
2 Justis Kameralistik im Kontext

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From Polizei to Politique: Justi and Bielfeld

Firstly, my System of Politics would remain incomplete if I failed to deal with a branch as important as that of Commerce; secondly, the Books that I have just named are so profound, in general so well written, that it almost needs a genius as transcendent, as much master of the subject as M. Melon is, to understand them, and know how to apply them; finally there are many points on which I beg to differ from the sentiment of these great men; & I believed that the Reader would not be displeased to see their ideas & mine treated in a simple, clear manner, one which responds to the spirit of a Book that is more dogmatic than speculative.¹

Bielfeld's *Institutions politiques* appears to be an anomaly among mid-eighteenth century German writings on state and economy: written as advice to a ruler and legislator, and not as more common at the time, for university lecture courses, or for an emerging Enlightenment literati; citing French sources, even clearly naming them, itself not routine contemporary practice; and composed and published in French. From the standpoint of the established *Kameral- und Polizeiwissenschaften*, it looks at first glance more like a French than a German book, in both language and content.² But then the year following its publication in 1760 a German translation appeared,³ second and third German editions in 1764 and 1768, and what was presented as a commentary by Darjes in 1764.⁴

1 Baron de Bielfeld: *Institutions politiques* t. 1, La Haye 1760, p. 272. The book was published in two volumes with the publisher given as »Pierre Gosse Junior, Libraire de A. S. Monseigneur le Prince Stadhouder«. A short (66 p.) *Supplément aux Institutions Politiques de M. le baron de Bielfeld* was published in Montargis (1761), containing responses to criticisms. A third volume, dedicated to Catherine the Great, was published posthumously in Leiden 1772.

2 Which is how I approached it in my *Governing Economy. The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750–1830*. Cambridge 1988, pp. 82–84.

3 Jakob Friedrich von Bielfeld: *Lehrbegriff der Staatskunst*. Breslau 1761; translated J. C. Gottsched and J. J. Schwalbe. This first edition is very rare; copies of both volumes of this edition are recorded only for the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden and UB Regensburg and there appears to be no online version. There were further French editions in 1762, 1767–1772 [BN]; a complete Spanish edition was published in 6 volumes in Madrid 1767–1801, translated by Domingo de la Torre y Molinedo [Kress] with a very short edited Spanish version, *Instituciones Políticas. Obra en que se trata de los reynos de Portugal, y España*, translated by Don Valentin de Foronda, Burdeos [Bordeaux], published in 1781 [BL]; the two volumes, without the Supplement, were translated from French into Russian by Prince Fyodor Shakhovskiy as *Наставления политическия барона Билфелда*. Moscow 1768–1775; excerpts translated into Italian were published in *Estratto della letteratura Europea* for 1761; and in 1823 a Portuguese translation was made from the truncated 1781 Spanish edition, as *Resumo das Instituições Políticas do Barão de Bielfeld*, Rio de Janeiro 1823. No copies of a Dutch (1779) nor an Italian (1764) translation can be located, and can be presumed never to have been published. My thanks to Ken Carpenter, Alexandre Mendes Cunha, Alexandra Ortolja-Baird and Danila Raskov for their great help in establishing this publication history.

4 Joachim Georg Darjes: *Einleitung in des Freyherrn von Bielfeld Lehrbegriff der Staatsklugheit*

Bielfeld was in any case not a university professor. Born into a Hamburg merchant family in 1717, and so clearly distanced from the sons of a North German rural clergy, the cadre from which many *Kameralwissenschaftler* were drawn, he studied initially in Leiden and then travelled in France, England and Holland. In his early 20s he came to the attention of the Prussian Crown Prince, and in 1740, with the assumption of Friedrich II, he entered Prussian diplomatic service, retiring to his estate in 1755. In 1757 war forced a move back to Hamburg, returning to his estate only in 1763, with the end of the Seven Years' War. Hamburg was a maritime commercial city, without a university until the twentieth century; combined with his diplomatic employment, this helps account for his detachment from the conventions of German academic literature, and his writing in French, like his patron Friedrich II.⁵

The reference to Melon in the epigraph above is no mere name-check: *Institutions politiques* is more French than German not least in the way it makes use of a body of French writing on commerce that originated in 1734 with Melon's *Essai politique sur le commerce* and which reached its peak during the 1750s – the other major French source used by Bielfeld was Forbonnais, who had contributed several articles on commercial subjects to the *Encyclopédie*,⁶ partly republished in a revised form as *Elémens du commerce* in 1754. Moreover, Melon came from the same Bordeaux commercial and legal circles as Montesquieu – and Bordeaux maritime trade was central to the French Atlantic trade, hence connected to, competing with, the Atlantic trading empires of Spain, Portugal, Britain and the United Provinces. Writing in the later 1750s, Bielfeld was, like Justi, influenced by the arguments about commerce and politics presented in Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* (1748), as Alexandre Mendes Cunha outlines elsewhere in this volume. But Bielfeld's *Institutions politiques*, signed off in January 1759, has a deeper debt to contemporary French literature, to what has become known as the Gournay Circle: writers and translators of articles and books on the importance of commerce to national welfare and power

zum Gebrauch seiner Zuhörer verfertigt. Jena 1764. While Darjes does cite Melon at §§ 93, 94, his book refers directly to Bielfeld's text only once, in the preface, which is an account of Darjes's personal history (Vorrede, § 18). The internal referencing to relevant paragraphs is to Darjes's own book, not that of Bielfeld. It is therefore only an introduction to Bielfeld in the broad sense that it provides a different and contrasting account of politics. His choice of *Staatsklugheit*, instead of *Staatskunst* as in the German title of Bielfeld, is also significant.

5 Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Bd. 2 (1875); there is no entry for Bielfeld in the *Neue Deutsche Biographie*.

6 Chambre des assurances, Vol. III (1753), pp. 57–60; Chambre de commerce, Vol. III (1753), p. 60; Change, Vol. III (1753), pp. 127–132; Charte-partie, Vol. III (1753), pp. 219–220; Colonie, Vol. III (1753), pp. 648–650; Commandité, Vol. III (1753), p. 688; Commerce, Vol. III (1753), pp. 690–699; Communauté, Vol. III (1753), p. 724; Compagnie de Commerce, Vol. III (1753), pp. 739–742; Concurrence, Vol. III (1753), pp. 832–833; Contrebande, Vol. IV (1754), pp. 129–131; Crédit Vol. IV (1754), pp. 445–450; Culture des terres, Vol. IV (1754), pp. 552–566.

associated with Vincent de Gournay, the Intendant du commerce who died in June 1759 and who had purchased the position in March 1751.⁷

Hence *Institutions politiques* provides us with an opportunity to explore the intersection mid-century of the French literature of *commerce*, *politique* and *police* with German writing on *Polizei* and *Politik*: their degree of alignment respecting the relation of economic order to state and politics. By comparing the scope of Justi's *Grundsätze der Policy-Wissenschaft* (1756) with Bielfeld's *Institutions politiques* (1760) I hope to shed some light on a moment when convergence between French and German preoccupations seemed a possibility. Justi came under the influence of Montesquieu, but not of the writings of the Gournay circle, like Bielfeld. What are the implications of this?

Since Bielfeld's book was published in 1760 it predates the rise of Physiocracy,⁸ writings that have long dominated understanding of mid-eighteenth century French writings on policy.⁹ For my purposes here this extensive literature lies in the future and so is of little or no relevance, focussing our attention instead on earlier French writings that were Bielfeld's sources. This sharpens our appreciation of writings whose ramifications linked French debate over domestic policy to France's maritime trading and imperial competition, but which were quickly overshadowed by a succeeding body of literature whose focus was mostly domestic, and which had by the later 1760s been mobilised as a self-conscious »school«.

Institutions politiques also reflected the first effective entry¹⁰ into use of the collocation *économie politique*, later anglicised in the title of Sir James Steuart's *Inquiry*

7 There is also a direct connection of the work of the Gournay circle to Vienna: Ludwig Zinzendorf advised the Austrian Ambassador to France, Count Kaunitz, on economic affairs from 1750 to 1752 and drew heavily on the work of both Melon and Gournay. See Ch. 3: French Intellectual Influence: Melon and Gournay. In: Simon Adler's *Political Economy in the Habsburg Monarchy 1750–1774. The Contribution of Ludwig Zinzendorf*. Cham 2020.

8 Besides Quesnay's two *Encyclopédie* entries, »Grains« and »Fermiers« and the first version of the *Tableau économique*, the first are not strictly Physiocratic and the latter was not widely available until the publication of *Philosophie rurale* in 1764.

9 The »French« influence on Adam Smith has long been associated solely with Physiocratic writing of the 1760s, exemplified in *Wealth of Nations* Book IV Ch. IX, a critique of the »agricultural system«, ie. Physiocracy. The influence of Melon's *Essai politique* on the composition of *Wealth of Nations* was first emphasised by Istvan Hont: *Jealousy of Trade. International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge (Mass.) 2005, pp. 30–34, 52–53. For an account of the subsequent historiographic dominance of Physiocracy see Catherine Larrère: *L'invention de l'économie au XVIII^e siècle. Du droit naturel à la physiocratie*. Paris 1992, pp. 5–15.

10 Montchrétien is sometimes associated with the first use of *économie politique*, Jean-Claude Perrot for example opening his entry on the term in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich, 1680–1820* (1988) Heft 8, with a discussion of Montchrétien's *Traicté de l'économie politique* (1615). While Perrot properly notes that the term only occurs in the title and not in the book itself, he fails to account for the 150-year gap before its second (partial) appearance in print, in the opening lines of Rousseau's *Encyclopédie* entry of 1755 »Économie ou Oeconomie« (Vol. V,

into the *Principles of Political Oeconomy* (1767) and employed, pejoratively, by Adam Smith as the title of Book IV of the *Wealth of Nations*, »Of Systems of political Oeconomy«.¹¹ Here again, this was not the Physiocratic usage of choice – they favoured *la science économique* as describing the idiom in which they worked¹² – but what they here meant by *économique* has likewise mostly been misconstrued in modern commentary.

I will discuss French usage below, but Bielfeld's use of the term is important for an understanding of his book's purpose:

The principles of the general commerce of a whole people, the way of taking full advantage of the local situation of the country, of its natural and relative forces, of the production of its soil, of the industry of Subjects, the knowledge of the Rights, Privileges & Concessions of each Nation relative to its Commerce, & especially of that which it governs, the skill of concluding with other Powers Commercial Treaties advantageous to ours; all these objects, & many others, form a Science which is within the competence of the Statesman, which is part of *Oeconomie Politique*,¹³ & which is almost always ignored by the ordinary Merchant. The skilful Financier, who presides over the affairs of Commerce, should know the Art of the Merchant, such as we sketched in §1. He must possess moreover all the knowledge of Commerce which we have just required in the Man of State; but one can be a skilful merchant without knowing these great national interests, provided one is well acquainted with the manner of governing one's particular trade. This reflection proves how much Sovereigns are mistaken, who imagine that they have

pp. 337–349): »ÉCONOMIE ou ECONOMIE, (Morale & Politique.) ce mot vient de οἶκος, maison, & de νόμος, loi, & ne signifie originairement que le sage & légitime gouvernement de la maison, pour le bien commun de toute la famille. Le sens de ce terme a été dans la suite étendu au gouvernement de la grande famille, qui est l'état. Pour distinguer ces deux acceptions, on l'appelle dans ce dernier cas, économie générale, ou politique; & dans l'autre, économie domestique, ou particulière. Ce n'est que de la première qu'il est question dans cet article.« (my underlining) Perrot's *Handbuch* entry is reprinted in his essay collection: *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique. XVII^e–XVIII^e siècle*. Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. Paris 1992, pp. 63–95, here at pp. 63–67. For more detail on Montchrétien see my *The Economy of the Word. Language, History, and Economics*. New York 2015, pp. 31–32.

11 See my elaboration of this point in: *Framing the Wealth of Nations*. In: *History of Political Economy* 54 (2022), pp. 957–958. Steuart spent time in Paris during the 1750s, Smith during the 1760s. Both became personally acquainted with leading contemporary writers on politics and economy.

12 Marie-France Piguet: Quesnay, le langage et le »langage de la science économique«. In: *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* 21.2 (1999), pp. 123–147.

13 Bielfeld's usage here is similar to that of Steuart. Mirabeau described the »sole and unique principle of a true économie politique« as »de laisser tout libre & procurer ainsi l'abondance«, but he was writing in the context of police ordinances that limited the locations where eggs and butter could be bought and sold – *L'ami des hommes, ou Traité de la population*. Première Partie. Avignon 1756, p. 157.

made a great political coup by placing at the head of the affairs of Commerce a simple Merchant who has conducted his own Commerce successfully.¹⁴

Quite plainly here Bielfeld uses *Oeconomie Politique* as a science of use to a legislator, not to a man of business. Commercial knowledge is a part of *Oeconomie Politique*, but a kind of knowledge quite distinct from the practical knowledge of the merchant or the manufacturer. Such practical knowledge is in turn of little direct relevance to the proper administration of the state. *Oeconomie Politique* thus represents the knowledge of a state required for the proper maintenance and augmentation of its power – and here there is a convergence with the domain of *Polizei*, as it was known in German-speaking areas of Europe. Moreover, during the 1750s this conception appears to have had a French corollary, the *police des grains* referred to by Claude-Jacques Herbert's *Essai sur la police générale des grains* (1753, rev. 1755), which was also part of the Gournay circle's output. How far then were *Polizei* and *police* cognate? What distinguished their usage?

Two linked arguments will be made here. First, that eighteenth century French discourse on commerce, wealth and power was first formulated in the context of an Atlantic trading system in which German states did not directly participate, lacking the colonial empires of France, Spain, Britain and the United Provinces. This led to a natural interchange in the arguments made in French, Spanish, English and Dutch texts, as we can see in the various publications of the Gournay circle. All the same, while German territories were not direct participants in this Atlantic system, very similar arguments were being made in German-language literature about wealth and power. This chapter presents an opportunity to explore the boundaries of this convergence.

Secondly, and more generally, we should not amalgamate, homogenise, the arguments that we encounter here as a new European »political economy«. As will become clear, contemporaries did not use this collocation in the sense that we understand it today, as a post-1800 invention of principles and dogma by Say, Mill and Ricardo. To talk of »eighteenth-century political economy« carries a dual risk: we impose a false coherence on diverse writings whose authors did not think of themselves as contributing to any such idiom; while also, conversely, blurring the specific nature of the political economy that formed in the early decades of the nineteenth century, placing it in a false continuity with what came before and what came after.

¹⁴ Bielfeld: *Institutions politiques* (see note 1), pp. 269–270. He lists his sources on p. 272 as »Savary, Melon, Du Tot, Forbonnais, Chevalier Nickols«, this last being a work by Forbonnais' cousin Plumart de Dangeul, which he presented as a translation of a (non-existent) English text by »Sir John Nickolls«: *Remarques sur les avantages et les desavantages de la France et de la Gr. Bretagne, Par rapport au Commerce et autres Sources de la Puissance des Etats*. Leyde 1754. The title page gives this as a second edition, but this seems to have been a stratagem for evading censorship, as likewise the pretence that it was a translation.

Institutions politiques has attracted little attention from historians of political or economic thought, and so it offers an opportunity to reconsider the convergence and divergence of idioms usually treated quite separately, and without having first to clear away the clutter of commentary. Likewise, the work of those belonging to the Gournay circle has until quite recently been overshadowed by a preoccupation with Physiocratic arguments and their apparent filiation with much more modern economic discourse. There is so much to deal with here that this chapter can only signal a fresh approach. However, simply by picking up the connections that Bielfeld's text offers us we might glimpse the outlines of a new transnational perspective on mid-eighteenth century arguments about wealth, power and welfare. Here I will develop my argument in three phases: first, the use made of *police* and *Polizei*, Justi's *Grundsätze* being presented by him as the first systematic treatment of the latter, as a *Polizeiwissenschaft*. Then I will outline the »science of commerce« as presented by the Gournay Circle, emphasising the importance of earlier arguments advanced by Melon, and the degree to which Herbert and Forbonnais drew upon them. Following this, I consider how commerce fitted into the *Polizeiwissenschaft* developed by Justi, then in conclusion considering Bielfeld's *Institutions politiques*, and the nature of the relationship between *Polizei* and *Politik* at a time when both terms could plausibly be translated into English by »policy«.

1 Police/Polizei

Justi wrote and published his *Grundsätze der Policey-Wissenschaft* (1756) in Göttingen, for use in his lectures, as his »Vorrede« states. The didactic and ponderous style that this demanded was not one suited to the kind of audience that Bielfeld would write for, his *Institutions politiques* being written not primarily as an academic text but as advice to a legislator. Counsellors, merchants, bankers and officials were the typical addressees of this genre, not students. Nonetheless, as Alexandre Mendes Cunha notes,¹⁵ it was through French translation of this work that Justi became known outside the world of German-speaking universities, facilitating a convergence between contemporary French and German conceptions of welfare and order, and in particular the French discussion of *police des grains* exemplified by Herbert's *Essai*. Differences of natural language, of target readership and of political geography have combined to divide up this discourse of good government and welfare into discrete literary groups, but as I will demonstrate, this would be a mistake. As I outline below, the Gournay circle engaged in an extensive programme of writing and of translation – but from Spanish and English works, not from German.

¹⁵ See Alexandre Mendes Cunha's chapter in this volume, especially p. 292, note 3.

Reciprocally, English, French, and Spanish texts had comparatively little direct influence on the burgeoning mid-century *Staatswissenschaften* – and the extra-academic provenance of any translations from this literature is emphasised today by their comparative rarity in established university libraries.¹⁶

At issue here is a conception of »police« that is non-judicial, a prescription for good order (*gute Policey*) within a state through the enumeration of eventualities that threaten to undermine such good order, and provision for their avoidance. In the German case, late medieval and early modern statutes ascribed two meanings to the term *Polizei*: a condition of order in the community, and statutory intervention to institute or maintain such order.¹⁷ With the transformation of university teaching on *Politik* into the *Staatswissenschaften* during the first half of the eighteenth century¹⁸ *Polizeiwissenschaft* shifted the emphasis from the statutes governing this regime to its general nature:

It puts forward theories which are concerned with the detailed conditions for the institution and/or maintenance of order, and in consequence has to grapple with the objective of the State itself and the forms of State activity considered requisite for the establishment of order. ... »Polizei« is marked off from the external affairs of the State, from financial and military concerns [...].¹⁹

In both French and German at this time a »policed« society was a civilised, »polished« society.²⁰ »Civility« in this way became cognate with »peace, internal order and security«, in other words, with the »happiness« (*Glückseligkeit*) of subjects. And as stated by the *Encyclopédie* article that, unlike Rousseau, really did address the

16 While the Göttingen Universitätsbibliothek is well-stocked with French and English mid-eighteenth century literature, to which Justi had access, such translations into German from these sources that were made were never systematically acquired. The same appears to be true of Heidelberg, Munich, and Tübingen, for example.

17 Franz-Ludwig Knemeyer: *Polizei*. In: *Economy and Society* 9 (1980), p. 172. Translated by Keith Tribe from *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* Bd. IV (1978), pp. 875–897.

18 See Thomas Simon: »Gute Polizey«. *Ordnungsbilder und Zielvorstellungen politischen Handelns in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Frankfurt a. M. 2004 for a detailed account of the medieval and early modern formation of *Politik*, and the way in which *Politik* as guarantor of peace and security became displaced by *Ökonomie*, transferring the governing instance from ruler to state. However, as is plain in mid-eighteenth century literature, *Staat* and *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* were at the time treated as synonyms – as in Johann Georg Sulzer: *Die Staatswissenschaft, oder Politik, enthält die Theorie der Glückseligkeit ganzer Staaten oder bürgerlicher Gesellschaften*. In: ders.: *Kurzer Begriff aller Wissenschaften*. Frankfurt 1759, § 231, p. 180.

19 Knemeyer: *Polizei* (see note 17), p. 173.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 180; and see Jean-François Melon: *Essai politique sur le commerce* [1736]. Ed. par Francine Markovits. Caen 2014, p. 106: »Luxury is an extraordinary sumptuousness that renders a Government wealthy and secure; it is a necessary consequence of every Société bien policée.« As Markovits outlines in her preface to this facsimile edition, the *Essai* was first published in 1734, this edition being reprinted five times before a new, augmented edition appeared in 1736.

neologism *économie politique*: »[...] it is the art & science of maintaining men in society, & of keeping them happy (*hereux*) [...]«.²¹ It was an art of government, for which there were historically three genres: despotic, republican and monarchic.²²

Delamare's monumental *Traité de la police* (4 volumes, 1705–1738) has long stood as the point of reference for the French usage *police*, but this is misleading. It is primarily a historical account of statutes regulating police and public order from Antiquity to the early eighteenth century, including among its subjects religion, morals, health, roads, public safety, commerce, manufacture, and the poor. Herbert's draft version of his *Essai sur la police générale des grains*²³ is directed to the malign effects of government regulation of the grain trade as recorded in those parts of Delamare's *Traité* dealing with harvest failures and the price of bread.²⁴ Jean-Daniel Boyer has recently emphasised that Herbert's *Essai* is a critique of the ineffectiveness of government regulation of the grain trade as represented by the »old police of grain«, itemised in Delamare,²⁵ although he recognises that the outlines of the »new police« advocated by Herbert remain indistinct.²⁶ Boyer does not however note that Herbert openly acknowledged his indebtedness to Melon;²⁷ and there is little in the arguments about the liberty of commerce in grain presented by Herbert that cannot be found in Melon, some twenty years earlier. While Melon presented a general argument about commerce, opening with his parable of the three islands specialising in respectively wheat, wool and beverages, he also noted that the prime object of legislation was the »assurance du pain«, in conclusion stating that agriculture was the chief object of commerce, the foundation of industry and commerce.²⁸ Melon's conception of commerce was one that turned on the provision of food for the population, far from the caricature of »mercantilist policy« associated with Eli Heckscher.

21 Art. *Économie politique* (Hist. Pol. Rer. Anc. & mod.). *Encyclopédie* XI (1765), p. 366. This was a posthumous entry, its author Boulanger having died in 1757 and Diderot later using his notes – Marie-France Piguet: *Économie/Économie (politique) dans le texte informatisé de l'Encyclopédie*. In: *Recherches sur Diderot et sur l'Encyclopédie* 31–32 (2002), p. 132.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 367.

23 This was an early product of the Gournay circle, published in London (supposedly) in 1753. In a much-expanded edition of 1755 (supposedly published in Berlin) Herbert stated that the earlier version had been published without his permission.

24 Nicolas Delamare: *Traité de la police*. t. 2. Paris 1710, Livre V Titre XIV »De la Police des Grains & de celle du Pain, dans les temps de disette ou de famine«, pp. 942ff.

25 Jean-Daniel Boyer: *Police of Individual Interests against Police of Good Order: Herbert's Essay on the General Police of Grain as an attack on Delamare's Treatise on the Police*. In: *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 29 (2022), pp. 523–547, here at p. 527.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 543.

27 Herbert: Claude-Jacques Herbert: *Essai sur la police générale des grains, Sur leurs Prix & sur les Effets de l'agriculture*. Berlin 1755, p. vii.

28 Melon: *Essai politique* (see note 20), pp. 17, 343, 341.

Melon also tends to employ *police* and *politique* interchangeably,²⁹ and to confirm that this was normal in both French and English in the early eighteenth century we can refer to Boyer's *Dictionnaire Royal François et Anglois*. The entry here for *police*, glossed in the French as »order, regulation observed in a state, in a town« has »Policy, or Civil Government« as the English equivalent. The verb *policer* is translated as »to Govern or Order«. *Polir*, glossed in one sense as *adoucir*, *orner*, *cultiver L'Esprit & les Mœurs*, here has »to polish, to make polite, to civilize« for the English. *Politique*, as a noun and referring to the art of governing a state, is translated as »Politicks, or Policy«.³⁰ Likewise, the 1738 translation of Melon into English tends to render Melon's use of *police* as »polity«, so that »Le terme de Luxe est un vain nom, qu'il faut bannir de toutes les opérations de Police et de Commerce« becomes »The Term Luxury is an idle name, which should never be employed, in considerations on Polity, and Commerce«.³¹ This raises the question: what is the relationship between »police« and »commerce«?

2 The Science of Commerce

Paul Cheney has identified Montesquieu's *De l'Esprit des lois* (1748) as marking a turning point in the development of a science of commerce. He suggests that »throughout his life, his principal interest remained the problem of despotism and its alternatives« and especially in a form that »had become salient since the seventeenth century: what was the most appropriate political system for a world order based on commerce rather than territorial conquest?«³² Reviewing the impact of the three forms of political constitution – despotic, republican, and monarchic – Book XX primarily considers the relationship between trading in luxuries and the carrying trade (*commerce d'économie*).³³ »Politics« means the constitutional form of these states, »commerce« merely the means by which states engage in transactions; not the sources of a ruler's power in his subjects, nor the way in which a ruler might

²⁹ For example, he argues that the progress of opulence of an island can be easily established in three ways: whether its land produces wheat or equivalent commodities; »si sa police & son industrie augmente le nombre de ses habitants«; and whether there is a sufficiency of a circulating means of exchange (p. 9). On the following page he notes the importance of a »sage police« in the management of external affairs, while then later referring to the »cruelle politique« of the Spanish in their subjugation of the Americas (p. 38).

³⁰ Abel Boyer: *Dictionnaire Royal François et Anglois*. t. 1. La Haye 1702.

³¹ Melon : *Essai politique* (see note 20), p. 113; Monsieur M. : *A Political Essay on Commerce*. Trans. by David Bindon. Dublin 1738, p. 180.

³² Paul Cheney: *Revolutionary Commerce. Globalization and the French Monarchy*. Cambridge (Mass.) 2010, p. 53.

³³ Montesquieu : *De L'Esprit des lois*, t. II. Paris 1973, pp. 1–18.

augment these sources. The size of a population in relationship to the economic activity supporting that population is considered only in the four short paragraphs of Book XXIII Ch. XIV,³⁴ and otherwise the people of a country are considered only in terms of their »unique general spirit«.³⁵ Not only might we question how relevant Montesquieu might have been for the mid-century discussion of a nation's strength and a ruler's power, we can conclude that, *contra* Cheney, the broad arguments of *L'Esprit des lois* were unlikely to bring about any inflection in issues already raised by Melon and then subsequently elaborated by members of the Gournay circle. For Melon's work established the framework within which all French discussion of commerce and economy took place until the 1760s, when it was displaced by the Physiocrats.

Jean-François Melon (1675–1738) was born into a noble family and became a lawyer in Bordeaux, founding a literary circle that became an academy in 1712, with Melon as its secretary. The academy's benefactor was the Duc de la Force, and when he was appointed to the Conseil des finances he took Melon with him, as his secretary. Melon embarked on a career in the Regency, becoming Inspector General of the Bordeaux tax farms, and then secretary to John Law. With the collapse of Law's system in 1720 he became secretary to the Regent until his death in 1723. Despite his considerable experience of politics and finance, the *Essai* was his only foray into discussion of the sources of wealth. There is some similarity with Cantillon's roughly contemporary *Essai sur la nature du commerce en général*, which was written around the same time (Cantillon reputedly dying in a house fire in 1734), although first published in 1755. But Melon's text fits more easily than Cantillon's into the idiom of »power and plenty« that would prevail until the 1760s.

It opens with a chapter simply entitled »Principes«, presenting the reader with three islands, each specialising in one good (wheat, wool, beverages) whose annual production is sufficient for the population of all three islands. The islands trade the surpluses between themselves and, needs and transactions being equal, the balance of trade is also equal. What, however, if one island becomes able to supply its own need for one of the other goods, while still producing a surplus in its own good? What happens »dans la Politique & dans le Commerce?«³⁶ if this is the grain-producing island, a good the other two islands cannot do without, then initially workers will simply migrate to the wheat-producing island so that they can eat. On the other hand, if the two other islands properly understand their interest, and they cannot grow wheat, they will join together and compel the island producing wheat to sow sufficient grain for them in exchange for their own products, which it is then forbidden from producing. This exemplified the natural law of nations, that an indi-

³⁴ Ibid., t. II, pp. 107–108: »Des productions de la terre qui demandent plus ou moins d'hommes.«

³⁵ Ibid., t. II, p. 55.

³⁶ Melon: *Essai politique* (see note 20), p. 2.

vidual nation had to cede to the combined force of other nations, in the same way that an individual or a family acceded to the right of their own nation.

There are various other possible relationships, but the chief conclusion is that

[...] wheat is the foundation of commerce, because it is a support necessary for life, and its provision must be the prime object of the Legislator.³⁷

Everything else flows from this; and while commerce is the exchange of a surplus for necessities:

There is a relationship so intimate within the parts of society, that one cannot know, if by striking one, others are not struck in turn.³⁸

Melon elaborates upon this idea, noting the reciprocal effects of the power that plenty brings to the one island producing wheat, nullifying trade with the other islands, supporting trade with yet other islands from whom it has nothing to fear, such that »its tranquillity will become equal to its power.« The idea that a country with gold mines and money is the most rich is therefore an error; for it has to purchase its necessities from others, and in this way it becomes subject to them.³⁹ This first chapter concludes by stating that the book's title does not relate to the commerce between persons, but instead to the way that the Legislator can procure for the nation those things that make best use of the productions of its *terroir*.⁴⁰ Commerce sets up the relationships between nations in terms of a balance, which can however, to a greater or lesser extent, to greater or lesser advantage, be influenced by the policy of the Legislator in governing his own state.

The second chapter is entitled »On Wheat«, and asserts that the prime object of legislation is the securing of grain under conditions of fluctuating harvests and prices; fluctuations that occur not only from year to year, but within nations, so that another task is to prevent excessive increases in price by redistributing grain internally through the good offices of merchants who are kept informed of local surpluses and shortages:

It is also to be noted that the greater part of shortage and dearth were only sudden panics that closed granaries, whose doors a feeble or interested police was unable to break down.⁴¹

And as becomes evident in a chapter on political arithmetic added for the 1736 edition, the three independent islands with which Melon begins his *Essai* can also

³⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 16.

serve to illustrate the need for gathering information within one country, region by region:

The quantities of grains collected in each Province, and the quantities necessary for the consumption of each Province, are not difficult to know, and it would unnecessarily tire the Reader to propose Formulas. It is also not difficult to conclude from all that we said elsewhere in the Chapter on Wheat, that whether in scarcity or in abundance, the freedom of transport from one Province to another is the foundation of good management (*une bonne Régie*). Freedom of Transport must be accompanied by convenience, & convenience depends on Roads, Rivers & Canals. From which must follow good Finance, that is to say, Finance subordinate to Trade, the abolition of tolls.⁴²

In another new chapter, on the freedom of commerce, Melon notes that the law of the state is above the ordinary law, but that a wise *politique* should avoid injustice, if Reason of State provided authorisation. Again, privileges granted to an institution or an enterprise are often unnecessary, but odious when granted to persons, enriching one person to the detriment of the public – here neither the public nor the state benefits. This is followed by other examples, but the important point to note is that this discussion of the freedom of commerce is grounded in a reciprocal relationship between subject and state – unlike for example Montesquieu, for whom the freedom of commerce is merely an unexamined principle.

Melon's *Essai* therefore provided a rich platform upon which arguments regarding the commercial relationships of rival states could be linked to consideration of the domestic sources of wealth and power. *Commerce*, *politique* and *police* belonged together. But after the flurry of reprints and the second edition in 1736, there was little immediate reaction.⁴³ Not until the later 1740s was interest in Melon's arguments reflected in print, in for example Claude Dupin's pamphlet on grain, published in 1748.⁴⁴ Taking up points raised by Vauban, Colbert, Boisguilbert and Melon, Dupin argued for both internal and external freedom of trade in grain, arguing that this would secure the population against shortage and pointing to the manner in which England maintained a good supply at a fair price through the work of the

⁴² Ibid., pp. 324–325.

⁴³ The 1738 English translation was re printed in 1739, the French edition in 1742 and then 1751, 1754, 1761. That a significant argument makes an immediate impact, then remains unexamined for some time before its significance is again recognised, is quite usual and could be explained by a number of factors, not here of direct concern. Significant arguments can also go entirely unrecognised – exploration of these and other ramifications is the work of reception history.

⁴⁴ Claude Dupin: *Mémoire sur les bleds, avec un projet d'édit pour maintenir en tout tems la valeur des grains a un prix convenable au vendeur et a l'acheteur*. n. p. 1748. In fact, and related to fn. 42, the «Avertissement» states that this had been submitted to the censor in October 1742 but then preempted by the Arrêt of 17 September 1743 that permitted the internal transport of grain, flour and vegetables.

Corn Laws.⁴⁵ And it was not always a shortage that caused dearth and high prices; the avarice of usurers and monopolists might also play a role, as also the existence of merchants who did not deserve government protection, whose actions were designed to profit only themselves. Two measures might be taken without force, constraint, and punishment: the creation of public granaries in all major towns, and the establishment of a *police générale* regarding the entry and exit of grain, »as is practised in England«. ⁴⁶

Girolamo Belloni's *Del commercio*, a parallel text in Italian and Latin, appeared in 1750, was quickly translated into French, German, and English, with three further French reprints within the decade.⁴⁷ The reception of this work turns out to be more interesting than the text itself. A short book primarily about money and balances in trade, its three objects being the power of commerce, the nature of money, and the proportion between gold and silver, there is no more than a generalised idea that the commerce of the state is directed by a ruler; there is no discussion of the activity of individuals, be they merchants, manufacturers, farmers, or labourers, nor by extension of their respective interests. Most of the discussion turns on money flows within and between states, not on activity. The March 1751 issue of *Journal Économique* printed a précis of the work,⁴⁸ then in the following issue Marquis d'Argenson responded by questioning the idea that commerce required careful direction. He asked why one could not instead »allow everything to proceed by itself, while only lending protection?«

How many general and particular works are accomplished and perfected by *freedom*; each working *in their own right*; honour & profit lead each man individually, & the result is a *great whole* that never arises from general direction. If, on the contrary, the government supervises too much & worries about things, if laws that are too extensive & too detailed come to disturb individual work, you alarm with penalties (often badly inflicted) or reward with prizes (badly adjudicated), then you replace emulation with intrigue. That things are still going fairly well

45 Ibid., p. 7: »Commerce must be free, without regard, without consideration, without preference, and for the greatest public utility.«

46 Ibid., p. 10. There is a slight ambiguity here – whether »une police générale sur l'entrée & la sortie des grains« relates to the filling and emptying of granaries, but since public granaries were not part of English grain policy the sense is as given.

47 Girolamo Belloni: *De commercio/Del commercio*. Rome 1750; ders.: *Dissertation sur le commerce*. Avignon 1751; ders.: *A Dissertation on Commerce*. London 1752.

48 In the 1751 French translation Belloni's text is 98 pages; the March *Journal Économique* précis is printed pp. 93–121. The English translator appended several direct quotations from Montesquieu (from *Esprit des lois* Book XX on p. 13, from Book XXI pp. 14–15, and from Ustariz pp. 15–16) – Belloni had made no such references, implicit or explicit.

today is for the sole reason that they have so far escaped a so-called Legislative Police which retards progress, instead of advancing it.⁴⁹

Republics have prospered thanks to commerce, although prosperity has recently been disturbed by war and national debt. All that was needed of the public power was good judges, the punishment of monopoly, equal protection to all citizens, reliable money and good roads and canals. All else was vicious, arising from an overzealous state; for

Commerce is the science of individuals, but the general direction of commerce cannot be a science, for it is impossible.

Such general supervision would not only require knowledge of the interests of each nation, province and community, but of everything about individuals, and the quality and value of each and every good. And then he turns to a story from the time of Colbert: that Colbert had brought together several commerce deputies and asked them what he could do for commerce; to which the most reasonable and the least inclined to flattery responded: *Laissez-nous faire*.⁵⁰

The following month this enthusiasm was tempered by another contributor, making clear that we should not identify d'Argenson's argument with a more widespread sentiment. Belloni, this contributor suggests, is a »good citizen« aware of human fallibility and the remedies needed; d'Argenson by contrast a man »stirred by the love of wealth«, presenting under the veil of the public good the application of principles that are in his personal interest. No individual is a competent judge of what is of advantage or prejudicial to society; a reduced liberty within the law is the only liberty that an »honnête homme & un bon Citoyen« can enjoy living among »Nations policées«.⁵¹

Moreover, we should not assume that d'Argenson is here countering a restrictive system of police to a lack of any regulation. When Herbert's *Essai sur la police générale des grains* was published anonymously in 1753 d'Argenson wrote once more to the editor of the *Journal Économique*, describing the book as the one for which he had hoped:

Be sure to read the new pamphlet that I'm praising; let us think about it, and our state will change course. You will read that it is legislative precautions against monopoly that give rise to this awful monopoly that can starve us; that grain magazines are needed, but run by the commercial public; that the open competition of traders produces the just price of goods; that

⁴⁹ Marquis d'Argenson: Lettre à l'auteur du *Journal Économique*, au sujet de la dissertation sur le commerce de M. le Marquis Belloni. In: *Journal Économique* April (1751), p. 107 [pp. 107–117].

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 110–111.

⁵¹ M. M. D. B. I. D. C. : Lettre sur la Liberté du Commerce. In: *Journal Économique* May (1752), pp. 121–155, here at pp. 124–126.

dearness makes things flourish; that all circulation of goods has to be perfectly free from one province to the other, that it is rarely necessary to close the kingdom to import and export; that free commerce is always the most favourable for the public; that the interest or purchasers is preferable to that of sellers [...].⁵²

D'Argenson also wrote here that he had but one system regarding commerce: »c'est de laisser faire le public, & de ne point diriger le commerce. Punissez la fraude, & tout ira bien.«⁵³ But this should not be taken at face value. Herbert had indeed argued that it was the constraints placed upon the grain trade to prevent dearth that in fact made dearth more likely; but also, comparing France with other countries, he noted that

No, we have one more prejudice, a different Police, and Regulations that we would be ashamed to adopt for any other Commerce than for that of Grain.⁵⁴

So a different police from that prevailing since the sixteenth century, not the eradication of police as might be inferred from d'Argenson. In the 1755 edition, Herbert expanded on the English system of import and export thresholds, creating a balance governed solely by price:

No other Police would be needed than the raising or lowering of the duties in question, without any prohibition or licence for entry, nor for exit. The combination of foreign prices with our own will always be the compass that guides us.⁵⁵

For Herbert, if grain could be moved freely from one region to another, exported in times of abundance without ministerial authorisation, then granaries could be created at no cost to the state; for the public good, it was important to have merchants capable of funding magazines, spreading money among cultivators, and supporting the cost of their maintenance; for

Wheat is the foundation of all commerce; it is the good that no-one can avoid purchasing.⁵⁶

And accordingly, a Bureau should be established in Paris to promote agriculture, keeping records of harvests and consumption, seeking means to secure each year sufficient produce for consumption, establish in what ways agriculture might become subordinated to finance, what may encourage or discourage the cultivator, and disseminate good practice.⁵⁷

⁵² Marquis d'Argenson: *Lettre à l'Éditeur du Journal Œconomique*, May (1754), pp. 81–82.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁵⁴ Claude-Jacques Herbert: *Essai sur la police générale des grains*. London 1753, p. 16.

⁵⁵ Herbert: *Essai*, 1755 (see note 27), p. 173.

⁵⁶ Herbert: *Essai*, 1753 (see note 54), p. 28.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

This was the kind of task that de Gournay took up after he became Intendant du Commerce in 1751. Coming from a merchant family in St Malo, he had been apprenticed in Cadiz and stayed there for fifteen years, returning to France in 1747 when his business partner died, marrying his widow and inheriting his title. He was the only one out of thirty-one eighteenth century Intendants du commerce to come from a merchant background, nor had he studied law, as the others had done. As Loïc Charles emphasises, he applied his entrepreneurial talents to commerce as a literary business, commissioning histories, surveys and translations from Spanish and English, seeking to place commerce at the centre of politics.⁵⁸ At the time he was appointed the Bureau de commerce had been in operation for fifty years, initially charged with the drafting, promulgation and enforcement of regulations and the collection of economic information.⁵⁹ De Gournay was joined by Forbonnais, at the time writing his entries on commerce for the *Encyclopédie*,⁶⁰ likewise with a background in commerce, coming from a family in Le Mans in the cloth trade, which exported to the Spanish empire through Cadiz. Besides revising his *Encyclopédie* entries and publishing them as *Elémens du commerce*, Forbonnais had published a translation of *The British Merchant; or, Commerce Preserved* (1721), with additions, under the title *Le négociant anglois* in 1751, then in 1753 both a translation of the second 1742 edition of Uztariz's *Theoria y practica de comercio, y de marina* (1724) as *Théorie et pratique du commerce et de la marine* and his own work *Considérations sur les finances d'Espagne*. A cousin of Forbonnais, Plumard de Dangeul, also joined them, and in 1753 he published a French translation of Ulloa's *Restablecimiento de las fabricas, y comercio español* (1740). Another member of the Circle, Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont, published *Histoire et commerce des colonies angloises dans l'Amerique septentrionale* in 1755.⁶¹ Many of these works were either published anonymously or with false places of publication, as is demonstrably the fact with Cantillon's *Essai*, whose title page carries the name of a non-existent London bookseller.⁶²

58 Loïc Charles: Le cercle de Gournay: usages culturels et pratiques savantes. In: Loïc Charles, Frédéric Lefebvre, Christine Théré (eds.) *Le cercle de Vincent de Gournay. Savoirs économiques et pratique administrative en France au milieu du XVIII^e siècle*. Paris 2011, pp. 63–87. Charles also indicates here how the work of the Gournay Circle has over the years been fitted into various anachronistic frameworks – not only »liberalism« or »mercantilism«.

59 David Kammerling Smith: Le discours économique du Bureau du commerce, 1700–1750. In: Charles, Lefebvre, Théré (eds.): *Le cercle de Vincent de Gournay* (see note 58), pp. 31–32.

60 See fn. 6 above.

61 See Loïc Charles, Frédéric Lefebvre, Christine Théré: Introduction. In: Charles, Lefebvre, Théré: *Le cercle de Vincent de Gournay* (see note 58), pp. 11–26.

62 There is a long and tangled history attached to the composition and publication of the *Essai*, explored in detail by Richard Cantillon's *Essay on the Nature of Trade in General*. A Variorum Edition. Ed. by Richard van den Berg. Abingdon 2015; and most recently Loïc Charles, Christine Théré:

The sheer volume of publication that can be associated with de Gournay makes concise summary problematic and cannot be attempted here. Instead, the fact that, for Bielfeld, this wave of publication was primarily represented by Forbonnais's *Elémens du commerce*, and that this text was itself in large part compiled from his *Encyclopédie* entries, provides a short cut. All the same, we should recognise that Gournay's initiative was noticed outside France, as evident with Zinzendorf, and in Austria more generally. I discussed this Austrian reception of Forbonnais in *Governing Economy*, noting there his definition of »commerce« as a relation between economic agents, rather than the more simple »trade« that might be thought the appropriate English translation.⁶³ This enabled him to move from a discussion of commerce to the varied (domestic) impact that the removal of various impediments to commerce might have. More recently a special issue of the *History of European Ideas* was devoted to the translation and reception of Forbonnais' work, although leaving its sources and French context relatively unexamined.⁶⁴ Subsequently Thierry Demals and Alexandra Hyard have examined his critique of Physiocratic writing, but providing useful context in later seventeenth century English writings, and in Melon's *Essai*.⁶⁵ However, the recent focus upon Physiocratic and anti-Physiocratic discourse, in which Forbonnais features as a critic, makes it difficult to focus on the work being done in the mid-1750s, when all this lay in the future.⁶⁶

Here we are only concerned with the twelve chapters of the *Elémens du commerce*, largely assembled from the *Encyclopédie* entries for Vol. III (1753) and Vol. IV (1754), the latter being Ch. III on agriculture (»Culture des terres« in the *Encyclopédie*) and Ch. X on credit, neither of which had been published at the time the book was printed. Forbonnais marks with an asterisk those entries that had already appeared; not drawing attention to the fact that the brief entry on colonies in Vol. III

The Marquis de Mirabeau and Cantillon's *Essai sur la nature de commerce en general*. In: *History of Political Economy* 55 (2023), pp. 677–714.

⁶³ Tribe: *Governing Economy* (see note 2), pp. 80–82.

⁶⁴ See in particular the contributions of Antonella Alimento, the issue editor: *Beyond the Treaty of Utrecht: Véron de Forbonnais's French Translation of the British Merchant (1753)*. In: *History of European Ideas* 40 (2014), pp. 1044–1066; Jesús Astigarraga: *Forbonnais and the Discovery of the »Science of Commerce« in Spain (1755–1765)*. In: *ibid.*, pp. 1087–1107; and Monica Lupetti, Marco E. Guidi: *Translation as Import Substitution: The Portuguese Version of Véron de Forbonnais's Elémens du commerce*. In: *ibid.*, pp. 1151–1188. Marco Cavarzere's contribution to the issue: *The »New Science of Commerce« in the Holy Roman Empire: Véron de Forbonnais's Elémens du commerce and its German Readers*. In: *ibid.*, pp. 1130–1150, makes some useful comments on the translation of key terms of *Elémens* into German (pp. 1132–1135), but otherwise lacks connection with the contemporary German literature.

⁶⁵ Demals and Hyard: *Forbonnais, the Two Balances and the Économistes*. In: *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 22 (2015), pp. 445–472.

⁶⁶ Brought together in Steven Kaplan, Sophus Reinert (eds.): *The Economic Turn. Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*. London 2019.

had been expanded to fill fifty pages of the book. Hence the real additions to the book are chapters on manufactures (I pp. 241–311), navigation (I pp. 312–350), colonies (I pp. 351–400), the circulation of money (II pp. 67–172), luxury (II pp. 221–243) and the balance of trade (II pp. 244–276) – so 40% of new material added to the first part, and 58% to the second.⁶⁷

From the very first paragraph of the first chapter, which defines »commerce« as »reciprocal communication«, it is plain that Forbonnais does not have in mind exclusively external, maritime trade, but relates to the »communication made by men⁶⁸ between themselves with the products of their land and their own industry«. ⁶⁹ When this industry is applied to the refinement of the products of the land in such a way that it changes their form, it is called »manufacture«. While food and clothing are the only real human needs, convenience is only a result of this initial sentiment; while luxury results from a comparison with the surplus commodities that some individuals enjoy. Following from this, any good that can be passed from one man to another for his utility and satisfaction is the subject of commerce.⁷⁰ An equivalent is given for what is received: this is the essence of commerce, whose object is to create an abundance of necessary or convenient things, satisfying the needs of those participating. From this there develops navigation, insurance, and money, the establishment of colonies, and in general, the eight branches of commerce: agriculture, manufactures, liberal arts, fisheries, shipping, colonies, insurance, and instruments of exchange.

When Commerce is considered in relation to a political body, its work consists in the interior circulation of the products of the land or of colonies, the export of their surplus, the import of foreign products, whether for consumption or for re-export. When Commerce is considered as the occupation of a citizen within a political body, it consists in the purchase, the sale, or the exchange of goods for which other men have need, with the intention of making a profit.⁷¹ Further, the aim of commerce is to support through their own labours the greatest number of persons in a state; where agriculture and human activity are the only means for subsistence.

The effect of Commerce is to reinforce a Political Body with all the force that it can receive. [...] The real wealth of a State is the greatest degree of independence with respect to other States for its needs, and the greatest surplus that it has to export. Its relative wealth depends upon the quantity of conventional wealth [money forms] that it can attract through its Commerce, com-

⁶⁷ The first edition was published as two parts, pp. 400 and 276 respectively; the second edition of 1755 likewise as two parts, but as respectively pp. 239 and 164 because of its tighter page layout than the first edition.

⁶⁸ It should perhaps be noted that the French »hommes« means gendered persons, unlike the German »Menschen«. There is a reason that French women did not get the vote until 1946.

⁶⁹ Forbonnais: *Elémens du commerce*. Leyde 1754, Part I, p. 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

pared with the quantity of the same wealth that Commerce attracts to neighbouring States. It is the combination of this real and relative wealth that makes up the Art and the Science of the Administration of *Commerce Politique*.⁷²

Following on from this, Forbonnais outlines nine principles used by the English, »the people the best acquainted with Commerce«,⁷³ that can be used to judge the advantages of trade, and here we find listed a series of principles regarding the import and export of goods that emphasise the need to maximise domestic economic activity.

This emphasis upon what, for the sake of anything more precise, we can for the time being call mercantilist trade policy does however keep fully in view domestic economic activity – that it is animated by a concern to subsist a large, working, domestic population, and here we can identify a crossover with the kind of arguments we do find in contemporary German literature.

What we do not find in contemporary German literature is any discussion of competition, the subject of the second chapter. Here Forbonnais first distinguishes between two forms of domestic competition: that between imported and domestic products, where the import of foreign goods threatens to deprive people of the means to support themselves, and which must be proscribed; and that between the labour of the inhabitants, where

each of them has the faculty to occupy themselves in the way they believe most lucrative, or which pleases them more, when it is useful to Society. It is the principal foundation of the freedom of Commerce; it alone contributes more than any other to procuring for the nation this external competition that enriches it and makes it powerful.⁷⁴

This short chapter on competition is then followed by one on agriculture, which is stated to be the »necessary foundation of Commerce«. ⁷⁵ We have already encountered this sentiment in Melon; here it is elevated into the principle that the real power of a state can be judged from the growth or the decline of its rural areas. Here those who treat the cultivation of land only as a source of subsistence are constantly prey to fear of shortage, and they are often proved right. However, those who view agriculture as an object of commerce enjoy an abundance sufficient to always find themselves capable of supplying the needs of foreigners. England is an example of this, following the spirit of Roman Law in its »police des grains«. ⁷⁶

But while agricultural production is the foundation of commerce, this does not preclude trade in luxuries. In the short chapter that he added on this subject, For-

⁷² Ibid., pp. 46–47.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 51.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 92. [pp. 90–91 repeated].

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 98.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 105–106.

bonnais neither condemns trade in luxuries on moral grounds nor suggests that they are a source of economic motivation. Instead, his principal concern is the capacity of luxury to »unbalance« a nation. Here it was not the prudent action of a Legislator that would preserve this balance, but instead merchants, who are »les oeconomies d'une nation«, in whose caring hands the distribution of wealth between all classes of working people, or the proprietors of commodities:

To the degree that this distribution repeats itself, the labourer, the artisan, come to know a much greater number of enjoyable commodities, whose use multiplies the same faculties in an infinity of other men. The inequality that remains between each class does not discourage them at all, for the principle is known, and to everyone; it is industry.⁷⁷

Forbonnais refers here to Melon, but the emphasis upon the industry of the population as the source of national wealth, and by extension, of national power, projects English arguments into a Continental discourse that locates the power of a state in the wealth of its inhabitants. Absent, however, any discussion of the kinds of luxury goods and their sources, which would raise the issue of control of the oceans and colonies. The short chapter on »navigation« turns out to be a general disquisition on the advantages offered by maritime trade, not including for example any discussion of the role of the Navigation Acts in bolstering British maritime trade, but on the other hand recommending the practice of press-ganging sailors, on the grounds that they received regular payment and a share in any prize money.⁷⁸

Closing the first part of the book is a chapter on colonies, expanding considerably upon the brief entry in the *Encyclopédie*,⁷⁹ which had combined a discussion of antiquity with general points regarding the costs and profits arising for the metropole. While the original entry contained no discussion at all of modern slavery and the way that Spanish and British colonial possessions created new and lucrative flows of bullion and products respectively, the revised chapter has a short section on slavery and the slave trade, noting chiefly the additional costs involved, without however considering the productive uses to which slaves were put.⁸⁰ This lends emphasis to the way that »commerce« was for Forbonnais commensurate with economic activity in general, and not foreign trade; diminishing the conceptual distance between maritime and non-maritime powers, while at the same time obscuring the way in which maritime and colonial competition had, by the mid-eighteenth century, become a powerful lever in the competition of European states – not least, between France and Britain. Reference to the English literature on trade drew from it generic ideas, not arguments about power and plenty.

⁷⁷ Ibid., Part II, p. 233.

⁷⁸ Ibid., Part I, pp. 333–334.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Vol. III (1753), pp. 648–650; pp. 351–400 in *Elémens*, Part I.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Part I, pp. 382–386.

This rather disembodied, abstract tone of *Elémens* can perhaps be linked to the style adopted in the *Encyclopédie*, where relentlessly systematic, detached description prevailed. This was itself a function of Diderot's project, a work of reference for any reader. Justi wrote his *Polizeiwissenschaft* for use by students; Bielfeld wrote in the idiom of advice to a legislator. The distinction between the readers addressed by each mutually precluded the seamless integration of material serving a different purpose. Forbonnais rarely wrote of *police*, as Herbert and Melon had done; he showed little interest in the human improvement that *gute Polizei* and *une bonne politique* might offer. Forbonnais wrote of commerce, not commercial policy; and his material could be slotted into any argument. Now we can turn to Justi and Bielfeld to establish what limits might exist to this.

3 Polizeiwissenschaft

Justi's *Grundsätze der Policy-Wissenschaft* is a short and compact book of 352 pages, written for his lectures; indeed, for oral delivery. Each paragraph of the introduction makes one simple point taken from a word or phrase in the foregoing paragraph, as though viewing the same point from different angles.⁸¹ His stated object is to create for the first time a systematic approach to *Policy*, whose principal purpose is

to maintain and to increase the entire wealth (*Vermögen*) of the state through good internal arrangements (*Verfassungen*), and to foster all the inner power and strength of the republic, of which it is capable according to its condition. To this end it seeks to cultivate the lands, improve the *Nahrungsstand*,⁸² and maintain order and discipline in the commonwealth. [...] *Policy* concerns itself with the maintenance and increase of the entire wealth of the state according to its inner condition; while the Cameralist busies himself with extracting from this entire wealth of the state the most accessible wealth without disadvantaging the former, in order to meet the great expenditures needed for government.⁸³

Reviewing the existing literature, he noted how *Policy* had tended to be subordinated to other subjects, such as oeconomy or *Politik*; but in the following he intends simply to engage in exposition, not criticism.

There are four Books:

On the culture of lands (pp. 17–78);

On the measures promoting a flourishing *Nahrungsstand* (pp. 79–186);

⁸¹ See for instance the sequence of §§ 4–9, pp. 5–8, where the definition of the *Endzweck* of all republics is elaborated in terms of their »innerliche Verfassung« and their »allgemeine Vermögen«.

⁸² The state of subsistence, literally the »nutritional condition«.

⁸³ J. H. G. von Justi: *Grundsätze der Policy-Wissenschaft*. Göttingen 1756, Vorrede, no pagination.

On the moral circumstances of subjects and the maintenance of discipline and order (pp. 187–278);

On the implementation of the principles of *Policey* (pp. 279–352).

The first book begins with clearing land for habitation and cultivation (§.26), moving on to the construction of towns, roads, and bridges (§.43–§.72), ensuring for example that town clocks are audible and properly set (§.76); ensuring that the land is fully populated, attracting incomers by maintaining freedom of confession and economic activity (§§.87, 88) and promoting the birth rate through promoting marriage and preventing emigration (§§.97–100). More specifically, agriculture must be fostered to feed the population adequately (§§.123f.), manufactures so promoted that all necessities can be produced domestically, and that so far as is possible all raw materials are refined domestically.

Commerce and industry are »the soul of the *Nahrungsstand*« (§.191, p. 129). Internal industry cannot increase wealth; it needs the support of external trade based on the surplus created by domestic production, which in turn provides more employment. This leads to the basic principle of external trade: that more goods are to be exported than imported, not with respect to individual countries, but according to the general balance of trade. (§.201, p. 135). To further this, freedom of commercial enterprise is needed:

Each must be in the position to pursue those kinds of commerce and industry that appear most advantageous and pleasant to them, without being hindered by monopolies, exclusive societies, endowed privileges and other forms of restriction, or otherwise limited in their affairs and free actions (§.203 p. 136).

This is not an unconditional freedom; there are goods for which it is not advantageous for the state to import or export:

and the merchant must allow his action to be led by whatever is of advantage to the welfare of the republic and the increase of its wealth (§.203, p. 137).

Further, the export of goods is more beneficial the more that domestic goods have been worked up; and duties can help in encouraging this. (§.205, p. 138). Such exports should be given all possible encouragement: they should be carried in the nation's own ships, for this lays the basis for the maritime power of a state; and the more that one nation possesses goods that others lack, the greater the demand for them. While both these points might be construed as an acknowledgement of the British Navigation Acts and the tea, coffee, and sugar imported from the West Indies, no such direct reference is made. Justi moves to the circulation of money, the role of credit, and prices, so that about 60 pages of the entire book are devoted to general comments on trade and commerce, and the need for institutions that can secure it.

But these passages that resemble contemporary French arguments about commerce are followed by a return to an emphasis on the preservation of morality: that the chief concern of *Policey* with regard to morals was to ensure that the vices of whoring and indecency did not become too well-established (§.290, p. 205), along with public drunkenness, swearing, shouting, and public disorder. These had all to be nipped in the bud if the state was not to suffer serious harm (§.294, p. 208). Idleness was to be controlled, the people rendered industrious (§.328, p. 236).

There was a second, slightly revised and augmented edition of the *Grundsätze* in 1759, but the major revision came with the publication of the *Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten* in two volumes (1760 and 1761), much longer at a total of 1433 pages. Signing off the preface in Berlin on 25 April 1760, Justi is able to include Bielfeld among the writers he criticises for their failure to set boundaries to their exposition of *Polizeisachen*:

When they have set out to write about *Policey* they have mixed in so much from *Staatskunst*; and one will almost generally find that those who deal with *Staatskunst* also include *Policey*, commercial and financial science. This is what he most recent writer about *Staatskunst*, Baron von Bielfeld, has done, who in his *Institutions politiques* includes commercial and financial science as well as *Policey* in towns, down to the smallest circumstances [...].⁸⁴

But to do this would make *Staatskunst*, oder *Politik*, simply a framework for all other sciences that were in one way or another useful to the government of the state, and to the institutions and arrangements of civil society. Here Justi defines the limits of *Policey* as a science whose object is »to maintain the welfare of individual families in constant and exact agreement and relationship with the common good«. ⁸⁵ The object of *Staatskunst*, he went on, was the relative power of the state internally and externally – although it could not be denied that it has principles shared with *Policey- und Finanzwissenschaft*.

As with virtually any text on *Policey*, Justi's efforts to delimit his subject matter cannot be described as an unalloyed success. How then did Bielfeld, four years later, stake out his understanding of *politique*, and make use of the work of Melon and Forbonnais – but not really Montesquieu, whose emphasis upon political constitutions might seem a natural candidate?

⁸⁴ J. H. G. von Justi: *Die Grundfeste zu der Macht und Glückseligkeit der Staaten; oder ausführliche Vorstellung der gesamten Policey-Wissenschaft*. Königsberg 1760, Bd. I, Vorrede.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vorrede, n. p.

4 Bielfeld's »Political Institutions«

Bielfeld begins his book by disparaging an understanding of politics based on natural law, the »laws of human society« that make use of metaphysical reasoning but which neglect experience and the authority of history.⁸⁶ While such an approach might have its uses, it is inadequate for the education of the man of state, who would wish to be guided not by a philosopher in his study, but by a man of the world familiar with the chaos of affairs that have unravelled before him. It may be doubted, he suggests, that any book on politics since Aristotle, or any lecture given in a university, has been of use in the education of a single minister or diplomat. While a ruler might become distinguished through war, these are passing matters, and a wise and prudent ruler will end them as soon as possible. Ruling a people is by contrast a task for a lifetime. And if armed with the art of making a state happy (*hereux*), what evils might they be able to repel, and how much good they might do!⁸⁷ The book is organised in three parts: the first deals with the interior of a state; the second with foreign affairs; and the third presents the current condition of Europe.⁸⁸

The second chapter of the first volume deals with the education that a statesman should have, cultivating a good writing style, eloquence, and the ability to reason. For this last Bielfeld recommends the works of Grotius, Pufendorf and Montesquieu.⁸⁹ There follows a discussion of the very extensive literature of diplomacy and law to which a statesman should be exposed, concluding that

Such are, more or less, the Sciences that prepare one for the study of Politics. Not to mention here the knowledge that must be acquired of Commerce, of Navigation, of Finance, of Police etc. These are of the essence of the Art that will be exposed here. ... It is through the combination of all these different forms of knowledge, by study and reflection, that great statesmen are ultimately formed.⁹⁰

And it turns out that most of the first volume deals with police, finance, manufactures and commerce, leaving the treatment of diplomacy and affairs of state to the second volume. This is because he defines politics as »knowledge of the most fitting means to achieve one's aim«; which, applied to the state, is

⁸⁶ Bielfeld: *Institutions politiques* (see not 1) t. 1, Ch. 1, § 4, p. 3.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Ch. 1, § 7, p. 4.

⁸⁸ This last was the posthumous volume containing a review of Europe state by state and published in 1772.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Ch. 2, § 9, p. 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch. 2, § 18, p. 18.

the Knowledge of the most fitting means to make the State formidable, and its Citizens happy, or in other words, it is the art of governing a State & managing public Affairs.⁹¹

And associated with this,

All the parts of a Political Body, or a State, all the branches of Government must be in a condition of perpetual harmony, without clashing with each other, shocking each other, confounding each other, and this is what is called *good Order*.⁹²

This leads into a discussion of *police*, initially identified with an organised body of men, securing the safety of citizens by catching offenders; but, inevitably, this soon extends to assuring clean air and cheap bread, in the latter case by establishing and supervising public bakeries, as also then for meat, beverages and salt.⁹³ There is no end to all of this, »la Police s'étend aussi sur tous les Métiers utiles & nécessaire à la vie humaine«. ⁹⁴ Turning from urban to rural police, vagrancy was to be dealt with, as well as floods, cleanliness and dangerous dogs.⁹⁵

Finally, about half way through the first volume, Bielfeld turns away from this ever-extending work of police to »the opulence of the State in general«, opening with a historical survey that includes reference to Montesquieu, but also public debt, for which Melon is cited as an authority. Comparison of different nations reveals that

Very few States have sufficient funds to vigorously boost Agriculture, to establish all Skills, all Arts, all Manufactures, all the useful and practicable branches of Commerce, and ultimately *to give employment to all Citizens in the most profitable way*.⁹⁶

Success here depends on possessing sufficient money, and those nations with the most money are those most successful with manufacture and commerce. »The most industrious and the most Political Nations realised in good time this need for money.« The following chapter outlines the proper measures to be taken to create the institutions capable of regulating and administering debt, repeatedly referring to Melon's discussion of money and finance. The discussion continues in Ch. 12 to include manufactures, beginning by emphasising the need to establish a Higher Council of Commerce that includes as members bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and accountants. Here, and in the preceding chapter on finance, we can begin to see how the book is proposing an entire administrative framework through which a statesman can create a flourishing state. Bielfeld begins citing Forbonnais' *Elémens*

⁹¹ Ibid., Ch. 3, § 3, p. 20.

⁹² Ibid., Ch. 5, § 1, p. 52.

⁹³ Ibid., Ch. 8, § 21, p. 127.

⁹⁴ Ibid., Ch. 8, § 34, p. 134.

⁹⁵ Ibid., Ch. 9, § 19, p. 153.

⁹⁶ Ibid., Ch. 10, § 21, p. 166.

du commerce,⁹⁷ »a work more of practice than of speculation«, commensurate with the remarks he had made in the opening pages. This is followed by a detailed discussion of different types of manufactured goods, the hazard of monopoly, the location of manufacturing and apprenticeships, before then devoting a chapter to commerce. His definition is taken from Melon: that it is the exchange of superfluity for necessities.⁹⁸ After a discussion of banking Bielfeld comes to luxury; here he endorses Melon, who has shown how frivolous objections to luxury are.⁹⁹

The penultimate chapter of the first volume deals with »navigation«, largely based on the chapter in *Elémens*, suggesting how closely Bielfeld used Forbonnais' book as a source when working through these later chapters, and how easily Forbonnais' work can be assimilated into a more direct account of the internal power of a state – something that he did not himself attempt. As already noted, the title of Bielfeld's book should be taken quite literally: that he provides an institutional account of the way in which a statesman might organise a powerful, wealthy state through internal organisational measures. The second volume deals with the more directly diplomatic aspect of the same project, including here treaties, wars and inter-state negotiations. But even here there is an emphasis on political arithmetic, on the need to collect information about the internal condition of a state as a means for improvement, the specific arrangements for assembling information and evaluating it.

The amount of space given over in the first volume to the work of *police* – even though it starts out with the alternative French sense of an organised body of men – suggests that there is convergence here with the account of *Polizei* that we can find in Justi. And that, therefore, the sense of good order and happiness, its connection of domestic plenty with the power of the state that is so typical of the German literature is recapitulated by Bielfeld, drawing on recent French writings on commerce and exchange. It turns out that the practical aspects of maritime trade in goods and slaves, and the importance of slave labour in the production of new consumer goods – cocoa, coffee, sugar, cotton – played a very small part in mid-century French writings. Nor, indeed, was there any discussion of the commercial competition that would lead several European nations into armed transatlantic conflict from 1756 to 1763; and so arguments about the domestic foundation of state rivalry did not, after all, divide between maritime and non-maritime powers. The arguments about power and plenty remained generalised arguments, and so were capable of being taken up in different contexts.

What did Justi think of Bielfeld's book? Not a lot, it seems. He published a review in 1760, noting in his first sentence that it was a nice-looking work, and very

⁹⁷ Ibid., Ch. 13, § 6, p. 238. He cites the first French edition, and not the German translation.

⁹⁸ Ibid., Ch. 14, § 6, p. 272.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Ch. 14, § 45, p. 301.

well-printed. This was the last positive thing he said about it. It was, he stated, a work that one could not simply ignore; his readers would know that he usually simply refused to comment on other texts, but in this case the book was »too large and handsome« to simply ignore. It required thorough review.¹⁰⁰

But he does not do this. The vast majority of his comments are confined to the first thirty pages of the first part, and even though neutral summary or the printing of extracts rather than critical reviewing was the usual practice in the mid-eighteenth century, Justi's approach is all-too familiar for a modern reader – Bielfeld is incapable of developing the system that he seeks (p. 404); his versions of Greek and Roman history are faulty (pp. 405–406); while he cites Montesquieu here and there he does not seem to understand him (p. 407); he lacks knowledge of modern history (pp. 409–410); in particular, he muddles the kinship relationships underlying the War of Spanish Succession; he does not understand the relationship of King and Parliament in Britain (p. 411); he lacks knowledge of other states (p. 411); »he gives no general principles, no basic rules, from which all other rules and principles follow«, (p. 412); his treatment of police is defective (p. 417). Justi entirely fails to engage with both the material that Bielfeld brings together and the argument he advances, nor does he recognise the rhetorical purpose of the book. This is all depressingly familiar for any modern author.

Nonetheless, the book was in general well-received. A reviewer in the *Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen* gave a brief overview of the two volumes, noting that Bielfeld seeks not to instruct a reader, but to flatter and persuade. It was nonetheless an important work and it was to be hoped that a reader more familiar with the material would engage with it, since its purpose was serious and important.¹⁰¹ The reviewer emphasises that the work is intended as a guide to the education of a statesman, and as such the book is a very useful compendium that can be leafed through. There is a lack of philosophical order, but there is so much detail that this can be forgiven. In particular, the reviewer notes that Bielfeld

is dissatisfied with the newer philosophers, who discourse about *Politik* in their own way, and only too often demonstrate, without proof. They understand by *Politik* merely the laws of human society, which they explain using rational metaphysical inferences, without calling for support from experience or history.¹⁰²

100 J. H. G. von Justi: Review of Bielfeld, *Institutions politiques* in his *Fortgesetzte Bemühungen zum Vortheil der Naturkunde und des Gesellschaftlichen Lebens der Menschen*. 3 St., Berlin 1760, pp. 403–418.

101 Review of Bielfeld. In: *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* St. 45 (14 April 1760), pp. 393–400, here at p. 394.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 395.

The short supplement that Bielfeld published in 1761 in response to critics was printed at the end of the German translation, and here he acknowledged that his book was not sufficiently systematic, that he assembled and annotated material more than analysed it thoroughly, seeking to cover all aspects of *politische Wissenschaft*.¹⁰³ In his own defence, he emphasised that he was writing for a broad public, for princes as well as all those who were from birth likely to participate in government. For this readership, a more rigorously systematic work would have been a deterrent. In any case, he points out that the criticism aimed at his work would apply equally to Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*; but that had not prevented its success.

As it happened, in the same year Gottfried Achenwall published an account of *Politik* that did move beyond the laws of human society. He defined it as

the science of the most suitable means of achieving the purpose of the state, or promoting the external happiness of all and every member of a state, the well-being of the common weal, the land's welfare, the common good.¹⁰⁴

While he stated that the boundaries of *Staatsklugheit* were set by natural law, in closing his introduction he does refer to both Montesquieu and Bielfeld. And in the following he lays out the sources upon which he has built – regarding »Nahrungswesen und Gewerbe« Becher's *Politische Diskurs* in the 1754 Zincke edition, but then also Melon, Forbonnais, Savary, the *Journal de Commerce*, Herbert, and Hume's *Discours politiques* (1754). He cites the French, German, Italian and English literature that had discussed the ways in which the welfare of a state could be furthered by the management of economic activity, adding to this a very brief »Part II« »On the Government of a State in External Matters or Affairs of State« – 43 pages out of a total of 336.

This should at least give us pause in considering the relationship in mid-century of *Polizei* and *Politik*, of *police* and *politique*, and the way in which they related to the word that entered circulation at this time – *économie politique*. Was this at the time any more than a pleonasm, two terms that occupied the same conceptual space? The fact that Bielfeld's work had a wider European reception than any work by Justi, or Achenwall for that matter, gives us an opportunity to consider the implications of this. That *Institutions politiques* was written in French immediately gave it the pan-European accessibility any German text lacked. Full translation into Spanish and Russian, extracts in Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, these all widened access to a book whose principal flaw seems to have been its very accessibility.

¹⁰³ Bielfeld: *Lehrbegriff der Staatskunst* (see note 3) (1764), Theil II, p. 608.

¹⁰⁴ Gottfried Achenwall: *Die Staatsklugheit nach ihren ersten Grundsätzen*. Göttingen 1761, p. 3 (§ 6).