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## **A HISTORY OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT WITHOUT POLITICAL ECONOMY? THE CASE OF SPAIN**

### **Abstract**

Although often side-lined, political economy was one of the core languages of the European Enlightenment. In countries such as Spain, this discipline emerged in the 1740s as an essential language of the enlightened movement and a powerful mechanism for connecting with culturally and economically more developed countries. This article uses political economy as a common thread to consider some of the dilemmas currently facing the historiography of the Spanish Enlightenment: a single Enlightenment movement versus national context; radical versus moderate; centre versus peripheries; and an Enlightenment that was tied to the eighteenth century versus a longer-term movement.

**Keywords:** Spanish Enlightenment, political economy, national context, long Enlightenment, centre/periphery.

### **I.**

In one of the reflections addressed to the European sovereigns of his day, Voltaire mused about how they should proceed so that their nations could benefit from the advantages of apparently uniquely developed agriculture such as that in China. “*Que doivent faire nos souverains d’Europe en apprenant de tels exemples?*”, he asked emphatically, going on to reply that they should simply limit themselves to “*admirer et rougir; mais surtout [à] imiter*”.<sup>1</sup> Far from being banal or rhetorical, Voltaire’s question and answer hold fundamental keys to explaining the nature of the European Enlightenment. To a great extent, this was an exercise in endless observation, admiration and imitation. The latter was understood in a sense that involved an active role for enlightened Europeans:

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<sup>1</sup> „What should our sovereigns do to learn from these examples? ...to admire and to blush, but above all to imitate“.

first to understand, then to spread and finally to adapt to their respective nations the ideas and experiences that they discovered beyond their borders and which simultaneously aroused feelings of embarrassment and envy.<sup>2</sup>

As in most Old Continent countries, the Enlightenment in Spain was essentially a process of circulating, adapting and applying these new developments and, as such, was a creative process with indisputable added value. When filtered through different national realities, the scientific, economic and social innovations originating in France, Britain and Germany mutated into something different from the original versions. The result of this process of cultural migration was not a pure product that was a faithful derivative of the original, but a kind of jointly owned hybrid in which the first version had usually undergone a significant transformation.<sup>3</sup> If, moreover, these new European ideas reached Enlightenment Spain via a third country such as France, as they usually did, these impurities assumed even greater relative importance. Furthermore, the Spanish intellectuals and reformers who were involved in these processes of receiving and appropriating ideas, reforms and socio-political and cultural practices throughout the eighteenth century were not concerned with remaining faithful to the doctrinal orientation that had inspired them; they were not worried about being viewed as supporters of Adam Smith, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Isaac Newton or Cesare Beccaria, but about pursuing a process of creative re-appropriation whose end products would be suitable for insertion into the new Hispanic reality that embraced them. These processes took precedence over pure creation or innovation, and as such, they cannot be overlooked if the aim is to interpret correctly the nature of the Enlightenment in countries that, like Spain, were essentially recipients of the movement. However, in another sense, they were also countries with a political, military, imperial and economic weight of the first order in the geography of eighteenth-century Europe.

Bringing Spain into a discussion of the European Enlightenment may seem somewhat anomalous; in fact, the traditional interpretation that denies Spain's involvement in the Enlightenment has never entirely

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<sup>2</sup> See, on this n° I, Jesús Astigarraga, "Admirer, Rougir, Imiter. Spain and the European Enlightenment", in Jesús Astigarraga (ed.), *The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2015, pp. 1–17. A more complete version of this work can be found in Jesús Astigarraga, "Sujeto histórico e historia intelectual. Reflexiones en torno a un debate historiográfico acerca de la Ilustración española", in Teresa Nava (ed.), *De ilustrados a patriotas. Individuo y cambio histórico en la monarquía española*, Madrid, Sílex, 2017, pp. 41–65.

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Burke, *Cultural Hybridity, Cultural Exchange, Cultural Translation: Reflections on History and Theory*, Cambridge, Polity, 2010.

disappeared. However, although this is not the place to go into detail, the development of Spanish historiography over the last five decades is an invitation to bring the Spanish Enlightenment out of the shadows and try to fix it on the overall map of the movement in Europe. Spain undeniably had its own unique Enlightenment, which requires attention and study, and which can be analysed by means of classical categories such as “enlightened ideas”, “enlightened reforms”, and “enlightened despotism”. The country unquestionably internalised some of the European Enlightenment’s main ideas, practices and reforms, particularly during the last three decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

## II.

It was also the case with political economy. Although often sidelined — or even totally neglected — by traditional eighteenth-century historiography, the discipline was indisputably one of the core languages of the European Enlightenment<sup>5</sup>, and, as John Robertson has brilliantly shown, played a central role in its international dissemination.<sup>6</sup> Franco Venturi explained that, like the Enlightenment as a whole, political economy was understood as a utopia and reform; that is to say, as a movement of intellectual research and practical reforms.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, as a science of government, it was also understood to have a significant political

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<sup>4</sup> Mónica Bolufer, “The Enlightenment in Spain: Classic and New Historiographical perspectives”, in Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Mónica Bolufer and Catherine M. Jaffe (eds.), *Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Abingdon-New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 3–16.

<sup>5</sup> Without wishing to be exhaustive, on the emergence of political economy in the European eighteenth century can be seen: William Letwin, *The Origins of Scientific Economics*. Londres, Methuen, 1963; Terence W. Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith. The Emergence of Political Economy, 1662–1776*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1988; Jean-Claude Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique*, Paris, EHESS, 1992; Catherine Larrère, *L'invention de l'économie au XVIIIe siècle. Du droit naturel à la physiocratie*, Paris, PUF, 1992; Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse, 1750–1840*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998; Peter Groenewegen, *Eightheenth Century Economics: Turgot, Beccaria and Smith and their contemporaries*, Londres, Routledge, 2002; Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> See John Robertson, “The Enlightenment Above the National Context: Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland and Naples”, *The Historical Journal* 40–3, 1997, pp. 667–697; *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680–1760*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971.

dimension and, in fact, was undoubtedly one of the preferred languages of politics in countries such as Spain during a good part of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> In strictly intellectual terms, political economy was a landmark in the history of European ideas. Its emergence was part of a broader intellectual movement that, throughout the 17th century, had sought a new definition of human nature that was unconnected to religious explanations and attempted to understand humanity's true passions and interests and the ultimate reasons for its sociability. Its appearance is thus not unrelated to the more general of what the eighteenth century termed the "sciences of man", to use Hume's expression. The hostility towards religion, the destruction of the intellectual unity of the Catholic world that came from the Reformation and the new empirical and rational understanding of the world illuminated by natural scientists and empirical philosophers of natural law, mainly British, Dutch, German and French, formed the basis of the new ways of thinking<sup>9</sup>, that ultimately fuelled the gradual emergence of political economy during this century.

In countries such as Spain, political economy emerged from the 1740s onwards as an essential language of the Enlightenment movement, as well as a powerful mechanism for connecting with countries that were culturally and economically more developed and transferring from them some of the most prominent institutions of their economic culture (press, dictionaries, translations, chairs or economic societies)<sup>10</sup>. It is therefore impossible to write the history of the Enlightenment in Spain without paying close attention to political economy, and this article uses the discipline as a common thread to consider some of the dilemmas currently facing the historiography of the Spanish Enlightenment<sup>11</sup>: a single Enlightenment movement versus national context; radical versus moderate; centre versus peripheries, and an Enlightenment that was tied to the eighteenth century versus a longer-term movement.

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<sup>8</sup> A synthesis of the history of political economy in the Spanish Enlightenment can be seen in Vicent Llobart, "El pensamiento económico de la Ilustración en Europa (1730–1812)", in Enrique Fuentes Quintana (ed.), *Economía y economistas españoles. Vol. III. La Ilustración*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg-Círculo de Lectores, 2000, pp. 7–89.

<sup>9</sup> See, for a deeper reflexion, Anthony Padgen, *The Enlightenment and why it still matters*, Oxford, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> See a full synthesis in Jesús Astigarraga, *An Unifying Enlightenment. Institutions of Political Economy in Eighteenth-Century Spain (1700–1808)*, Leiden-Boston, Brill Publishers, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> See two complete balances on the Spanish Enlightenment in Jesús Astigarraga (ed.), *The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2015, and Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Mónica Bolufer et Catherine Jaffe (eds.), *Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Abingdon-New York, Routledge, 2020.

### III.

An initial interpretative approach that may be useful in analysing the circulatory flow of ideas about political economy in Enlightenment Spain is the centre-periphery model; that is, how these ideas, which originated in centres of innovation such as Edinburgh, London, Paris and Amsterdam, arrived and took root in the underdeveloped and culturally backward peripheries of Southern Europe, as indeed occurred in Spain.<sup>12</sup> However, this approach is rather too schematic to be useful, as the problem of the unclear demarcation between the concepts of “centre” and “periphery” immediately arises. The main dividing line is usually drawn between the Protestant North and the Catholic South, with France as the only exception; however, as Franco Venturi’s *magnum opus* makes clear, the Italian Enlightenment cannot be considered merely an intellectual by-product of the West Atlantic mainstream.<sup>13</sup>

The additional problem is that many writings and economic and political ideas arrived in Spain from their places of origin — Scotland, England, Holland and Germany — following a process of intervention in which a decisive role was played by Paris, and French, as a genuine lingua franca.<sup>14</sup> That was mainly true of British and German-Austrian economic-political treatises, almost all of which reached Spain in French. While this was specifically the case with authors such as Joshua Gee, David Hume, George Grenville and Charles Davenant from the first group, and Johann Heinrich Gottlob Justi ou Joseph Sonenfels from the second, various texts such as those by Cesare Beccaria and the Pietro and Alessandro Verri brothers, which originated in Italian states, were also circulated in Spain in their French translations. These interventions led to problems related to diachrony — a text could take some time to arrive in Spain simply because of delays with the French translation — and content: the Spanish version was produced based on a French translation that may well have departed from the original, so that the result — the Spanish version — that was eventually circulated throughout the country was the product of a double transfer process.

The usefulness of the centre-periphery model where Spain is concerned is undermined by a further reason related to the fact that the

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example,, Richard Butterwinck, Simon Davies and Gabirel Sánchez Espinosa (eds.), *Peripheries of the Enlightenment*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, Turin, 1969–1984, 5 vols.

<sup>14</sup> Vicent Llombart, “Traducciones españolas de economía política (1700–1812): catálogo bibliográfico y una nueva perspectiva”, *Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, CROMOHS-Firenze University Press, 2004, 9 [DOI: [www. cromohs.unifi. it/92004/llombart. Html](http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/92004/llombart.Html)].

writings originated in several places. It is connected to the direct flow — that is, without any intervention whatsoever — that Spain established with other states that were also classed as “peripheral”, the best representatives of which are undoubtedly Portugal, Greece and Italy. Some of the essential treatises by major Neapolitan school authors such as Giacinto Dragonetti, Antonio Genovesi and Gaetano Filangieri went straight to Spain<sup>15</sup>, making Italian the second most important medium for the transfer of economic and political culture, above English.<sup>16</sup> It was also the case with other institutions, the most important of which was the Naples Chair of Commerce and Civil Economy, created under the aegis of *Carlo di Borbone* in 1754 and headed by Antonio Genovesi until 1769. This experience was directly transferred to Spain as the model for the Chair of Civil Economics and Commerce founded thirty years later (1784) in Zaragoza by the *Sociedad Económica Aragonesa*, as well as for similar teaching experiences there at the end of the century.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, the *Aula de Comércio*, founded by Pombal in Lisbon in 1759, was a factor in creating the Spanish university chairs in commerce.

A very similar pattern of communication, although undoubtedly less important than that originating in Naples, was reproduced in economic treatises and other writings produced by authors such as Gian Rinaldo Carli or Francesco Grisellini in Austrian Lombardy and Francesco Maria Giani in Leopold II's Tuscany, whose works also reached Spain without intervention from third countries. All these cases involved processes of cultural transfer — which also flowed in the opposite direction — that bypassed the great centres of the continental Enlightenment. Studies of the European Enlightenment tend to forget, or at least undervalue, these “dialogues” that took place on the edges of the “other Europe”, but their importance to Spain was neither circumstantial nor marginal: between 1774 and 1836, about thirty translations or Spanish versions of texts

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<sup>15</sup> Jesús Astigarraga, “Diálogo económico en la ‘otra’ Europa. Las traducciones españolas de los economistas de la Ilustración napolitana (A. Genovesi, F. Galiani y G. Filangieri)”, *Cyber Review of Modern Historiography*, CROMOHS-Firenze University Press, 2004, 9 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.13128/Cromohs-15645>]. The circulation of ideas in the opposite direction was also very fluid; see, for example: Niccolò Guasti, “Claroscuros de la fortuna de Campomanes en la Italia de la Ilustración”, in Dolores Mateos (ed.), *Campomanes doscientos años después*, Oviedo, Universidad de Oviedo e Instituto Feijoo de Estudios del Siglo XVIII, 2003, pp. 691–708.

<sup>16</sup> Llobart, Vicent, 2004, “Traducciones españolas”, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Jesús Astigarraga and Javier Usoz, “El pensamiento político y económico ilustrado y las cátedras de la Sociedad Económica Aragonesa”, *Anuario de Historia del Derecho Español*, 78–79, 2008, pp. 423–448; “The Enlightenment in Translation. Antonio Genovesi's Political Economy in Spain, 1778–1800”, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 28–1, 2013, pp. 24–45.



originating in the Neapolitan Enlightenment were produced. It means that economic-political culture in the Spanish eighteenth century cannot in any sense be interpreted from an exclusively Franco-centric perspective, as the Spanish Enlightenment began to be largely reconstructed in its most modern phase by authors such as Jean Sarrailh or Richard Herr<sup>18</sup>; in fact, this was also the case with the European Enlightenment as a whole, which Ernest Cassirer's classic theory wrongly linked to the *Lumières* and the small circle of *philosophes* who represented them.<sup>19</sup> Neither can this culture be ascribed to a merely Franco-British phenomenon: under no circumstances can the advent of Spanish enlightened - and liberal - culture forget its Italian roots.

The interpretative problems raised by the centre-periphery approach also apply to the receiving centres. While early studies interpreted European economic and political ideas' arrival in Spain as a phenomenon that was almost exclusively confined to the Court of Madrid, a much fairer line of interpretation has since developed that takes into account the contributions that the different regions in Spain made to this reception process: the focus has shifted from an interpretation based on a "single centre" — Madrid and its powerful court — to a more polycentric approach.

Spain's political make-up had some bearing on this issue. In other European regions, such as the Italian and German states and principalities, this polycentric component was simply a consequence of fragmented political structures, which had a decisive influence on how Enlightenment ideas were received and applied.<sup>20</sup> In Spain, however, no such political fragmentation appeared to exist; in fact, the reverse seemed to be true. The transition from the Habsburgs to the Bourbons after the War of Succession entailed a substantial change in political and administrative model, from the Habsburgs' horizontal and "compound" structure to the Bourbons' more centralised and vertical structure with its increasingly unitary and executive administrative pattern<sup>21</sup>. However, as is well known, this did not mean that all vestiges of the old Spain inherited from the Habsburgs were eliminated; this is clear from the example of

<sup>18</sup> Jean Sarrailh, *L'Espagne éclairée de la seconde moitié du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, Impr. Nationale, 1954; Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958.

<sup>19</sup> Ernest Cassirer, *La Philosophie des Lumières* (1932), Paris, Fayard, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> On the Italian case, see *Settecento riformatore*, *op. cit.*, de Franco Venturi, and on the German case, Tribe, *Governing Economy*, and Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Germany*, Oxford, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> María Victoria López-Cordón: "Instauración dinástica y reformismo administrativo: la implantación del sistema ministerial", *Manuscrits*, 18, 2000, pp. 93–111; "Secretarios y secretarías en la Edad Moderna: de las manos del Príncipe a relojeros de la Monarquía", *Studia Historica-Historia moderna*, 15, 1996, pp. 107–131.

the three Basque provinces and the Kingdom of Navarre, which retained their *fueros* — chartered laws — and public law institutions. At the same time, the cultural identity of the economic and political elites continued to be marked by a regional component, by the ties to Hapsburg Spain's ancient kingdoms and crowns, which in some way helped to prolong its validity over the years. The first manifestations of the early Enlightenment were centred around *tertulias* — gatherings — and groups of *novatores* — innovators — they were geographically isolated and had relatively little communication with each other and thus retained this significant regional component after the Bourbons ascended to the throne.<sup>22</sup> Partly as a continuation of these early expressions of cultural change, the emergence of political-economic culture from the 1750s and 1760s onwards was no different in this respect. The regionalisation and decentralisation process undergone by the economic Enlightenment was underpinned by two institutions in Spain, at least at the administrative level: the trade consulates and the economic societies.<sup>23</sup> Both essentially emerged from the 1760s onwards and helped to multiply the effect of the circulation of economics writings on the shaping of the Spanish “public sphere” during the Enlightenment period.<sup>24</sup>

However, economic-political literature had begun to appear in the 1760s, even before the proliferation of consulates and economic societies, reflecting the fact that political economy was reaching and adapting to regions that had enjoyed their own political and administrative identity before the War of Succession. It arrived without first passing through the court. Authors such as Tomás Anzano in Aragon, Javier María de Munive, Count of Peñaflorida in the Basque Country, Enrique Ramos in the Kingdom of Valencia and Francisco Romà y Rosell in Catalonia were among the first exponents of these “regional” Enlightenments, which remained very active in the period before the *Cortes* of Cadiz were held from 1810 to 1813. These authors, and others who continued to develop this regional economics approach afterwards (Antonio Arteta, Ignacio Jordán de Asso, Manuel Sisternes, Jaume Caresmar, Antonio de Capmany, José Cornide and many more), wrote a series of works whose content referred to the regional realities of the Principality of Catalonia,

<sup>22</sup> Jesús Pérez Magallón, *Construyendo la modernidad. La cultura española en el tiempo de los novatores (1675–1725)*, Madrid, CSIC, 2002.

<sup>23</sup> Jesús Astigarraga, “Economic Societies and the Politicisation of the Spanish Enlightenment”, in Jesús Astigarraga (ed.), *The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited*, Oxford, Voltaire Foundation, 2015, pp. 63–81, and *An Unifying Enlightenment*, ch. 4.

<sup>24</sup> On the relations between the Enlightenment, the political economy and the public sphere, see John Robertson, “Enlightenment, Public Sphere and Political Economy”, dans Jesús Astigarraga and Javier Usoz, *L'économie politique et la sphère publique dans le débat des Lumières*, Madrid, Casa Velázquez, 2013, pp. 9–32.



the Kingdoms of Valencia, Aragon, Galicia and Navarre, and the Basque provinces, for the first time since the Bourbons had become established. It is the fundamental factor that gave the economic Enlightenment in Spain its polycentric component. As Franco Venturi argued in the case of Italy, the Spanish Enlightenment was essentially the work of personalities, political authorities, civil servants and other royal employees, intellectuals and reformers linked to official institutions — the courts and bodies of provincial administration — or semi-official ones, such as the consulates and the economic societies.<sup>25</sup> It gave the process of the reception and acclimatisation of economic-political ideas its marked territorial component, which also extended to the question of translation. The Spanish versions of works by authors such as Charles Davenant, Gabriel-François Coyer, Jakob Friedrich Bielfeld, Antonio Genovesi, Jean-François Melon, Francesco Grisellini and Gian Rinaldo Carli were produced in these enlightened groups in the Basque Country, Majorca and Aragon. In some cases, such as Catalonia or the Basque provinces, these regional centres developed proposals whose doctrinal and reformist foundations were not always consistent with the “official” programme designed at court.<sup>26</sup>

The issue of polycentrism becomes even more complex if the country, including its Atlantic side, is considered. Although the transfer of economic-political culture from peninsular Spain to its overseas territories is poorly understood, everything suggests that the mainland played the role of a true “centre”, as a mediator in the reception of the economic-political ideas of the European Enlightenment and their subsequent transfer to Latin America, where they underwent a second process of reception, dissemination and adaptation. The centre-periphery scheme is therefore of little use in the case of Spain, which, in short, was polycentric - both within the peninsula and on its Atlantic side - and can thus be compared to some extent to the Enlightenment experienced in the different Italian states, as described in detail by Venturi.

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<sup>25</sup> See, in the same line, María Victoria López-Cordón, “The Enlightenment and its Interpreters: Nobility, Bureaucrats, and publicists”, in Elizabeth Franklin Lewis, Mónica Bolufer and Catherine M. Jaffe (eds.), *Routledge Companion to the Hispanic Enlightenment*, Abingdon-New York, Routledge, 2020, pp. 203–17. On Venturi, see “Economisti e riformatori spagnoli e italiani del ’700”, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 74, 1962, pp. 532–61.

<sup>26</sup> On the Catalan case, see Ernest Lluch, *El pensament econòmic a Catalunya (1760–1840)*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1973; and on the Basque case, Jesús Astigarraga, *Los ilustrados vascos*, Barcelona, Crítica, 2003.

## IV.

If centre-periphery models are generally of little use due to their over-simplicity, economic culture in Enlightenment Spain cannot be approached with any real thoroughness either by interpretative models assimilated to “national context”, along the lines of Roy S. Porter and Teich Mikula’s 1981 analysis<sup>27</sup>. Their work stressed the non-existence of a single, unitary Enlightenment, and Porter went so far as to say that this idea seemed to him to be a kind of “hallucination”. If the phenomenon were to be approached properly, it had to be fragmented in such a way that the idea of the Enlightenment (with a capital E and singular) gave way to that of enlightenments (plural), defined in national, political (republican versus royalist), religious (Catholic versus Protestant) and other terms. The cost of this historiographical tradition, today enthusiastically represented by John G. A. Pocock<sup>28</sup>, has been the deconstruction of the Enlightenment’s unitary sense. At the same time, however, it has undeniably led to clear progress in studies of the European Enlightenment, contributing to a better understanding of the importance of such ebullient regional Enlightenments, as those in Scotland and Naples, and enhancing knowledge of the relationship between Enlightenment ideas and the different political and social contexts in which they were received.

However, these indisputable benefits do not make the approaches that produced them valid in themselves. Indeed, they are highly questionable when applied to the Spain of the Enlightenment and the interpretation of the arrival of economic-political culture there. The first reason is that the focus of the national context approach has been built on national entities when, throughout the eighteenth century, the identity element of enlightened sectors was frequently based not on political community, which did not exist then, but on other factors such as language.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, this approach is based on an anachronistic interpretative model, as it projected the nation-state structure that took hold in the following two centuries onto the eighteenth century. The vastness of the territories controlled by Spain then made it necessary to multiply “national contexts” well beyond the Iberian Peninsula itself. As the area ruled by Spain encompassed numerous nation-states that would come

<sup>27</sup> Roy S. Porter et Teich Mikula (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* Cambridge, CUP, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> John G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1999–2003 (3 vols.), vol. I. *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 5–10.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, the case of Greece:: Paschalis M. Kirimiades, *Enlightenment and Revolution. The Making of Modern Greece*, Cambridge-Massachusetts-Londres, Harvard University Press, 2013.

into being during the first decades of the following century, still under the influence of Enlightenment ideas, defining the precise national context to which it is not easy to confine any analysis of the international flow of economic-political ideas.

In addition, as outlined above, the Spanish Enlightenment's raw material was the multiplicity and diversity of issuing and receiving centres. If the regional Enlightenments' remarkable intellectual activity in the receiving and applying economic-political culture is considered, understanding the country's central power as the only such centre is inappropriate. Doing so would require breaking down the national dimension into "sub-national" units to do justice to this culture's impact on Spain. The unitary Enlightenment model would thus be replaced by a kind of fragmentation process resembling *matryoshka* dolls.

There is a third reason why the usefulness of methods associated with the national context in the issue at hand is debatable, and this is related to the very process by which political economy emerged as a science. As is already known in some detail, this process was the result of research at international and cross-generational levels, which is inseparable from its cosmopolitan component and in which, as a brilliant work by Sophus Reinert has shown<sup>30</sup>, the cross-border circulation of ideas played a crucial role. If it is fair to talk of the existence of political economy in the Spanish Enlightenment, this is because the discipline had previously taken root in other nations, giving rise to new economic laws, policies and methods. The political economy of the Spanish Enlightenment was a fusion of these foreign ideas with pre-existing currents of thought, mainly Castilian *arbitrismo* — political economy of XVI and XVII centuries — and, to a lesser extent, scholasticism. Above all, however, it involved a programme of adapting these external ideas to the Hispanic context.

For this reason, it is not possible to understand the birth of Spanish economic culture in the eighteenth century in isolation, disregarding this international dimension, without stressing that it was, above all, the result of intense intellectual interconnection. To use Franco Venturi's well-known expression, it was the outcome of the fusion of the "patriotic" and "cosmopolitan" facets of the Enlightenment. They were "cosmopolitan" because of intellectual interests and aims, because they transcended national borders and enlightened thinkers were able to harness the emergence of this powerful intellectual cosmopolitanism infrastructure to their countries' advantage. However, at the same time, they were "patriotic" because European intellectual and reforming elites applied these ideas to their societies in order to activate processes of improvement

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<sup>30</sup> Sophus A. Reinert, *Translating Empire. Emulation and the Origins of Political Economy*. Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2011.

there. As John Robertson has argued, if the Enlightenment is reduced to a plethora of independent and unconnected movements and local centres, this not only abolishes the very idea of Enlightenment, but also curtails the essence of political economy's emergence as science without a specific nationality and that was eventually established in most European societies during the eighteenth century, making a decisive contribution to the shaping of their enlightened sectors.

This economic culture's emergence in Spain can thus be presented as a local expression of the broader Enlightenment movement.<sup>31</sup> It can be analysed without needing to renounce the idea of the existence of an Enlightenment with a capital E, that is to say, unique and indivisible, one of the expressions of which was precisely the emergence of the new science of political economy. This approach is in keeping with the lines of interpretation put forward by authors such as Franco Venturi and John Robertson: Franco Venturi's notion of a polycentric Enlightenment regarding its transmitting and receiving centres, and Robertson's idea of an Enlightenment that allows for diversity within a common framework of ideas and aspirations are both wholly appropriate. Its coherence would lie in the intellectual interest in inquiring into "how to promote the improvement of the human condition in this world"<sup>32</sup>. In its focus on the material improvement of subjects and sovereigns, the political economy would share the limelight with the "sciences of man", as well as with others concerned with the historical development of societies and their progress from barbarism to civilisation. In short, it both influenced and was influenced by moral philosophy, politics and history, and the great differences that *local* patriotism gradually imposed on *universal* cosmopolitanism gradually became apparent within this common framework.

## V.

This unitary vision would link the approach outlined here to Jonathan Israel's recent magnum opus on the Enlightenment.<sup>33</sup> His work bursts

<sup>31</sup> On the histories of economic thought that interpret economic theories from a national perspective, see Manuela Albertone and Alberto Masoero (eds.), *Political economy and national realities*, Torino, Fondazione Luigi Einaudi, 1994; Ernest Lluch, "Las historias nacionales del pensamiento económico y España", in Enrique Fuentes Quintana (ed.), *Economía y economistas españoles. Vol. I. Una introducción al pensamiento económico*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutenberg-Círculo de Lectores, 1999, pp. 435–476.

<sup>32</sup> John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, op. cit., p. 28ff.

<sup>33</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650–1750*, Oxford, 2001; *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and*

with evidence of the idea of one sole Enlightenment, albeit with a wealth of national or local variants. However, it is much more difficult to accept the different historiographical categories that structure it, of which the most important is the “radical Enlightenment”. Jonathan Israel portrays this as a kind of *touchstone* for re-evaluating the European Enlightenment as a whole, and this has a direct bearing on the movement’s most representative features at several levels. Firstly, chronologically, it places the beginning of the early Enlightenment around 1660 rather than 1680, when, according to Paul Hazard’s traditional model, the first expressions of the “crisis of the European conscience” appeared<sup>34</sup>; secondly, thematically, in that it emphasises the importance of Baruch Spinoza and his philosophical system rather than other classical starting points, especially the fathers of natural law (Samuel von Puffendorf or Thomas Hobbes) and Pierre Bayle, and finally, geographically, in that it establishes the Dutch Enlightenment’s hegemony over the French, British and German movements to some extent.

According to Antoine Lilti, this approach completely rules out the possibility of continuing to construct the intellectual history of the European Enlightenment based on John Locke, Voltaire, Montesquieu or David Hume; that is, on these more measured liberal and empiricist authors, the foundation stones of a “moderate” Enlightenment.<sup>35</sup> These thinkers were undoubtedly predominant and constituted the Enlightenment mainstream on much of the Old Continent; moreover, they were the main bedrock on which political economy was built. It certainly did not emerge from the currents inspired by Baruch Spinoza and his radical, secular and materialist philosophy, but blossomed from roots in the moderate empiricist and utilitarian currents which Israel derides, both the fathers of natural law from Thomas Hobbes to John Locke, and moral philosophers from Shaftesbury to David Hume, as well as in the multiple currents of the sciences of government, including Germanic Cameralism. The study of political economy and its acceptance as one of the central sciences of the European Enlightenment is in itself a powerful revival of the relevance of the currents that are side-lined in Jonathan Israel’s work: it is possible to address national variants of the Enlighten-

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*the Emancipation of Mind, 1670–1752*, Oxford, 2006; *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*, Princeton, NJ, Oxford, 2010.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne* (Paris, 1935); Spanish translation, Madrid, Alianza, 1988.

<sup>35</sup> Antoine Lilti, “Comment écrit-on l’histoire intellectuelle des Lumières? Spinozisme, radicalisme et philosophie”, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, 64–1, 2009, pp. 171–206. On the Spanish case, see Jesús Astigarraga (ed.), *The Spanish Enlightenment*, *op. cit.*

ment from a unitary understanding that acknowledges the central role of these “moderate” currents in its genesis and unfolding.

Concerning the perennially complex problem of religion, these moderate Enlightenments proposed a relationship that did not always exclude faith: on the contrary, in contrast to what Israel argued, it was common — not only in Spain — for faith to be compatible with membership of the enlightened Republic of Letters, even among authors that adhered to its most radical heterodox tendencies.<sup>36</sup> In the same way, it does not seem right to exclude the Enlightenment’s conservative or even reactionary manifestations from the movement. And finally, as occurred in Spain and most European countries, the outcome of the intellectual and reform process led by Enlightenment political economy did not necessarily culminate, as Israel assumes, in a democratic Enlightenment underpinned by republicanism, encouraged by a revolutionary transformation of the human condition. Identifying the Enlightenment with revolution is confusing and uncertain, although some authors still subscribe to this view.<sup>37</sup> Enlightened absolutism and democratic Enlightenment need not be presented as mutually exclusive ways forward; if they were, not only Spain but most European countries would be left off the Enlightenment map.

The political economy of the Enlightenment, even in its most radical aspects, developed in the shelter of reformist gradualism, and this legacy continued into the nineteenth century. This fact highlights the usefulness of approaches that insist on the *longue durée* Enlightenment, not only in terms of when it began, but more especially when it ended. As Joel Mokyr’s recent works on political economy convincingly show, taking a long-term view of the Enlightenment is particularly necessary for any analysis that includes the effect of the movement’s ideas and policies, not only in technological change but more significantly in the institutional sphere. As Joel Mokyr explains in detail about the seminal case of Britain, the legacy left by Enlightenment political economy vis-à-vis the institutional transformations that made liberal society and the dawning of industrialisation possible stretched into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> A similar claim can undoubtedly be made for Spain:

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<sup>36</sup> On the issue of the Catholic Enlightenment, see Ulrich L. Lehner, “Introduction. The many faces of the Catholic Enlightenment”, in Ulrich L. Lehner and Michael Printy (eds.), *A Companion to the Catholic Enlightenment in Europe*, Leiden-Boston. Brill, 2010, pp. 1–61.

<sup>37</sup> See, in the same line as Israel, for example, Kirimiades, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, *op. cit.*

<sup>38</sup> See Joel Mokyr, *The Gifts of Athena: Historical Origins of Knowledge Economy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2002, and, particularly, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1850*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2010.



Enlightenment economics, which was introduced and applied with special intensity during the reigns of Ferdinand VI (1746–1759) and Charles III (1759–1788), lasted well into the nineteenth century, at least until the Liberal Triennium (1820–1824). Under the protection of freedom of the press and expression, this was a high point in spreading European Enlightenment thought throughout the Spanish-speaking world.

## VI.

An adequate interpretation of the political economy's arrival in Spain is essential for a better understanding of the Spanish Enlightenment as a whole. This article has asserted the importance of interpreting the intense process of the transmission and international circulation of the economic-political ideas from which the country benefited during the long Enlightenment, highlighting their roots in moderate Enlightenment currents and avoiding the need to splinter the framework of the Enlightenment, which should be considered a unitary phenomenon and understood beyond its specific national expressions. Choosing appropriate interpretative guidelines is a question of crucial importance owing to the political economy's importance in Spain in the second half of the eighteenth century as a vital language in the spreading of Enlightenment ideas and the implementation of reforms, including at the political level. The process that placed Spain on the path to constitutional culture cannot be understood unless the role unquestionably played by Enlightenment economics is considered. It is likewise impossible to provide a fair profile of the players who shaped Spain's transition from *Ancien Régime* to liberal society; they were not only steeped in Enlightenment principles but were also educated in the principles of economics and, to a greater or lesser degree, contributed to the fact that its presence constituted one of the most representative distinguishing features of the era they lived through.

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