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PHYSIOCRACY IN EUROPE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Movement and Reception of a Model of Reform of Legal and Social Order

English summary



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Abstract

In the Age of Enlightenment, physiocracy was an attractive paradigm proposing a universal and original model for societal reform of the Ancien Regime. From the 1760s, the ideas supported by this political, economic and legal doctrine were carried across the European continent, where they were met with varied degrees of interest by the rulers and enlightened elite. The movement's propositions gained support from some important people in Europe and inspired enthusiasm in many intellectuals, diplomats and administrators. In contrast, physiocracy was met with scepticism or indifference by certain princes, ministers or thinkers, often including those close to the seats of power. Although they were looking for reformatory solutions, these rulers only applied physiocratic principles sparingly or else rejected them outright on the pretext of their insidious effects on the traditional social order. By studying the impact that physiocratic ideas had in Europe on the princes and enlightened elites of the second half of the eighteenth century, this essay aims at reconsidering physiocracy as an intellectual movement, not solely French but with a truly European dimension.

Keywords: Physiocracy, Europe, Enlightenment, Enlightened Absolutism, Legal and Political Model.

1. Introduction

In the century of the Enlightenment, physiocracy emerged from the meeting in 1757 of Doctor François Quesnay, Madame de Pompadour's personal doctor and protégé, and the Marquis of Mirabeau whose *L'Ami des hommes* had recently enjoyed literary success. During the 1760s, the movement integrated new talents, such as the former military officer Charles Richard de Butré, the parliamentarian Paul Pierre Lemercier de la Rivière, the publicist Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, the lawyer Guillaume-François Le Trosne and the abbot Nicolas Baudeau. Together, they proposed a model for social reform of the Ancien Regime. The ideas carried by this political, economic and legal doctrine circulated in a remarkable manner throughout the whole European continent and were welcomed with varying degrees of interest by rulers and the enlightened elite. This "new science", as its disciples liked to call it, gained the support of some important people in Europe and incited a fervour of interest verging on glorification in many intellectuals and foreign

administrators. *A contrario*, other princes and personalities at high levels remained unmoved by the principles of natural order or dismissed them completely on the pretext of their insidious effects on the traditional social order.

While the birth and growth of the physiocratic movement have already been the object of many detailed analyses[1], the phenomenon of the circulation and reception of physiocracy in Europe, however essential to the understanding of the second half of the eighteenth century, had hardly been revealed in its entirety. The recent publication of our book entitled *La physiocratie dans l'Europe des Lumières. Circulation et réception d'un modèle de réforme de l'ordre juridique et social*[2] aims to fill this historiographical lacuna by reconsidering the impact that physiocratic ideas had in Europe on princes and enlightened elites. The purpose of this essay is to present to the international academic community the conclusions and new scientific viewpoints contributed by this work of several years.

2. Physiocracy, a model of reform in the Age of Enlightenment

In *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, Alexis de Tocqueville explains that the physiocratic state "doesn't only have to rule the nation, but should shape it in a certain way: it should train citizens' minds according to a particular *model* that it has proposed in advance"[3]. But what exactly did the physiocratic model contain?

From an economic standpoint, physiocracy was a reaction against the mercantile system, which, based as it was on the accumulation of gold and precious metals, favoured the rise of the merchant and manufacturing sectors to the detriment of agriculture. This, in

[1] For a general approach to the subject, see the immense body of work by Georges Weulersse, *Le mouvement physiocratique en France (de 1756 à 1770)* (Paris: Alcan, 1910); *Les physiocrates* (Paris: G. Doin & Cie, 1931); *La physiocratie sous les ministères de Turgot et de Necker (1774-1781)* (Paris: PUF, 1950) ; *La physiocratie à la fin du règne de Louis XV (1770-1774)* (Paris: PUF, 1959) ; *La physiocratie à l'aube de la Révolution (1781-1792)* (Paris: EHESS, 1985). For a social and economic history approach, see Steven L. Kaplan, *Raisonner sur les blés. Essais sur les lumières économiques* (Paris: Fayard, 2017). From the point of view of intellectual history, see Philippe Steiner, *La « science nouvelle » de l'économie politique* (Paris: PUF, 1998); Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, 'The Physiocratic Movement: A Revision', *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe*, edited by Steven L. Kaplan and Sophus A. Reinert (New York: Anthem Press, 2019), 35-70; Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, 'François Quesnay: A "Rural Socrates" in Versailles', *History of Political Economy*, 39 (2007), 195-214; Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, 'The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay and the Making of Physiocracy', *History of Political Economy*, 40 (2008), 1-42; Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, 'From Versailles to Paris: The Creative Communities of the Physiocratic Movement', *History of Political Economy*, 43 (2011), 25-58; Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, 'The Economist as Surveyor: Physiocracy in the Fields', *History of Political Economy*, 44 (2012), 71-89; Liana Vardi, *The physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Arnault Skornicki, *L'économiste, la cour et la patrie* (Paris: CNRS, 2011).

[2] Thérence Carvalho, *La physiocratie dans l'Europe des Lumières. Circulation et réception d'un modèle de réforme de l'ordre juridique et social* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2020).

[3] Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856) (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1988), 253.

fact, constituted one of the pillars of the doctrine, which considered only the land to be capable of producing riches by annually providing a "net product", in contrast to commerce and manufacturing which it qualified as "sterile classes". Hence, all economic policy must be drawn up taking into account the riches issued from the land and putting agriculture, the sole productive activity, at the heart of the government's concerns[4]. With this objective, it would be necessary to abolish the grain police, who were meant to guarantee a sufficient quantity of cereals for the population at an affordable price. Faced with state interventionism, a factor of stagnation or even regression of the country's political economy, there was a need to remove the barriers curbing the circulation of agricultural produce so as to increase the riches created by the land. The physiocrats took up the famous maxim of Vincent de Gournay "*laisser faire*, *laisser passer*" ["Let do and let pass"] for themselves, advocating a complete and absolute liberalisation of commerce, within and beyond frontiers[5]. In the same way, so that labour would face no obstacles and could flourish freely, corporations and guilds should be abolished.

In taxation matters, as agriculture was the only productive source of wealth, taxation must solely concern landowners. Considered as a veritable "cancer", indirect tax impedes freedom of trade and ultimately relies on the landowner, either through a decrease in income or an increase in expenditure. In a few words, Du Pont summarised this as "Indirect taxation, poor peasants; poor peasants, poor kingdom; poor kingdom, poor sovereign"[6]. The physiocrats therefore proposed to radically abolish all existing taxes so as to establish a single direct and proportional tax on the "net product" of the land[7].

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[4] On this theme, see Jean Cartelier, 'L'économie politique de François Quesnay ou l'utopie du Royaume agricole', in François Quesnay, *Physiocratie. Droit naturel, Tableau économique et autres textes* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1991), 9-64 ; Philippe Steiner, 'L'économie politique du royaume agricole : François Quesnay', in *Nouvelle histoire de la pensée économique*, edited by Alain Béraud and Gilbert Faccarello, t. 1 (Paris: La Découverte, 1993), 225-253 ; Catherine Larrère, 'Mirabeau et les physiocrates : l'origine agrarienne de la civilisation', in *Les équivoques de la civilisation*, edited by Bertrand Binoche (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 2005), 83-105.

[5] Concerning freedom of commerce according to the physiocrats, see Loïc Charles, *La liberté du commerce des grains et l'économie politique française (1750-1770)* (Doctoral thesis, Paris 1, 1999); Loïc Charles, 'Théorie des prix et liberté d'exportation du blé chez Quesnay : une interprétation', *Cahiers d'économie politique*, 32 (1998), 41-65 ; Philippe Steiner, *Les physiocrates : de la pensée économique à l'économie politique* (Doctoral thesis, Paris 10, 1984); Philippe Steiner, 'La liberté du commerce : le marché des grains', *Dix-huitième siècle*, 26 (1994), 201-219; Philippe Steiner, 'Quesnay et le commerce', *Revue d'économie politique*, 5 (1997), 695-713.

[6] Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, *De l'origine et des progrès d'une science nouvelle* (Londres and Paris: Desaint, 1768), 48.

[7] On the physiocrats' concepts of taxation, see Thérence Carvalho, 'La justice fiscale des physiocrates', in *La justice fiscale (X^e^-XXI^e^ siècle)*, edited by Emmanuel de Crouy-Chanel, Cédric Glineur and Céline Husson-Rochcongar (Paris: Bruylant, 2020), 101-117; Bernard Delmas, 'Les Physiocrates, Turgot et « le grand secret de la science fiscale »', *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 56-2 (2009), 79-103; Mathieu Soula, 'Nicolas Baudeau et la question fiscale. La théorie physiocratique de l'impôt à l'épreuve du temps (1760-1789)', in

From a more political and constitutional point of view, the doctrine aspired to regenerate the monarchy by reconciling political authority and decentralization[8]. In 1767, in *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*, Lemercier de la Rivière set out his famous theory of "legal despotism", the ideal model of physiocratic government. This regime attributes absolute power to a sovereign prince to observe and execute the laws and fundamental maxims of the natural order. The sovereign's legislative activity, devoid of any kind of proactivism, consists of translating the principles of natural law into positive norms. The principles of liberty, property and security therefore form fundamental rights that every monarch should respect to avoid lapsing into arbitrariness. As pointed out by Du Pont de Nemours, these tenets are intrinsically interlinked: "No ownership without liberty; no liberty without security"[9]. To this strong central power, the physiocrats attempted to associate large-scale administrative decentralization where the interests of local towns would be managed by representatives elected by land-owning citizens.

How did the physiocrats succeed in disseminating their ideas and find themselves at the heart of power? Wanting to win over public opinion and gain the approval from the princes, Quesnay's disciples employed a sophisticated strategy with multiple vectors of influence. In fact, a doctrine almost never wins support solely on the strength of its ideas but by group or individual actions put into place by its instigators and supporters on several fronts. To promote their model, the physiocrats published numerous works in a broad diversity of literary genres and using the *Éphémérides du citoyen* the movement's official review from 1766. They also communicated in writing with multiple correspondents across Europe, encouraged the translation of their texts into foreign languages and organised

Nicolas Baudeau, un « philosophe économiste » au temps des Lumières, edited by Alain Clément (Paris: Houdiard, 2008), 176-189; Jean-Jacques Clère, 'La critique de la fiscalité de la monarchie absolue dans le discours des physiocrates : l'exemple de Le Trosne', in *État, finances et économie pendant la Révolution française* (Paris : Comité pour l'histoire économique et financière de la France, 1991), 81-101; Pierre-Henri Goutte, 'Quesnay et la fiscalité comme politique de développement', *Économie et humanisme*, 286 (1985), 62-73; Jacques Blanc, 'Les physiocrates et les impôts de la Révolution', *Revue française de finances publiques*, 84 (2003), 69-77.

[8] For background on the political and judicial conceptions of the physiocratic movement, see Anthony Mergey, *L'État des physiocrates : autorité et décentralisation* (Aix-en-Provence: Presses Universitaires d'Aix-Marseille, 2010); Anthony Mergey, 'Le contrôle de l'activité législative de la nation en 1789 : l'opinion de Du Pont de Nemours', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History of Ideas*, 5 (2014), 1-33; Éric Gojosso, 'Le contrôle de l'activité normative royale à la veille de la Révolution : l'opinion de Mercier de La Rivière', *Revue de la recherche juridique – Droit prospectif*, 1 (1999), 237-250; Éric Gojosso, 'Le Mercier de la Rivière et l'établissement d'une hiérarchie normative. Entre droit naturel et droit positif', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, 20 (2004), 285-305.

[9] Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours, *De l'origine et des progrès d'une science nouvelle*, *op. cit.*, 28. On these three eminent principles of the doctrine, see Arnault Skornicki, 'Liberté, propriété, sûreté. Retour sur une devise physiocratique', *Corpus. Revue de philosophie*, 66 (2014), 17-36. On the role of physiocratic ideas in the universal birth of human rights, see Dan Edelstein, *On the Spirit of Rights* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019) ; Thérence Carvalho, 'The Role of Physiocracy in the Birth of Human Rights', *Opera Historica. Journal of Early Modern History*, 21 (2020), 61-71.

discussion groups such as Mirabeau's *mardis économiques* [economic Tuesdays], which many foreign visitors attended. A real European physiocratic network was built from the second half of the 1760s onwards.

3. A historical investigation at the European scale

Recognising that physiocracy "spread like wildfire" in continental Europe in the eighteenth century and "won numerous supporters", the academic Marc Fumaroli in 2001 was surprised that it "had not yet had a revival"[10]. In fact, no substantial work had ever set out to present as a whole the circulation and reception of physiocracy in Europe, looking at the practical consequences of its model of reform on eighteenth century law and legislation[11]. Our study therefore has a dual purpose, historical and comparative. Part of our work intends to describe and explain the relationships of influence of physiocracy on the European elite and enlightened princes. It also aims to show how physiocratic concepts penetrated the most powerful political circles of Europe during the Enlightenment. Our study also analyses how the reception of physiocratic thought influenced changes to positive law in several European countries. As it happened, the recommendations of Quesnay's school inspired certain governments of the period either directly or indirectly, who attempted – more or less successfully – to reform their countries using new normative provisions. This therefore means looking at the concrete actions: the attempts to apply the physiocratic model and its rejection by the legislators of enlightened absolutism. With this double goal we need to look firstly at the reception of the movement of thought and then at the downstream consequences on effective law and the reforms undertaken. The first perspective makes it possible to understand the foundation and motivation of the changes made in the state of the law while the second, which looks at practical results, focuses on the normative and legislative heritage.

To tackle the methodological challenges of such a subject, we approached it in three steps 1) the study of the international literature, 2) an analysis of the writings of the school of physiocracy and 3) an investigation of archives scattered across Europe. To start with, we listed and analysed the French and international bibliography on the dissemination of

[10] Marc Fumaroli, *Quand l'Europe parlait français* (Paris: Éditions de Fallois, 2001), 277.

[11] The work edited by Bertrand Delmas, Thierry Demals and Philippe Steiner, on the international dissemination of physiocracy, made remarkable advances on the subject (*La diffusion internationale de la physiocratie (XVIII^e^-XIX^e^)*, Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1995). However, certain European countries otherwise particularly interesting, such as Russia, were not included and the analysis mainly concentrated on the dissemination of economic theories of physiocracy. The dissemination of the political and judicial model, the influence of the doctrine on governments and its links with the reforms put in place are only marginally considered.

physiocracy in Europe. To build this corpus we contacted a large number of international researchers to learn from them the way in which this subject is approached by their national historiographies and how they could thus provide insight on studies conducted in their countries. In the second stage of this work, we scrupulously analysed a very large number of written works – books, booklets, periodicals and other documents – from the Quesnay school, paying particular attention to passages about European news, policies implemented by foreign princes and reforms made outside the Kingdom of France. Finally, in the third stage, we concentrated our research on the study of sources kept in archives all over the continent. For France, we therefore consulted different collections at the *Archives Nationales*, *Bibliothèque André Malraux* in Strasbourg, *Musée Paul Arbaud* in Aix-en-Provence, etc. Outside of France we gained access to rare and little studied documents by going directly to where they were stored or by having a copy sent. Accordingly, our research is based, among other things, on resources held by the Baden country general archives (*Generallandesarchiv*) at Karlsruhe, State Archives of Florence, Swedish National Archives (*Riksarkivet*) in Stockholm, Austrian State archives and court archives (*Haus-, Hauf- und Staatsarchiv*) in Vienna, Russian State Archives of Ancient Documents in Moscow, Russian National Library in St Petersburg and at the Du Pont de Nemours collection in Wilmington (Hagley Museum and Library) in the United States. Finally, in such a study combining many different cultural areas, the understanding of foreign languages can also prove difficult, especially when the texts are written in old versions of these languages. For this reason, we had to translate many documents, either by our own means or with the help of specialised native speakers.

4. Overview of the physiocratic movement in Europe

To understand how physiocracy circulated in Europe and how it was received during the Enlightenment, we needed to study a cluster of distinct but complementary parameters involving the physiocrats' ambition to export their ideas, the attractiveness of their model, the cultural specificities of the recipient areas and the political, economic, legal and social concerns of local legislators and reformers. The doctrine met with a vast diversity of reactions in different places across the continent, ranging from enthusiastic support to strong disapproval or sometimes complete indifference[12].

[12] For more information on the following developments, we refer the reader to our book which details how physiocracy was received in each geographical space.

4. 1. The favourable reception of physiocracy: parts of Europe where physiocracy was met with benevolence and enthusiasm

Several princes, ministers and intellectuals received the theories of the "new science" with fervor and even decided to make them the model for some of their reforms. Thus, after having established extremely close ties with the school, the legislators and administrators of the Margraviate of Baden and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany took as their guide many of the precepts of the doctrine and undertook a reform policy approved by Quesnay's disciples. To a different degree, prominent figures in the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of the Two Nations also took a close interest in the school's ideas. In search of innovative proposals, the rulers and elites of these two states required the advice and even the services of some physiocrats. However, their adherence to the doctrine was driven more by rational and pragmatic choices than by a purely dogmatic belief.

4. 1. 1. The Margraviate of Baden

From the mid 1760s, the Margrave Charles Frederick of Baden, an enlightened German prince, took an interest in physiocratic theories and forged close relationships with members of the movement, especially Mirabeau, Du Pont and Butré. This truly physiocratic prince also had ministers who were close to the school, like Johann August Schlettwein[13] or Baron Wilhelm von Edelsheim. His wife, the Margravine Caroline-Louise, and his eldest son, Charles-Louis, heir to the throne, also maintained close links with the physiocrats. In the summer of 1771, the royal family of Baden visited Paris and met Mirabeau, Baudeau, Quesnay and Lemercier de la Rivière. Du Pont was even charged with the education of the crown prince Charles-Louis and lived in Baden for a while. In 1773, the Margrave honoured him by making him court advisor and he even became legation advisor the following year. Soon, the Margrave decided to put the theory into practice by testing some physiocratic proposals, such as freedom of trade and the single territorial tax, in three villages in the bailiwicks of Pforzheim (Dietlingen) and Emmendingen (Bahlingen and Teningen). He then gave Butré, who would live in Baden from 1775 to 1792, a very special mission: to produce a register referencing all of the land in the margraviate so as to generalise the application of the single, direct and proportional tax on the net product of the land. Finally, in the name of natural liberty, the Margrave decided to abolish serfdom by his ruling of 23rd July 1783. Despite the sovereign's wishes, the reforms were far from meeting the expected success or getting support from local populations, it should also be noted that the

[13] On Schlettwein, see Helge Peukert, 'Johann August Schlettwein (1731-1802): The German Physiocrat', *Physiocracy, Antiphysiocracy and Pfeiffer*, edited by Jürgen Georg Backhaus (New York: Springer, 2011), 71-96.

physiocratic theories were not strictly followed and that the territorial tax, for example, was never based on the true net product of the land. Charles Frederick was gradually forced to give up his experiments, which was a great disappointment to the members of the school. Mirabeau, while showing himself unable to give any practical advice, told the monarch severely that one should start by educating the people before putting things into practice[14]. Finally, only the liberation of the serfs was a successful and lasting reform.

4. 1. 2. The Grand Duchy of Tuscany

In the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the ruling elite also believed in the "new science". Pierre-Léopold and his ministers – François-Xavier Orsini von Rosenberg, Pompeo Neri, Angelo Tavanti and Francesco Maria Gianni – took a close interest in physiocratic theories and built a special relationship with the school, mainly through Abbott Niccoli, the secretary of the Tuscan legation in Paris [15]. At the forefront of European reform, Pierre-Léopold, qualified by Mirabeau as "the pastor prince", was keen on making changes to the state of law and of society in numerous fields. Some of these emblematic reforms are clearly inspired by proposals made by the Quesnay school. He progressively established free trade of cereals and reshaped the regulation of labour completely by abolishing corporations. In the same way, he reformed the organisation and functioning of local administration, contemplated the adoption of a political constitution in a particularly avant-garde manner and attempted to build a general land register that would ensure ambitious taxation reforms in line with physiocratic ideas. This positive reception followed by the establishment of legislation inspired by their ideas gained the physiocrats' admiration, who held up Tuscany as a model for the whole of Europe. "Our readers are accustomed to considering the Grand

[14] In his letter of 9 June 1774, Mirabeau wrote to the margrave: "This change should be demanded as the establishment of an order and not ordered by the prince, who by the nature of the very order should order nothing. Coming back to the instruction. […] Because I dare to tell you and before God that as far as I can judge from a distance your Highness did not do all that He could have" (*Correspondance du margrave et du prince héréditaire de Bade avec le marquis de Mirabeau et Du Pont de Nemours*, edited by Carl Knies, t. 1, Heidelberg: Winter, 1892, 82-83).

[15] On the role of Abbot Niccoli in Paris and on his relations with the physiocratic movement, see Mario Mirri, 'Per una ricerca sui rapporti fra "economisti" e riformatori toscani : l'abate Niccoli a Parigi', *Annali dell' Istituto Giangacomo Feltrinelli*, (1959), t. 2, 55-115.

Duchy of Tuscany as the first European state where the principles of economic science have become a basis for the legislation" enthused the *Éphémérides du citoyen* in 1770[16].

4. 1. 3.The Kingdom of Sweden

In the Kingdom of Sweden, physiocratic ideas were circulated via and with the support of the enlightened elite. The tenets of natural order were of interest to several eminent personalities, of which the most illustrious were Gustave Philippe, the Count of Creutz, Swedish ambassador in Paris, Baron Johan Fredrik von Nolcken, Swedish ambassador in Saint Petersburg, Professor Lars Ekmarck, economist and writer Johan Fischerström and above all Charles-Frédéric Scheffer. A Diplomat, statesman and the tutor of the future Gustav III, Scheffer played a central role in the dissemination of physiocracy in Sweden though his translations. A true follower of the school, he made direct contact with several of the most prominent figures of the group, corresponding with Mirabeau, Du Pont, Baudeau, Le Trosne and Lemercier de la Rivière. As early as 1767, the young Gustav, who was only heir to the throne at the time, keenly studied the theses laid out by Lemercier de la Rivière in *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*. This attraction to the doctrinal aspects of legal despotism is obviously linked in some way with his monarchist coup d'état of 19 August 1772. The physiocrats thoroughly approved of the new constitution, which increased royal authority, and were also directly associated with the new regime via the prestigious decorations of the Order of Vasa, received by Mirabeau and Du Pont. Having politically transformed Sweden using the theories of natural law as a political weapon, Gustav III committed himself to reforming the economy by developing agriculture and commerce. Although the monarch and his ministers were attracted to physiocratic solutions, Swedish political upheavals rapidly caught up with them and hindered the introduction of any bold legislative measures. During the 1770s, therefore, the government adopted reforms that combined traditional mercantilism with vague liberal intentions in an unharmonized and incoherent manner. Rallying physiocratic aspirations to enlighten public opinion, the prince and his government decided to intervene in the domain of freedom of the press and to reform the Swedish educational system by seeking the opinion of Lemercier de la Rivière[17].

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[16] Nicolas Baudeau, 'Règlement fondamental d'administration économique établi en Toscane', *Éphémérides du citoyen*, 9 (1770), 210.

[17] This project by Lemercier de la Rivière was published in 1775, under the title *De l'instruction publique, ou considérations morales et politiques sur la nécessité, la nature et la source de cette instruction* (Stockholm and Paris: Didot l'aîné, 1775).

4. 1. 4. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth

Physiocracy also attracted a remarkable level of interest in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth. From the mid-1760s, some members of the high nobility travelled to France where they embraced the school's ideas. Such was the case of Ignacy Jakub Massalski, bishop of Vilnius, Count Joachim Litawor Chreptowicz, future chancellor of Lithuania and Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski, the King's cousin and former pretender to the throne. Back in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, these powerful aristocrats wanted to apply the prescriptions of the doctrine to bring about ambitious reforms. In parallel, several thinkers, legal experts and University scholars also supported the theories put forward by Quesnay and his followers. The doctrine was studied in depth and can be found at the heart of some important publications. Like some of the great texts of the school, the *Tableau économique* was to meet with huge success in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The physiocratic tenets, likened to theories of natural law, were also taught in the advanced levels of certain schools and in the most prestigious universities of Eastern Europe. The Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, a republic threatened by its powerful Russian, Prussian and Austrian neighbours, represented a real experimental testing ground for Quesnay's followers. Sometimes their suggestions would serve as inspiration for the legislator, or the physiocrats were personally sought to help with a specific reform. The abbot Baudeau, who made two stays in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1768 and 1769, then Lemercier de la Rivière thus studied local difficulties carefully. In 1772, the latter wrote *L'intérêt commun des Polonais* in which this theorist of legal despotism adapted his discourse to the local context, affirming the compatibility of natural law with a republican regime! On his ascension to the throne in 1764, Stanislaw-August Poniatowski wanted his country to free itself from the supervision of foreign powers and catch up with Western Europe economically and socially. Physiocracy figured prominently among the new ideas implemented with the reforms. Du Pont was named secretary of the commission of national education, a modern institution unique in Europe, responsible for reshaping the public education system. Although, due to the weakness of royal power and conservative resistance, the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth failed to reform its society and codify its law, the new constitution of 3 May 1791 had a real physiocratic flavour. For example, the "liberty, property, security" triptych was now fully integrated into the ranks of the fundamental laws of the republic.

4. 2. Scepticism and distrustfulness: parts of Europe where physiocracy was less well received

From the middle of the 1760s, a strong and firm opposition to physiocracy developed under the pen of various personalities such as Grimm, Linguet, Forbonnais, Graslin, Mably, Galiani, Béardé de l'Abbaye, Pesselier or Necker[18]. These critics were also exported throughout Europe. Indifferent to the spirit of the time, a certain number of princes, ministers or intellectuals ignore completely the physiocracy or receive its theories with scepticism. This circumspect reception of the doctrine can take several forms. In the Russian Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy, the self-proclaimed enlightened rulers and the elites remained hesitant. Sometimes tempted by the proposals of the school, they nevertheless end up discarding them from their reformist actions. In other European states, the physiocratic model was not respected mainly because of mistrust or ignorance. In the Germanic and Helvetic space, in the kingdoms of Prussia, Spain, Portugal, or even Great Britain, the doctrine remains strongly ignored.

4. 2. 1. The Russian Empire

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Russia had to address serious legal, economic and social issues critical for its development. In 1767, as part of the great reform of Russian law, Catherine II wanted to have a renowned thinker countersign her decisions in the name of philosophy, which would ensure in western public opinion her status as an enlightened monarch. She finally chose Lemercier de la Rivière, but his stay in Saint Petersburg was cut short[19]. Disappointed in her guest and inconvenienced by his shortened

[18] On criticism and opposition to physiocracy, see Steven L. Kaplan, Sophus A. Reinert (ed.), *The Economic Turn: Recasting Political Economy in Enlightenment Europe* (New York: Anthem Press, 2019); Gérard Klotz, Philippe Minard, Arnaud Orain (ed.), *Les voies de la richesse ? La physiocratie en question (1760-1850)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2017); Jean Airiau, *L'opposition aux physiocrates à la fin de l'Ancien Régime : aspects économiques et politiques d'un libéralisme éclectique* (Paris, LGDJ, 1965); John W. Rogers, *The opposition to the Physiocrats : a study of economic thought and policy in the Ancien Regime, 1750-1780* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1971); Loïc Charles, Christine Théré, '*Jeux de mots*, narrative and economic writing: The rhetoric of anti-physiocracy in French economic periodicals (1764-1769)', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 22-3 (2015), 359-382 ; Arnaud Orain, 'Figures of mockery. The cultural disqualification of physiocracy (1760-1790)', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 22-3 (2015), 383-419 ; Florence Magnot-Ogilvy, 'A body without a voice: A literary approach to Linguet's opposition to the physiocrats over the free trade in grain', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 22-3 (2015), 420-444.

[19] On the stay of Lemercier de la Rivière in Russia, see in addition to our book Sergey Zanin, *Utopisme et idées politiques. Visite de Pierre-Paul Joachim Henri Lemercier de La Rivière à Saint-Pétersbourg* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2018); Bernard Herencia, 'Le séjour du physiocrate Lemercier de la Rivière en Russie. 1767-1768', *Dix-huitième siècle*, 44 (2012), 621-658. On the links between the thinkers of the Enlightenment and the reforms of the empress, see Graham Clure, 'Rousseau, Diderot and the Spirit of Catherine the Great's Reforms', *History of European Ideas*, 41-7 (2015), 883-908.

stay, Catherine II spread an inaccurate account of the visit that considerably discredited the physiocrat. Despite the constant interest of economists in Russia and the reforms being made there, Catherine II thereafter rejected most of the recommendations of Quesnay's school. While she took on the old Colbertist and interventionist methods of Peter the Great concerning commerce and manufacture almost nothing was done to compensate for how the agricultural sector had fallen behind. While this could be partly explained by the Queen's aversion to the physiocratic movement, it could also be due to the extreme difficulty of applying the proposals of the doctrine to a state as large as Russia. In general, physiocratic literature was very little disseminated in Russia. Only a small French-speaking elite, cosmopolitan and open to the ideas of the Enlightenment, really took an interest in the ideas of the physiocrats. Among this group, Dmitry Alekseyevich Golitsyn campaigned actively, but vainly, in favour of the school's proposals. In 1796, the year when Catherine II died, this former Russian ambassador to Paris felt free to publish *De l'Esprit des Économistes*, in which he aimed to defend physiocracy against those who accused it of having paved the intellectual way for the French revolution.

4. 2. 2. The Habsburg Monarchy

In the Habsburg monarchy, physiocratic ideas remained largely unknown but were discussed among a small group of administrators close to the seat of power. The minister Karl von Zinzendorf took a very keen interest in the school's theories and met up with its members in Paris when it was at its height. Because he was a high-ranking public official, his reading of physiocracy was primarily orientated by practical considerations. The proposals of the doctrine in fact allowed him to feed and enlarge his ambitious reform projects. In 1775, the Count of Batthyány, member of the Hungarian high aristocracy, turned to Mirabeau for ideas to improve the country's institutional and constitutional framework. However, the Marquis turned out to be incapable of providing practical answers to his questions. Generally speaking, the physiocrats were passionate about the Viennese sovereigns but deluded themselves completely about the reality of their actions. To attract the attention of Joseph II on the proposals for school reform. In 1771, Du Pont went as far as writing a play entitled *Emperor Joseph the Second.* The prince himself, however, was never a follower of the movement. As a pragmatic legislator seeking efficiency, he sought inspiration for future reform here and there from all quarters. He made hybrid political choices influenced by multiple schools of thought. Most of the time, in disagreement with his own advisors, he opted for firmly mercantilist reform solutions. As part of the land registry and taxation reform, Zinzendorf took on the recommendations of the physiocrats and in deliberations and preparatory work defended ideas that clearly went

against those of the Emperor. Ultimately, the new legislation chosen by Joseph II was very different from the school's proposals.

4. 2. 3. The Germanic area

In the vast Germanic area, the school's theories spread increasingly from the 1770s. A controversy arose progressively concerning the relevance of the doctrine and the opportunity to follow reformative proposals in the context of the German States[20]. The debate came in over about two decades between 1778 and 1783[21]. Some thinkers, such as Johann Jakob Moser, Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, Johann Frederich von Pfeiffer and Johann Georg Schlosser, were strongly opposed to physiocracy. They pointed out its doctrinal inconsistencies and considered its reform program as dangerous for the economy and society. Their proposal to establish a single tax on the net product of the land was seen as a real threat to the state's finances, and would be almost impossible to implement. Nevertheless, other authors, dubbed the "*physiokraten"*, like Schlettwein, Jacob Mauvillon, Karl Gottfried Fürstenau or even Johann Christoph Erich von Springer energetically supported physiocracy and called on central European legislators to follow its specifications.

4. 2. 4. Switzerland

Situated at the heart of Europe, Switzerland did not remain isolated from the great currents of thought sweeping across the continent. On the contrary, it played a major role in the development and propagation of enlightened ideas. From its first appearance, the physiocratic current established direct contact with a few members of the Swiss elite open to new theories. As early as 1759, Mirabeau participated, with help from Quesnay, in the

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[20] On the reception of the physiocratic economic arguments in Germany see Keith Tribe, *Governing Economy: The Reformation of German Economic Discourse 1750-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 119-131; Keith Tribe, 'The Reception of Physiocratic Argument in the German States', in *La diffusion internationale de la physiocratie (XVIII^e-XIX^e)* (Grenoble: PUG, 1995), 331-344; Kurt Braunreuther, *Die Bedeutung der physiokratischen Bewegung in Deutschland in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Doctoral thesis, Berlin, 1954); Kurt Braunreuther, 'Über die Bedeutung der physiokratischen Bewegung in Deutschland in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Ein geschichtlich-politökonomischer Beitrag zur "Sturm-und-Drang-Zeit"', *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe*, 5 (1955-1956), 15-65; Richard T. Gray, 'Economic Value-Theory and Literary Culture in Late-Eighteenth Century Germany: The Debate over Physiocracy', in *Practicing Progress: The Promise and Limits of Enlightenment* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 93-107; Günther Chaloupek, 'On the Reception of Quesnay's Economic Thought in German History of Economics', *Physiocracy, Antiphysiocracy and Pfeiffer*, edited by Jürgen Georg Backhaus (New York: Springer, 2011), 123-133; Hans Joachim Braun, 'Economic Theory and Policy in Germany (1750-1850)', *The Journal of European Economic History*, 4 (1975), 301-322.

[21] For a detailed inventory of physiocratic and anti-physiocratic publications in German, see Birger P. Priddat, 'Bibliographie des physiokratischen Debatte in Deutschland 1759-1799', *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert*, 9-2 (1985), 128-149 (corrections and additions in 11-1 (1987), 62-64).

famous contest on Agricultural reform organised by the Bern Economic Society (*Oekonomische Gesellschaft Bern*). In the same way, the Marquis made the most of his firm friendship with Sacconay to establish a useful staging post for the school in Switzerland[22]. Physiocracy was welcomed with a mixture of curiosity and reticence in the country and, far from gathering a vast body of intellectuals to the cause, it only really gained two lasting supporters: Isaac Iselin, secretary of the Council of Basel and founder of the Ephemerides of Humanity (*Ephemeriden der Menschheit*) and Schmid d'Avenstein, who published his *Principes de la législation universelle* in 1776, a work that clearly shows the influence of physiocracy.

4. 2. 5. The Prussian Kingdom

At the head of the Prussian Kingdom, Frederick II was enthusiastic about the writings of the Enlightenment to the point of befriending the most eminent philosophers of his time, including Voltaire. His attitude was not however the same with regard to physiocratic theories. A passionate francophile, he surprisingly shied away from the doctrine and applied clearly mercantilist policies. On the eve of the French revolution, the Count of Mirabeau, who had long kept his distance from the physiocratic movement, made a spectacular turnaround by making himself the custodian of the principles of the paternal science. With the zeal of a new convert, he made several journeys to Prussia which led him to bitterly criticise Frederick II's economic policy, which went against physiocratic tenets, in his important treatise *De la monarchie prussienne sous Frédéric le Grand*, published in 1788. In the same way, he overconfidently allowed himself to give the new sovereign Frederick William II a plan showing the reforms to make to prevent the country from failing. Although much less open to the spirit of the times, the new monarch was to mitigate the rigidity of the Prussian economic framework. This "letting go", which was more akin to laxness, did not, however, really reflect a true acceptation of the school's ideas.

4. 2. 6. The Kingdom of Spain

In the south-west of Europe, Spain only opened belatedly and with difficulty to the ideas of the century. Royal censorship and the inquisition systematically stifled the emergence of any innovative thinking that might challenge monarchical authority or the Catholic church. So physiocratic literature, although less subversive than the works of Voltaire, Rousseau or the encyclopaedists, and thus not singled out, had its dissemination

[22] On the relationship between Mirabeau and Sacconay, see Béla Kapossy, Sarah Meylan, 'Les publications suisses du Marquis de Mirabeau', *Revue historique vaudoise*, 120 (2012), 109-126; Auguste Bertholet, 'The intellectual origins of Mirabeau', *History of European Ideas*, 47-1 (2021), 91-96.

considerably slowed down. Apart from a few secondary texts, most translations into Spanish were not made until the 1790s[23]. Manuel Belgrano, future hero of the Argentine independence, appears as an efficient agent of diffusion of physiocracy in the Hispanic area. He translated several texts of the school such as Quesnay's *General Maxims*. Although he was not a faithful follower of the doctrine, his political action attests to a certain influence of physiocratic conceptions. Furthermore, the political and legal theories of physiocracy elicited radically contradictory interpretations. The Spanish thinker and magistrate Valentín de Foronda admired the physiocratic "trinity" – liberty, property, security – and made a profoundly liberal reading of the school's tenets, which he broadly defined. Conversely, in 1823, the lawyer and former diplomat Juan del Castillo y Carroz translated *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* in an authoritarian and reactionary manner. He refused the ideals of the French revolution, wanting rather to rely on the treatise by Lemercier de la Rivière, published more than half a century before, to restore Spanish monarchical absolutism. Beyond the intellectual domain, it should be noted that the policies applied by Charles III's government remained fluctuating and uncertain during the years when the movement was growing. In terms of economic legislation, his choices swung between the mercantilist tradition and the liberal theories of the *Ilustrados*. Although the prince totally misunderstood the postulates of the school, the 1765 reform concerning the freedom of grain commerce shows a remarkable agreement with the doctrine's ideas. Moreover, the physiocracy movement celebrated the actions of the absolute monarch on several occasions.

4. 2. 7. The Kingdom of Portugal

While Portugal was not impervious to the Enlightenment, it was particularly late in welcoming the new theories. It was only from the *la Viradeira*, a name given to the period following the dismissal of the Marquis of Pombal in 1777, that physiocratic ideas entered Portuguese academic and university circles. Even so, the physiocratic works were rarely read and no author can truly be considered to be a follower of the movement. While physiocratic ideas only arrived late or in a partial manner, they nevertheless found some compatibility with studies led by the Lisbon Royal Academy of Sciences. Likewise, the law

[23] See Ernest Lluch, Lluís Argemí, *Agronomía y fisiocracia en España (1750-1820)* (Valencia: Alfonso el Magnánimo, 1985); Ernest Lluch, Lluís Argemí, 'Physiocracy in Spain', *History of Political Economy*, 26-4 (1994), 613-628; Vicent Llombart, 'Market for ideas and reception of physiocracy in Spain: some analytical and historical suggestions', *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 2-1 (1995), 29-51 ; Jesús Astigarraga, 'La Fisiocracia en España : los *Principes de la législation universelle* (1776) de G. L. Schmid d'Avenstein', *Historia Agraria*, 37 (2005), 545-571; Jesús Astigarraga, 'Ramón de Salas y la difusión de la fisiocracia en España', *Historia Agraria*, 52 (2010), 75-102; Jesús Astigarraga, Javier Usoz, 'Una alternativa fisiócrata al *Informe de Ley Agraria* de Jovellanos', *Revista de Historia Económica*, 25-3 (2007), 427-458; Jesús Astigarraga, Javier Usoz, 'Algunas puntualizaciones sobre la fisiocracia en la Ilustración tardía española', *Revista de Historia Económica*, 26-3 (2008), 489-497.

professor Joaquim José Rodrigues de Brito welcomed the school's principles and unexpectedly recognised to the importance of its political and legal contribution. From a more practical perspective, the physiocratic model was rejected by Portuguese reformers. During his long period as minister, from 1750 to 1777, Pombal therefore applied a pragmatic policy that usually consisted of following mercantilist principles at the expense of the spirit of the times. After the disgrace of this "Portuguese Colbert", the new government of Mary I attempted to introduce a few liberal reforms, before quickly reverting to the interventionist and protectionist habits of the previous reign.

4. 2. 8. The United Kingdom of Great Britain

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the United Kingdom benefited from a large pool of theorists, but hardly any who encouraged interest in continental Enlightenment. From an economic point of view, the country gave priority to commerce and maritime exchanges. While in the rest of Europe farming communities accounted for the majority of the population, in England their numbers was to fall below 50% by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Under such conditions, it seems unlikely that a French theory suggesting commerce was barren and only the productivity of the land had any value would be well received. The physiocratic movement was therefore generally overlooked in the country and its followers had distant or negative relations with the British rulers and thinkers of the period. Still, in the context of Scotland's vibrant intellectual life, Adam Smith's extraordinarily successful *Wealth of Nations* contributed to spreading physiocratic principles in the English-speaking world. However, the phenomenal success of this work also contributed to slowing down the dissemination of physiocratic thought in Great Britain for over a decade. It was finally only at the very end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth that these theories really started to gain renewed interest. From this time onwards, the school's ideas circulated more easily and were discussed by several eminent British intellectuals such as Benjamin Vaughan, John Gray, Henry Brougham, William Spence, Daniel Wakefield and Robert Torrens. From that point on, a lively controversy about the economic principles of the movement arose and went on for nearly twenty years. In parallel, the political and legal theories of physiocracy remained largely overlooked or were even strongly criticized by thinkers like Dugald Stewart and Samuel Taylor Coleridge. To fill this gap and change this judgement, in 1819, the Scottish philosopher James Mill, father of John Stuart, set out to reveal this little-known facet of their doctrine, which he also considered superior to their economic speculations. His seemingly classic presentation paved the way to proper recognition.

5. Conclusion

Despite the broad diversity of reactions, other converging or diverging lines can also be distinguished that bear a closer resemblance to the nature of existing ideas. In central and western Europe, such as in the Habsburg monarchy, cisalpine Italy and Swiss and German areas, or even, much later, Great Britain, it was above all the theories on economic policy and proposals concerning economic legislation that drew the attention of governments and intellectuals. The school's ideas left a permanent mark in the field of economic analysis and were cited by enlightened princes and ministers with regard to their reforms of commercial law, taxation and the organisation of work, agriculture and property. In these countries, with their political and administrative solidity, the doctrine of legal despotism was only of minor interest. However, the school's alternative solutions to the grain police, the simplicity of a single direct tax on the net product of the land, or, more broadly, its commercial and industrial liberalism, fascinated a number of thinkers, university academics and administrators, often trained in cameral sciences but weary of the burden and complexity of regulations. Conversely, in northern, southern and eastern Europe, it was the political, legal and educational ideas on which the reformers focused. Legal despotism, as a model favourable for the regeneration of a State appeared as a welcome lifeline in Sweden and the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, two countries where political independence was threatened by powerful neighbouring nations. In the same way, the Russian prince Golitsyn hoped that the theory developed by Lemercier de la Rivière would help to enlighten and modernise the Russian autocracy by revitalising imperial power. Later, legal despotism was also used by the lawyer Castillo y Carroz to legitimise the restoration of Spanish absolutism. Additionally, physiocratic ideas about public education were met with particular attention in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, where Du Pont was named secretary of the national education commission. In these countries, the "liberty, property, security" triptych also met with notable success, as demonstrated by the liberal thought of the Spaniard Foronda. In parallel, physiocracy was being taught in Polish and Lithuanian law schools as part of the science of natural law.

Overall, it appears that the way in which physiocratic ideas were received did not bode well for their understanding and even less for their approval or application by the enlightened rulers or elite. In many cases, only portions of the doctrine were known or it remained poorly understood. It was therefore interpreted, knowingly or unknowingly, in unusual ways that diverged considerably from the initial specifications. Among many thinkers, legal despotism thus became arbitrary despotism, a system denounced by the physiocrats. As they circulated between different places and over time between different

epochs, the school's texts didn't carry with them the specific circumstances of their creation and were thus interpreted depending on the context in which they were received. The tailoring and appropriation of certain physiocratic concepts, isolated from their original field of production, meant they could even be put to use for radically different political objectives to those for which they were designed. Besides, the reception of the doctrine could also take place at the same time as governmental adoption of competing models such as late mercantilism or German cameralism. Because the propositions of the economic philosophers implied completely revising the legal and social order, they could worry prudent leaders seeking stability and guaranteed results. Finally, we should be wary of hasty comparisons or conclusions about how physiocracy was accepted outside of France. In fact, ideas *a priori* similar to the physiocratic movement could emerge within national intellectual traditions, without inspiration from abroad. In the same way, a reform can be liberal, agrarian or populationist without being subject to the pervasiveness of physiocratic conventions.

While the level of support for the doctrine determined whether the reforms were undertaken, their degree of success seemed only to depend to a small extent on the fidelity of supporters of the "new science". In addition, policies inspired by physiocracy or direct actions by Quesnay's followers proved repeatedly to be failures, like the experiments conducted in Baden or the abortive visit of Lemercier de la Rivière to Russia. Most of the time, the school's ideas appeared overambitious relative to the means granted by the rulers. However, real success for the physiocrats would have required a profound rationalisation of state, law and society, rather than the small measures and limited borrowing of certain ideas they were confined to. Moreover, the physiocrats were not totally blameless for this outcome, sometimes showing themselves incapable of dealing with practical, specific questions, for example Mirabeau baffling the Margrave of Baden and the Count of Batthyány, who had had great expectations. Imbued with a dogmatic logic clearly incompatible with the pragmatism needed for any political operation, the Marquis continued to assert in a peremptory tone that "it is enough to follow the principles for them to give the ideas and solutions to the surrounding questions"[24]. But the failures could also be attributable to a lack of education of the lower classes, who were potential victims of the reform's impacts. In this sense, Lemercier de la Rivière observed: "If there are only a few men in a society who have clear knowledge of the order, while the masses still have the

[24] *Lettres inédites du marquis de Mirabeau [1787-1789]*, edited by Dauphin Meunier, in *Le correspondant* (Paris: Bureaux du Correspondant, 25 février 1913), 701.

opposite opinion, it would be impossible for the order to govern, they would give orders in vain and not be obeyed"[25].

Far from being fixed and definitive, physiocratic thought appeared like an evolving movement which, while founded on common tenets, regularly sought to provide appropriate solutions for local situations. Outside France, the physiocrats showed themselves capable of making large adaptations or even breaching with the orthodoxy of the doctrine. Thus, when advising the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in crisis, Lemercier de la Rivière presented the laws of natural order as compatible with the existence of a republican regime. While the physiocrats were often disappointed by the enlightened princes, this was no worse than for other philosophers of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire with regard to Frederick II or Diderot with Catherine II. The converts to the "new science" were as courageous toward enlightened royalty and the elite as they were in their publications. Although they knew how to be good courtiers, they could hardly be described as obsequious or sycophantic. On the contrary, the physiocrats showed independence and would not accept any mission that might go against their convictions, sometimes at quite a cost. Lemercier de la Rivière preferred to return to France than play an inconsistent role for Catherine II. With the limited means of action they had available, the physiocrats had to rely on their ability to persuade. On the eve of the collapse of the Ancien Régime, Mirabeau, disillusioned, came to think that the physiocratic order had to go through a revolutionary change: "Any constitution or order must have revolution and excessive disorder as a precursor. […] Docility must be preceded by misfortune. Blood and ruins have to come before a new order and governments will become economists"[26]. The logic of enlightened absolutism peculiar to the preceding decades then vanished definitively. Even in the minds of the historic physiocrats, the moderate or conservative reformism of the Enlightenment had had its day. Henceforth, they considered that the triumph of natural order could emerge from events of protest or radical change. From 1789, the National Constituent Assembly, in which Du Pont de Nemours was briefly but intensely active, made an effort to bring together a large part of the physiocratic heritage[27].

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[25] Paul Pierre Lemercier de la Rivière, *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (Londres, Paris: Jean Nourse, Desaint, 1767), 53.

[26] Letter from the Marquis of Mirabeau to Butré, Paris, 4 December 1788 (*Papiers et correspondance de Butré*, Médiathèque André Malraux de Strasbourg, t. 1, f° 160).

[27] Whether for the fundamental role given to ownership rights, freedom of trade and industry, property tax on constructed buildings, building land and vacant land, projects of judicial supervision of power or the establishment of administrative assemblies and municipalities, the significance of physiocratic conceptions for the National Constituent Assembly is far from negligible. In this regard, see Pierre Rosanvallon, 'Physiocrates', in *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française. IV. Idées*, edited by François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 359-371; Loïc Charles, Philippe Steiner, 'Entre Montesquieu et Rousseau.

Examining sources spread across Europe revealed a far greater circulation and reception than much historiography would suggest and reveals an intellectual movement, not solely French but with a truly European dimension. Over time, physiocratic proposals have had varied fates. While the *primat de l'agriculture*, the single tax and legal despotism progressively became obsolete, the physiocrats' hopes for complete freedom of trade and industry, administrative decentralisation, fundamental rights and a normative hierarchy placed under control of the magistrates have had an unusually long legacy, lasting until the present day. When it advocates strict supervision of legislative activity and the limitation of public interventionism in the economic sphere, physiocracy contributes to the separation of political and economic powers, considered as one of the most important factors of equilibrium in the political regime of a liberal state. Similarly, the physiocrats' scientific, methodological and even terminological legacy seems considerable. In view of the enduring influence of these concepts, we can reasonably suggest that the dissemination of physiocracy has certainly contributed to the foundation of the cultural base of European civilisation. By offering a new model linked to the emergence of modernity and development of capitalism, it surely contributed to the birth of a common intellectual background among the different countries of the continent. Consequently, the study of physiocracy in Europe of the Enlightenment can contribute to throwing new light on the history of the circulation of ideas and history of European culture.

Further abroad, the Ottoman Empire opened belatedly to the doctrine's ideas. It was in fact only in the nineteenth century, notably during the Tanzimat era, that the intellectuals of the Sublime Porte took an interest in the suggestions of philosophic economists as a means to combat the decline afflicting the empire. The Bulgarian thinker and encyclopaedist Ivan Bogorov welcomed their economic liberalism and concept of "net product"[28]. Europe was not however the final frontier for physiocracy. In the late

La physiocratie parmi les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française', *Études Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, 11 (1999), 83-159 ; Thierry Demals, 'Une économie politique de la nation agricole sous la Constituante ?', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, 20 (2004), 307-333; Richard Whatmore, 'Du Pont de Nemours et la politique révolutionnaire', *Revue française d'histoire des idées politiques*, 20 (2004), 335-351; Pierre-Henri Goutte, 'Économie et transitions : l'œuvre de Du Pont de Nemours au début de la Révolution française 1789-1792', in *Idées économiques sous la Révolution (1789-1794)*, edited by Jean-Michel Servet (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989), 145-233; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the deluge: public debt, inequality, and the intellectual origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006).

[28] See Nikolay Nenovsky, Pencho Denchev Penchev, 'Reconstructing Eclecticism: Bulgarian Economic Thought in the Ottoman Empire in the Nineteenth Century', *History of Political Economy*, 47-4 (2015), 631-664. On the causes of the absence of a movement close to physiocracy within the Ottoman Empire, see Eyüp Özveren, 'Ottoman economic thought and economic policy in transition. Rethinking the nineteenth century', in *Economic Thought and Policy in Less Developed Europe: The Nineteenth Century*, edited by Michalis Psalidopoulos and Maria Eugenia Mata (London: Routledge, 2002), 129-144.

eighteenth century and above all during the nineteenth, the theories of the school multiplied in the Americas. Physiocratic tenets inspired enthusiasm in eminent people like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson and could thus be attractive to the young America that then dreamed of becoming an agricultural republic founded on liberty, property and security. It was also in the United States that Du Pont de Nemours, fascinated by the extraordinary potential of this new state, went to live during the reign of Napoleon and remained until the end of his life in 1817[29]. In South America, the movement's proposals also found their second wind and fascinated enlightened thinkers who wanted to free themselves from Spanish or Portuguese domination, as did Manuel Belgrano, hero of the Argentine independence. During the nineteenth century, physiocracy voyaged to horizons further afield and was welcomed, for example, in Australia by the lawyer Alfred de Lissa[30]. Similarly, Quesnay's ideas attracted a strong revival of interest in Japan in intellectual and academic circles at the beginning of the twentieth century[31]. Defying both time and frontiers, innovative ideas can therefore radiate from the contextual limits of their creation to conquer the world.

[29] On the dissemination of physiocracy in the United States of America, see Manuela Albertone, *National Identity and the Agrarian Republic. The Transatlantic Commerce of Ideas between America and France (1750-1830)* (Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); Manuela Albertone, *Dialogues physiocratiques sur l'Amérique* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015); Manuela Albertone, 'Physiocracy in the eighteenth-century America. Economic theory and political weapons', *History of European Ideas*, 47-1 (2021), 97-118; Manuela Albertone, 'Thomas Jefferson and the French economic Thought: a mutual Exchange', *Rethinking the Atlantic World. Europe and America in the Age of Democratic Revolutions*, edited by Manuela Albertone and Antonino De Francesco (London: Palgrave, 2009), 123-146 ; Manuela Albertone, 'Accomplir la Révolution. Les fondements économiques de la république moderne. France et Amérique : un échange mutuel entre la fin du XVIII^{e} et les débuts du XIX^{e} siècle', in *Républiques sœurs. Le Directoire et la Révolution atlantique*, edited by Pierre Serna (Rennes: PUR, 2009), 123-146; Daryl M. Hafter, 'Du Pont's America as a Physiocratic Ideal', *French-American Review*, 2 (1982), 232-246.

[30] See Peter Groenewegen, 'Land Policy, Taxation, Growth and the Multiplier: Learning from Physiocracy in Australia', *La diffusion internationale de la physiocratie (XVIII^{e}-XIX^{e})* (Grenoble: PUG, 1995), 441-459.

[31] See Takaho Ando, Ragip Ege, 'La diffusion de la physiocratie au Japon au début du XX^{e} siècle', *La diffusion internationale de la physiocratie (XVIII^{e}-XIX^{e})* (Grenoble: PUG, 1995), 461-472.

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