Moralism and Monarchism

Visions of Power in 18th-Century Russia

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The time-honored tradition of writing the history of Russian political thought as the history of constitutionalism describes it as a sequence of reform projects, unsuccessfully trying to circumscribe autocratic power with the use of new theories and concepts exported from the West. Marc Raeff depicted modernization in Russia by emphasizing the contrasts between Anglo-Saxon liberal individualism and continental collectivist "state dirigisme," yet the attempts to construct an effective *Polizeistaat* were halted by the autocratic monopoly of personalized power.[1] David Ransel has spoken of the "paradox of a would-be reformer" characteristic of the political culture of 18th-century Russia.[2] Some researchers insist that the principal conflict within Russian political thought in the 18th century was between absolutist arbitrariness and legal, procedural limitation.[3] If the history of Russian political thought revolves around the problem of the unlimited power of the autocrat, then its key problem is the juxtaposition of *arbitrariness* and *law.*

As Elise Wirtschafter puts it, "in a society in which property rights carried no judicial or administrative authority beyond the family estate, the development of an educated populace capable of employing reason to make independent judgments produced an abstract philosophical form of politics,

[1] Marc Raeff, "The Well-Ordered Police State and the Development of Modernity in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Europe: An Attempt at a Comparative Approach," *American Historical Review* 80, 5 (1975): 1221–43.

[2] David Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: The Panin Party* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 278–79.

[3] Cynthia Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy: Eighteenth-Century Rulers and Writers in Political Dialogue* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003); Andrey N. Medushevsky, *Russian Constitutionalism: Historical and Contemporary Development* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Richard Pipes, *Russian Conservatism and Its Critics: A Study in Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Sergei Polskoi, "Dvorianskii konstitutsionalizm v Rossii XVIII–nachala XIX vv.," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (2011): 27–42.

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concerned more with moral principles than with the routine functioning of institutions."[4] *Morals* are here juxtaposed with *politics*. Yet "moral alienation" could also lead to "rebellion."[5] Thus political processes in the Russian Empire were supposedly shaped by collisions over moral issues, in which the expectations of enlightened elites collided with the severe reality of an increasingly bureaucratizing machinery of power. In this article I seek to capitalize on Wirtschafter's concept of "moral monarchy," elaborated in *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater*.

I consider Wirtschafter's analysis of 18th-century Russian political culture convincing, and I might add that monarchist moralism existed in a variety of genres, enabling the Russian elite to discuss a broad range of issues. While Wirtschafter analyzed 18th-century dramatic pieces, I concentrate on a general study of political texts of the period, including panegyrics, odes, dramatic pieces, and administrative projects.

This article does not attempt to describe the whole range of ideas and concepts of 18th-century Russian monarchism. Such a task is far beyond the scope of any journal article. What I am trying to do is provide a reflection on certain political lexicons (or, to use J. G. A. Pocock's expression, "conceptual vocabularies"), manners of speech that—I would argue—were used by the elites of 18th-century Russia to describe the empire's political order.[6] These political lexicons overlapped, and the same author could borrow concepts and rhetorical figures from different manners of speech, while conceptual similarities of these vocabularies allowed them to fuse effectively.

The second section of the article, however, aims to correct Wirtschafter's concept of moral monarchy to some degree. The tensions that led the Russian elite to "rebellion" were, in my mind, not hidden in the mechanism of moral monarchy, which constantly promoted reconciliation rather than revolution. Its praise of peace and desire to avoid conflicts (I mean, of course, the *rhetoric* of conflict, not the actual *practice* of social conflict) were the foundation of moralist monarchism. Thus a radical change in political culture was to be found in the development of alternative political lexicons that would emphasize conflict as a legitimate social regime. In the last section of this article I briefly investigate the example of such a lexicon: Machiavellian civic republicanism.

[4] Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 176.

[5] Ibid., 177; Elena Marasinova, *Vlast´ i lichnost´: Ocherki russkoi istorii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008), 426.

[6] John Greville Agard Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 3.

The Conceptual Lexicons of 18th-Century Russian Monarchism

The first was the providential lexicon of church preachers and bishops. Religious legitimation was historically important. For example, Giovanni Maniscalco Basile, in studying the political ideology of 16th-century Russia, writes of an "elastic ideological structure," which established that "the ascendant justification of power (i.e., in the Zemskie Sobory between the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century) but also the descendant one (from God to the *car´*) mix, expanding the (absolute) power of a *car´*, whose authority derives directly or indirectly from God."[7]

The developments of the 17th century led to a rethinking of the metaphor of the godly tsar, which ceased to be merely rhetorical play and acquired a direct meaning, laying the foundation for a "civic cult of the monarch" in Petrine Russia. So power did not only originate directly from God; rather, the monarch himself acquired the godly capacities of demiurge. B. A. Uspenskii and V. M. Zhivov examined these Baroque ways of talking about the Russian monarchy.[8] In the 17th century, Russian political thought became byzantinized, in their words, in combination with the "theocratic eschatology" of the Muscovite state.

Providential rhetoric was thoroughly developed under Elizabeth, providing a stable and solid way to legitimate her power. Her coronation manifesto (1742) used providentialist vocabulary excessively: "The indubitable word of God teaches us: the Almighty possesses the realm of men and gives it to whoever he wants; and solely from Him, the supreme Tsar, the earthly monarchs have supreme power; and for all this, according to a good old custom of Christian Autocrats, are anointed and crowned in the Houses of God."[9] Church panegyrists such as Porfirii (Kraiskii) and Amvrosii (Iushkevich) used their rhetorical arsenal to persuade listeners of the divine origins and character of monarchical power.[10] They used forceful metaphors: in a sermon of 1741

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[7] Giovanni Maniscalco Basile, "Law and Power: The Idea of Sovereignty in 16th-Century Russia," *Quaestio Rossica*, no. 2 (2014): 76.

[8] Boris Uspenskii and Viktor Zhivov, "Tsar i Bog: Semioticheskie aspekty sakralizatsii monarkha v Rossii," in Uspenskii, *Izbrannye trudy*, 1: *Semiotika istorii. Semiotika kul´tury* (Moscow: Gnozis, 1994), 110–218.

[9] *Obstoiatel´noe opisanie torzhestvennykh poriadkov blagopoluchnogo vshestviia v tsarstvuiushchii grad Moskvu i sviashchenneishego koronovaniia Ee Avgusteishego Imperatorskogo Velichestva Vsepresvetleishiia Derzhavneishiia Velikiia Gosudaryni Imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1744), 2–3.

[10] Porfirii (Kraiskii), *Slovo v vysokotorzhestvennyi den´ vstupleniia na Vserossiiskii prestol Eia Imperatorskogo Velichestva … Elizavety Fedorovny* (Moscow: Sinodal´naia tipografiia, 1750), 17; *Obstoiatel´noe opisanie torzhestvennykh poriadkov*, 11–22; Iurii Kagarlitskii, "Sakralizatisiia kak priem: Resursy ubeditel´nosti i vliiatel´nosti imperskogo diskursa v Rossii XVIII veka," *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, no. 38 (1999), available at http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/1999/38/

Amvrosii called Elizabeth a "new Judith," as did Bishop Simon (Todorskii) in his sermon of 1747.[11] The efforts of church and secular panegyrists in praising Elizabeth were crucial to the emergence of providential monarchical language, depicting monarchical power as derived directly from God and describing the monarch himself as an omnipotent, godlike demiurge, establishing the "civic cult" of the prince.[12] The same concept appeared in poems of the period, such as odes written by M. V. Lomonosov or A. A. Rzhevskii.[13]

The same pattern can be seen during the reign of Catherine II. Her accession manifesto referred to Divine Will, although it also included a reference to the "desire" of the Fatherland.[14] The preacher Konstantin (Borkovskii), who delivered a sermon in the Dormition Cathedral of the Danilov Monastery in Moscow on 10 July 1762 (that is, right after the palace coup), compared Catherine to Gideon, calling her "the one chosen by God."[15] A large number of secular and church panegyrics were created during Catherine's provincial reforms of the 1770s—an ideological tour de force that occupied dozens of authors. One example of poetic panegyrics is the "Ode to the Establishment of the Kursk General Governorate" (1779) written by Ivan Golenevskii, a poet then at the "court" of the governor-general of Malorossiia, Field Marshal P. A. Rumiantsev. Here Golenevskii deploys the typical tropes of monarchical language. Kursk experiences the transformation of winter into spring due to Catherine's wise legislation; the city anticipates the rule of truth and law, alongside the ultimate triumph of justice. Golenevskii speaks of the severe extermination of vice and evil, yet at the same time he describes the rule of Catherine's truth as "mild" and "meek."[16]

The same pattern was used in the political novels (*Staatsroman*) of 18th-century Russia, which had emerged by the 1760s. Perhaps the most important of these, M. M. Kheraskov's *Numa Pompilii, ili protsvetaiushchii Rim* (Numa

kagarli.html; Joachim Klein, "Praising the Ruler: Panegyrical Poetry and Russian Absolutism," *Slovene*, no. 2 (2015): 36–71.

[11] *Petr I v russkoi literature XVIII veka: Teksty i kommentarii* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2006), 131; Simon (Todorskii), *Slovo v den′ vysochaishego rozhdeniia … Imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny vseia Rossii* (Moscow: Sinodal′naia tipografiia, 1747), 19–20.

[12] Klein, "Praising the Ruler," 44.

[13] Mikhail V. Lomonosov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 85–96, 123, 125, 136; *Poety XVIII veka* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel′, 1972), 247–48.

[14] Petr I. Bartenev, *Osmnadtsatyi vek: Istoricheskii sbornik* (Moscow: Grachev, 1869), 4:220.

[15] Konstantin (Borkovskii), *Slovo torzhestvennoe o vseradostneishem i vozhdelenneishem na samoderzhavnyi vserossiiskii prestol vstuplenii … Gosudaryni Imperatritsy Ekateriny Vtoryia* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1762), 5–6.

[16] Nauchno-issledovatel′skii otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteki (NIOR RGB) f. 255 (Rumiantsevy), karton 5, "Oda na otkrytie Kurskogo namestnichestva Eia Velichestvu Imperatritse Ekaterine Alekseevne Samoderzhitse Vserossiiskoi prinesennaia ot goroda Kurska dekabria 27 dnia 1779 goda Sochinitelem onyia Ivanom Golenevskim," ll. 2–4.

Pompilius, or Rome Flourishing, 1767), portrayed a virtuous monarch, Numa, who ruled by love and kindness. M. M. Shcherbatov's *Puteshestvie v zemliu Ofirskuiu* (Journey to the Land of Ophir, 1783–84) is somewhat more sensitive to the legal and institutional framework of monarchy, yet it also stresses the importance of the monarch's benevolence, gentleness, and ability to serve as a moral example in creating a good polity.

Although rhetorical strategies might differ from author to author as the result of distinctive styles, the conceptual framework was essentially the same, showing the monarch as a godlike demiurge who could transform the very nature of things by means of virtue, good will, and personal example.[17] This approach can be seen both in well-known and thoroughly studied odes (like those of Lomonosov, Aleksandr Sumarokov, or Kheraskov) and in relatively less-studied texts. Joachim Klein even argues that the Paulian concept of the monarch as a viceroy of God determined political thought as a whole.[18]

Another way to speak about the monarchy was through the language of *commerce and industry*. Raeff, in his famous essay on "the well-ordered police state," calls it "the application of a mechanistic view of the world to the sphere of government and the belief in a deliberate state policy for maximizing the potential of society."[19] This manner of talking about the monarchy was exemplified in numerous political projects aimed at an increase in revenues and production.[20] It is commonly associated with cameralism and *Polizeistaat*. I would formulate the central rhetorical element of this vocabulary by saying that it conceived of the common good as one benefit of a *new economy.* Such a new economic order demonstrated Russians' capacity to adopt European innovations and, as a result, to increase production and the quality of goods. The flourishing economy is linked to the progress of art and science, which was inseparable from Westernization. In addition, morals were being improved with the help of commerce as well, becoming softened and more civilized or, if we borrow a word from 18th-century Russian, "polished."

Although certainly part of the 18th-century European political discourse that praised commerce and industry, in Russia such a vision had its own distinctive traits, linked to the imagery of Peter the Great, which in turn was well elaborated in the providential lexicon. Both church and secular

17 Klein, "Praising the Ruler," 48.

18 Ibid., 42.

19 Raeff, *Well-Ordered Police State*, 1229.

20 See Sergei V. Andriainen, *Imperiia proektov: Gosudarstvennaia deiatel´nost´ P. I. Shuvalova,* (St. Petersburg: SPbGUEF, 2011); Igor´ V. Kurukin, *Epokha "dvortsovykh bur": Ocherki politicheskoi istorii poslepetrovskoi Rossii, 1725–1762 gg.* (Riazan: NRIID, 2003); Mikhail A. Kiselev, "Kazus D. V. Volkova: "'Pod´iachie' na vershinakh vlasti v Rossiiskoi imperii XVIII v.," *Ural´skii istoricheskii vestnik*, no. 36 (2012): 42–52.

writers capitalized on the metaphor of transforming Russia by the will of a mighty demiurge. The fleets, the cities, and the factories, as well as multiple goods and improved commerce, were considered to be key attributes of the common good.

For example, V. N. Tatishchev, in his *Predstavlenie o kupechestve i remeslakh* (Presentation on Commerce and Crafts, 1748) stated clearly: "All who are skillful at civil life [*grazhdanstvo*] know that the wealth, power, and honor of any land arise solely from the diligence of the people in manufactures and the good condition of merchants."[21] In 1760, Senate Secretary F. I. Sukin composed his *Razsuzhdenie o kommersii* (Discourse on Commerce), in which he stated that the beneficial role of commerce was widely known. After mentioning the examples of England, the Netherlands, and Venice, he proceeded to describe Russian commerce. Sukin emphasized Peter the Great's role as the creator who "transformed the brutal manners of the people; extorted the ignorance and debauchery in the Church; raised, equipped, and trained a new army; created a new fleet; built and fortified great cities; made harbors and wharfs; established courts and civility; sowed arts and sciences." The wise monarch surely knew that "commerce is the most reliable means to enrich the state."[22] The "enrichment of the state" is, by definition, the common good.

In 1783, the College secretary Ivan Smirnov, who was among the compilers of a collection of Russian laws (*Description of the Domestic Order of the Russian Empire, with all Parts of Legislation*), made a similar statement in the introduction to chapter 7, "On State Abundance." Smirnov defined prosperity as an abundance of luxurious goods: that is, "goods both useful and pleasant, to be used by the inhabitants of the state." He meant that a wise prince could stimulate the "multiplication" of his subjects and use the potential resources of the land on a maximal scale by assigning his subjects particular tasks—like the sciences, the arts, or industry. Thus "the more inhabitants the state has, the more advantages they could bring both to the state and to private persons through their successes."[23] Smirnov saw prosperity, understood as an abundance of goods and wealth, as the most important goal of a prince's political actions. N. I. Novikov, in an article "O torgovle voobsche" (On Commerce in General) published in 1782, regarded

[21] Vasilii N. Tatishchev, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 392.

[22] Sergei M. Troitskii, *Rossiia v XVIII veke: Sbornik statei i publikatsii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 232.

[23] NIOR RGB f. 132, karton 15, d. 22, "Opisanie vnutrenniago Rossiiskoi imperii pravleniia so vsemi zakonopolozheniia chastiami, glava 7: 'O gosudarstvennom izobilii,' soch. Ivana Smirnova," l. 1.

the production of luxury commodities as a path toward the common good, citing Montesquieu and Frederick the Great.[24] The same concept of commerce, science, and industry as civilizing vehicles was present in works by Moscow University professors: for example, I. D. Tret´iakov's "Discourse on the Causes of Prosperity and the Slow Enrichment of Ancient and Modern States" (1772) and Ia. A. Shneider's "Discourse on Montesquieu's Book *The Spirit of Laws*" (1782).[25]

Such language borrowed heavily from the providentialist rhetoric. Starting from Gavriil (Buzhinskii), who in 1723 sermonized about Peter's successes in creating a new economy and transforming Russia, church authors were keen on merging the providentialist lexicon with the technological discourse of Westernization. It is evident in Porfirii (Kraiskii)'s political sermon of 1744: "Tell us, o Russia! Did you really know before the time of PETER THE GREAT what factories were, and what manufactures were, what was profit and the state benefit from them all, and were not all these established by the lofty reason of PETER THE GREAT."[26] The same statements were made by Amvrosii (Iushkevich) in 1743 and by Stefan (Kalinovskii) in 1744; M. V. Lomonosov echoed these appraisals in his ode to Elizabeth of 1747.[27] Golenevskii, whose ode I mentioned above, was trapped by the equation of common good and commercial prosperity, for, in comparing Russia under Catherine to Sparta under Lycurgus, he attributed to the latter the establishment of not only wise laws but also of sciences, arts, and trade.[28]

The examples of Tatishchev, Sukin, and Smirnov, on the one hand, and of Stefan, Amvrosii, and other preachers, on the other, demonstrate the use of the lexicon of commerce and industry to describe the Russian monarchy as a vehicle of national prosperity. Prosperity here was understood not only as

[24] Nikolai I. Novikov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel´stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1951), 553.

[25] Ivan D. Tret´iakov, "Rassuzhdenie o prichinakh izobiliia i medlitel´nogo obogashcheniia gosudarstv kak u drevnikh tak i u tepereshnikh narodov," in *Izbrannye proizvedeniia russkikh myslitelei vtoroi poloviny XVIII veka* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel´stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1952), 1:358–59; Iakov A. Shneider, *Rassuzhdeniia na Monteskievu knigu o razume zakonov, ili Uroki vseobshchei iurisprudentsii, prepodavaemye v Moskovskom universitete* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1782).

[26] Porfirii (Kraiskii), *Slovo v vysokotorzhestvennyi den´*, 10–11.

[27] Amvrosii (Iushkevich), *Slovo v den´ chudesnogo na roditel´skii vserossiiskii prestol eia imperatorskogo velichestva vosshchestviia Elisavety Pervyya* (Moscow: Sinodal´naia tipografiia1744), 24; Stefan (Kalinovskii), *Slovo v den´ torzhestvennogo vosshchestviia na roditel´skii imperatorskii prestol Blagochestiveisheia Velikiia Imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny* (Moscow: Sinodal´naia tipografiia, 1744), 5; Lomonosov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 115–21.

[28] "Oda na otkrytie Kurskogo namestnichestva," l. 4.

an improvement in the material conditions of subjects' lives or as filling the treasury with money but also as a tool of civilization.

The rhetoric of change and improvement was connected closely to the providentialist style of political speech due to its emphasis on the demiurgic qualities of the monarch. This is evident from an example of the unknown translator of Frédéric-Henri Strube de Piermont's *Lettres russiennes* (1760), who used the rhetoric of transformation in a rather radical way. While Strube in the original text discusses Petrine reforms in a calm tone, the translator lets his emotions out.[29] The translator accused "Monseigneur von M." of attempting to describe Peter the Great's "unparalleled acuteness of impossible reason and wisdom" (*besprimernaia ostrota nevozmozhnogo razuma i mudrosti*) "with his poor little mind" (*bednym umishkom*). According to the translator, Montesquieu had insulted the immortal memory of the emperor, who possessed unsurpassed wisdom and virtue and could be compared with Moses or Lycurgus.[30] The translator lamented that, despite all Peter's efforts to transform the Russian realm, some barbaric "beards" were still present in Russia, especially among merchants. The Westernizing "polishing" of manners had not been completed.

The third way to describe political relations was that of *natural law*. Some of the Russian elite, familiar with Western political philosophy, were sensitive to concepts of natural law by the mid-18th century. Walter Gleason argues that the ideology of natural law as reflected in the works of Samuel Pufendorf and Christian Wolff influenced the political views of a whole generation of "moral idealists" such as D. I. Fonvizin or I. P. Bogdanovich.[31] I must admit that *natural law* indeed played an important role in Russian political thought in the 18th century. Educated Russian readers were eager to believe that a natural order of things exists from which a political system derives. Power is good only when it follows this natural order; otherwise it is "violence against nature," or tyranny.

Julia Berest, who has analyzed the tradition of natural law in Russia, points out that it was the Wolffian—or absolutist—branch of natural law that dominated Russian universities through the efforts of German professors.[32] But the practical use of the concepts of natural law was by no means limited

[29] [Frédéric-Henri Strube de Piermont,] *Lettres russiennes* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Akademii nauk, 1760), 105.

[30] Konstantin D. Bugrov and Mikhail A. Kiselev, *Estestvennoe pravo i dobrodetel´: Integratsiia evropeiskogo vliianiia v rossiiskuiu politicheskuiu kul´turu XVIII veka* (Ekaterinburg: Ural´skii federal´nyi universitet, 2016), 403–4.

[31] Walter Gleason, "Political Ideals and Loyalties of Some Russian Writers of the Early 1760s," *Slavic Review* 34, 3 (1975): 560–75.

[32] Julia Berest, *The Emergence of Russian Liberalism: Alexander Kunitsyn in Context, 1783–1840* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 107–18.

to university teaching. Tatishchev was among the first proponents of natural law in Russia, and "the first Russian author who based his conclusions upon the logic of natural law, but not a preacher who simply incorporated the elements of natural law into theological texts."[33] Strube de Piermont pioneered the systematic use of natural law in Russia.[34] In the Senate debates of 1761, R. I. Vorontsov, P. I. Shuvalov, and Ia. P. Shakhovskoi employed the concept of natural law.[35] M. M. Shcherbatov and A. P. Sumarokov referred to natural law in their writings of 1759, and in 1764 V. T. Zolotnitskii published a special guide in Russian for studying natural law.[36]

The political language of natural law spread steadily, and in 1762 it was widely used to justify Catherine II's palace coup. Indeed, her manifesto proclaimed that Peter III had neglected not only God's law but also "laws civil and natural."[37] In her *Instruction to the Legislative Commission* (1767) Catherine II tried to describe the "natural" political and legislative Russian state that corresponded to "the nature of the Russian people."[38] At the beginning of the "Instruction," Catherine said, "Christian Law teaches us to do mutual Good to one another," yet when talking of serfdom, she added that "the Law of Nature commands Us to take as much Care, as lies in Our Power, of the Prosperity of all the People."[39] The empress stressed that her "Instruction" was "drawn from the nature of things, and was conducive to the protection of the liberty of the citizens."[40] The political language of natural law remained a "broad frame," which could be used to justify a large range of positions.[41] For example, in some situations it could be used to justify the privileges of nobility and the existence of serfdom (as Strube de Piermont did in his *Lettres russiennes*) or to launch a fierce attack on the same privileges and serfdom (as A. N. Radishchev did in his *Puteshestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* [Journey from Petersburg to Moscow, 1790]).

33 Bugrov and Kiselev, *Estestvennoe pravo i dobrodetel´*, 145.
34 Ibid., 160.
35 Ibid., 183.
36 Mikhail M. Shcherbatov, "O nadobnosti i pol´ze gradskikh zakonov," *Sochineniia i perevody, k pol´ze i uveseleniiu sluzhashchiia* (July 1759); Aleksandr P. Sumarokov, "Son: Schastlivoe obshchestvo," *Trudoliubivaia pchela* (December 1759); Vladimir Zolotnitskii, *Sokrashchenie estestvennogo prava* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Sukhoputnogo kadetnogo korpusa, 1764).
37 Bartenev, *Osmnadtsatyi vek*, 4:218.
38 Tatyana Artemyeva, "From 'Natural Law' to the Idea of Human Rights in 18th-Century Russia: Nobility and Clergy," in *Orthodox Christianity and Human Rights*, ed. A. Brüning and E. van der Zweerde (Leuven: Peeters, 2012), 118.
39 *The Grand Instruction to the Commissioners Appointed to Frame a New Code of Laws for the Russian Empire: Composed by Her Imperial Majesty Catherine II* (London: T. Jefferys, 1768), 134.
40 Ibid., 85.
41 Bugrov and Kiselev, *Estestvennoe pravo i dobrodetel´*, 206.

The language of natural law could also be used to support providentialist arguments. In his oration of 1777, delivered in Iaroslavl′ to support Catherine's reform of the administrative structure, Archbishop Samuil (Mislavskii) talked of Providence, which gives the crown to a wise monarch. The wise monarch, in turn, is capable of bringing prosperity and happiness to his people with ease, since he has before his eyes "a book of nature," from which he borrows the "image of his goodness."[42] Thus the lexicons of Providence and natural law were fused in actual monarchical discourse.

The lexicon of natural law also tended to fuse with that of commerce, following the European pattern. Thinkers such as Montesquieu, David Hume, or Adam Smith redefined the relationship between commerce and power, paving the way for the Habermasian "public sphere" to emerge—that is, the sphere of political communication, in which naturally equal persons, polished and civilized through the practices of commerce and trade, use reason to exchange opinions and persuade each other.[43]

These three modes of speech were often used simultaneously and were the pillars of the conceptual image of the Russian monarchy as based on Providence, Westernization, and the natural law. Yet all these lexicons deployed the same understanding of arbitrariness and procedure. As far as I know, none of the Russian 18th-century authors had ever defended an arbitrary monarchy per se. Instead, they insisted that monarchical power was in fact limited, since it was oriented toward the common good. The use of the lexicons described here made it possible for particular authors to formulate different descriptions of the meaning of the common good—be it the execution of godly justice, or the establishment of a prosperous new economy, or the relevance of politics to the commands of natural law.

These concepts implied certain limitations on absolute power. Those who neglect their godly duty, who fail to increase prosperity or violate the immutable laws of nature, are to be called tyrants. We might recall the way in which Locke treated the term "absolute" in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689): "Even absolute power, where it is necessary, is not arbitrary by being absolute, but is still limited by that reason, and confined to those ends, which require it in some cases to be absolute."[44] The same logic, although independently of Locke, operated among 18th-century Russian writers.

[42] Samuil (Mislavskii), *Slovo o velikikh predmetakh vysochaishikh uchrezhdenii … imperatritsy Ekateriny Alekseevny* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal′naia tipografiia, 1777), 3.
[43] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 27.
[44] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (London: A. Millar et al., 1764), 321.

The providentialist political lexicon was not used to praise arbitrary rule.[45] Eighteenth-century preachers had a rather well-formed notion of tyrannical rule. The anonymous *Ifika Ieropolitika* (1712), one of the earliest political treatises of the Russian 18th century, stated it bluntly: "This is how a skillful statesman [*muzh blagoiskusnyi*] acts, being watchful and serving the common good [*obshchee dobro*] … A ruler who is loved by God remembers that those who chose him gave them into his hands not as slaves or prisoners but for protection. And should he be useful to them all, they will glorify him and love him."[46] The same idea was endlessly repeated in court sermons, like the one delivered by Simon (Todorskii) at the court in 1747:

> The monarch who forgets the purpose of his birth is a danger to his state. These are the tyrants and persecutors of the Church of God, who exterminate godly and civil law, ruin the people, make their subjects angry, neglect the common good, and worship themselves as if there is no almighty God in the sky. Instead, the Monarch who remembers the purpose of his birth, that he was born with the expectancy of eternal life, to do the will of the Creator, and following not his own whims but the holy Laws of God, is the health and benefit or rather the source of all benefits for his state.[47]

The political lexicon of reform, Westernization, and prosperity also limited monarchical power by its relevance to this political purpose. This lexicon provided Elizabeth with arguments against the rule of Ivan VI; her accession manifesto stressed not only the illegitimacy of the child emperor's rule but also the "troubles and riots" which were provoked by his short and unsuccessful reign.[48] The same pattern was reproduced by the panegyrists of Catherine II. And the empress herself stated in an anonymous treatise, *Antidote* (1770), that "there were no revolutions in Russia, save for the situations when the nation felt as if it were falling into weakness [*état d'affoiblissement*]. We had cruel reigns [*regnes durs*]; but only the weak reigns [*regnes foibles*] were difficult to bear. Our form of government by its essence requires vigor; and if there is no vigor, discontent becomes common, and thus revolutions occur,

[45] For a similar conclusion, see Vladimir Valdenberg, *Drevnerusskie ucheniia o predelakh tsarskoi vlasti: Ocherki russkoi politicheskoi literatury ot Vladimira Sviatogo do kontsa XVII veka* (Petrograd: A. Benke, 1916).

[46] *Ifika Ieropolitika, ili Filosofiia nravouchitel´naia simvolami i prispodoblenii iziasnena k nastavleniiu i pol´ze iunym* (Kiev: Kievo-Pecherskaia lavra, 1712), 83–84.

[47] Simon (Todorskii), *Slovo v den´ vysochaishego rozhdeniia blagochestiveishiia Samoderzhavneishiia Velikiia Gosudaryni Nasheia Imperatritsy Elisavety Petrovny vseia Rossii* (Moscow: Sinodal´naia tipografiia., 1747), 8.

[48] *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Vtorogo otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva kantseliarii, 1830), 11:542–43.

if things do not start to improve."[49] The loss of Westernizing dynamism thus might have been enough to qualify the ruler as a tyrant.

Finally, the concept of *natural law* implied a limitation on monarchical power by definition. The monarch's action cannot violate the rights of a person, which derive from nature itself. In her accession manifesto of 1762, Catherine II accused Peter III of breaking "laws civil and natural," and insisted that her husband was imagining his power as if it were not aimed at the benefit of subjects, due to its God-given character, but rather given to him accidentally, solely to satisfy his whims and passions. The Fatherland was inclining to revolt against the tyrant, yet God's law was strong enough to prevent bloodshed.[50] References to popular revolt which would put an end to a tyrannical reign were not rare, and were present in different contexts. For example, Zolotnitskii in his *Short Manual on Natural Law* (1764) cautiously pointed out that "should a monarch's bad deeds be severe enough to exterminate all the common good [*vsia obshchaia pol′za i sovershenstvo*], and the monarch will not hear the calls of his subjects, then it seems as though Majesty no longer exists, for the common good is being broken."[51] Daniel Nettelbladt, one of the German teachers of natural law at Moscow University, in his manual on natural law *Foundations of General Natural Jurisprudence* (1770) openly stated that "should a supreme ruler be a tyrant, and should he neglect the whole governance, then it is permitted to overthrow him."[52] Speaking of Strube's natural law, M. A. Kiselev draws a similar conclusion: "The sole absolute limitation of power here is natural justice, which manifests itself in the common good. Strube acknowledged that there exist different forms of government, including a limited monarchy.… However, such public limitation is not necessary on condition that the ruler is striving towards the common good."[53] In the famous "Discourse on Permanent State Laws" (composed around 1783), Catherine's adviser and chief of Russian foreign policy N. I. Panin stated clearly: "Power, which sets itself above all the laws of natural justice, cannot be legitimate."[54] Power, he meant, should secure the natural rights of people—namely, freedom (which he understood in Montesquieu's terms) and property.[55]

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[49] *Antidote* (Amsterdam:, n.p., 1770), 143.

[50] Bartenev, *Osmnadtsatyi vek*, 4:218–19.

[51] Zolotnitskii, *Sokrashchenie estestvennogo prava*, 119.

[52] Daniel Nettelbladt, *Nachal′noe osnovanie vseobshchei estestvennoi iurisprudentsii* (1770), 315.

[53] Bugrov and Kiselev, *Estestvennoe pravo i dobrodetel′*, 163.

[54] Aleksandr Sumarokov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel′, 1957), 342.

[55] Panin's definitions of liberty were the same as those in Catherine's "Instruction" and in general followed the concepts elaborated by Montesquieu in *L'Esprit des Lois.* See Konstantin

In short, the monarch had to be unlimited only in good deeds. As Panin put it, a monarch's power is unlimited as is God's power, but "God is almighty exactly because He cannot do anything but good; and to make this impossibility the endless omen of his perfection, He established the rules of eternal truth, which are immutable for Himself, by which He governs the Universe, and which He cannot break until He ceases to be God."[56] Should a monarch abandon his duty, terrible consequences will occur, be it divine retribution or the people's revolt. Bad governance produces revolts and coups, which are inevitable consequences of tyranny. That conclusion could be elaborated both with the use of the providential lexicon, and with the use of the lexicon of natural law. Chancellor A. A. Bezborodko repeated almost the same words in his "Note on the Needs of Russian Empire" (1799): "The autocratic Monarch, if he possesses the qualities worthy of his dignity, must feel that the power is given to him not to govern according to his whim, but to honor and execute his laws and the laws of his ancestors; thus, having proclaimed his law, he is, so to say, the first to obey it, so that no one would even think that they could avoid it."[57] Or, as A. P. Sumarokov poetically formulated it in the tragedy *Khorev* (1747): "The men who create laws / Themselves are submitted to their law."[58]

Is there a contradiction? After all his lamentations, Panin finally discovered the way to deal with the dilemma of divine monarchical authority and its limited manner of execution: "Beside all subtle scrutiny of political rights, let us ask ourselves ingeniously: who is the most autocratic of all the princes of the world? The soul and the heart will shout anonymously: he who is the most beloved."[59] The same idea was repeated in political literature available to a broad circle of readers—for example, F. A. Emin in his preface to *Russian History* (1767) stated: "No person is foolish enough to lack knowledge of the fact that freedom (*vol′nost′*) has to support the common good, and that its consequences ought to be truth and virtue: for no Republic permits the doing of evil. And since freedom is the creation of good, such golden freedom has no better home than in Russia."[60]

D. Bugrov, "'Petrovskaia' i 'Ekaterininskaia' kontseptsii politicheskoi svobody v Rossii 2-i poloviny XVIII v.," *Izvestiia Ural′skogo federal′nogo universiteta*, Ser. 2 (Humanities) 114, 2 (2013): 179–89.

[56] Konstantin D. Bugrov, *Monarkhiia i reformy: Politicheskie vzgliady N. I. Panina* (Ekaterinburg: BKI, 2015), 249.

[57] Aleksandr A. Bezborodko, "Zapiska o potrebnostiakh Imperii Rossiiskoi," *Russkii arkhiv*, no. 1 (1877): 297.

[58] Aleksandr Sumarokov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia N. Novikova, 1787), 3:30.

[59] Bugrov, *Monarkhiia i reformy*, 260.

[60] Fedor A. Emin, *Rossiiskaia istoriia* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1767), 1:ix.

Because the overthrow of the monarch could result only from the prince's own neglect of his duties, palace coups were presented as bloodless. Catherine's accession manifesto of 1762 stated that *everyone* hated Peter III and was ready to "shed his blood," but Providence prevented the people from doing so and gave the crown to the empress. The miracle here coincides with the revolt. The tyranny of a ruling prince was thus an anomaly, a state of exception, that was to be restored to the normal state of harmony, tranquillity, and peace through rapid and dynamic conflict. The necessary feature of the tyranny was its obvious character: the tyrant had to be manifestly evil to provoke everyone's hatred.

The words of statesmen like Panin or Bezborodko exemplify the moralist discourse, in which the law itself was seen as "a tool of education and administration," and power was characterized more by its purpose and quality, than by its procedural aspects.[61] I agree with David Christian's view, expressed in his analysis of the so-called Senate party of the first years of Alexander I's reign: "There was no way that procedures could bind the monarch, for there was no way in which the autocrat could legally confine himself to certain types of procedure or prejudge the legality of any future changes in procedure. Such rules could not be made to stick for the simple reason that there was no court legally or practically capable of enforcing them if the monarch chose to ignore them."[62] But—contrary to Christian's conclusion about the arbitrariness in the Russian political system—this by no means led to the assumption that the monarch could rule arbitrarily.[63] The actions of the prince had to be guided by the pursuit of the common good rather than by a set of legal procedures.

The same question was examined rather differently by Gleason, who has argued in favor of the strong influence of Pufendorf and Wolff, as well as François Fénelon, on Russian authors in the 1760s. Gleason states that "Pufendorf and Wolff provided virtually no theoretical bases for opposing the policies and authority of a monarch," and adds that their Russian readers cared even less about resistance theories, focusing instead on the monarch's functions and duties.[64] In Gleason's opinion, however, the discrepancy between the ideals of young Russian writers and journalists and Catherine's political actions led to the possibility of an independent critique of the

61 Dmitrii V. Timofeev, "Strategiia i taktika sovershenstvovaniia rossiiskogo zakonodatel´stva v Rossii pervoi chetverti XIX veka," *Ural´skii istoricheskii vestnik*, no. 3 (2011): 120.
62 David Christian, "The 'Senatorial Party' and the Theory of Collegial Government, 1801–1803," *Russian Review* 38, 3 (1979): 301.
63 Ibid., 322.
64 Gleason, "Political Ideals and Loyalties," 566.

monarchy.[65] But the focus on the monarch's duties, which Gleason attributed to Wolffian influence, was not a particular "program" but an important part of the Russian rhetorical tradition, reflected in numerous sermons and odes, political writings, and reform projects. The monarchist discourse was not a philosophy of mere obedience. It could provide strong arguments for critique and even for a legitimation of resistance against manifestly evil rulers. However, it was exactly that critique—be it deployed by such writers as D. I. Fonvizin or I. F. Bogdanovich—that strengthened the overall structure of the moralist monarchy. The moral commitment to the common good—understood as an objective thing in disguise of God's will, economic prosperity, or natural law—was the conceptual basis of monarchy.

A Non-Machiavellian Monarchy

The monarchical political thought of 18th-century Russia in all its variations recognized the existence of certain limitations on power. These limitations, however, were not procedural or institutional because the monarch was considered to be a supreme moral authority. Rather than see the proposals of reforms as attempts to circumscribe monarchical authority (*arbitrariness* vs. *law*) a historian ought to treat them as attempts to support the monarch's power by ensuring that its exercise be directed toward the common good. The recognition of the objective character of the common good—be it godly justice, a new economy, or the natural order—supported monarchical discourse at its core. Such moral commitment simultaneously provided arguments in favor of absolute power and established conceptual limitations on it. Wirtschafter points out that Russian Enlightenment led "not to revolution, but to reconciliation," and bolstered absolute monarchy while effectively making specific monarchs responsible for failures of governance.[66] While this opinion is quite correct, I must add that the monarchist discourse nevertheless made it possible not only to describe limited power and to identify tyrants but also to propose a variety of institutional reforms within the monarchical system.

As demonstrated above, monarchs had to use the administrative apparatus to pursue the common good; otherwise they risked being seen as lazy and passive tyrants. Rulers are human beings and have weaknesses, despite the supreme qualities typically praised in court sermons and odes. To compensate for those weaknesses, reforms of the system of governance may be undertaken to ensure the quality of decision making. Thus a moral commitment to pursue

[65] Ibid., 575.

[66] Wirtschafter, *Play of Ideas*, 174–77.

the common good led to an impressive wave of reform proposals elaborated by the Russian elite starting in the second quarter of the 18th century.[67]

These 18th-century projects cannot be understood in terms of reshaping the powers of governing bodies at the expense of a monarch's power. They were not directed at counterbalancing the monarch's own power, since that power had to be absolute in doing good. But since monarchs knew that the consequences of arbitrary and tyrannical rule would be disastrous and might result in the collapse of the state, they themselves supposedly had an interest in increasing the quality of their decisions. The balance between different administrative bodies and persons was aimed at preventing courtiers and flatterers from effectively usurping monarchical power. Favoritism was strongly criticized in almost every project for political reform, but it was a commonplace, since there never existed any contrary theory that praised favoritism and court flatterers. These enemies had to be dealt with by means of a certain system of government that would minimize the damage resulting from their actions. The other purpose of administrative reform was to increase the quality and quantity of information needed to make decisions.[68] For example, elective bodies were designed to provide monarchs with expertise, but not to drive them into situations of conflict.[69] One of the earliest proposals of this type was made by I. I. Pososhkov in *Kniga o skudosti i bogatstve* (Treatise on Poverty and Wealth), in which he advised summoning an assembly of delegates to compose a law code for Russia and stressed that such *mnogosovetie* (multiple counsel) would not restrict monarchical power: "For God did not gave a single person a perfect knowledge of everything, but divided that into small pieces … so it is useful to follow the counsel of many people [*mnogonarodnym sovetom*] in establishing justice."[70] F. A. Emin had put forward almost the same argument half a century earlier in his popular novel *The Letters of Ernest and Doraura* (1766): "The prince, regardless of how wise, virtous, and just he is, remains a man; but he has to be God to see all that goes on in his realm, and should something go wrong, the blame is on those who were appointed to provide justice."[71] A procedural

[67] Konstantin D. Bugrov and Mikhail A. Kiselev, "'Zakon' i 'sovet': Kontseptual´noe pole proektov politicheskikh reform rossiiskoi biurokraticheskoi elity (rubezh 50–60-kh godov XVIII veka)," *Dialog so vremenem*, no. 33 (2010): 110–39.

[68] Marc Raeff, "Introduction to Plans for Political Reforms in Imperial Russia, 1730–1905," in his *Political Ideas and Institutions in Imperial Russia* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994), 100.

[69] Kirill S. Chernov, "'Pravitel´stvennyi konstitutsionalizm' pervoi chetverti XIX v. (Na primere 'Gosudarstvennoi ustavnoi gramoty Rossiiskoi imperii,'" *Trudy Istoricheskogo fakul´teta Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta*, no. 11 (2012): 173.

[70] *Sochineniia Ivana Pososhkova* (Moscow: N. Stepanov, 1842), 76.

[71] Fedor A. Emin, *Pis´ma Ernesta i Doravry* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia akademiia nauk, 1766), 3:35.

limitation on the monarch's power might provoke conflict, which moralist monarchism tended to avoid. As Kheraskov stated in *Numa Pompilius*, conflict and intrigues made Romans vicious, but Numa's task was to bring them "sweet tranquillity" once again.[72] In "A Willful and Unanimous Discourse and Opinion of the Russian Nobility about State Governance," while proposing ways out of the crisis of 1730, Tatishchev compared the monarch to a master of the house, who, striving for the common good of all his household, had to retain wise advisers.[73] In 1762, N. I. Panin would make a similar comparison (replacing "house" with "factory") to argue for the establishment of a permanent council (*sovet*).[74]

N. M. Karamzin took exactly this approach in criticizing the project of political reforms under Alexander I: "What will the Senators do if the Monarch breaks the Charter [*Ustav*]? Will they present it to His Majesty? And he will laugh at them ten times; will they proclaim him an outlaw? Will they stir up the people? Every good Russian heart trembles at such a terrifying thought." The monarch, Karamzin argued, is already limited by the "fear of provoking common hatred," while the competing political bodies are like "terrible lions in the same cage." Thus additional procedures and balances would only promote endless conflicts, which would ruin tranquillity, justice, and finally the Russian state itself.[75] Karamzin did not, however, propagate meekness and blind obedience. What did he mean by "common hatred"? That concept was earlier used to justify the overthrow of "tyrants" like Peter III, and Karamzin nearly repeated Panin's words about the rules that God established for Himself. It seems as if Karamzin was dismissive of the conflict within the ordinary system of governance, in which a procedural conflict might lead to a rebellion. But he envisaged a different situation, in which the monarch first clearly shows himself as a manifestly evil tyrant; then the "common hatred" would most probably punish him, an idea shared by the proponents of natural law and of Providence alike. These ideas of Karamzin summarize perfectly what I would call the fear of conflict in Russian monarchist thought.

Thus the key problem in the discourse of politics in 18th-century Russia was not the limitation of power and not even the problem of resistance to the abuse of power, but the role of conflict within the political sphere. While moralist monarchism provided numerous ways to criticize the monarchy, to

72 Mikhail M. Kheraskov, *Numa Pompilii, ili Protsvetaiushchii Rim* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1803), 39.

73 Tatishchev, "Proizvol´noe i soglasnoe rassuzhdenie i mnenie sobravshegosia shliakhetstva russkogo o pravlenii gosudarstvennom," *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 149.

74 Bugrov, *Monarkhiia i reformy*, 279.

75 Nikolai Karamzin, *Zapiska o drevnei i novoi Rossii v ee politicheskom i grazhdanskom otnosheniiakh* (Moscow: Izdatel´stvo vostochnoi literatury, 1991), 48.

propose numerous improvements for the administration, and even to justify the overthrow of the tyrant, it did not presuppose the existence of permanent political competition between the monarch and any other political actors. What we typically consider to be an ideology of opposition and resistance could be better understood as an ideology that valued improvement of the apparatus of power to avoid internal conflict, which was usually understood as a disastrous but inevitable consequence of tyrannical rule. The definitive feature of good rule was tranquillity, or harmony, which meant that earthly order corresponded to the objective moral good. Loss of harmony was seen as a mark of bad rule.

Such a distinction between good and bad rule was possible based on a specific vision of conflict as an anomaly in the political process. Conflict was incompatible with an objective moral good, which supported monarchical power in its pursuit of the common good. Any form of conflict was undesirable, for the very existence of conflict was interpreted according to the monarchical lexicon as damage to the common good. It was exactly the absence of conflict that characterized successful and good rule. In the worst case, conflict was seen as necessary, unpleasant, and brief, a time in which violence was necessary to maintain security and justice. But in general, the common feature of monarchist ideology was the rhetoric of harmony and tranquillity, which implied the ability of the monarchy to correspond effectively to the objective moral order of things while pursuing the common good.

In general, that approach had much in common with the intellectual paradigm of anti-Machiavellianism, which emerged in the West at the beginning of the 17th century as a primarily Catholic reaction against the spread of the concept "raison d'état." Anti-Machiavellians such as Pedro de Rybadeneyra or Baltasar Gracian tried to connect the Machiavellian raison d'état (with its unpleasant features, which included lying, deceiving, and killing for raison d'état) with Thomist natural law and Ciceronian optimistic morals equating morally good and useful actions. Some of these writers, including Gracian, were popular in 18th-century Russia, but Russian authors were not eager to provide outlines of political practices in the manner of Gracian's famous *Oraculo manual y arte de prudencia* (The Art of Worldly Wisdom, 1647). In contrast to anti-Machiavellianism, Russian monarchists focused more on equating morally good and useful than on discussing practical implications of raison d'état and the arsenal of political tools required for successful governance. Even though political handbooks were translated into Russian and spread in handwritten or printed form, almost no attempts

to create Russian political handbooks were made in the 18th century (with Tatishchev's *Dukhovnaia moemu synu* [Testament for My Son] providing a rare example of something in the manner of handbook).

Many examples could be given in support of this conclusion, but I will limit myself to one. In a sermon of 1770 Bishop Gavriil (Petrov) told the empress:

> Your philanthropic heart impresses us with the truth, and so we see even punishments directed to real use even in guilt: your godlike soul leads us to promote a love of law through the love of virtue.... Your wise instructions teach us the real causes of both the well-being and the misfortune of each person, and to maintain each person's rights. Your desire to bring us to that demonstrates how troublesome it is not to know man's destiny and to seek man's happiness in things that do not belong to him [*iskat´ schastiia v neprinadlezhashchikh emu delakh*], and how it is serene and joyful not to be deluded in one's life: you lead us to that. Your instructions have the force to convince us because they are wise and philanthropic.[76]

The empress's governance turns out to coincide with the objective moral good, the harmony that allows all subjects to pursue happiness in their lives. Here politics is in fact philanthropy. Violence was reserved for the states of exception, which were applied to cases of manifest evil. One example of such evil was, of course, military opponents, most often the Ottoman Turks—although authors might differ on the waging of war. The same conceptual pattern appeared in literature about the rebellions, most notably Pugachev's uprising.[77] An article published in Novikov's *Pokoiashchiisia trudoliubets* in 1784, titled "Instruction of an Old Persian Monarch to His Son" insisted that under a virtuous king "no one will ever suffer, except for criminals who are guilty according to the law."[78] As Tatishchev stated in one of his historical notes for Ivan IV's *Sudebnik* (Law Code), "all decisions of the Senate are, in essence, new laws; for all these follow from the wrong decisions of lower chambers or from their inability to judge a court case due to the lack of comprehensible laws; however, the wrong decision could only occur due to a contradiction in the laws, which is to be resolved by

[76] Gavriil (Petrov), *Slovo v torzhestvennyi den´ vozvysheniia na Vserossiiskii Prestol… Imperatritsy Ekateriny Aleksievny Samoderzhitsy Vserossiiskiia* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Morskogo kadetnogo korpusa., 1770), 13.

[77] S. Eleonskii and G. Aleksandrov, "Pugachevshchina v dvorianskoi literature XVIII veka," *XVIII vek*, no. 9–10 (1933): 433–40.

[78] *Pokoiaschiisia trudoliubets* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1784), 1:118.

the Senate according to justice, and thus such a decision would become a new law."[79] There can be no conflict, according to Tatishchev, only the vagueness of laws, which could be cured by the Senate's effort to clarify the norms. I. N. Boltin, providing a passionate defense of Russian monarchy in his *Notes on Leclerc's History* (1788), condemned the conflict of opinions in politics: "The difference of reasons and passions destroys unanimity, while the mutual struggle of opinions creates obstacles in the way of good and wise intentions. Envy, defiance, hatred—they all frequently cause people to proclaim something even against their own reason with the sole desire of contradicting one who proposes a useful truth."[80] Conflicts typically were associated with the republican form of government, which was regarded as "weak": since the time of Feofan (Prokopovich) and Tatishchev, disputes and conflicts within the Russian political establishment were seen as the cause of military defeats at the hand of Mongols in the 13th and Poles in the 17th centuries.[81] Consultations within the power apparatus, which I briefly outlined above—from Pososhkov's projects to Panin's reforms and Emin's political novels—were not to become the battlefield of opinions and private interests. However thin that line between wise consultation and dangerous conflict, the 18th-century authors were able to see it quite clearly.

We might also illustrate the rhetoric of the state of exception with the antirevolutionary texts that appeared in Russian after the fall of the French monarchy in 1789. In 1793, Pavel Ikosov published a poem titled *Dithyramb, a Depiction of Terrible Deeds of French Riot, or the Woeful End of the Royal Martyr Louis XVI*. Here passionate and ferocious accusations against the revolting French are combined with the praises of Catherine's grace, wisdom, and divinity.[82] Another anti-French poem, *The Spirit of Citizen or Subject, in His Old Age Confused by the Atrocities of French Mutineers* (1794), was published by the vice-president of the Medical College, A. S. Volkov (also a prominent translator of European political texts). In the same manner as Ikosov, Volkov depicted the conflicts and bloodshed in France, then expressly called on divine retribution against the devilish rebels. Catherine II, as Volkov

[79] *Sudebnik gosudaria tsaria i velikogo kniazia Ioanna Vasilevicha* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1786), 124.
[80] Ivan N. Boltin, *Primechaniia na istoriiu drevniia i nyneshniia Rossii g. Leklerka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Gornogo uchilishcha, 1788), 477.
[81] Konstantin D. Bugrov and Sergei V. Sokolov, "Respublika mechei ili torgovaia respublika? Rossiiskaia istoricheskaia mysl′ XVIII–nachala XIX v. o voennoi moshchi respublikanskogo Novgoroda," *Cahiers du monde russe* 59, 1 (2018): 93–116.
[82] Pavel Ikosov, *Difiramv, izobrazhenie uzhasnykh deianii frantsuzskoi neobuzdannosti, ili Plachevnaia konchina tsarstvennogo muchenika Liudovika XVI* (St. Petersburg: Sytin, 1793), 11–13.

puts it, must save the French through her clemency, but if the rebels continue to resist, she will make them tremble with her anger. France, being a realm of conflict, is contrasted with Russia's tranquillity and prosperity, but in the case of the Russian empress, violence could easily be transformed into a tool for salvation and the restoration of harmony.[83] In Volkov's text, French anarchy is an anomaly, a view that extended to regarding the French as ceasing to be humans and becoming wild animals, while Russian tranquillity represented normal society. In *Tsar, or Novgorod Rescued* (1800), an antirepublican poem dedicated to the French turmoil, M. M. Kheraskov painted an impressive panorama of anarchist rebellion led by the aggressive Ratmir, aimed at the king and the elderly and bursting with bloody violence and permanent conflict.[84]

As Kirill Ospovat shows in his recent study of Sumarokov's political drama, violence hid behind the moral monolith of the monarchical lexicon of love and peace: "Fate—in eighteenth-century Russian discourse conventionally assimilated with divine will—stands for a potent pattern of political legitimacy that recognized repression and usurpation (as opposed to due judicial process and legally regulated succession) as valid sources of royal charisma."[85] Ospovat depicts 18th-century rulers as "modern usurpers, equally heroic and villainous," who constantly used the "theatre of power" to deceive and terrorize their subjects, even though the official language of ode and panegyric did not make it possible to openly postulate this goal.[86] This analysis shows that violence itself was a problematic, controversial concept for Russian political thought. Yet Ospovat somewhat overemphasizes the degree to which the Machiavellian character of power was visible in Sumarokov's political drama. For example, in Sumarokov's *Mstislav* (1774) the protagonist was eager to kill his brother with the assistance of courtesans but realized his mistake and was ready to kill himself. The happy ending dissolves the conflict, however, and Mstislav summarizes the royal duties: he would like to rule his people as a father, mild and benevolent, setting aside all the temptations of love, passion, and whims. No one should tremble under such benevolent rule, with the exception of "evil ones," of course.[87]

[83] Ibid., 20–23.

[84] M. M. Kheraskov, *Tsar′, ili Spasennyi Novgorod* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1800), 14.

[85] Kirill Ospovat, *Terror and Pity: Aleksandr Sumarokov and the Theater of Power in Elizabethan Russia* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016), 279.

[86] Ibid., 283–84.

[87] Aleksandr Sumarokov, *Polnoe sobranie vsekh sochinenii* (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1781), 4:177.

The tendency to portray social realities by juxtaposing good and bad does not represent something new in the history of political speech. But here we can clearly see the juxtaposition of the norm, understood as a rule of harmony, love, and justice, with the state of exception applied to what is manifestly evil. Harmony is guaranteed by the correspondence between politics and the supreme, objective moral good (be it Providence or natural law, discovered by means of human reason); for good governance coincides with such moral good. Consequently, violence is required only to restore the norm and to cure the anomaly, like the actions of criminals and vicious persons.

The absence of any concept of conflict as a tool of politics imposed a serious limitation on 18th-century Russian political thought and prevented it from adopting and adapting entire sectors of the European intellectual heritage—in particular, classical republicanism, which was connected with the name and tradition of Machiavelli. As Luca Bacelli states, Machiavelli's ideas about the significance of political conflict were innovative for Western tradition as a whole. In particular, this point applies to the Machiavellian concept of virtue, which is "not a moral value superimposed on political action; it rather means the ability to see the narrow space of possibility left open by fortune and necessity."[88] For Machiavelli, who was a key figure in the intellectual history of republican political thought, conflict was a necessary element of the civic participation of citizens in the life of the republic. He even stated that the Roman republic gained its strength due to the constant conflict between citizens.[89] Therefore, tranquillity is not a good thing on its own, and it cannot easily be equated with the common good. Machiavelli's ideas on the role of political conflict in the history of republics were heavily used by Montesquieu in his *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and Their Decline* (1734), which was widely read in Russia.[90]

Such a concept of conflict disturbed another influential republican mind of the Age of Enlightenment, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who praised unanimity as the political vehicle of republics. However, Rousseau elaborated an original decision in response to the same dilemma; while rejecting Machiavelli's idea about the beneficial role of internal conflict, Rousseau postulated that citizens could be "forced to be free."[91] He stated that "as long as several men in assembly regard themselves as a single body, they have only a single will

[88] Luca Baccelli, "Political Imagination, Conflict, and Democracy: Machiavelli's Republican Realism," in *Machiavelli on Liberty and Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 366.

[89] Ibid., 361.

[90] Lionel A. McKenzie, "Rousseau's Debate with Machiavelli in the 'Social Contract,' " *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43, 2 (1982): 215.

[91] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Social Contract and Discourses* (London : J. M. Dent, 1913), 18.

which is concerned with their common preservation and general well-being," and so "there are no embroilments or conflicts of interests; the common good is everywhere clearly apparent, and only good sense is needed to perceive it."[92] Moreover, if in *The Social Contract* Rousseau was somewhat critical of Machiavelli's ideas, in his *Dissertation on the Origin of Inequality* (1755) he followed the Florentine in a passionate attack on the social tranquillity imposed by the "common good" and "eternal harmony," calling it merely a tool masking the tyranny of the rich.[93]

Did such ideas of conflict find their way to the minds of Russian authors? Let us examine two of the most republican texts of the Russian 18th century—those by A. N. Radishchev and Ia. B. Kniazhnin. Radishchev, in his *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, was somewhat controversial. In the ode "Liberty" he praised the deposition of a tyrant by the people and even hailed Thomas Cromwell, a regicide; most important, he heavily criticized tranquillity, calling it a mask hiding the face of tyranny. But as Iu. M. Lotman pointed out, Radishchev was "less revolutionary" (or, I would say, more inclined to remain within a conceptual field of moralist monarchism) than Rousseau, since he believed that the common good represented the sum of private benefits.[94]

Thus the common good coincides with the objective moral good, which is valid for any human being and forms a solid basis for political harmony. In this sense, Radishchev—both in "Liberty" and in some other parts of *Journey*—excluded *conflict* from the realm of the political, save for exclusive situations such as manifest tyranny, resembling the monarchical discourse on the fall of tyrants that I analyzed above. Such a picture followed the general line of moral monarchy. He was much more innovative and, so to say, Machiavellian in the various sections of "Liberty," where he shifted the focus from a depiction of actual revolt to a historical analysis of the gradual degeneration of liberty into slavery and the ominous role of tranquillity in such degeneration.

Ia. B. Kniazhnin's drama *Vadim of Novgorod* (1789) took the problem of *conflict*, *tranquillity*, and *virtue* even farther than Radishchev's celebrated text. Kniazhnin used Roman rhetorical patterns in combination with a knowledge of ancient Russian history to perfectly emulate republican discourse and to glorify civil conflict in Novgorod. Whereas Riurik, who represents a benevolent monarch, is afraid of civil war and tries to put an end to violence,

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92 Ibid., 90.

93 Ibid., 222; Filippo del Lucchese, "Freedom, Equality, and Conflict: Rousseau on Machiavelli," *History of Political Thought* 35, 1 (2014): 47–48.

94 Iu. M. Lotman, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 1: *Russkaia literatura i kul´tura Prosveshcheniia* (Moscow: OGI, 2000), 62.

Vadim stubbornly fights for freedom, sacrificing the lives of his friends, his daughter, and ultimately himself. No grace or benevolence demonstrated by Riurik could stop the conflict, because the republicans preferred to fight and die rather than live under the monarch's rule. In the closing lines of the drama, Riurik remarks that his virtue did not bring him any reward.[95]

William Edgerton points out that Vadim's brutal treatment of his daughter represents a contradiction in his own republican inclination: "Vadim's unyielding republicanism grew out of his recognition that absolute power will corrupt even the noblest of men, and that no society is safe from its corrosive effects unless it retains the sovereign right both to choose and to remove its rulers.… Vadim unconsciously and inconsistently demonstrates the correctness of his republican argument against autocracy through his own tyrannical treatment of his daughter."[96] But in Vadim's mind virtue, civic status, and freedom are interconnected, making the problem of freedom relevant only in the political field. When Vadim makes his daughter promise that she will marry whomever he picks for her, he tries to stimulate his republican commanders to fight fiercely against Riurik. In doing so, he acts in a Machiavellian manner. Surely, Vadim was interested not in objective morals but in the preservation of the republican political regime in Novgorod, and used all his skills, art, and virtue to achieve this purpose. Contrary to Edgerton's argument, Vadim's brutality is *precisely* a feature of republicanism.

The republic was kept running through civic conflict, and when people became tired of that, they preferred Riurik's wise and benevolent rule to republican freedom. In Vadim's eyes, however, this fact was nothing more than ominous evidence of the excess of civic virtue of his fellow Novgorodians, so he continued to confront Riurik even when—according to the basics of moralist monarchism—Riurik's supreme qualities had to make the rebels change their minds unless they were manifestly evil. Vadim is obviously not evil in the strict sense (unlike, say, Dimitrii in Sumarokov's *Dimitrii Samozvanets* [Dmitrii the Pretender]), yet he remains adamant in his desire to oppose Riurik. No harmony could be ever reached under such circumstances; Vadim's civic virtue brings suffering to his own daughter, to Riurik, and to Vadim himself. The political body of the republic was a necessary precondition of virtue and the common good; one could not be virtuous

[95] Iakov D. Kniazhnin, "Vadim Novgorodskii," *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel′, 1961), 303.

[96] William Edgerton, "Ambivalence as the Key to Kniazhnin's Tragedy 'Vadim Novgorodskii,'" in *Russia and the World of the Eighteenth Century: Proceedings of the III International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*, ed. John T. Alexander (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1988), 312.

without being the perfect republican citizen. The republicans, being vigilant, are ready to unleash conflict, ferociously fighting even a prince of superior moral qualities. Virtue and the common good within such a paradigm are subjective, so all the supreme moral qualities of Riurik proved to be futile.

I must agree with Wirtschafter that monarchy, for most 18th-century Russian authors, played a crucial role in supporting the God-given moral order in society.[97] As I have tried to demonstrate, the central element of monarchical rhetoric was the assumption that the common good coincided with an objective moral good. The proponents of monarchical ideology—from Simon (Todorskii) to A. P. Sumarokov, and from N. I. Panin to N. M. Karamzin—insisted that princely rule was in fact limited by its ultimate purpose, the common good, which at the same time coincided with the objective moral good. A virtuous prince, although not legally bound by institutional checks, would follow these limitations, whereas a vicious one would soon fall, and the norm of virtue would be restored by the moment of conflict. The proposals for procedures and administrative regulations elaborated by 18th-century reformers (starting with Pososhkov's concept of *mnogosovetie* and ending with elaborate proposals like those of Panin or Bezborodko) were mostly aimed at supporting the monarch's pursuit of the common good by providing him with an apparatus to correct his deeds: expertise, counsel, and procedures.

What should be done in the case of conflict between the monarch's will, which supposedly has to be permanently directed toward the common good, and procedure? Russian writers and reformers found this question painful and dealt with it through an appraisal of tranquillity. Conflict was reserved for states of exception, like the punishment of a criminal, the waging of war, the suppression of rebellion, or even the disastrous fall of a tyrant. Consequently, the key distinction in the political speech of monarchy was not that of limitation and arbitrariness but that of *tranquillity* and *conflict*. A good monarchy remains tranquil, while a bad one suffers from conflict, provoked either by a tyrant or by anarchist mobs of rebels. This picture may appear surprisingly duotone—either black or white—but such was the specifics of Russian political thought of the age.

Therefore, we might conclude that for 18th-century Russian political thinkers the most important challenge to imperial power lay not in attempts to place the monarch within the limits of a certain constitutional

[97] Wirtschafter, *Play of Ideas*, 174.

or legal system. Instead, the challenge was the shift in understanding of the connections among the political system, civic virtue, and conflict, which slowly developed in 18th-century Russia under the influence of the European republican tradition, based mainly on the rethinking of Greek and Roman history with insights from Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and others. Kniazhnin's *Vadim* is evidence of the emergence of such a mode of speech, operationalizing conflict as a tool of political order.

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