows in the republican state."[51] He was thinking of the honors offered to Hauptmann, but also of the role he was now taking up himself. His discourse contained no political program. His task, as he conceived of it, was to act as the conscience of the nation. "All culture springs from relations with the state," Mann quoted with approval from Novalis. This contained "a world of hope for present-day Germany."[52] Novalis's apparent sympathy for Crown and Church was rooted in democratic sentiments. He wanted a popular, elective monarchy, not above, but in service of the nation. He idealized the medieval church because he hoped for a confederation of Europe in harmony and brotherhood, not because he aimed at a reintroduction of authoritarianism and dogmatism. His conception of Christianity rested on the principles of freedom and solidarity. Novalis was in favor of international law and international cooperation, and he expected war to be abolished, once the different nations had come to their senses – and this from a German aristocrat, Mann exclaimed, from whom one could have expected diatribes on chivalric honor![53] Similar ideals could be found in Tolstoy, and particularly in Whitman, in whose writings the Romantic conception of the state based on a common humanity had

49 Ibid., 821, 823.
50 Ibid., 831.
51 Ibid., 813.
52 Ibid., 833.
53 Ibid., 843.

made the transition to the modern age. Spengler was wrong; his rejection of a humanitarian, international outlook stemmed from a "crude stubbornness," and his vision of the future was nothing but a continuation of the mechanical approach to society that had prevailed in Prussia.[54] This was just the thing the postwar generation revolted against, Mann thought. The Republic should be able to build stronger ties.

Mann saw a new positive role for Germany as a country that kept a middle course between the "political mysticism" of the Slavic peoples and the "radical individualism" of the West, by which he meant Russian communism and French liberalism. The one sacrificed everything to equality, the other to freedom. Only Germany was able to maintain the right balance. This would allow the country to act as a mediator between East and West in a future European constellation. Again he took a step forward while pretending to stay in the same place. His *Reflections* still saw the German tradition as radically opposed to the Western democracies, closer to Russia than to France. Now he concluded with words of praise for the "*Deutsche Mitte*", the German middle ground.[55]

The last part of Mann's speech was devoted to a digression on the "social eroticism" he found in Whitman, on sexual liberation as an aspect of future society, on male bonding in a democratic, non-military sense, and on the Romantic consciousness of death as an obligation to serve life to the fullest ("*Lebensdienst*").[56] Anthropological and psychological speculations of this type were fashionable at the time, not only among the artistic *bohème* and left-wing radicals, but also in conservative circles. The reactions in the press, however, focused on something else. Mann's truly sensational remark came early in his talk: the Republic was a matter of "*Erhebung und Ehre*," of edification and honor. Whatever further qualifications he added, and how much he underlined that the Republic, "this state without citizens," still had to find its ideological bearings, for the political Right this amounted to treason. "They see me as a campaigner for the re-election of Ebert," he wrote, "the surf of politics surrounds me."[57]

Mann did not retract his opinions. Some months later he defended the Republic even more emphatically in a speech in Munich for the members of

54 Ibid., 841–42.

55 Mann mentioned the idea of a "German middle" in his *Reflections*, but here it was to stress German exceptionalism, and not in a conciliatory way. For Mann's wartime views on the deep affinity between Germany and Russia, see Mann, *Werke*, vol. XII, 437–41.

56 Mann, "Von deutscher Republik," 847–51.

57 Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 200 (October 20, 1922). Friedrich Ebert was provisionally appointed president of the Republic in 1919. Elections for the presidency were foreseen in October 1922, but in view of the political instability the Reichstag decided to reappoint Ebert for a term.

the republican youth movement, on the anniversary of the murder of Walther Rathenau.[58] He still considered it a major function of the state to guarantee a space for "German introspection," this time referring to Goethe and Hölderlin, but he was now much more explicit about the enemy. It was the time of the French occupation of the Rhine, of the Fascist dictatorship in Italy and of the first stirrings of the Nazi party in Germany. In view of the rising tide of "absolutism and obscurantism," the old humanist ideals might seem to be "humbug." But they were not; what was needed, and what had been neglected for far too long, was to turn them into a political force. Only then would the tradition of German *Humanität* be completed. Once more, Mann set his hope on a coming "religious humanism."[59]

The great themes Mann discussed in his lectures from 1921 to 1923 – Romanticism, conservatism, republicanism, democracy – remained subject to constant revision and reconsideration. His allegiance to the Republic began with praise for Hauptmann, who at the time seemed an embodiment of the cultural potential of the new German state. A year later Mann had some personal conversations with Hauptmann while on vacation in Southern Tyrol.[60] In the summer of 1924 they met again with their families on the Baltic coast. Hauptmann's appearance and demeanor gave Mann the idea to include someone like him as a character in his novel. In *The Magic Mountain*, he transformed Hauptmann into the imposing Dutchman Peeperkorn, who is credited by those around him with great wisdom and experience. This respect, however, is based only on assumption, because Peeperkorn has trouble expressing himself clearly and usually leaves his sentences unfinished. Shortly before he commits suicide, he invites the guests at the sanatorium to a picnic near a waterfall. There he holds a speech which everybody takes to be a summary of his insights. But his words are drowned out by the deafening noise of the water.[61]

Almost everything in *The Magic Mountain* has a symbolic function. Is it far-fetched to see in Peeperkorn's speech an expression of disillusion with Hauptmann's refusal to accept a leading role in the Republic? Hauptmann felt ridiculed, and Mann saw the need to excuse himself profusely for the way he had turned him into a literary character.[62] The real reason for his abundant, almost obsequious apologies must be that his portrayal of Peeperkorn was

58 Thomas Mann, "Geist und Wesen der deutschen Republik," in Mann, *Werke*, vol. XI, 853–60.
59 Ibid., 860.
60 Thomas Mann and Heinrich Mann, *Briefwechsel 1900–1949* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1984), 145 (October 17, 1923).
61 Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, Chapter 7 (in Mann, *Werke*, vol. III, 861–63).
62 Mann, *Briefe*, vol. I, 234–236 (April 11, 1925, to Gerhart Hauptmann).

more than just a slight caricature. It implied a severe criticism. Like Hauptmann, his fictional figure was expected to come up with an answer, to say something decisive, but when the moment had arrived nothing could be heard. With hindsight, we know that Mann was right. Hauptmann did not applaud the Nazi regime, but neither did he protest against it. He continued to believe, as Mann did not, in the fiction of the "unpolitical man."

Mann's speech on the Republic was a warning signal to the members of a younger generation, who felt attracted to right-wing movements on the basis of Romantic sentiments. In the following years he saw with distress how these sentiments were not channeled into a moderate republican conservatism, but increasingly descended into an aggressive radicalism. After the unexpected death of Friedrich Ebert in 1925, the parties of the Right successfully supported the election of Field Marshal Hindenburg as president of the Republic. In Mann's opinion, this was "a scandalous exploitation of the Romantic inclinations of the German people."[63] In 1928 he described the Nazi agitation as "a Romanticism consisting purely in dynamics, a celebration of the catastrophe purely for its own sake."[64]

Romanticism, once thought of as a solution to Germany's political dilemmas, now became a problem of its own. Mann kept returning to this question throughout the rest of his life. It took a quarter of a century, a time of exile and a new war, before he found a way of dealing with it once again in a novel. In *Dr. Faustus* (1947) the German Romantic tradition, with its continuation in Schopenhauer, Wagner and Nietzsche, is no longer presented as a means to salvation but as a fatal seduction, a magnificent but dangerous burden.

63 Ibid., 239 (April 23, 1925, to Julius Bab).

64 Ibid., 278 (March 11, 1928, to Willy Haas).

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