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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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Reviews of Pearce, Pragmatism's Evolution. Organism and Environment in American Philosophy, U. of Chicago Press 2020; Fal'kner, Le Papier-monnaie dans la Révolution française, une analyse en termes d'économie d'émission, Classiques Garnier 2021; Imbruglia, Utopia. Una storia politica da Savonarola a Babeuf, Carocci 2021; Giuli, L'opulenza del Brasile coloniale. Storia di un trattato di economia e del gesuita Antonil, Carocci 2021.



1 TREVOR PEARCE, *Pragmatism's Evolution. Organism and Environment in American Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020, xii+366 p. ISBN: 9780226719917/9780226720081, \$35.00; 9780226719887, \$105.00. See also <http://www.trevorpearce.com/books/pragmatisms-evolution/>.

The tradition of American pragmatism has not been the object of sufficient historical research compared to analytic and “Continental” traditions. Besides the well-known connection of late 19th century American philosophy to German idealism, the rise of pragmatism has been connected to both a post-Civil war mistrust of claims to absolute knowledge (notably in Menand’s *The Metaphysical Club*) and to the establishment of natural science as a collective, self-correcting enterprise and hence an alternative model for philosophy. Trevor Pearce’s book *Pragmatism’s Evolution* is a very important contribution to this reconstruction, focused on towering figures of American intellectual life such as Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, George Herbert Mead and W.E.B. Du Bois. Although the importance of these thinkers

is widely recognized, Pearce points out that “few scholars realize the full extent of their engagement with new developments in the biological science at the end of the nineteenth century. Even a brief look at their life and work reveals that many of their core ideas emerged from a dialogue between philosophy and biology” (p. 3). In order to reconstruct this connection, Pearce offers an in-depth account of the Academic context that set the stage for the development of pragmatism. This reconstruction is based on a variety of sources including institutional documents, textbooks, lecture notes, letters and other manuscripts besides published papers and research books by major philosophers.

Pearce defines four “cohorts” of pragmatists of different generations, starting from graduation year 1851 (Nicholas St. John Green) to graduation year 1939 (Donald Davidson), leaving further generations to future research. A first look at these groups shows that biology featured more prominently in the work of students belonging to earlier cohorts compared to those who graduated in the early 20th century. Over the different chapters of the book, Pearce accurately and convincingly shows that this feature corresponded to a difference in the textbooks and intellectual context of American universities, and more particularly to different stages of the diffusion and reception of Darwinism in the United States. This wide-ranging approach provides a fresh perspective on the origins and meaning of the ideas of evolution and organism-environment interaction in the epistemology, ethics and social philosophy of pragmatism. A further element of originality in Pearce’s approach is the choice of connecting several contemporary thinkers rather than focusing on single famous philosophers, and thereby casting new light on less considered figures such as Addams and DuBois, whose work is best understood in the wider framework of the social issues of their time.

Chapter 1 focuses on the gradual acceptance of Darwin’s theory of evolution among members of the Metaphysical Club. A general point is that philosophical Darwinism scarcely corresponded to Darwin’s original ideas and could easily be adapted to religious views. Chauncey Wright, John Fiske and Francis Abbot defended the theory of evolution against orthodox Christians, while Charles Sanders Peirce and William James had a more cautious attitude. A prominent connection for many of the future members of the Metaphysical Club was the Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz, who rejected the theory of evolution in his textbook and lectures. James participated a naturalistic expedition in the Amazon

basin and was led by Agassiz to emphasize the hypothetical status of Darwin's theory. On the other hand, Pearce points out that Fiske, Wright and Abbot criticized Agassiz as a "philosophical naturalist", and supported Darwin's theory "on philosophic grounds".

The philosophical reception of early Darwinism is investigated in chapter 2. The continuous adjustment of organisms to the environment was a major feature of Spencer's interpretation of evolution, which would raise considerable controversies among early pragmatists. Pearce focused on different criticisms of Spencer's claim that "organisms are primarily shaped by their external environments and those of their ancestors" (the view that Peter Godfrey-Smith calls 'externalism'). E.g., James criticized Spencer's view of mind "as absolutely passive clay, upon which 'experience' rains down", arguing that interest, attention, and consciousness in general, are equally important factors of evolution. Pearce's account of James's view of evolution and criticism of Spencer in his lectures, inspired by previous work by a number of scholars including Shadworth Hodgson, Wilhelm Wundt and Hermann Helmholtz, is particularly documented and insightful.

Chapter 3 presents an original reconstruction of how evolution was introduced in American Colleges and Graduate Schools and thus contributed to the education of older members of the "second cohort" of pragmatists, such as Josiah Royce, Dewey and Addams. Pearce examines the bibliographical background of the "new ferment" that Dewey detected in the late 1870s, characterized by the reception of contemporary literature on evolution from Britain and Germany. This context turns out to be the origin of Dewey's conviction "that the organism-environment relation was at the heart of debates over mind, matter, and evolution" (p. 120). Pearce carefully examines the teaching curricula, their role for the critical transmission of ideas from Europe and their impact on students across American institutions. James had notably spent some time in Germany in 1867-68, but his was no isolated case. Royce studied in Göttingen with Hermann Lotze (1875-76), Mead enrolled in Leipzig and Berlin (1888-91), Du Bois was graduate student in Berlin. These examples, besides James' and George Morris's teaching at Johns Hopkins, are examined by Pearce and presented as constitutive moments for the metaphysical and social interpretations of Darwinism, which figured prominently in the teaching and writing of pragmatists.

Chapter 4 investigates the connection of Hegelianism and Darwinism in the ideas of pragmatists. Peirce rejects the view that naturalism and idealism were contrasting elements of pragmatism. On the contrary, he argues that “important connections between conceptual evolution in the work of Hegel and organic evolution in the work of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin” (p. 161) were already highlighted by British idealists and then shared by Dewey and Mead. The elaboration of this connection led to key notions of pragmatism such as Dewey’s “dialectical” account of the organism-environment relation.

Chapter 5 deals with the introduction in America of August Weismann’s theory of the “germ-plasm” as the medium of heredity. This theory was quite different from Darwin’s and Spencer’s, for it rejected the Lamarckian principle of the inheritance of acquired characters and restricted evolution to the selection of characters in the germ-plasm. Hence it is qualified as a “neo-Darwinism”. While James accepted this neo-Darwinism, Peirce endorsed a kind of neo-Lamarckism and developed this view into an audacious anti-materialist and anti-mechanist metaphysics grounded on the precedence of mind over matter. Dewey’s engagement with Weismannism is the object of an articulated reconstruction: in the 1890s, Dewey favored the thesis of the inheritance of acquired habits, probably “because it was consistent with contemporary work in developmental and comparative psychology” (p. 237). However, according to Dewey, Spencer’s and Weismann’s views were both too narrow, since variation always involved a “mediation” of old habit and changing circumstances. Eventually both Dewey and DuBois accepted Weismannism in biology, while they endorsed a peculiar kind of social Darwinism, arguing—against racial determinism—that “free social opportunity”, “conscious deliberation and experimentation” are crucial factors of change. This topic leads to chapter 6, where Peirce accounts for the ethics of pragmatism, showing how originally biological notions of the theory of evolution were reshaped as social and political notions by Dewey, DuBois and Adams. Peirce points out that these views entailed the rejection of Spencer’s evolutionary racism, but they also had a “darker side” in their linking of the process of social reform to eugenics.

The importance of evolutionary ideas for the pragmatist’s account of scientific knowledge and scientific inquiry is investigated in Chapter 7. Peirce deals with recent scholarship on these topics, arguing that the peculiar intertwining—rather than distinction—of Hegelianism and evolutionism is once more crucial

to understanding Dewey's logic. Hence, although it is true that Darwin's influence was not direct in this field, nevertheless evolutionary ideas were of the foremost importance of the Dewey's "logic of knowledge" as concerned with—as Dewey himself puts it—a "free, mobile, self-developing, and self-organizing reality", rather than a world of set facts and fixed values. Pearce highlights that a similar importance of evolution concerns Peirce's James' logic. In general, the pragmatist's focus on experimentalism and "adaptation to the environment" echoed evolutionary ideas.

On the whole, Pearce's book is compelling and valuable for a number of reasons. First, the historical analysis is based on a fruitful connection of institutional setting and a variety of documents that provides a deep insight into the different stages of the story. Second, Pearce convincingly points out the importance of British and Continental European sources and the way these were originally elaborated by pragmatists. The different experiences abroad of key figures of American philosophy and the constant flow of texts—of Darwinian thinkers, of neo-Kantian philosophers and psychologists, of British idealists—provides a substantial background for the proper understanding of the rise and original character of American pragmatism. Pearce's book presents fresh insights concerning this story. Finally, the book wants to investigate "a model of how biological ideas, suitably reframed, can ground a nonreductionist evolutionary account of mental and moral life" (p. 7) and manages to establish a promising background for this future research.

Paolo Pecere

2 SEMION ANISSIMOVITCH FAL'KNER, *Le Papier-monnaie dans la Révolution française, une analyse en termes d'économie d'émission* [1919], éd. par Serge Aberdam, Laure Desprès et Alexis Berelowitch, tr. par Alexis Berelowitch, Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2021, 530 p. ISBN : 9782406107330, €49.00.

La publication de la traduction du texte d'un jeune économiste russe des années 1920 : « Le papier monnaie dans la révolution française » marque une date dans le domaine de l'édition. Commencée en 1916 à l'Université de Pétersbourg, mais publiée en 1918 seulement, après que son auteur fût entré dans la section d'études du Conseil supérieur de l'économie nationale, elle se proposait

de stimuler une nouvelle réflexion sur le passé conçue comme instrument de connaissance et de transformation du présent.

Cette traduction est le produit d'un travail collectif entre Alexis Berelowitch, universitaire d'ascendance russe à la retraite qui a effectué une première traduction en vérifiant les multiples références fournies par Fal'kner, Serge Aberdam, historien de la Révolution française et Laure Després, économiste spécialiste de la Russie qui connaît bien les problèmes d'émission monétaire et d'hyperinflation dans les années qui ont suivi la révolution soviétique sur laquelle elle a fait sa thèse.

Une première version de cet ouvrage parue en 1917 a été perdue. Celle de 1919, plus complète, est restée réservée aux seuls russophones. Une version abrégée sort en allemand en 1924 dans laquelle la plus grande partie du texte est délaissée et des quatorze chapitres de l'édition russe, seulement quatre subsistent.



Depuis la chute de l'URSS peu d'études ont été consacrées aux écrits d'économie durant la période révolutionnaire. Or cette période est riche d'enseignement et mérite d'être revisitée surtout depuis que l'accès aux archives est devenu beaucoup plus facile en dehors de la période de la répression stalinienne au cours des années 1930. L'ouvrage ici publié n'est pas un livre d'histoire c'est un livre de théorie écrit dans les pires conditions de la guerre civile, au milieu des combats, de la faim qui se traduira par la suite par la disparition tragique de l'auteur assassiné dans les camps staliniens en 1938. À l'exception de Seymour Edwin Harris, de Laure Després et de Manuela Albertone, les travaux de Fal'kner sont restés largement négligés à l'extérieur du monde soviétique pendant un siècle. À juste titre dans un article ancien Manuela Albertone soulignait que les assignats étaient une histoire oubliée dans l'historiographie.¹ Il faut mentionner toutefois les débats qui se sont déroulés à l'occasion du bicentenaire de la Révolution Française.

¹ Manuela Albertone, « Une histoire oubliée : les assignats dans l'historiographie », *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, n° 287 (1992) : 87-104.

Sur cette même période nous ne disposons en français que des textes de Konratiev publiés, traduits en leur temps par *Economica*. Outre l'accès difficile aux archives pendant toute la période de l'URSS il faut sans doute invoquer le problème de l'accès à la langue russe pratiquement inconnue chez les économistes bien que certains de ceux qui ont fui le totalitarisme stalinien ont pu produire des textes et que tous les débats de cette époque ont surtout été évoqués par les Britanniques tels que Alec Nove sans oublier bien sûr toute la critique d'origine autrichienne et le débat mené par Von Mises et Karl Polanyi sur le calcul économique et la possibilité de la réalisation de la planification, de son éventuelle réussite ou échec. Mais l'ouvrage de Falkner ne traite pas de la question de la planification il envisage simplement de savoir si une politique d'émission monétaire, dans les conditions de la guerre civile et de la révolution russe, est possible sans déboucher nécessairement sur une désintégration des relations économiques.

Il s'agit de comprendre comment, pendant huit années, les assignats français, frappés d'une dépréciation accélérée ont pu, dans un contexte de révolution, de guerre civile et de guerre étrangère, remplir des fonctions monétaires et assurer le financement de l'État. Il s'agit de découvrir les mécanismes de ce que Falkner appelle une économie d'émission. L'analyse que Falkner consacre au papier-papier monnaie sous la Révolution française le conduit à identifier des lois de la circulation monétaire. L'économiste russe s'appuie sur les études sur l'histoire monétaire et financière de la Révolution française, avec le russe, il lit le français, l'allemand, l'anglais et l'italien. Il est donc bien armé pour se lancer dans l'étude d'une économie où la circulation monétaire est assurée par le papier-monnaie.

La question centrale qui est au cœur de son étude est celle de la dette accumulée par l'État Tsariste. La question est comment éteindre la dette qui est passé aux mains de la bourgeoisie qui est la véritable créancière de l'État. Il examine donc toutes les mesures économiques et financières que sont les emprunts forcés, les tentatives de rétablissement de l'appareil fiscal mais surtout les différentes mesures de régulation de l'économie encadrant l'activité commerciale et réglementant les marchandises disponibles voir leur production et leur distribution. Pour Falkner, en émettant des quantités abondantes de papier-monnaie, les autorités opèrent un prélèvement délibéré : « la plus grande part des assignats servit à confisquer définitivement, pour les besoins de l'État, des valeurs réelles ainsi extraites de la circulation marchande » (p. 443).

Pour répondre à cette question théorique qui est en même temps à l'époque une question pratique il va revisiter toute l'histoire de la période révolutionnaire française en particulier celle de l'émission des assignats. Cette approche théorique est profondément originale et mérite pleinement qu'elle soit prise en compte dans les débats actuels sur la politique des banques centrales, sur la *modern monetary theory* (MMT) ainsi que sur le statut de l'émission de la monnaie de crédit et du rôle des banques commerciales. Elle constitue un élément essentiel parmi les explications de l'hyperinflation. Cet ouvrage est donc tout autre chose que la publication d'un simple document historique utile seulement à ceux qui se dédient à l'analyse de ce que fut la période révolutionnaire dans la Russie de l'entre-deux-guerres. Ajoutons qu'une très bonne introduction, un appareil critique et une bibliographie exhaustive complètent cet ouvrage.

André Tiran



3 GIROLAMO IMBRUGLIA, *Utopia. Una storia politica da Savonarola a Babeuf*, Roma: Carocci, 2021. ISBN: 9788829004270, € 19.00

The volume under review marks the culmination of the author's uninterrupted scholarly interest in utopian ideas as a crucial subject in early modern history. Imbruglia has focused on this study area for more than forty years, and it shows.

Utopia is much more than a history of political utopia. It might be described as a historical reflection on the troubled history of utopian ideas, firmly based on the sources, with the aim to reconstruct the deep-lying plot of utopian desires, after the hiatus of the 19th and the 20th centuries. Therefore, as the author points out in the introduction, this is not a history of utopia as a literary genre in Early-Modern Europe. If it were a history of utopia, it would begin with Thomas More's very successful treatise of 1516. It is worth recalling that a very limited part of the text deals with More's *Utopia* (pp. 32-38). Imbruglia's book is, in the

first place, a history of utopian ideas. He has chosen a perspective that is different from most histories of utopia. To Imbruglia, utopian ideas are expressed in a variety of contexts: in the structured fantasy of a place far away in space and time, as well as in the sentimental or literary reflection or, especially at the end of the volume, in the commentary on documents of political events in the broad sense. In order to tell this story of utopian ideas Imbruglia resorts to a sort of textual ventriloquy: he is not interested in paraphrasing or summarizing the relevant texts, but rather in calling back to life, through carefully selected quotations, sometimes very brief, the utopian ideas as they were coalescing into coherent patterns. This very distinctive way of reading and presenting the texts to the reader dovetails with the choices to organize the materials. First of all, the conciseness of the volume should be noted since it does not aim at completeness and an in-depth and detailed analysis; instead, it seeks to convey the overall architecture of the fractured and irregular history of utopian ideas over three centuries.

Imbruglia essentially identifies four chronological partitions. The first covers the sixteenth century with the emergence of the great utopias confronting the expanding geography of the modern world. The second is placed during the seventeenth century and stands out for the shift of utopia from the spatial framework to its projection into the future. The third is the age of the Enlightenment, rightfully recognized as central to the history of utopian thought. The volume ends with the vision of the new confrontation between utopian desire and the French Revolution, when an endless space seemed to open up to utopian desire: “now [in 1789] it was reality that needed utopia to fill the void of an unimaginable situation and build the new society. Utopia had not caught up with reality; reality gave birth to utopia” (p. 155). With the French Revolution, utopia turned into the operative guide for political movements, starting an epoch that culminated in 1848.

On the final page, Imbruglia steps out of the historian’s shoes to put on those of the interpreter of his and our time. According to him, we live within a constellation of social relations and visions of reality that have put the dogmatic monistic ideologies of the late 19th and 20th centuries behind us: we find ourselves in a situation that can bring us closer to the age that preceded 1789. Through these four stages from the late 15th century to the French Revolution, utopian ideas have addressed the two crucial issues of European modernity:

communism, the abolition of private property, and in general, the containment of difference in access to goods; civil religion as a way to keep compact the perfectly organized society. Both themes run through and have shaped utopian ideas.

A historian of the Enlightenment and of Italian historicism, Imbruglia seems to cherish a non-historicist approach to Early-Modern utopian ideas that reminds of the classical history of ideas, ventured by Lovejoy in the 1930s. Imbruglia is interested primarily in intellectual expressions: their interactions with the broader historical context and the individual personality of the authors are reduced to a minimum. Almost entirely absent is the discussion of how contemporaries and historians discussed the utopian ideas that both well-known and largely forgotten authors put forward during three centuries (Imbruglia's erudition is impressive). Consequently, *Utopia* is a very straightforward, stripped-down book that skips over and ignores the abundance of bibliographical information generated by the story of utopias. To bring it to the point: this is a profoundly and quietly non-historicist historical narrative. Seen from a 21st-century standpoint, the past of utopian ideas is not part of an overall continuum but depicts an orderly and rich collection of ideas, doubts, feelings, aspirations, proposals for solutions to abolish misery and unhappiness. The utopian ideas are connected by mutual reference and react to macro-transformations (first of all, the unification of the world in the early modern age). However, they all constitute, in the first place, an intellectual reservoir to draw on for inspiration and encouragement.

Imbruglia has made a conscious and courageous choice: acting as a perceptive ventriloquist, he almost wholly disengages himself from the academic conventions that require footnotes to be, more often than not, unnecessarily crammed with references to the previous literature. In *Utopia*, the academic paratext is minimal. The references in the footnotes are mainly limited to the canon of the classics in the field: Garin, Vasoli, Koselleck, Skinner, Baczkó, Venturi, and a handful of other prominent and recognized historians. Imbruglia has written a monograph that is a far cry from a classroom textbook, catering to readers willing to "learn from scratch" or "learn more" about Botero, Campanella, Morelly, Rousseau, or Babeuf. Whoever reads this book will feel and appreciate the strong impact of Imbruglia's original, unconventional and insightful way of reading and making sense of early-modern texts.

Imbruglia treats with particular energy three subjects. A brief discussion of each of them might give an idea of his approach. The first subject raised by Imbruglia addresses the question of how the reservoir of utopian ideas for modernity got underway. Imbruglia's pick, the Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola, seems to be the most unlikely of these possible founders of political modernity. However, Imbruglia is very cogent in his argument that Savonarola played a significant role in conceiving a notion of utopia before More. A political and religious leader simultaneously, Savonarola preserved his desire to anticipate in his preaches the state of things to come. From a Christian prophetic perspective, Savonarola described a situation that was bound to happen but was displaced ahead of the present and would fulfill the true human needs. Similarly, according to Imbruglia, Savonarola saw with perspicacity the power of persuasion, of emotional mobilization, and he gauged it as more effective than the power of naked force. Savonarola was a political leader who eventually failed, but he successfully promoted the republican experiment and brought "civilized men" like the Florentines to accept a new order (pp. 26-27). Using Eelco Runia's brilliant metaphor, the Christian prophecy became the stowaway aboard the political utopia. Prophecy, that non-paying passenger, came into full light only later in the secularized form of a project for a new society in the making.¹ Following this oblique and fractured trajectory, from Christian prophecy to the communist atheism of Abbé Meslier, Imbruglia points out a fascinating aspect of the early-modern utopian ideas: their protean, ubiquitous and unpredictable nature allows Imbruglia to include in the analysis authors like Machiavelli and Montesquieu, who were far from being naïf enthusiasts for utopia as it is commonly understood.

The second interesting case is the analysis of the largely forgotten pamphlet *L'avant-coureur du changement du monde entier*. The author was Nicolas Collignon, who, by the late 1780, had made a name for himself as a radical physocrat.² In 1773 he wrote to plead the cause of land clearing: Collignon advocated

¹ Eelco Runia, "Presence" (2006), in Runia, *Moved by the Past. Discontinuity and Historical Mutation* (New York: Columbia UP, 2014), 49-82.

² *L'avant-coureur du changement du monde entier par l'aisance, la bonne éducation et la prospérité générale de tous les hommes, ou prospectus d'un mémoire patriotique, sur les causes de la grande misère qui existe par-tout, et sur les moyens de l'extirper radicalement. En 8 vol. in-8°. Avec figures. Par M. Collignon, Avocat en Parlement, et Membre de plusieurs Academies. À Londres 1786.* Cf. Abgar

land distribution as a way to ameliorate the misery of the poor, who did not own any property but had a moral right to cultivate fertile plots of land left uncultivated. After publishing the *Avant-coureur*, in 1788, Collignon printed a pamphlet calling for the introduction of the decimal system. During the French Revolution, Collignon ran for the Legislative Assembly without success and flooded the National Assembly and then the Legislative Assembly with appeals and requests to approve his plan of social regeneration. He showed the same respect for the revolutionary rule and for King Louis XVI and Calonne.

Against the background of Collignon's life and concern for the social question, the *Avant-coureur* is evidence that Collignon had far-fetched aims but lacked the political acumen to accomplish his plans. Imbruglia's main reason for integrating Collignon in his analysis is his relationship, through de Fosseux, with Babeuf (apparently, Collignon and Babeuf never met in person). The virtual encounter between Collignon and Babeuf marked the convergence of two personalities, both embedded in the culture of the Enlightenment, who faced the options that the crisis of the Ancien Regime was making available. According to Imbruglia, Babeuf's comments on Collignon's ideas put on view "the last spark of the dialogue between utopia, reform and revolution" (p. 153) that had shaped the Enlightenment. Babeuf passed the point of no return when he organized the conspiracy and committed himself to radical militancy and communist equality. On the other hand, the philanthropic physiocrat Collignon sought to interact with Calonne and the revolutionary assemblies, convinced as he was that they would acknowledge his proposals to be self-evident and agree with him that history had been above all the history of famine and misery suffered by the people (p. 47 of the *Avant-Coureur*). Indeed, the revolution opened up unexpected opportunities for utopian desires to be pursued and encouraged militancy, but not everyone, certainly not Collignon, had the energy of the modern Gracchus.

Thirdly, among the many forms taken by utopian ideas in the Enlightenment, Diderot's reflections certainly stand out for their consistency and, as Imbruglia suggests, for a paradox: for a long time Morelly's *Code de la nature* was at-

Roubenovitch Ioannissian, "Sur l'auteur de 'L'Avant coureur du changement du monde entier'", *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 184 (1966): 1-14. This article is the source of Ian H. Birchall, *The Spectre of Babeuf* (London: MacMillan, 1997), 22-23.

tributed to Diderot. In contrast, a significant part of his writings on utopian desires remained handwritten or circulated in works not attributed to Diderot or appeared in unexpected settings, such as the *Encyclopédie*. Imbruglia closes with Diderot, praising him for considering utopian ideas the conceptual tool that allows focusing on “happiness and conflict” (p. 168). Along with Montesquieu, Diderot is the philosophe who contributed most to creating the reservoir of utopian ideas in the modern age. Diderot produced an emotionally rich utopian vision that still resonates with 21st-century readers. Diderot’s utopian thoughts are infused with historical and geographical references that establish the “effect of reality” and make the description of a perfect society credible. Imbruglia uses a very insightful formula and describes Diderot’s position as “inside and outside history” (p. 128). In particular, the *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, on which Diderot worked from 1772 to 1778/9 (but it appeared at the turn of the century), undergoes a succinct but perceptive analysis. Diderot’s attitude towards the Tahitians is clear: they are a happy society because they are caught in the evolutionary mechanism of human societies halfway between the savage and the corrupt.

La difficulté de mieux connaître les usages d’un peuple assez sage pour s’être arrêté de lui-même à la médiocrité, ou assez heureux pour habiter un climat dont la fertilité lui assurait un long engourdissement ; assez actif pour s’être mis à l’abri des besoins absolus de la vie, et assez indolent pour que son innocence, son repos et sa félicité n’eussent rien à redouter d’un progrès trop rapide de ses lumières. Rien n’y était mal par l’opinion ou par la loi que ce qui était mal de sa nature. Les travaux et les récoltes s’y faisaient en commun. L’acception du mot propriété y était très étroite. La passion de l’amour, réduite à un simple appétit physique, n’y produisait aucun de nos désordres. L’île entière offrait l’image d’une seule famille nombreuse dont chaque cabane représentait les divers appartements d’une de nos grandes maisons. (Dialogue V)

The Tahitians, therefore, prove that the Europeans are wrong in pursuing the endless proliferation of unnecessary needs, in inventing unnatural superstitions and in repressing the impulses that reflect our nature. They demonstrate also that this civilizational error is irremediable, contagious in its consequences, destructive of everything it touches. Modernity will take in its grip even the fragile but real utopia of Tahiti: the mere act of knowing and appreciating it sentences its death penalty.

C'est un vieillard qui parle; il était père d'une famille nombreuse. A l'arrivée des Européens, il laissa tomber des regards de dédain sur eux, sans marquer ni étonnement, ni frayeur, ni curiosité. Ils l'abordèrent, il leur tourna le dos et se retira dans sa cabane. Son silence et son souci ne décelaient que trop sa pensée: il gémissait en lui-même sur les beaux jours de son pays éclipsés. (Dialogue II)

Here, Imbruglia would probably agree that it is not only the ambiguity but the tragedy of the utopian thought that is aware of its premises and environment.

The utopian thought is continuously inside history, inevitably, and outside history, trying to jump out of time and reconnect to the primordial natural order that ensures happiness, while turning myth into politics. To be oneself and someone who will live with the same name and identity in the future, is the paradox of prophecy morphed into political utopia.

Edoardo Tortarolo



4 MATTEO GIULI, *L'opulenza del Brasile coloniale. Storia di un trattato di economia e del gesuita Antonil*, Roma: Carocci, 2021, p. 316. ISBN: 9788829010691, € 32,00.

In 1711, André João Antonil's book *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* was published in Lisbon. Behind this pseudonym lay Giovanni Maria Andreoni, a Tuscan Jesuit who had reached São Salvador da Bahia in 1681, soon establishing himself as a leading member of the Jesuit Province of Brazil. His treatise, subdivided into four very unequal parts in terms of length and structure, analysed the main productive activities in Brazil, which at the time was the most important colony of the Portuguese Crown. The first, longest, and most detailed part of the book is about the cultivation of sugar can (150 pages) e, the second about tobacco (20 pages), the third about gold and silver mining (52 pages), and the fourth about cattle ranching and the leather trade (11 pages).

Cultura e opulencia marks a departure from earlier publications about Brazil, which were essentially descriptive and reflected the paradigm of descriptions of the 'other' and of imaginary geographies underpinned by colonial ideology. Antonil/Andreoni's book represents instead the first genuine treatise on the Brazilian economy, rich in technical information and practical advice.

Matteo Giuli provides a detailed and in-depth analysis of this treatise. He takes account of studies already published on this work, whose value and originality has already been acknowledged by historians, while at the same time offering some fresh and interesting food for thought.¹ Giuli's aim is not only to define the historical context in which *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil* was written and published, to analyse its ideas, and to evaluate the data and information it provides, his aim is also to provide an interpretation of the overall significance of the work by highlighting its political value. Through a description of Brazil's economic resources, Antonil/Andreoni sought to develop a justification—within the broader framework of Portuguese imperialism—of the political and social predominance of the Brazilian rural oligarchy, whose power found legitimacy in its being rooted at the local level. The political value of the treatise lies precisely in its defence and promotion of the interests and claims (raised with Lisbon) of the owners of *engenhos*, settlements specialising in the production and processing of sugar cane, and within the context of a specific plan for a colonial society.

Giuli's monograph stems from a broad research conducted on primary, both archival and published sources from Italy, Portugal, and Brazil, combined with a wide-ranging engagement with the extensive secondary literature. The study presents a markedly interdisciplinary character, cutting across intellectual history and the history of ideas, religious and economic history, imperial and global history, not to mention cultural, political, and institutional history. At the same time, *L'opulenza del Brasile coloniale* convincingly operates on a double level, local and global. Giuli sets out from a case study which he examines from a micro-analytical perspective, with an eye to biographical information, and the specific topics addressed by the treatise. In doing so, he tackles macro-questions of global significance: from missionary activities in the Modern Age (particu-

¹ André Mansuy-Diniz Silva, *Introduction*, in André Joao Antonil, *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil por suas drogas e minas* (Paris: Éditions de l'IHEAL, 1968), 9-67.

larly involving the Jesuits) to the issue of slavery and Portuguese transatlantic colonial policies.

The first two chapters of *L'opulenza del Brasile coloniale* analyse the most extensive part of the treatise, probably written before the rest of the work and focusing on sugar production. These pages come across as a genuine handbook providing practical expertise and advice for the cultivation and processing of sugar cane, regarded as the foundation of Brazil's wealth and hence of the Portuguese Crown. As Giuli convincingly shows, in this part of the book Antonil/Andreoni combines technical information and educational guidelines by drawing upon the ancient Aristotelian tradition of *oikonomika*, understood as the proper way of managing a home, and applying it to the Brazilian colonial context. The owners of *engenhos* are offered training not only in economic matters, but also in ethical and moral ones (the model is that of moderation and the 'just mean' inherited from the Classical tradition), particularly as regards the way to manage relations with the various economic actors found in an *engenho*. The tradition of *oikonomika* is combined with the aspect of Christian catechesis proper to the Jesuits. From this perspective, Giuli shows how Antonil/Andreoni's work marks the transition from *oikonomika* to Christian *oikonomika*, whereby the aspect of religious instruction and indoctrination not merely overlaps with the ancient precepts about home management, but ultimately supersedes them: *oikonomika* becomes a means to save souls. One crucial question concerns the right way to manage slaves. Based on a strong interplay between ethical concerns and economic interests, the main issue is how a landowner should treat slaves in order to make his farm truly productive and profitable.

Although Giuli does not specifically focus on this aspect, Antonil/Andreoni's work represents not just a take on *oikonomika*—in its first part—but also, on the whole, an overcoming of this tradition. *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil* reflects the transition which had already taken place from *oikonomika* to political economy. The Jesuit Father's aim was to analyse production in colonial Brazil in view of economic benefits for the Portuguese monarchy. The field of analysis is already production, exchange, and consumption, which presuppose a market—by now a transatlantic and global one. At the same time, the economic power of Portugal, which was chiefly based on production in Brazil, constituted the foundation of the country's political power, in a phase of increasing commercial

competition between the European monarchies. This also raises the question of the periodisation of the transition from *oikonomika* to political economy, understood not so much as a science, but rather—more broadly—as the modern relationship between economics and politics. Conventionally, historians have emphasised the long duration of the tradition of *oikonomika*, contending that it remained unchanged until the mid-18th century.¹ More recently, however, by building upon some of Foucault’s insights on the concept of *gouvernabilité*, scholars have stressed how, already in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, within an economic framework, an attempt was made to apply to political governance the kind of managerial and administrative rationality associated with heads of families.² When it comes to defining the link between economics and politics (understood as the science of governing), the phase between the late 16th century and the early 17th played a crucial role: the rise of the notion of reason of state and of mercantilistic ideas led to a complete overcoming of the Aristotelian tradition in favour of new market requirements and the development of a form of economic knowledge that was relatively independent yet functional to states, their governments, and their administrations.

In the third chapter of his book, Giuli examines the remaining sections of *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil*, respectively dealing with tobacco production, mining (particularly gold mining), and cattle ranching and the leather market. This last economic activity is discussed in a very cursory way by Antonil/Andreoni, but the other two appear more significant. As far as tobacco is concerned, Giuli analyses the information on growing techniques, processing methods, and commercial data, along with the historical digression on trade in this product between Brazil and Portugal, and the medical and social considerations that Antonil/Andreoni offers with regard to the use of tobacco. Here Giuli partly draws on the contemporary historiography on the consumption of colonial goods in the Modern Age and on the debate that it gave rise to, at the crossroads between religion and medicine. The part on the extraction of gold, which describes mining techniques, addresses the juridical issue of the *quinto do oro* (i.e. the levy

¹ Otto Brunner, *Adeliges Landleben und europäischer Geist, Leben und Werk Wolf Helmhardts von Honeberg 1612-1688* (Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1949).

² Pietro Sebastianelli, *Homines æconomici: per una storia delle arti di governo in età moderna* (Roma: Aracne, 2017).

imposed by the Portuguese Crown on any gold mined in Brazil). It lays out in detail the existent routes to reach the gold deposits of Minas Gerais, discovered in the late 17th century. This section is interpreted by Giuli as generally supporting Antonil/Andreoni's condemnation of the negative social and economic repercussions of the discovery of gold deposits in Brazil, which had led not just to social turmoil and an increase in inflation, but also to a shift in the labour force from agriculture to mining—whereas in the Jesuit's view the former was to remain the main activity for investments. Certainly, Antonil/Andreoni's reflection on this issue was also influenced by the kind of criticism that had been voiced in Europe from as early as the late 16th century—chiefly with reference to the Spanish monarchy—concerning the negative consequences of colonialism based on the importing of gold. Giuli refers to this criticism, if only in a partial way. At the same time, Antonil/Andreoni's views fall within the framework of the transition from bullionism to mercantilism that had already taken place by his time. The last two decades have witnessed a resurgence of the historiographical debate on the category of mercantilism and on the significance of mercantilistic ideas in the 17th and 18th centuries, associated with a strong revival of mercantilism as an approach to political development. What has especially been stressed is the ambiguous and imprecise nature of the term. Scholars have pointed to the need to “re-imagine” and “redefine” the concept, even going beyond the level of purely economic analysis in an effort to set certain ideas within the broader cultural and intellectual framework of the Modern Age.¹

The fourth and final chapter is especially dense and offers plenty of food for thought. Shifting the level of analysis, it provides a fascinating reconstruction of the publishing history of the treatise. Just when the last authorisation needed to publish the work had been obtained, all copies of *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil* were seized and destroyed. Giuli convincingly argues that this censoring of the book was due to “reasons of state”, starting from the fact that the book provided detailed descriptions of existing routes to reach the gold deposits of Minas Gerais. The Ultramarine Council of Lisbon also played a role, as they

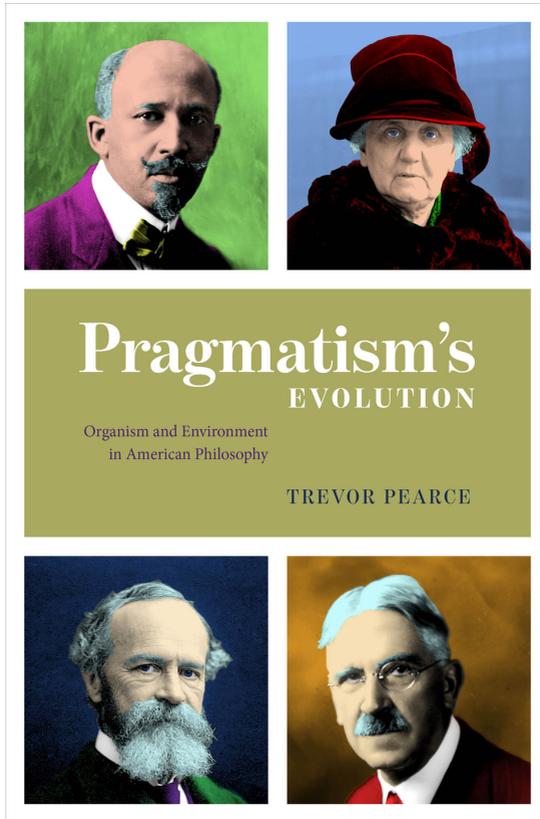
¹ Steve Pincus, “Rethinking Mercantilism: Political Economy, the British Empire, and the Atlantic World in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries”, *William and Mary Quarterly* 69/1 (2012): 3-34; Philip J. Stern, Carl Wennerlind, ed., *Mercantilism Reimagined: Political Economy in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire* (New York: Oxford UP, 2014), 305-327.

advised against publishing the book. The part about mines might have fuelled the aggressiveness of powers hostile to Portugal, while also fostering any ambition in Brazil to revolt against the Lisbon government. Giuli, however, explores the whole matter in greater depth, by providing a detailed reconstruction of Antonil/Andreoni's life and setting the treatise within the framework of the divisions that marked the Jesuit Province of Brazil. The main contrast was between the group of so-called *alexandristas*, which is to say those Jesuits revolving around the figure of Alexandre de Gusmão, including Antonil/Andreoni himself, and the *veristas*, which is to say those Jesuits who supported Antonio Viera's position. The conflict revolved around two chief issues. The first was the distribution of hierarchical power within the Order, with an opposition between Portuguese Jesuits on the one hand and Jesuits born in Brazil and/or foreign ones on the other. The second, crucial issue, was the temporal government of the indigenous population and the deployment of natives as a workforce. Giuli offers the intriguing hypothesis that the treatise, which was published anonymously precisely on account of this high degree of conflict within the Jesuit Order in Brazil, actually constituted an attempt to accomplish a political exchange. Antonil/Andreoni sought to uphold the economic claims of the sugar and tobacco barons in exchange for their support in his main battles against the *vieristas*: the battle in favour of non-Portuguese Jesuits in Brazil and that in favour of the demands made by São Paulo colonists concerning the use of indigenous labour. In this respect, the author of *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil* adopted a perspective fully in line with that of the Portuguese Crown, which was well aware that colonial production—and hence its own wealth—depended on the deployment of indigenous labour and that only the São Paulo settlers could make such labour available. These were precisely the positions which prevailed in the end, forcing the Jesuits to forego any attempt to exercise indirect temporal power over indigenous villages, thereby largely limiting their missionary activities to the spiritual sphere.

L'opulenza del Brasile coloniale is a fine book which—through a detailed reconstruction of ideas, arguments, and contexts—enables us first of all to grasp the political meaning of *Cultura e opulencia do Brasil*: a work offering not only a significant justification of the political and social predominance of the Brazilian rural oligarchy, but also a powerful justification of Portuguese imperialism and the means by which it was exercised, based on economic arguments. At the

same time, the great merit of Giuli's book lies in its capacity to set out from this early 18th-century economic treatise, which combines economics, politics, and religion, in order to bring the reader to reflect—from a specific yet privileged vantage point—on a range of crucial topics in modern history: the Jesuits' missionary activity, the practice of censorship, the relationship between colonialism and mercantilism, the transition from *oikonomika* to political economy, the debate on slavery, and imperialist policies.

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Pearce, Pragmatism's Evolution, 2021, cover.