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Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet's Eighteenth-Century Perspectives on the Intimate Relationship between a Free Market Economy, the Rise of the "Big Government," and the Creation of a Police State

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Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet's Eighteenth-Century Perspectives on the Intimate Relationship between a Free Market Economy, the Rise of the "Big Government," and the Creation of a Police State

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Abstract

As a lawyer, economist and journalist of European stature, Linguet argued that the political and economic ideas advocated by the "economic philosophes" or the physiocrats, were bound to lead to a dangerous revolution undertaken without a clear idea of the true principles of a new and better society. Linguet's opposition to the physiocrats and his support for the guilds stemmed from a radical populism that prompted him to accuse the philosophes and the physiocrats of talking about humanity while neglecting the sufferings of real human beings. Linguet warned during the 1770s and 1780s that the systematic laissez-faire theories of the philosophes and Turgot's suppression of the guilds would dissolve the traditional ties of society and lead to a conflict between a mass of unemployed people and an oppressive police state. Linguet argued that only a politics of subsistence, welfare, and preventative nurture would prevent the coming revolution. Linguet's clashes with the physiocrats would prompt him to develop a theory of underconsumption as well as a historicist understanding of political economy and of the legal system that would have a deep influence upon the history of humanist economy.

Keywords: economic liberalism, enlightenment, physiocrats, authoritarianism

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Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet, Perspectivas en el XVIII sobre la Íntima Relación entre Economía de Libre Mercado, el aumento del "Gran Gobierno", y la Creación de un Estado Policial

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Abstract

Como abogado, economista y periodista de talla europea, Linguet argumentó que las ideas políticas y económicas defendidas por los "filosofos economistas", o los fisiócratas, conducían a una revolución peligrosa emprendida sin una idea clara de los verdaderos principios de una nueva y mejor sociedad. La oposición de Linguet a los fisiócratas y su apoyo a los gremios, derivaron a un populismo radical que lo llevó a acusar a los filósofos y los fisiócratas de hablar de la humanidad, descuidando los sufrimientos reales de los seres humanos. Linguet advirtió, durante la década de 1770-1780 que las teorías sistemáticas del laissez-faire de los philosophes y la supresión por Turgot de los gremios disolverían los tradicionales lazos de la sociedad y daría lugar a un conflicto entre una masa de desempleados y un estado policial opresivo. Linguet argumentó que sólo una política de la subsistencia, bienestar y crianza preventiva impedirían la próxima revolución. Los enfrentamientos de Linguet con los fisiócratas le incitarán a desarrollar una teoría de subconsumo, así como una comprensión historicista de la economía política y del sistema legal que tendría una profunda influencia en la historia de la economía humanista.

Keywords: liberalism económico, ilustración, fisócratas, autoritasrismo

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One of the ideas embraced, especially after the end of the Cold War, by both historians of political economy and political pundits is that, if only left to itself, the "free market" would be able to provide us with both a "small government" and a cornucopia of high quality goods. In this narrative, regulation breeds "big government," and vice versa, and results in the manufacturing of low quality goods. The smaller the government, the greater the freedom of the market, and therefore the higher the quantity and quality of the goods on the shelves of the supermarkets. The supporters of free market economy have never been able to offer a convincing explanation of the fact that their very enthusiastic "cheers" for global capitalism have always been accompanied by sobs for the growth of the "welfare/nanny state," or "big government." Neither could neoliberals offer convincing explanations of the fact that eugenic ideas, aiming to lighten the "burden" of the state by diminishing the number of those deemed socially, racially, intellectually or physically inferior or unfit, internal migration control, and racial segregation have always pleasingly haunted the liberal imagination, from La Beaumelle (Platon, 2011) in the eighteenth century, to certain neoconservatives who translated the plain, old-fashioned racism into fiscal conservatism during the Cold War (Glaser & Possony, 1979).

Beginning with the last decades of the eighteenth-century, the supporters of the free market economy have treated political economy as ontologically sealed against any historical contamination, as an ecosystem functioning according to its own laws. Today, neoliberals discuss the growth of the state with the moral outrage reserved to an ecological catastrophe, as the result of a greasy political spill into the pure ocean of economics. The resulting story is one of heroic "neoliberal" divers struggling and failing, for conjunctural reasons (the Cold War, the "liberal media/academia," Greenpeace), to stop this spilling caused for contingent, self-serving reasons, by "liberal" (that is, "leftist" in American parlance) politicians who trade freedom for votes. Neoliberals do not seem to take into account any possible structural connection between the rise of the free market and the rise of "big government," and therefore interpret the growth of the welfare state simply as an indication of the economic and political malaise fostered by a political

class kowtowing to the masses. The discourse of "free market" is also a rhetorical tool used by "big business" to bully the state and convince the public that what is good for the big corporations is good for the people, and that no amount of regulation, planning or protectionism could do the amount of public good that corporate self-interest given free rein in an open market can do.

But beside theories that treat the rise of the welfare state as a result of "liberal" wrongdoings, that is as a political catastrophe that could have been avoided by not leaving the straight path of pure economics, a handful of historians have also highlighted the largely neglected possibility that capitalist economy is bound - for a variety of reasons, among which the collusion between the big corporations and the state - to lead to a bigger, more complex, and even more repressive, government, not to a smaller one (Beard, 1931; Higgs, 1987). Indeed, these arguments have found their first very cogent proponent in Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet (1736-1794), whose writings against Turgot's attempt to suppress the guilds in 1776 explored this structural connection between market deregulation, the low quality of goods, and the oppressive size of the state, and pointed out to a different understanding of the nature and relationship between economic and political values than the neoliberal one.

Linguet and the Philosophe Culture

Edward Gibbon, visiting France in 1763, noted that the pro-philosophe salons were disparaging Linguet's (1762) then recent book on Alexander the Great. Gibbon (1796) suspected that Linguet was probably a writer of more genius than he was credited for. Edmund Burke (1778) translated and published Linguet's letters to Voltaire on the question of Grotius and natural law theory, which Linguet thought at best useless and usually harmful and which he criticized in the name of a juridical realism akin to Burke's own historicism. Tocqueville, reading through the vast literature generated by the French Revolution, found that Linguet's pamphlet *La France plus qu'angloise* (1788) was "written with very remarkable style, great talent, and some profound and prophetic views" (2001, 2:407). These were mostly *in petto* endorsements, circulating in private letters (Gibbon's) or confined to

private notebooks (Tocqueville's). If distinguished by its quality, the historiography dedicated to Linguet (Cruppi, 1895; Vyverberg, 1970; Levy, 1980; Minerbi, 1981; Baruch, 1991; Garoux, 2002; Yardeni, 2005) is also small in comparison with his output, his eighteenth-century impact and his all-around relevance for the history of humanist alternatives to free market economics, many of which were centered on the guilds (Clément, 1854; Sewell Jr., 1980; Coleman, 1995; Potter, 2000; Kaplan, 2001; Clark, 2007; Epstein, & Prak, 2008; Fitzsimmons, 2010).

Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet was born on 14 July 1736, as the second child of Marie and Jean Linguet, a professor dismissed from the University of Paris in 1731 for Jansenist leanings. A gifted pupil, Linguet went through schools on scholarships, winning prizes in classical languages and history. Early in the 1750s, Linguet tried, like Rousseau, to make a career in diplomacy, but by 1754 he returned to Paris, where he sought an entrance into the literary world, befriending the poet Claude-Joseph Dorat, and frequenting the circle of Elie-Catherine Fréron, the editor of the *L'Année littéraire* and Voltaire's archenemy. Leaving for Reims in 1760, Linguet hatched all sorts of economic and diplomatic schemes during the next two years, trying to break into the manufacturing and wine trade with the help of his own family as well as with the support of his former patron, the duke de Deux-Ponts. When these ventures petered out, Linguet again left Reims for Paris, where he published his *Histoire du siècle d'Alexandre* (1762) as well as a pamphlet supporting the recently suppressed Jesuits. Linguet's support of the Jesuits sealed the failure of his book on Alexander the Great, badly received both by the philosophes and the Jansenists, the enemies of the Jesuits (Guerci, 1981).

In the summer of 1762, Linguet enlisted in the army as an "aide de camp" in the engineering division of Charles Juste, duke of Beauvau's army, and participated in the Spanish-Portuguese War (1761-1763), which was part of the Seven Years War between France and England. After the signing of the peace in 1763, Linguet left Madrid and returned to France, settling himself in Picardy, in the city of Abbéville, where he gained the patronage of Jean-Nicolas Douville, a former mayor and a counselor in Abbéville's presidial court. While in Abbéville, and partially with the financial support of Douville, Linguet anonymously published some of his most interesting

works, such as *Le Fanatisme des philosophes* (1764a) and *Nécessité d'une réforme dans l'administration de la justice et dans les lois civiles en France* (1764b), a book, banned by the government, that opened Linguet's attack on Montesquieu and on the *thèse nobiliaire* and advanced the idea of an alliance between the kings and the Third Estate. In October 1764, Linguet had himself inscribed as a *stagiaire* on the rolls of the Parlement de Paris. But instead of obscurity, Linguet gained European notoriety the very next year, in 1765, when he became the defender of the chevalier François-Jean de la Barre, accused of destroying a wooden crucifix venerated by the pious citizens of Abbéville. Since one of the young men accused of taking part in the blasphemy perpetrated on the night of 8 to 9 August 1765 was none other than Pierre-Jean-Francois-Douville de Maillefeu, the son of Linguet's protector, Linguet was summoned by Douville to defend the accused. Linguet's judicial *mémoire*, published in June 1766, did not manage to save La Barre, executed on 1 July 1766, but attracted the attention of public opinion to the political machinations behind the scenes of the trial by revealing that the initial investigations regarding this case were conducted by Duval de Soicourt, a local political enemy of Douville (Maza, 1993, pp. 46-47). As a result, Duval de Soicourt was forced by Guillaume-François-Louis Joly de Fleury, the procurator general of the Parlement de Paris, to step down, and in September 1766 the charges against the three remaining defendants were dropped (Levy, 1980, pp. 35-36). In 1767 Linguet published his most important work, *Théorie des loix civiles*, which criticized Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* and proposed an alternative to Montesquieu's sociology of law and to liberal natural law theories. Badly received by both the *philosophes* (Grimm, 1829-1831, 7: 509, 8: 197; La Harpe, 1820-1821, 15: 86-106) and the physiocrats (Baudeau, 1767, pp. 203-204; Mirabeau, 1762), the work nevertheless assured Linguet's reputation as not only a man of letters and a hot-headed lawyer, but an insightful social critic and political thinker in the vein of Rousseau.

The beginning of the 1770s found Linguet endorsing the chancellor Maupeou and his reform of the parlements, and finally supporting Terray and his anti-physiocratic policies. The polemics against the physiocrats made Linguet the target of André Morellet's *Théorie du paradoxe* (1775), to which Linguet answered with a cutting *Théorie de la libelle, ou L'Art de calomnier*

avec fruit, dialogue philosophique pour servir de supplement a la "Théorie du paradoxe" (1775) (Morellet, 1821, 1: 226-230). As a result of his attacks on the Parlement, Linguet was disbarred on 1 February 1774, and the numerous appeals filed until the fall of 1775 failed to restore his livelihood. In 1774, Linguet launched his journalistic career as editor of Jean-Joseph Pancoucke's *Journal de politique et de littérature*. Despite transforming it into a successful venture, Linguet lost his editorship in July 1776, after criticizing the French Academy and its secretary, d'Alembert, for receiving in its ranks the mediocre La Harpe. Following Linguet's article, "outraged" academicians complained to the government, and, as a result of ministerial pressure, Panckoucke fired Linguet immediately and appointed La Harpe and Suard in his place. By the end of August 1776, Linguet was therefore out of journalism as well.

Towards the end of 1776, Linguet left France for England, where he launched his *Annales politiques et littéraires* and published an open *Lettre de M. Linguet à M. le Comte de Vergennes, ministre des affaires étrangères en France* (London, 1777) that read like a proclamation of independence and a declaration of war on all the beneficiaries and tools of "despotism" in France. Facing this new torrent of vitriolic political journalism, the Keeper of the Seals, Armand Thomas Hue de Miromesnil, asserted that the only way to silence Linguet would be to have him "thrown into a cell for life" (Levy, 1980, p. 213; Burrows, 2004). Indeed, by 1780, Linguet was tricked into coming to Paris, where he hoped to reconcile himself with the authorities, but where he was apprehended and thrown in the Bastille. In 1782 Linguet was freed and he started wandering through Europe, from England to Austria. Linguet's *Mémoires sur la Bastille* (1783) was a pan-European best-seller extremely influential in shaping the revolutionary discourse about the oppressive nature of the Old Regime (Charpentier, 1789; Evans, 1793; Cottret, 1986, pp. 105-130). Joseph II ennobled and pensioned Linguet, but afterwards dismissed him for publishing in *Annales* some *Considérations sur l'ouverture de l'Escaut* (1784) supporting the Brabant rebellion against Austria.

In 1789, Linguet returned to France where he allied himself with Danton and Camille Desmoulins, supported the Saint-Domingue revolution, and was praised by French revolutionary newspapers as a forerunner in the fight

against Old Regime despotism. The papers announced that during that during his social calls in Paris Linguet used a calling card depicting a lion keeping in his claws a pike with a Phrygian bonnet on top of it (*Le Martirologe national*, 1790, pp. 110-111, 219-222, 262). Indeed, even German revolutionary publications compared him with an untamable lion (von Clauer, 1791, p. 32). However, by June 1791, Linguet retired to the countryside, near Ville d'Avray, to Marnes, where he dedicated himself to agriculture, to local politics, and to his *Annales*. In June 1793 he was arrested by Order of the Committee of General Security under the accusation of conspiring with the king against the nation (*Le courier de l'égalité*, 5 October, 1793, p. 22). He was executed on 27 June 1794 as a "partisan and apostle of despotism." French revolutionary publications would start lambasting him as an opportunist, as a pen for hire, as a hubristic mercenary interested only in inflating his ego as well as his pockets (Rive, 1793, pp. 194-95; Delacroix, 1794, pp. 315-16).

Despite these post-mortem attacks, Linguet appears in retrospect a thinker whose ideological fecundity served to buttress a remarkably stable social, political, cultural and economic framework. Disbarred, twice thrown in prison under the Old Regime, a defender of chevalier de La Barre, an enemy of the philosophes and of the physiocrats, and, as it turned out, not quite a friend of Robespierre either, a defender of the poor and of the much maligned "Asian despotism," Linguet cast, in the century of Lights, a long and troublesome shadow. Considered a "brutal realist," Linguet was definitely an anti-nominalist, refusing to get caught in any ideological cobwebs. Linguet's involvement in some of the most resounding "human rights" trials of the eighteenth century France, such as the trials of La Barre and of the duke d'Aiguillon, the publication of his trial briefs, and his political journalism - a *Journal de politique et de littérature* (21 issues printed in Bruxelles [Paris] between 25 October 1774 and 25 July 1776), and the *Annales politiques, civiques, et littéraires* (19 volumes published in London, Bruxelles and Paris between 1777 and 1792) - marked him as one of the most thorough critics of the Old Regime. As one of the first political journalists, ready to make appeals to the "public opinion," Linguet crafted elements of the future revolutionary discourse, and criticized the "feudalism" of the Old Regime while proposing various fiscal, legal, economic, and

social reforms (Censer, 1994, pp. 179-181; Popkin, 1987). His embrace of empiricism, his defense of revolutionary causes such as that of the Belgians revolting against Austrian rule in 1789 or of the Haitians rising against their French colonial masters in 1791, his preoccupation with political economy and the situation of the poor and the oppressed, situated him firmly in the Enlightenment camp. But if he was no defender of the *status quo*, Linguet was no member of a "party of Enlightenment" either. Linguet questioned the juridical philosophy of the Enlightenment, the political institutions built upon that legal philosophy, the political economy corresponding to these legal precepts and political institutions, and finally the proponents of the new theologico-political consensus. As such, he argued against natural law philosophy, against a political regime based upon the multiplication, separation, and balance of powers such as that advocated by Montesquieu and by his followers, against the economic liberalism of the physiocrats, and finally against the philosophes.

The physiocrats and the philosophes, such as Diderot, were not always on the same page, some philosophes having little taste for the benevolent despotism advocated by the physiocrats, others being more supportive of industry than the physiocrats, others being too bourgeois to dream of a rural kingdom, too civic republican to engage in apologies of luxury, or too opposed to the *esprit de système* to enjoy the physiocrats' Malebranchian-Confucian esoteric system, which Galiani ridiculed as "economystification" (Weulersse, 1910a, 2: 626-682; 1950, pp. 138-247; 1959, pp. 206-230; Fox Genovese, 1976, pp. 59-62; Eltis, 1995; Riskin, 2003, pp. 42-73). Despite these fault lines, and despite protestations to the contrary on the part of the physiocrats, Linguet labeled the physiocrats as the "philosophes économistes," tying them firmly to the philosophes. According to Linguet, both groups had the characteristics of a "sect" (a term later used by Adam Smith also), or a "cabal." Linguet felt that the philosophes received his deeply probing writings with a mild, involuntary "sneeze" and a temporary "agitation" that would become, in time, "a long-lasting delirium" ("un délire durable") (Linguet, 1771, 1:2). This was, Linguet argued, the fanatical reaction of a sect trying to control and shape the public discourse in order to impose its own orthodoxy instead of merely taking part in a public debate. Linguet pointed out that he was not dispassionately contradicted, but literally

hunted down, insulted, viciously slandered, almost destroyed by his enemies, among whom the physiocrate journalist Samuel Dupont de Nemours, in the *Ephémerides du citoyen*, and the philosophe La Harpe, in the *Mercure de France*, were the most virulent (Linguet, 1771, 1: 3,7). This obduracy and dogmatic inflexibility was, for Linguet, the sign of a sect at work on a takeover of France. This takeover required the creation of chaos, and therefore it asked for the destruction of any and all moral or professional criteria.

Both the physiocrats and the philosophes advertised a "freedom" that, Linguet warned, would end up impoverishing, enslaving, and sacrificing the people for the benefit of the rich. This second characteristic was related to the first one, since the sectarian singleheadedness and discipline of the "sect" made them, both the philosophes and the "philosophes économistes," the guardians of the new, oligarchic establishment arising from "laissez-faire" politics. Linguet argued that the established "public intellectuals" of the day, far from being free intellectual agents, were mere tools of those aiming to increase their economic power in order to achieve a form of economic despotism they would then convert into political power and use to alter the whole "political machine" (Linguet, 1771, 1:9).

The philosophic invasion of the public sphere left people isolated and epistemologically dizzy, incapable of working out any new way of reconnecting with reality beyond the ever flowing deluge of signs. The linguistic explosion caused epistemological poverty and social implosion; relativism bred both despotism and rebellions since, in the absence of an order based on consensual values, the only way of staying alive was to enslave other people. Appealing to the fear of a revival of the sixteenth century wars of religion, a fear discursively shared by both Jansenists, Jesuits and the philosophes (Van Kley, 1996, pp. 160-162), Linguet argued that instead of reforming the French monarchy the philosophes were unwittingly reopening old wounds and had pushed France on the verge of a civil war: "Throwing around words such as 'humanity,' and 'reason,' we came near the point of seeing a revival of the quarrels, the schisms, and maybe even the wars of the sixteenth century" (Linguet, 1771, 1:11-12). Rousseau himself obliquely had warned in the "Preface" to his *First Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, that the philosophes were an

embodiment of conformism, and that as such they would have been in the first ranks of the League: "There will always be people enslaved by the opinions of their times, their country, and their society. A man who today plays the freethinker and the philosopher would, for the same reason, have been only a fanatic during the time of the League" (Rousseau, 2002, p. 46). Linguet saluted the 1758 suppression of the *Encyclopédie,* but warned that this act, far from stopping the advance of the philosophic spirit, merely prompted it to assume another identity, that of physiocracy.

Robert Shackleton (1977) argued that the suppression of the *Encyclopédie* in 1758 marked the birth of a real "party" of the philosophes (Garrioch, 2004). While historians have looked for various other similar watersheds in the decades going from the 1730s to the 1750s, one of them being the 1752 "affaire de Prades" (Burson, 2010), the importance that Linguet attached to physiocracy as a second, practical, incarnation of an already existing philosophic "sect" deserves consideration because it indicates that the "crucial developments" of the Enlightenment were not already over by the middle of the eighteenth century, as Jonathan Israel (2002, pp. 6-7) advanced from a perspective concerned with democratic equalitarianism, but neglecting economic ideas and changes. With the emergence of the physiocrats, a version of *philosophie* went from a theoretical to a practical phase, from being a more or less oppositional intellectual discourse to being accepted as part of a program of government. According to Linguet, the suppression of the *Encyclopédie* merely ushered in a new incarnation of the philosophical "sect." Abandoning its "encyclopedic envelope," the "sect" became "the buzzing insect that, since then, all of us have called economics or economic science" (Linguet, 1771, 1:13). The metaphysical speculations that preoccupied the first incarnation of the "esprit philosophique" were abandoned for something more dangerous for the people. As philosophes, the "sect" could be contained and its effects circumscribed to elite salons, whereas the *économistes* had arrived in a position to change France by direct political and economic intervention. Linguet was convinced that the philosophes harmed people by multiplying the number of empty intellectual signs, thus making social commerce impossible. On the other hand, the *économistes* altered the very conditions of life by fostering economic monopolies, oligarchies, and by an excessive

monetarization of economy that forced people to bow to the market. The poor could therefore ignore the philosophes, but it was impossible for them to remain untouched by the *économistes*.

Tocqueville (2001, 1:195-205) would later argue that the philosophes, because isolated from real politics, nurtured radical, utopian ideas that fomented the revolutionary upheavals of 1789-1794. Linguet, on the other hand, claimed that the philosophes were not revolutionary, but corrupting, that is they did not challenge the establishment, but tried to please it in ways that, according to Linguet, harmed France in the long run. The philosophes were not dangerous in opposition, but in power, since their influence was not merely theoretical, but practical, as mercenaries supporting any status-quo, even an utterly corrupt one (Linguet, 1764a, p. 13). Not unlike Rousseau in the *First Discourse*, what Linguet condemned was not the philosophes' radicalism, but a sort of eighteenth-century "trahison des clercs": the philosophes were not too little, but too much involved in real politics, that is in the administration of power and in the accumulation of huge wealth. Instead of pitting reason against injustice, the philosophes rationalized injustice, and expertly crafted learned arguments supporting the interests and policies of their financial backers (Linguet, 1764a, p. 18). Reason justified goals and thus ways of life alien to it.

Linguet, the Guilds, and the Politics of Simplicity

If Linguet argued throughout his whole life against "philosophie," in both its cultural and economic forms, and if the main thrust of his argument concerned both the philosophes and the physiocrats, Linguet's concern for the culture of politics stayed with him longer than his preoccupation with the politics of culture. Whereas Linguet's first writings were dominated by literary concerns, in the 1770s and 1780s Linguet attacked mainly the politico-economic embodiment of philosophie that was Physiocracy.

For the Physiocrats, the ultimate reality was that of "nature" and of natural law. The role of the state was iconic: it participated in that reality and mediated man's participation in that reality too. Hence, the state had not merely an existence of fact, but one of right: it was, so to say, deified according to this physiocratic Platonic deism. People were a component of

the state, and their "happiness" was an element of the perfect, natural, physiocratic state. The physiocrats recognized, as Warren J. Samuels noted, "no rights independent of state law," and even property was less "sacred" than "expedient" and useful in maintaining the ideal physiocratic "State" (Samuels, 1992, pp. 12-27, 28-46). The physiocratic drives to streamline the state for future progress were not accompanied by any sustained or systematic efforts to propose any way of "coping with individual misfortune and poverty" and did not take into account the historicity of human existence (Root, 1987, p. 111). Although, as Intendant of Limoges, Turgot created the *ateliers de charité*, a sort of public works system offering a temporary job in building roads – which played an important role in helping the free trade in the physiocratic scheme of things - to women, children and unskilled men unable to win their daily bread otherwise, this program could not be extended to the rest of France for lack of adequate financial resources. The destitute population of France stood at around a fifth of the total population and the physiocratic reforms aiming to increase agricultural productivity by partitioning and enclosing common lands and woods left many families without a livelihood, severed from their traditional ties and safety networks (Hufton, 1974, pp. 1, 183-88; McStay Adams, 1990, pp, 240-43).

For Linguet, on the contrary, the starting point was the welfare of the people since, for Linguet, the natural law was not an expression of the universal order, but of social realities, of human needs and passions. For Linguet, the state's legitimacy did not rest on its putative "natural" or supernatural (Christian) foundations, but on its social utility. The most important prerogative of the ruler was that of preserving the "dignity" of "man" and of not allowing the debasement of the "People," a concept which, according to Linguet, designated the "real Sovereign" (Linguet, 1770, 50). Linguet argued that since it was impossible to go back to the primordial and truly rightful situation preceding the appearance, by theft, of private property, the state existed as a means to a social end: to ensure public peace and to protect the right to life of its citizens. The state did not have any mission to harmonize citizens with a rational, transcendent, "natural order." Linguet feared that English-style economic and political liberalism would result in the rise of an "aristocratic monarchy," of an oligarchic system in which people would have no recourse to justice, and the rich and powerful

would go unpunished (Linguet, 1770, p. 74). Writing in his *Théorie des loix civiles*, Linguet argued that economic liberalism would multiply the bureaucratic-administrative networks and the abuses it was supposed to stifle and would stifle instead precisely the freedom it was supposed to nurture (Linguet, 1770, pp. 72-73). Putting in practice the idea of the 'balance of powers" required the growth of the administrative apparatus. This multiplication of the branches of the state would lead to the "real despotism" of that "horrible administration which is death, the putrefaction of a state." Yet, Linguet's attack on bureaucracy did not signal him as an enemy of what we call today "big government." According to Linguet, more than the concentration of power in the hands of a single person, citizens should fear the inflationary dispersal of such power, which would result in the total neglect of the laws and to executive and judicial incapacity. Linguet did not deplore the regulating state, but the dissolution of the state authority, the incapacity of the state to uphold its laws and to enforce its standards due to its bureaucratic proliferation, to political factionalism and to economic oligarchies. In fact, for Linguet, despotism was not the same as a strong government, but similar to a ghostly government, to an absence of government, or a "minimal state": "Despotism is so little like a government, that right from the moment when despotism begins any form of government ceases to exist" (Linguet, 1770, pp. 45-46). Linguet argued that the "balance of powers" theory would prevent those in power from doing any good, but would enable them to harm the citizens. "Checks and balances" liberalism, argued Linguet, made the people a prisoner of the institutions. The multiplication of institutions benefited only the rich, since the poor would never have enough money or time to pursue justice through the required institutional channels (Linguet, 1764b, p. 9). Linguet acknowledged the existence of only two socio-political categories: the rulers, and the subjects, that is those who ruled and those who had to obey because they had the weaker hand. Multiplying the branches of the government did nothing to weaken the elites' monopoly on power. On the contrary, argued Linguet, the power elites would gain control of the newly-created state institutions and use them to increase their pressure on people by bribing certain social segments and by marginalizing others (Linguet, 1774, pp.1-44-86).

Beside the political conditions for the growth of a despotic "big government," the English liberal model would create the economic conditions favorable to this growth. Despotism, Linguet argued, thrived in societies reduced to a multitude of "isolated individuals," easier to exploit (Linguet, 1770, p. 101; see also De Dijn, 2008; Rahe, 2009). And since economic liberalism tended to atomize societies, Linguet argued that the proper political answer to such a social crisis was not the multiplication of state bureaucracies to the expense of the former, organic, forms of solidarity and policing. The price of political freedom was, Linguet argued, social and economic solidarity. Economic liberalism destroyed the complex web of social and economic solidarities existing at a popular level while promising to secure the citizens' freedom by a web of political solidarities, of political representative institutions and mediating instances between the rulers and the ruled. Yet, Linguet insisted, social and economic organic solidarities and particularities cannot be replaced by individualism at the grass-roots level and labyrinthine bureaucratic solidarities at the state level.

Linguet argued that granting political rights would not alleviate economic inequalities, and that all political rights derived from the right to own private property and thus to not depend on anyone for one's own subsistence. Therefore, protecting private property and guaranteeing the right to subsistence became the pillars of Linguet's political system, whose cornerstone was not the state, but the person. Or, Linguet rejected physiocratic *laissez-faire* ideology precisely because it disenfranchised people by leaving them to the mercy of the market forces, of rich oligarchs and of speculators. The physiocrats were the first to proceed to the "neutralization of history" in political economic discourse. This neutralization or evacuation of history from the political economic discourse had two aspects: the first one was to announce the "ontological enclosurability" of the economic factor and to attribute to this space "natural dimensions," thus severing it from history. In the words of François Quesnay himself: "Les sciences mêmes abandonnent le système du territoire et vont se perdre dans le système de l'univers" (Weulersse, 1910b, p. 28). The economic factor was thus treated as a "natural" reality decipherable in terms of eternal, natural laws, adverse to experimentation and asking for the use of the deductive method (Arnaud, Barrillon, & Benredouane, 1991, p. 412).

Consequently, the variations, the alternatives, the afterthoughts and the specific situations that had required specific answers from the economic masters would be overlooked or discarded as errors in order to preserve the uninterrupted ideological homogeneity of political economic orthodoxy. Thus, liberal political economy refused historicization and contingency. But the elimination of history from economic thinking would also mean, as the economic historian Mark A. Lutz (1999) showed, disregarding the amount of time (years, decades) it would take "the market" to regain its balance after a shock. It was an interval of hunger, cold, joblessness, death and quiet or rebellious desperation that physiocratic political economy, content with "the big picture," did not address.

Linguet's objections regarded precisely this set of problems. In the first place he showed that economic policy had nothing to do with fanatical and sectarian proclamations of a universal dogma, but with political, social and geographical contingencies. The foreign policy, demographics, natural resources, and political system of a country ought to have counted as factors shaping its domestic economic policy. Linguet also noted that, blinded by a peculiar combination of unenlightened self-interest and naiveté, the physiocrats ignored the sufferings of the poor, and that while they embraced the rhetoric of humanitarianism, their policies resulted in misery, alienation and death. When the urban proletariat revolted because their salaries did not keep up with the inflation, the government resorted to violence and threw them in prison instead of helping them avoid starvation by "giving them what was rightly theirs" (Linguet, 1770, p. 180). Two of the most original articulations of Linguet's criticism of the physiocrats were his analysis of the physiocrats' theory of costs and profits, and his critique of the theory of the economic cycle from the point of view of what might be called a theory of underconsumption, according to which Linguet pointed out that sacrificing small farmers for the sake of creating big agribusinesses would lead to a decrease in the number of consumers. Underconsumption would come to the fore of economic literature only in the nineteenth century, due to Jean Simonde de Sismondi in the French speaking world and to Thomas R. Malthus or John A. Hobson in the English speaking world (Nemmers, 1972; Spengler, 1980, pp. 333-343).

The physiocrats affirmed that there was a certain natural order based on eternal and unchanging laws, as "imprescriptible as those of physics" (Laski, 1936, pp. 207-8). In order to prosper, any society had to follow these rules (Du Pont de Nemours, 1910, p. 7). The reforms proposed by the physiocrats were not "a result of temporary economic necessity, but a rigid deduction from certain unassailable and immutable principles, newly discovered by their master Quesnay" (Einaudi, 1938, p. 10). Quesnay's system was expounded, developed and popularized by his followers, Pierre Samurel Du Pont de Nemours, the marquis de Mirabeau, Nicolas Baudeau (1776), and Pierre-Paul Le Mercier de la Rivière (1767; see also May, 1975, pp. 58-94), who advanced the idea that agriculture was the only productive endeavor. Only agriculture brought a "net profit," that is "a rent over and above the costs of production and the entrepreneur's profits" (Einaudi, 1938, p. 11). In agriculture, the physiocrats thought they discovered a source of wealth that "has the privilege of multiplying infinitely" (Weulersse, 1959, p. 14) thus breaking with the zero sum economic theory of classical civic republicanism. This also meant that if the first generation of physiocrats (the early Quesnay, abbé Gabriel-François Coyer) were interested in small-scale agriculture, the second generation of physiocrats (lead by a reconstructed Quesnay, Mirabeau, Baudeau, Dupont de Nemours, Le Mercier de La Rivière) would insist upon large farms, which they saw as more profitable since by cutting costs the big farmers would create more of that "net product," or capital needed to sustain the whole economic body. This, as Linguet shrewdly pointed out, indicated that the physiocrats were interested only in the "produit net," not in the well-being of the people.

Ontologically impermeable to history, and therefore to the sufferings of a humanity reduced to the status of a cog in the wheel of a naturalized, greater scheme of economic things, physiocracy, in Linguet's opinion, betrayed its promise, even while fulfilling its premises. According to Linguet, despite its promise of freedom and prosperity, physiocracy would bring only "servitude," poverty, and death, because physiocracy sought to increase the "net profit" by cutting costs in order to increase productivity. Since one of the "costs" targeted for elimination was that of human labor, physiocracy reduced human beings to the status of mere cheap and therefore expendable tools. According to the physiocrats, the "net profit" could be increased by

reducing the number of small independent farmers - whom the physiocrats wanted to transform into rural proletarians - and by further reducing the number of rural proletarians by forcing them to choose between starvation and inner migration to the cities as urban proletarians. Linguet denounced the economic calculations of the physiocrats as demographically ruinous, economically crude, and humanely cruel, and warned that they would amount to a "sum of privations rather than to an equality of pleasure" (Linguet, 1771, 2: 210-11). The physiocrats promised a flourishing economic life based on the fact that wealth would eventually trickle down in a naturally, perfectly balanced system. Linguet argued that, in fact, the increase of wealth postulated by physiocracy was dependent upon imbalances in the system, that economic liberalism thrived on imbalances produced by such common eighteenth-century practices (Thirsk, 1999; Wyngaard, 2004, pp. 151-90) as the enclosures of the commons, renting one's land to the higher bidder after expelling the peasant families who used to work that land, or the sudden increases in the price of bread. These revenue increases, Linguet argued, lasted only until all the other prices rose to keep up with them, with the more expensive price of bread, for example. So, if the increase in wealth was dependent not upon the balance but upon the imbalances of the system, the net result would mean that the physiocratic system would only be favorable to those able to create such imbalances. But the economic veneration of wealth gave birth to the political cult of the wealthy, according to Linguet, who argued that, by focusing on the accumulation of wealth, the physiocrats opened the way to the cult of the rich, of oligarchs: "Full of a not very philosophic veneration for anyone who has a big purse, they kneel in front of that fortunate being; and stand up only in order to order the entire world to submit to the same humiliation, and to claim that only these individuals deserve our respect" (Linguet, 1771, 2:222).

Linguet was not interested in how much "energy" one physiocratic farmer could milk out of "Nature," but in how many people could subsist on a certain piece of land, or in how many livelihoods could be preserved by a political economy favoring the small farmers, craftsmen or merchants. Linguet pointed out that, compared with the big farms, small farms were cultivated with greater care, that their soil was less depleted, that they

employed more people and paid in nature, avoiding the monetarization of the economy and the bankruptcies accompanying the development of a monetary economy (Linguet, 1771, 2:210-211). Big farms were, instead, more lucrative for their owner, "but infinitely more damaging" to that corner of the country were they are located, and to the state in general because they destroyed the local economy by replacing the stable peasant-tenants with migrant workers: thus, both the profit of the owner and the salary of the temporary workers is not reinvested locally, but in the city or in other provinces. In the end, the wealth of the big farm owner is spurious because it is obtained by ruining the countryside by investing less in it and in the people inhabiting it. It was a wealth that robbed the people of their dignity, of their means of subsistence and in the end of their freedom. Political freedom, the political rights of a human being possessing nothing, being reduced to selling its own personal labor on a market swelling with cheap available workforce, was nothing. The physiocrats claimed that by liberalizing the labor market they were making work available to everyone (Sheperd, 1903; Maldidier, & Robin, 1973; Groenewegen, 2002. pp. 314-30). But the physiocratic policy of opening up the labor market drove down the price of labor and made it hard for workers to subsist by their own work. If the physiocrats offered a man the right to emancipate himself by selling his own labor on the marketplace, Linguet maintained that politics, even parliamentarian politics, as in England, was a game of force, and that only an independent, self-sustaining man could stand for his freedoms, while a hired hand was worse than a slave. Freedom, like property, existed for Linguet first as a fact and only afterwards as a right. It was, in a way, a non-nominalist, human scale, prescriptive liberty. For Linguet, small property was the only bulwark against the grasping hand of both the state and the big private monopolies. While Linguet was not a follower of Montesquieu's political theory and disparaged intermediary bodies such as parlements, which he saw not as bulwarks against despotism but as a way of trickling down despotism and corruption, his politics of simplicity required the existence of the economic intermediary bodies known as guilds, or "jurandes."

When, in January 1776, Turgot promulgated his famous six edicts, one of which dissolved the craft guilds, Linguet jumped to their defense.

Paradoxically, Turgot attacked the guilds precisely because he was not an orthodox physiocrat, and as such he was not ready to neglect industry for the sake of agriculture (Fairchilds, 1988, pp. 688-692). The corporations suppressed by Turgot were professional organizations having the right to manage their own affairs, to define and enforce their own standards of quality, to establish the selling price, and to issue professional licenses. The guilds also functioned as support networks for their sick, poor or otherwise afflicted members. But Turgot's *Édit portant la suppression des jurandes* (1913-1923, 5: 238-55) charged the guilds with stifling free competition, with keeping the prices unnecessarily high due to their monopolistic practices, with encroaching upon the right to work by their quality controls and by their conditions of access to mastership after long years of apprenticeship, after producing a "masterpiece," and after paying what Turgot deemed to be high taxes in order to accede to the rank of master. The guilds, wrote Turgot, blocked competition among craftsmen by refusing the right to work to immigrant jobless craftsmen coming from England. Despite de fact that women were actually able to use to their advantage the guild system (Crowston, 2000; Lanza, 2007, pp. 83-152), Turgot claimed that guild standards kept women and the poor out of certain crafts, such as embroidery, for which, Turgot argued, women were particularly suited (Turgot, 1913-1923, 5: 241). The right to work was "sacred," argued Turgot, it was God-given, and therefore it was not a right that the monarchy should sell to its subjects: everybody should be free to practice whatever craft they were willing and able to master (Turgot, 1913-1923, 5: 242-43). Turgot accused the guilds of squandering huge sums of money on feasts as well as on lawsuits. Either too convivial or too querulous, the guilds spent money in ways that Turgot could single out as particularly heinous in the context of the French government's frantic attempts to deal in the 1770s with France's huge fiscal deficits (Kwass, 2000, pp. 21-115). Turgot therefore attacked the guilds not merely in the name of the "laissez faire" that physiocrats opposed to that form of "Asian despotism" that was regulation (Vroil, 1870, p. 219), but also from the perspective of the discourse of financial austerity that was becoming increasingly important for a monarchy submerged in public debt. Turgot suggested that the state might profit more from a flourishing industry liberated from guild constraints than from selling offices related to these

corporations. Therefore, with the exception of four guilds, those of the barbers-wigmakers-steamroom keepers, of apothecaries, of silver/goldsmiths, and of printers/booksellers, all the other guilds saw their rules and their corporate freedoms abolished. The battle against Turgot's edicts raged between January and July 1776. In January Turgot issued the edict of the suppression of the corporations, in March it was registered by the Parlement after a royal *lit de justice*, but by July it was abandoned in favor of a mixed system that allowed the corporations to exist, but put them in competition with free craftsmen.

Linguet's *Réflexions de six corps de la Ville de Paris, sur la suppression des Jurandes* opened with a brief historical disquisition on the guilds, followed by an enumeration of Turgot's complaints against them and a point by point refutation of Turgot's claims. In the third and final section, Linguet presented a case for preserving the guilds. Linguet started by pointing out that China, a country of reference for the Physiocrats, regulated the trades in the spirit of a very "rigorous" "despotism," completely opposed to Turgot's attack on the guilds in the name of "liberté," "indépendance," and "concurrence" (Linguet, 1776, p. 2). Regulation, Linguet argued, was only normal, since there had never been a period in the history of any "great Empire" or "significant City" without corporations: either "established" by the state, or *sui generis* creations (Linguet, 1776, p. 2). Indeed, the history of guilds shows that there were two ways of establishing a corporation: the Roman way, by state-sponsored organization and incorporation, and the Germanic way, by the grass-roots, democratic establishment of confraternities consecrated by no positive law but consisting in groups of people seeking to become friends and look after their own common interests and justice (Black, 1984, pp. 3-43). Linguet looked therefore at the guilds and trade corporations as historically confirmed cogs in the governmental wheel, as Montesquieu-an pillars of the state. In other words, while Linguet did not recognized the representativity of the aristocratic Parlements, he saw the craft guilds as part of the "Nation," and as bulwarks to despotism (Linguet, 1776, p. 3).

Like the nineteenth-century conservative Juan Donoso Cortes (Imatz, 2013, p. 146), with whom he also shared a historicist understanding of the law, Linguet argued that guilds were therefore useful from an administrative

point of view, since they articulated and policed society. Far from being inimical to freedom, guilds secured the existence of that order without which freedom was impossible: they were the "regiments" without which society would crumble in disarray and people would desert their duties (Linguet, 1776, p.3). Considering that their existence was not a hindrance, but a resource of the state, Linguet recommended the reform of the guilds, not their abolition. Linguet hinted that instead of squeezing them financially, for taxes and corporate loans to the monarchy, the state should consider the much more important political ways in which the guilds could serve the monarchy. Linguet would revisit this idea in 1788-1789, in the context of the pre-revolutionary crisis, when, to the dismay of the international banking creditors of France (Clavière, 1788), he urged the monarchy to declare bankruptcy and thus to refuse the politics of austerity imposed by the bankers, and called for an anti-aristocratic alliance between the monarch and the Third Estate (Van Kley, 1996, pp. 282-88, 317-21).

The suppression of the guilds was, for Linguet, merely another step in the direction of physiocratic despotism, the despotism of the rich robbing the people of their livelihoods under the guise of liberalizing the right to work. Indeed, Turgot and the physiocrats saw the dissolution of the guilds as an essential step toward creating an urban space for the rural proletarians displaced from villages by the enclosure of the commons and the creation of big farms, which most of the physiocrats considered more profitable than the subsistence agriculture. If, refused a livelihood in the villages, as agricultural workers, the poor would also have been unable to enter a trade in the cities, the government might have had on its hands a huge mass of discontented people, in the already difficult context of revolts caused by the rising price of bread due to bad crops and the partial deregulation of grain trade (the intendants subtly manipulated the grain market, supplying it with provisions bought with state money in order to lower the prices). Turgot's attack on the guilds had therefore political motivations as well as ideological overtones.

Linguet noted four ministerial reasons supporting the abolition of the guilds: first, the expansion of industry; second, the diminution of the price of work and of manufactured goods; third, the reduction of what we call now "red tape," of bureaucratic regulation of business; and fourth, the suppression of wasteful and vindictive trials between guilds such as the

judicial feud between bakers and steakhouse proprietors about whether or not the later were allowed to own an oven. Linguet answered that, in fact, the guilds acted as preservers of quality standards. He noted that Swiss clockmakers, where manufacture was unregulated, could no compete with French craftsmen (Linguet, 1776, pp. 4-5; see also Turner, 2008). Indeed, the question of quality stood at the heart of this debate. The physiocrats protested that requiring ten years of apprenticeship in order to be declared a master tub maker betrayed a dim view of human intelligence and insisted that workers and craftsmen had to be willing to retrain to compete in the free and rapidly changing job market. Linguet answered that it was impossible to master a craft without years of hard and constant work, and that only guilds allowed craftsmen to train in such a way. But the physiocrats' readiness to dispense with training was a practical consequence of their nominalist axiology according to which absolute quality did not exist. Simon Clicquot de Blervache (1723-1796), an academic prize-winning physiocrat who was, together with Linguet's enemy Morellet, a member of the physiocratic circle working in the 1750s under the protection of Vincent de Gournay, the royal Intendant of Commerce (Minard, 1998; Skornicki, 2006), argued that the only duty of the manufacturers and of the merchants was not to offer good merchandise, but merchandise that would sell well and that could spur demand by fueling the "consumer's" "caprice," "fantasy," and "whims" (Blervache, 1758, p. 44). Indeed, Blervache argued that manufacturers could be more useful to the state by producing "mediocre and even bad" goods, as long as the low price of this shoddy merchandise "invites and determines" the people to consume (Blervache, 1758, p. 49). As "Inspecteur general des manufactures et du commerce," a position he occupied between 1765 and 1790, Blervache developed this line of argument in 1779 in a series of memoirs successfully requesting the continuation of the mixed or two tiered system in which regulated and unregulated manufacturers coexisted (Vroil, 1870, 161).

If Turgot claimed that abolishing the guilds would lower prices, Linguet pointed out that competition only served to lower the quality of products, since the war of prices would by necessity force craftsmen to cheat on quality in order to maintain as low a price as possible. Honest craftsmen, Linguet argued, would be forced either to stop being honest or get out of

business because they would not be able to face dishonest competitors. By the end of 1776, Linguet, who had quarreled with Panckoucke, left France for England. Therefore Linguet's letter on the *jurandes* must be dated around March-June 1776. In March 1776, Adam Smith published what was to become his classic work, *The Wealth of Nations*, in which, from a position inimical to the guilds, he famously and alliteratively hold that the butcher, the backer, and the brewer did not sell their clients a product of quality because of their social concerns, but only because it was in their own interests to do so. We do not know if Linguet read Smith in 1776 or later, but in defending the guilds he pointed out one of the inconsistencies in the liberal line of thought. Thus, Linguet argued that, in order for it to be in the self-interest of producers to turn out, or of merchants to sell, a good product, they would have to live in what Peter Laslett would later call a "face to face society" (Laslett, 1963). In a world wide open to the free circulation of goods, in big cities swarming with people moving in and out as undetected as the origins of the goods they buy or sell, the buyer could not exert the quality control that was available to someone living in a smaller, more cohesive community. Someone from the faraway corners of an empire could not penalize the faulty craftsmanship of the metropolitan producer. Distance bred irresponsibility, and free circulation encouraged transporting the goods to increasingly faraway markets. Therefore, free circulation decoupled self-interest from responsibility (Linguet, 1776, pp. 6-7).

Linguet pointed out the social and economic benefits of cooperation, and his accent on the importance of social capital prompted modern scholars to consider him as one of the first great socialist thinkers or to bestow upon him the title of "the first anti-economist" (Durkheim, 1961, p. 94 ; Coleman, 2002, pp. 22-28). According to Linguet, cooperation allowed manufacturers to be extremely flexible in meeting the fluctuating demands of the market without raising the prices or hiring and firing people according to the impersonal demands of the marketplace. And this flexibility was possible only because the cost was partly absorbed by social capital, by guild solidarity yet unspoiled by a free-market economy dedicated to fierce competition for markets and lower costs. Guilds functioned as an insurance, welfare, and supply network that helped producers and consumers avoid the fluctuations of the market The guild system cushioned the effects of the

boom and bust capitalist economic cycle by not allowing craftsmen give in to what we now call "bubbles," and to what Linguet called "this imaginary bigness" ("cette grandeur chimérique") to which they were suddenly catapulted by good times (Linguet, 1776, p. 9). Linguet argued that producers fixated on competition for a corner of the market and for profits would lose sight of the buyer, who would end up being forced to choose between shoddy goods produced at the lowest possible cost. Unbridled competition would be bad for manufacturers, too, since they would stand at the mercy of the middle-man, of the distributors whose interest was to buy cheaply and to sell dearly. Faced with competition, the producer would try to meet the orders of the distributors as fast as he could, thus sacrificing quality for the sake of productivity: "He will cheat the merchant, who, at his turn, will cheat the buyers" (Linguet, 1776, pp. 7-8).

Therefore, liberal economic rationality, far from simplifying the economic life, would just result in flooding the market with a wave of fake artisans, shoddy goods, and dishonest merchants. Rushing to replace the old, honest masters craftsmen, would be "parasitical masters," eager to manufacture or to invest in manufacturing anything that sold well, and thus ruining the old masters dedicated to the perfection of their craft. (Linguet, 1776, p. 17). This deluge of fake goods would force the state to control it by creating agencies dedicated to quality controls. Removing therefore the quality controls at the guild level would force the state to assume tasks previously accomplished by the guilds. Whenever a certain craftsman would have to obtain a license in order to practice his craft, this license would have to be provided either by his guild or by state authorities. The alternative would be to dispense with professional licenses altogether in order to attain that "simplicité de régie" much praised by Turgot and by the physiocrats. But if the state deemed that professional licenses would still be necessary, then shifting them from the guild to state administration would not result in any simplification of economic life, or reduction of state bureaucracy. Liberal economics and "big government," argued Linguet, are inherently correlated, since liberal economics required tearing up the whole social fabric based on guild autonomy. The state would then have to spin the web of a police state as the price of destroying those very useful resources of the state that were the guilds, already invested with traditional liberties, and

organically involved in policing the kingdom (Linguet, 1776, p. 10). It was a perfect example of what Tocqueville would describe later as a growth of the leveling, administrative state at the expense of civil society, a form of centralization that violently removed certain prerogatives from civil society, where they were exercised in a reasonably fair manner, only to award them to the state administration.

Turgot and the physiocrats argued that the liberalization of industry was crucial for the creation of a larger market for agricultural products, that is for big farmers. Linguet warned that liberalizing the manufacturing sector would on the contrary be ruinous for the countryside. Peasants, argued Linguet, would be lured to the cities by the hope and promise of easy money, by the idea of engaging in some productive manufacturing activity, without having to submit first to long years of apprenticeship. Once the guilds abolished, the quality of products would crumble, and the relatively homogenous quality maintained by the guilds would be replaced by a multi-tiered system, with different levels of quality, for different pockets. Lowering quality levels would allow immigrant peasants to hope that, even if they would never achieve great mastery, they would acquire enough skills to secure a mediocre living. Thus, lowered manufacturing standards would in fact breed social unrest, since the market would be crowded by mediocre producers of worthless goods. And those mediocre producers would soon find themselves in a strange city and out of a job, with their dreams crushed and unable to return to the countryside. If physiocrats maintained that knowledge was the first property of a man, and that depriving somebody of a good education was similar to expropriating him, Linguet retorted that destroying quality standards, pushing people in the direction of a perpetual improvisation to meet the demands of the market, and depriving them of the chance to acquire, refine and securely practice a craft was similarly ruinous for the individual and for the state (Linguet, 1776, p. 14). Linguet warned therefore that the idea, dear to the physiocrats and advanced by Adam Smith in his *Wealth of the Nations*, that any worker who would not find work in the city would just go back to the countryside or would just learn another trade was false. Trying to find a solution to the problems raised by unemployment, Linguet supported the creation of a social welfare fund, or "caisse

nationale," and tackled homelessness in a *Plan d'établissement, tendans à l'extinction de la mendicité* (1779).

Trades were thus distorted by the same consumer culture as the intellectual life denounced by Linguet in his anti-philosophe writings. Since acquiring a craft was an exercise in stability and competence, the guilds produced useful citizens, even though "unenlightened" by the standards of the philosophes controlling the salon-centered "public sphere." Eliminating the guilds with their apprenticeship requirements was simply another way to leave people at the mercy of their own emotions, whims, and unrealistic ambitions. Linguet feared that, instead of learning a craft, young people would just float between jobs, and would go from profession to profession without really mastering anything. If the physiocrats argued that blocking the entrance of young, poor people in the trades produced a mass of unemployed vagrants, Linguet argued that suppressing the guilds would erode the economic and symbolic status of work itself, producing a mass of overworked vagrants, of people for whom a job would not mean a secure place in the world. Linguet warned that abolishing the guilds would encourage the apparition of unsettled individuals who would easily fall prey to a new mass consumer culture that, influenced by philosophe culture, would fuel wishful thinking, baseless pride, and inflated pretensions. Immersed in this culture, the French would become a people ruined by a revolution of higher expectations excited by the philosophes (Linguet, 1776, pp. 5-6).

Linguet cogently denounced the effects of the proletarization of the peasants, analyzed so well by the nineteenth-century sociologists and economists (Patnaik, 2007, pp. 86-127). He argued that, far from being a "natural," that is a smooth because organic evolution, the urban acculturation of a peasantry hunted from the countryside by enclosures and a free-market economy was a violent process in which people, "torn form their rustic and respectable occupations," would be exposed to a violent cultural shock (the "vertiges de la culture des Arts dans les Villes") (Linguet, 1776, p. 14). The result of this acculturation would be the creation of a mass of alienated peasants/proletarians ("Villageois dépaysés"), neither peasants nor bourgeois, tortured by hunger and moral decay, and impossible to police since the waning of the guilds would bring with it that of social control.

Linguet argued that it was easier to police corporations than individuals. After destroying the old guild structure of civil supervision and professional control, the state would have to build an entire police apparatus, such as Napoleon did later, with far thinner organic connections to the civil society than the guilds. Abolishing the guilds, who policed the "moeurs" and nourished the "purity" of family life (Linguet, 1776, p. 19), would force the state to ensure public peace with the help of another "guild," that of professional policemen. The citizens would eventually find policemen far more alien and intrusive than the old guilds, which had provided social stability at the neighborhood level. With guilds, society policed itself: with a police force, it would be the state policing society (Linguet, 1776, p. 15).

Linguet warned that, in case of a rebellion of jobless workers or ruined craftsmen, the state would be unable to calm social tensions using the proven ways and channels of the guilds. Losing any contact with the people, the state would thus lose its capacity to negotiate with its citizens. This incapacity would in its turn lead to the need for harsher punishments and for more severe repression in case of popular revolt (Linguet, 1776, p. 18). Linguet feared that governmental violence against jobless workers would only serve to delegitimize the monarchy. The result would be a general revolution resulting in the violent fall of the monarchy: "Out of the blood of these victims would grow the tree of liberty" (Linguet, 1776, p. 19). The genius of the guilds was that they "took care of everything, balanced everything, reconciled everything" (Linguet, 1776, p. 19), securing for craftsmen a certain degree of financial and social stability and also allowing the bourgeois their fair share of social honors and authority (Shovlin, 2000). Linguet deemed this last characteristic especially important in a society in which "the manufacturing and commercial bourgeoisie" was "rejected" from careers, such as the military, allowing a "more luminous glory" than that of the workshop (Linguet, 1776, p. 19).

Abolishing the guilds would therefore mean abolishing the principle of "honor" that connected the king with his most humble subject (Smith, 2005). Along with the honor would go any other criteria for judging the quality of workmanship. The disappearance of professional criteria would lead to the vanishing of any social rules, and also of social solidarity, of the sense of moral obligation that made members of the guilds take care of craftsmen's

widows or of craftsmen going through dry patches (Linguet, 1776, p.20). The fallout from a free-market economic policy and the abolition of the guilds as intermediary links in the great social chain – all these, Linguet concluded, would force the state to specialize in maintaining and managing a monopoly of violence. The monopoly in turn would spur the growth of a bigger and more powerful state. Economic liberalism would result in political illiberalism, Linguet argued. And both of them were, according to Linguet, legacies of the philosophe culture, one in which there was no absolute value, but merely a fluctuating price, and in which, accordingly, it was impossible to live or speak in good faith, or to hold anyone accountable. The axiological void at the heart of the free market economy encouraged a social and epistemological crisis that allowed the forces of anarchy and corruption to grow by feeding on each other. In this paradigm, the connection between a deregulated market, the proliferation of state bureaucracy, and the development of a police state due to the social unrest caused by a malfunctioning government and a rampant oligarchy manipulating the free market is one between cause and effects.

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