

The Spanish Enlightenment Revisited

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Hidden crevices of 18th century Spanish intellectual life were revealed to the reviewer by this volume, and the undercurrents of regional division and mixed feelings about Spain's own past provided insight into modern Spanish intellectual historiography. *Jesús Astigarraga* gave us in 2003 the contributions of the Basque economic society, *La Bascongada*. He largely excludes from this volume the political economy of Madrid --Campomanes, Olavide and Jovellanos. Perhaps as a result, the reign of Charles III (1759-1789) takes a back seat in favor of constitutional debates between 1812 and 1823, which Astigarraga views as the finest hour of the Spanish Enlightenment. His definition of enlightenment precludes those who served government, to focus instead on those outside of power. It is an interesting point of view.

The danger is this edited volume might convince some unsuspecting Anglo-American graduate student that the enlightenment did not affect Spain in the 1760s, an impression that would only be confirmed by Astigarraga's introduction which states that the Spanish enlightenment was a weak imitation of the French. It was a relief to find Gabriel Paquette's essay, which includes enlightened reform from government positions and puts Campomanes back into central position. Yet Astigarraga's view carries the day in this volume. The solution would be a companion volume that focusses on ideas emanating from intellectuals in Madrid in the 1760s and 1770s.

A second surprise for the English-speaking reader is the presentation of Spain's Enlightenment as an imitation. Many of the essays overtly agree, though their contents sustain this reviewer's belief that the Spanish enlightenment was vigorous and impacted by Spain's internal intellectual conversation and by Italian ideas, as much as by the French. Jovellanos read Smith, and Campomanes even learned Arabic to explore Spain's historical property rights institutions. Why would the Spanish present their enlightenment as an imitation? A line from *Juan Pimentel's* fine essay provided part of the answer: "Once Franco's dictatorship had ended, we (the Spanish) just wanted to prove that we had been modern, that there had been an Enlightenment in the Hispanic world, that Spain had not been so different" (p. 85). This volume suggests some in Spain are not yet convinced. Yet who are the potential readers? English-speakers who study the Spanish Enlightenment probably view the efforts and failures of Spain's 18th century intellectuals as part of the common human struggle to find the right balance between reason and imperfect human nature. To many of us, the failures of Enlightenment hopes reflect human (rather than Spanish) flaws.

Gabriel Paquette rejects a definition of the Spanish Enlightenment that identifies it exclusively with advocates of revolution from outside government, and puts Campomanes in the 1759-89 period back in the center. "Enlightened reform" is his term for the gathering by Spanish noblemen and government bureaucrats of innovative ideas from Italy, France, England, Germany and Spain's own past in the 18th century. Paquette argues that the Spaniards channeled new ideas to revitalize the monarchy, to change the relationship between church and state, but to abolish neither. By focusing on the Spanish Empire rather than on Spain itself, Paquette permits the reader to include burgeoning Mexico City alongside troubled Castilian agriculture as pieces of Spain's 18th century economic base. Astigarraga (2003) indicated that hundreds of members of the Basque economic society lived in Mexico City, Lima, and Manila as members of the opulent *consulados*. It would have been interesting to have a contribution from a Mexican economic historian of the Enlightenment, such as Jose Enrique Covarrubias, to follow up.

Perhaps the refrain that the enlightenment in Spain was delayed and imitative is not meant to be taken so seriously, because many essays provide evidence of the opposite. For example,

Joaquín Álvarez notes that the number of books published during the 18th century in Spain was 7,000, well over twice that published in England or France (p. 48). Juan Pimentel gives us the remarkable achievements of pharmaco-botanists trained at Spain's new military academies to explore plants in the Andes and Guayaquil at the end of the 18th century, much as Darwin would do in the 1830s. Astigarraga tells us that the Basques held a salon on political economy in the 1740s, which would put it earlier than the French societies he mentions from the 1750s. Usóz mentions that twenty Spanish works were translated into French. If the repetitions of delay and failure were meant to be taken less seriously, one must be careful because the English-speaking audience has the opposite ritual, of asserting American exceptionalism and British glory, though the content may be less exceptional and/or glorious.

Astigarraga reprises his work on La Bascongada to good effect, though his 2003 volume is well worth reading on its own. Under Peñaflores, the Basques began holding salons to discuss political economy in 1748, were recognized by the regional government in 1763, by Castille in 1765, and by 1774 opened the Bergara Institute to teach metallurgy, minerology and chemistry. The society discussed the works of Petty, Gournay, Forbonnais, Mirabeau, Turgot, Necker and Rousseau, and promoted treatises on political economy by Narros, Arriquirbar, Foronda, Samaniego, Aguirre and Ibáñez de Rentería. La Bascongada advocated export-promotion in contrast to the Madrid economic society's focus on rejuvenating rural life. Proliferation of further economics societies throughout Spain took place in 1774-75. Astigarraga attributes these to Campomanes' *Fomento de Industria Popular*, and does not mention Donald Street's convincing argument that the *Fomento* was not written by him.

Astigarraga also argues that the Spanish Enlightenment failed to have real influence until 1812. Joaquín Varela explains that royalists like Jovellanos misinterpreted British constitutionalism when they used the British example to advocate for a strong monarchy between 1808 and 1812. Relying upon Locke and other writers of earlier times, the pro-British Jovellanos under-emphasized the role of the two-party system in checking political power, and ignored that the House of Commons could remove members of the Kings' cabinet in the Britain of his own age. Liberal deputies such as Argüelles were more influenced by the French constitution of 1791, which viewed a unicameral parliament as a check on the monarch. However, the Spanish liberals attributed the downfall of the French to political parties, and wanted to keep Spain unified in one party. Varela sees the wisdom in the pro-British Blanco-White's argument that Spanish liberals were ensuring that monarch and legislature could never work together by banning representatives from serving as ministers to the king. The implication is that if the Spaniards had understood the role of political parties in checking power, then they could have permitted greater cooperation between legislature and monarch in their own constitution.

Ignacio Fernández Sarasola summarizes two proposals from Spain, the first by the Basque Aguirre in 1786. Aguirre was a member of the *Sociedad Bascongada* from the 1770s, but the constitution was sponsored by the Madrid Society. There would be two houses of representatives and a judiciary, but members of all three would ultimately be chosen by the monarch. In line with enlightened ideas of the 1770s, the state would have the right to remove property from those who were not using it, and land holdings would be limited to what the holder could cultivate. Donations to the church were to go through a fund managed by the government which would then distribute them to (and control) clerical salaries and fund places of worship. The second constitutional project presented here was put forward anonymously in 1790 and is attributed to Arroyal. It openly identified the French constitution of 1789 as a model, and called for self-government. The king could be declared demented by the *Cortes*, which the king could not dissolve. The private circulation of this unpublished document influenced the constitutional debates ten years later.

Alejandro Agüero and Marta Lorente discuss in a particularly good read the Spanish reception in 1774 of the Italian Beccaria's 1764 *Crime and punishments*. On the surface, the Spanish were persuaded by Beccaria to embrace the enlightenment idea of the same penalty for the same crime to every citizen convicted. However, Agüero and Lorente argue that references to Beccaria were a mere gloss, because Spain was loath to restrict discretion of judges, and remained convinced that men who had served the country deserved softer sentences than everyman. The essay is well-argued, and yet takes as given that Spain's reluctance to adopt the new ideas was a

sign of backwardness. For Beccaria, equality before the eyes of the law was meant to be accomplished without abolishing social and economic rankings, and there is a legitimate critique that such a combination provides no more than an illusion of justice.

Javier Usoz explores the creation of the sphere of public opinion by analyzing the forwards of fifty texts on political economy from 1724 (Uztáriz) to 1821 (Foronda). Government often sponsored publications to attain public backing for official policy. Authors expected their ideas to be attacked. As the century wore on, privileges of clergy, nobility and commerce were more openly criticized (suggesting a growing gap between government and public sphere). Writers argued that they were serving the country by criticizing the statu quo in order to improve public welfare. A memorable paragraph explains Cabarrús' personal experience that prison was the best place to conceive ideas. Uztáriz, Ulloa, Foronda, Jovellanos and Campomanes were the principle Spaniards whose works were translated. Usoz points out there were only twenty Spanish works published into other languages, while one hundred foreign works were published in Spain. The reviewer realized that the one hundred foreign works came from at least four languages, so that Spain's contribution was not insignificant.

Javier Fernández Sebastián defends the idea that the Spanish Enlightenment did not affect institutions until the 1820s in an essay on how public opinion permitted the ruled to exert control over the rulers (p. 214). Fernández identifies Foronda, Cabarrús, Arroyal and Jovellanos as men who shaped public opinion to bring down Godoy (in part to defend Jovellanos, imprisoned without charge). On the grounds that these men began writing in the 1790s and impacted events into the 1820s, he argues that the enlightenment extends into what is commonly considered the liberal period.

Astigarraga collaborates with *Niccoló Guasti and Juan Zabalza* in a comprehensive essay on tax reform, to which many English-speakers might immediately turn, given Regina Grafe's (2012) argument that failure to implement such reform prevented regional integration of Spain's 18th century economy. The first half presents writers influenced by Colbert to lift the tax burden on producers to stimulate output. Uztáriz in 1734 and Zavala (1732, but disseminated in 1747) advocated for replacing them with income or property taxes. Loynaz (1743) responded that such taxes were too easy to avoid, favoring a tax on grain at milling. In 1749 anonymous advocated the *Única Contribución*, against which Forbonnais came out in 1753, during which controversy he translated Uztáriz into French for debates in that country on the *vingtième*. In 1759, Aguirre (p. 180) advocated reforming the tax collection bureaucracy, while Campomanes suggested replacing sales taxes with regional quotas. Unfortunately, this important first half of the essay suffers from inadequate explanation of technical terms (such as *equivalentes* and *catastro*) to the English-language reader.

Astigarraga, Guasti and Zabalza in the second half of their essay consider post-1785 Spanish debates on financing. The French banker Cabarrús advised Carlos III in 1782 that for government bond sales to work, tax revenues to extinguish them must be raised by implementing a 3% tax on property --with no exemptions for the clergy. Finance Minister Múzquiz initially wanted to implement the *Única Contribución* instead, but was won over to Cabarrús' plan. Floridablanca blocked both plans for innovation by winning in the court of public opinion support for consumption taxes, an old plan with the new name of *frutos civiles*; Alcalá contributed in 1788 with an essay influenced by Jacques Necker. In 1790, Covarrubias translated portions of Smith's *Wealth of Nations* on reducing government spending. Cabarrús and Arroyal were both dissatisfied with Floridablanca's consumption taxes, and advocated taxing property or luxury. From 1789 and 1794, Foronda advocated property taxes and taxing the income of high earners. In 1794, the opposition was successful in abolishing *frutos civiles*, to be replaced in part with disentanglement of the church in the following years. This second half supports Astigarraga's argument that the better ideas (taxing property) failed to make headway in Spain until the *ancien régime* was gone.

Joaquín Álvarez discusses the emergence of literary culture. While half the books published in 18th century Spain were written by clergy, the remaining authors included teachers, civil servants, doctors and lawyers. Printed works were discussed in salons and guides on conversing became popular in Madrid as in Paris and London. Professionalization of the intellectual involved clarifying the rights of the author, as opposed to the printer. Britain carried this out early

in 1710, and both Spain and France enacted author protections in the 1760s. In accordance with *ancien régime*, authors enjoyed privileges granted by the King, rather than “rights,” which only came into existence with the *Cortes* of Cadiz in 1813. By 1785 multiple translations of the same work were authorized. Even so, the life of a writer involved illness and frugality, so by 1780, writers argued for government financing on the grounds that they produced “the growth of the country’s economy and...the value of its culture” (p. 47). The individuality of the writer emerged over the century; where Cervantes was depicted in 1738 with arms and books in the background, while by 1798, Goya would capture the “dream-like” state associated with writers in his portrait of Jovellanos. Álvarez notes that writers had to have a day job, a fact which he attributes to low literacy in Spain —though this reader suspects that penury is an enduring condition for people of modest means who criticize the powerful.

Spain’s eighteenth century gains artistic and human dimensions with *María Victoria López-Cordón’s* essay explaining how the Bourbons came over the 18th century to meld patriotism with civil society through support for the arts and science. The innovation of having king and queen sleep and eat together increased the influence of women in government, such as Elizabeth Farnese who patronized the arts. The Bourbons also brought in new nobility, with French, Italian, Flemish and Irish administrators close to them (p. 25). Over the 18th century, access to the secretaries surrounding the educated Bourbon kings became the path to political and economic success. Ferdinand VI ordered the Alcázar re-painted with images of David (Philip V) and Solomon (Ferdinand VI) along with Indian chiefs to emphasize the American empire; art was a way of asserting the Bourbons into Spain’s world. He also established the Royal Botanical Garden in 1755, and the Natural History Museum. Farnese’s son, Carlos III, sponsored multiple natural history expeditions in the New World, and turned more toward public benefits such as tree-shaded avenues and drainage and sewage systems.

Juan Pimentel dates scientific study in Spain to the 1680-1720 period through an informal group of physicians known as the “innovators” which included Cabriada, Zapata, Martínez, and Corachán, a mathematician who translated Descartes into Spanish. Universities run by the church were opposed to the military academies founded after 1748, to which scientific education became associated. Natural history covered geography, ethnography and botany and was popularized in 1753 when the Abbé Pluché’s *Spectacle de la Nature* was translated from the French. A certain Dávila from Guayaquil, Ecuador brought his collection to Madrid to found the Prado as a natural history museum in 1776. The Prado became instead an art gallery, which Pimentel views as a turn by Spain away from science toward the past. Pimentel believes that “herborising, identifying, collecting and even acclimatising plant species were all more easily accessible activities than, for instance applying infinitesimal calculus” (p. 93). Yet French scientists justly envied Spain’s access to the flora and fauna of Latin America. José Quer published *Flora Española* in the 1760s. Two pharmaco-botanists Hipólito Ruiz and José Pavón studied the Andes to write *Flora peruviana et chilensis*, together with the Limeño physician Hipólito Unanue. Juan Tafalla made a similar work, *Flora huayaquilensis*. Even the Philippines Company (1785) had a botanist on board. By 1803, botanist José Mociño had studied the Pacific Coast from Acapulco to Vancouver. José Celestino Mutis compiled the *Flora de Bogotá* between 1783 and 1808. Pimentel’s point is that these scientific riches were rarely published, and some were sold to other nations’ academies, which reaffirms the volume’s theme that Spain’s Enlightenment never achieved lift-off.

Some Spaniards clearly feel it is time for intellectual historiography to move beyond activities in Madrid. That point is well-taken. One can only hope that more volumes will follow, on ideas emanating from Madrid, and those flowing into Spanish America.

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