

DAZZLED, BLINDED, & NUMB:  
THE BODY AND SOCIETY IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

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## ABSTRACT

Joseph D. Bryan: *Dazzled, Blinded, & Numb:  
The Body and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*  
(Under the direction of Jay M. Smith)

One of the defining features of eighteenth-century France was a pervasive anxiety over the possible collapse of the hierarchical and corporate social order. Although influenced by a variety of political and cultural crises, contemporaries often channeled blame for the tenuous state of society to the increase in commercial activity and the effects of luxury. While historians have recently used this anxiety as a key to explore innovative social thinking, they have often neglected two fundamental aspects of eighteenth-century culture. First, opponents of luxury did not simply put forward abstract moral critiques; their criticisms stemmed from the increasing availability of “superfluous” material goods, the noticeable expansion of social activities, such as public leisure and shopping, and new understandings of social interaction through practices of civility, taste, and refinement. The attention given to unprecedented forms of behavior is indicative of a larger point: the notion of society itself as a realm of human independence and interdependence was being invented. Religious and political boundaries circumscribing the “social” had been loosened. Commerce challenged the foundations of Old Regime society, luxury confused the symbols that represented the Old Regime socio-political hierarchy, and a wide range of writers envisioned new roots for society based either on the harmonizing capacity of individual interests, the innate human quality of sociability, or the vague concept of social utility.

Second, and more important, historians have neglected the critical physiological aspect of contemporary confrontations with the increasingly-unsteady social order. There is a marked presence of physiological language in eighteenth-century socio-political writing; science, however, was more than a convenient idiom. In attempting to understand novel human interaction, writers appropriated evidence about the passions, the sensibility of nerves, and the *organisation* of the body. I propose that it was through the body, and the body's capacity to "feel," that many thinkers understood, argued over, and ultimately constructed new social institutions and forms of social interaction. Explaining the relationship between bodies—human bodies, material goods, specks of matter—became the key to understanding society.

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North Carolina is virtually equidistant from France and Billings, Montana, where I now live and work. For the first thirty years of my life, I was raised and educated between Henderson, Wilmington, Raleigh, and Chapel Hill, NC. North Carolina will always be home and

Paris will always be Paris, but I am lucky to be able to call Billings, Montana home as well. The transition has been made easier by the Lynn family, especially Lorrie and Richard Lynn and Jessica and Zac Rodne. I wrote the entirety of this dissertation in Montana, employed as a part-time instructor and now University Lecturer at Montana State University Billings. While Dr. Smith has shepherded me through this process from afar, Dr. Keith Edgerton has become a guide and a friend. Whether canoeing down the Missouri River, reading bloated chapters on the Physiocrats, or acting as a surrogate father to my wife at our wedding, Keith has welcomed me into the university, the city, and the vast expanses of the state. Lenette Kosovich has filled my belly too many times to count. Together, Keith and Lenette are amazing human beings and have cultivated an enduring home for my wife and me.

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Every day my wife Jen Lynn serves as a model of academic integrity and humane goodness. Urbane and silly, sharp and witty, she is exactly the person I want to be. She provides confidence when mine is flagging and sketches depicting the mundane when I am humorless. Most importantly, she constantly assures me that snakes cannot jump, climb trees, or thrive in winter. Whether real or metaphorical snakes, I like my chances with her.

To my parents, who believed in me unconditionally, I finally got my mind right.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
From Metaphor to Ontology: The Bodies of Eighteenth-Century France.....	1
Bodies Beyond Metaphor.....	2
Challenges to the Corporate Social Order: Commerce and “Society”.....	5
The Primacy of the Corporeal.....	11
PART I: EMBODYING SOCIETY: FROM SOCIAL STRUCTURE TO SOCIAL BODIES...	22
CHAPTER ONE: THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY AND THE BODY POLITIC.....	25
The Social Structure of Early-Modern France.....	25
The Human Body and the Body Politic.....	30
CHAPTER TWO: INVENTING AND EMBODYING SOCIETY.....	54
Inventing Society.....	55
The Language of the Body and the Senses.....	69
Embodying Society: Diderot, the Blind, and Natural Law.....	80
CHAPTER THREE: THE NATURAL LAW OF FEELING BEINGS.....	87
CHAPTER FOUR: THE SOCIAL IMAGINATION.....	107
The Corporate Body Unravels: Abolition of the Guilds (1776).....	108
Corporeal Concerns and Public Health.....	117
PART II: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE CORPOREAL CRITIQUE OF LUXURY....	127
CHAPTER FIVE: THE FRENCH ECONOMY AND CONSUMER CULTURE.....	130
The Political Economy of France.....	131

The Culture of Consumption.....	142
CHAPTER SIX: THE CORPOREAL CRITIQUE OF LUXURY.....	152
<i>La Querelle du Luxe</i> .....	154
The Corporeal Critique of Luxury.....	168
Effeminacy and <i>la Mollesse</i> .....	170
The Problem of <i>Représentation</i> .....	179
The Processes of Corporeal Decay.....	189
CHAPTER SEVEN: “CET ÉTAT D’ÉTOURDISSEMENT CONTINUEL”: (DIS)EMBODYING SOCIETY IN PHYSIOCRACY.....	212
Physiocratic Political Economy.....	215
Marquis de Mirabeau, <i>L’ami des hommes</i> (1756-1758).....	222
“Notre molle urbanité”: Mirabeau and Quesnay’s “Traité de la monarchie”.....	238
Physiocracy, or (Dis)embodying Society.....	250
CONCLUSION.....	273
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	286



## Introduction

### *From Metaphor to Ontology: the Bodies of Eighteenth-Century France*

In 1789, the anonymous author of *Principles of Government simplified and reduced to seven natural units, conditions for a good Constitution* reimagined French politics through a body-politic metaphor:

What we call the constitution of the human body is the totality, the intimate union of all the parts; they say that a man is ‘well-constituted’ when he enjoys a healthy, vigorous organization, without deformity...It must be the same for a political body. But the human body has only one head to watch over the preservation of all its limbs...Thus it is the nation, which created the head that it has given itself, that should determine the laws that this head should follow in directing the national interests.<sup>1</sup>

By reversing the traditional image of the body politic, as a divine and rational king-head directing the state-body, the author used a metaphor to direct readers’ attention to the inefficacious political system still governing France. The author also marshaled contemporary physiological and medical terminology—*constitution, organisation, nerfs, sensibilité*—to blend political authority with the immutable laws of nature.

The anonymous author’s metaphor is representative of the rhetoric of the Revolution. Yet, even though the pervasive use of body-politic metaphors has been an important vehicle for describing subtle and dramatic political change, historians have been too captivated by them. Revolutionaries made extensive use of body-politic metaphors to transmit their political messages, but metaphor was not the only expression of the corporeal. Revolutionaries such as

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 104.

Pierre-Louis Roederer and the physician J.-L. Alibert sought to ground French socio-political institutions in the body itself. According to Roederer, the “spring” of social *organisation* could be found in “the physical, intellectual and moral faculties,” and “it is necessary to know man himself, that is to say the qualities that can ensure the action of the social machine.”<sup>2</sup> For Alibert, sensationalism was the “universal key to the human mind.”<sup>3</sup> Society must necessarily function according to the ability of each individual to “feel” sociability through sympathy.<sup>4</sup> Where did Roederer and Alibert gather materials to build a new society from a corporeal foundation? Their sources were sturdier than metaphor. In order for the revolutionaries to know their body politic, they believed, the French had to know their own bodies.

### *Bodies beyond Metaphor*

One of the defining features of eighteenth-century France was a pervasive anxiety over the possible collapse of the hierarchical and corporate social order. Although influenced by a variety of political and cultural crises, contemporaries often channeled blame for the tenuous state of society to the increase in commercial activity and the effects of luxury. While historians have recently used this anxiety as a key to explore innovative social thinking, they have often neglected two fundamental aspects of eighteenth-century culture. First, opponents of luxury did not simply put forward abstract moral critiques; their criticisms stemmed from the increasing availability of “superfluous” material goods, the noticeable expansion of social activities, such as public leisure and shopping, and new understandings of social interaction through practices of

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<sup>2</sup>P.-L. Roederer, *Cours d'organisation sociale*, in *Oeuvres du Comte P.-L. Roederer*, ed. A.-M. Roederer, 8<sup>th</sup> tome (Paris: Typographie de Firmin Didot frères, imprimeurs de l'institut, 1859), 131.

<sup>3</sup>J.-L. Alibert, “Discours sur les rapports de la médecine avec les sciences physiques et morales,” *Mémoires de la Société d'Émulation*, vol. 2 (1798), i-cxii, here lxxv.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, lxxxiii.

civility, taste, and refinement. The attention given to unprecedented forms of behavior is indicative of a larger point: the notion of society itself as a realm of human independence and interdependence was being invented. A wide range of writers captured these changes by envisioning new roots for society based either on the harmonizing capacity of individual interests, the innate human quality of sociability, or the vague concept of social utility.

Second, and more importantly, historians have neglected the critical physiological aspect of contemporary confrontations with the increasingly unsteady social order. There is a marked presence of physiological language in eighteenth-century socio-political writing, especially metaphors of the body politic. Yet, a corporeal vocabulary was more than a convenient idiom. In attempting to understand the burgeoning world of commerce and the ramifications for the corporate social order, writers appropriated and applied evidence about the passions, the sensibility of nerves, and the *organisation* of the body. I propose that it was through the corporeal that many thinkers understood, deliberated over, and ultimately constructed new social institutions and forms of social interaction. Explaining the relationship between bodies—human bodies, material goods, specks of matter, etc.—became the key to understanding society. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the French began to approach socio-economic problems and the nature of social interaction through the physiological capacity of bodies to “feel.”

As Antoine de Baecque has written, eighteenth-century writers and revolutionaries “thought abstractly by means of metaphor and...gave to their comprehension of the individual, and of the human community, and even the universe, the figure of the human body. Their language, even at its most philosophical and legalistic, was charged with these images.”<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>5</sup>De Baecque, *The Body Politic*, 2. For “society’s” reliance on the king for its own existence, see Brian C. J. Singer, *Society, Theory and the French Revolution: Studies in the Revolutionary Imaginary* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), chp. 5.

vision of organic unity that heralded this introduction was the product of eighteenth-century investigations into the cohesive arrangement of physical bodies into a larger metaphorical entity, the “body politic” or “social body.”<sup>6</sup> Alongside frequent usage of physiological language, the often politicized metaphor that individual bodies are constitutive of something more powerful pervaded eighteenth-century France.<sup>7</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s concept of the general will, Théophile Bordeu’s view of the body as a confederation of organs, and the insistence in political economy that the circulation of commodities sustained the body politic all attest to linguistic overlap and a shared set of conceptual tools.<sup>8</sup>

Eighteenth-century metaphors of the organic unity of the body politic and the social body indicate the desire to re-establish the relationship between the monarchy and its subjects on new

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<sup>6</sup>See Judith Schlanger, *Les Métaphores de l’organisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1971); Barry Barnes and Steven Shapin, eds., *Natural Order: Historical Studies of Scientific Culture* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1979); de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*; Sabine Maassen, Everett Mendelsohn, and Peter Weingart, eds., *Biology as Society, Society as Biology: Metaphors* (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995); Catherine Packham, “The Physiology of Political Economy: Vitalism and Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 63, No. 3 (July 2002): 465-481. Two recent works delve into the interaction of politics and society: Jean Terrier, *Visions of the Social: Society as a Political Project in France, 1750-1950* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), and David Bates, *States of War: Enlightenment Origins of the Political* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), chp. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman have recently used the flexible “*language of self-organization*,” or the “family of self-organizing conceptual moves,” as an explanatory framework for the Enlightenment writ large. Sheehan and Wahrman, *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), xii, 249.

<sup>8</sup>According to Charles T. Wolfe and Motoichi Terada, “[Bordeu’s] celebrated image of the bee-swarm expresses this structural-functional understanding of living bodies quite well: ‘One sees them press against each other, mutually supporting each other, forming a kind of whole, in which each living part, in its own way, by means of the correspondence and directions of its motions, enables this kind of life to be sustained in the body’ (Ménuret, 1765c, *Encyclopédie*, “Observation”, XI, 319).” Wolfe and Terada, “The Animal Economy as Object and Program in Montpellier Vitalism,” *Science in Context* 21.4 (2008): 537-79, here p. 550. See also Peter Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 133. For Rousseau’s concept of the body politic, see Bates, *States of War*, chp. 5, and Terrier, *Vision of the Social*, pgs. 5-9 and 54-56. Turgot acknowledged the ubiquity of the organic metaphor of circulation: “It is this advance and this continual return of capitals which constitute *what one must call the circulation of money*; that useful and fruitful circulation which gives life to all the labors of the society, which maintains movement and life in the body politic, and which is with great reason compared to the circulation of blood in the animal body.” Turgot, *Reflections on the Formation and the Distribution of Riches*, trans. William J. Ashley (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1971; originally published in *Ephémérides du citoyen*, in three parts: Nov. and Dec. 1769, and Jan. 1770), 63.

grounds, but they competed with the persistent, traditional metaphors of a stratified society, hierarchically-arranged and based on privilege. The body politic found in these images resembled Hobbes' Leviathan in which the king served as the head, or control center, ordering his parts and organs through his will.<sup>9</sup> The body politic itself was eternal, but its immortality resonated in opposing ways in the eighteenth century: the king's two bodies (*Le roi est mort. Vive le roi!*) versus the regeneration of the body politic through the organization of its parts (the "body" directs the "head"). Whichever metaphor best expressed one's political allegiance or social vision, the body nevertheless stood at the center.

While corporeal metaphors served as important tools to disseminate traditional or controversial socio-political ideas, often appropriating the authority of nature to justify hierarchy or exclusion, historians have focused too intently on the metaphorical value of the corporeal. Contemporaries used not only the language of the body to add a natural stress to their arguments, but they also claimed that the body had ontological value in society. The new primacy of the corporeal and the role of the individual's body in society stemmed from two innovations of French life in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the spread of commerce and luxury and the invention of "society."

#### *Challenges to the Corporate Social Order: Commerce and "Society"*

Body-politic metaphors were more than just cognitive devices to explain forms of government; they equally entailed a set of expectations and limitations for individuals and

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<sup>9</sup>See Terrier, *Visions of the Social*, chps. 1-3, and Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor, Nation and the Holocaust: The Concept of the Body Politic* (New York: Routledge Press, 2010), chps. 6-8. Metaphors of the body politic also generally carried gendered expectations and expressed fears of both female sexuality and insidious social threats. See Lynn Hunt, ed., *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Jonathan Gil Harris, *Foreign Bodies and the body politic: Discourses of social pathology in early modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

bodies. Metaphors expressed social structures, and social structures circumscribed lived realities. In early-modern France, stratification of ranks and corporate privileges carried expectations of morality, behavior, and conduct, as well as symbols of status. The semiotic world was stable when the body was a viable metaphor for, and representation of, political power and social position. When these symbols were confused, however, “semiotic chaos” ensued, and this is precisely what happened.<sup>10</sup>

The eighteenth century felt a pervasive anxiety brought on by commerce, luxury, and the increasing realization that the corporate social order did not reflect the reality of social intercourse. Commercial exchange, the luxury industry, and the unpredictability of fashion emerged under the tight grip of Louis XIV and his minister of finance Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Together, the king and minister encouraged urban growth, domestic manufacturing, and international trade in mercantilist hopes of overflowing coffers and autocratic control of the French economy. Through sumptuary laws, they sought to extend the king’s control from economy to culture, limiting both the production of illegal goods and the consumption of imported luxury items.<sup>11</sup> The growing trade in licit and illicit luxury goods, nevertheless, circumvented sumptuary laws and eluded the grasp of the monarch and his minister.

Because of a long-term “consumer revolution” in France, consumption was not reduced or limited to *état*. The production and consumption of fashionable luxury items—e.g. watches,

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<sup>10</sup>The phrase “semiotic chaos” comes from John Shovlin, “The Cultural Politics of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 23, no. 4 (fall 2000): 577-606. For another examination of the function of the corporeal in the social order, see Katsuya Hirano, “Politics and Poetics of the Body in Early Modern Japan,” *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 8, n. 3 (2011): 499-530.

<sup>11</sup>On the king’s attempts to control fashion, see Clare Crowston, *Fabricating Women: the Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Jennifer Jones, *Sexing “La Mode”: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (New York, NY: Berg, 2004); Natacha Coquery, *Tenir Boutique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle: luxe et demi-luxe* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2011), 182-3.

jewelry, silks, furniture, hygiene products, and cosmetics—found a welcome home in Paris. By the middle of the eighteenth century, the market for “cheap copies of aristocratic luxury items,” or “populuxe goods,” flourished.<sup>12</sup> In her recent work on Parisian boutiques, Natacha Coquery has shown how boutiques embodied a fledgling “society”: “The boutique is at the same time a place of selling, buying, and fabrication, but it is also a place of *crédit*, sociability, spectacle, tourism, leisure, fantasy, etc. It is a place where a culture of consumption is constructed.”<sup>13</sup> Boutiques, in Coquery’s analysis, demonstrate the ambiguity of French commerce and culture in the eighteenth century. Balanced between archaism and modernity, boutiques represented the former through a continued respect for traditional practices, rules, networks, bartering, and older modes of production, while expressing the latter by their ability to adapt rapidly to changes in fashion, to direct those same fashions, to take advantage of new advertising opportunities, as well as encourage a new urban, social practice: shopping.<sup>14</sup> The increasing availability of “populuxe” goods, new spaces of sociability, and the international “culture of consumption”

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<sup>12</sup>Cissie Fairchilds, “The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in eighteenth-century Paris,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter, 228-248 (London and New York, Routledge, 1993), 228.

<sup>13</sup>Coquery, *Tenir Boutique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*, 24. Regarding *crédit*, Coquery’s analysis implies the dual nature of this term. During the eighteenth century, it meant both credit as we understand it today, which allows her to detail who needed to purchase items on credit, as well as the esteem or clout one acquired and the uses to which one applied that reputation. The latter definition, bound up with the *ancien régime* social hierarchy and obligations of interest and moral value, would be slowly overshadowed by the former by the end of the eighteenth century. See Jay M. Smith, “No More Language Games: Words, Beliefs, and the Political Culture of Early Modern France,” *The American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1414-1440, and Clare Haru Crowston’s critique in both, “Credit and the Metanarrative of Modernity,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 7-19, and *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 301-2. See also Amalia D. Kessler, “Enforcing Virtue: Social Norms and Self-Interest in an Eighteenth-Century Merchant Court,” *Law and History Review*, vol. 22, n. 1 (Spring 2004): 71-118, esp. 100-118. For a recent general work on economic developments that situates the essentials of confidence, *crédit*, gift, and debt between competing, but often overlapping, “aristocratic” and “bourgeois” economic cultures, see Laurence Fontaine, *L’Economie morale. Pauvreté, crédit et confiance dans l’Europe préindustrielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2008). For an analysis of shopping and the empowering possibilities of consumption for women, see Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), chp. 5.

enhanced the glamour of the French capital, as writers such as Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Jean-François Melon touted the social and economic profitability of *le doux commerce*. However, these changes tested the socio-economic order by giving birth to new consumers *sans état*.

The explosion of material goods, the excessive expenditures of the ultra-elite, and the fears of “bourgeois” emulation led to a debate over luxury. Consumer culture spread through the ranks of society; it disrupted the socio-political hierarchy, which was based on expensive symbols designating ranking, and fed arguments over the role of commerce in France’s political economy. Fears of social collapse abounded as a panoply of social and political crises threatened the once stable, tripartite social structure, and a new conceptual vocabulary challenged previous meanings of honor, virtue, patriotism, public opinion, and nobility.<sup>15</sup> The development of commerce and the extension of luxury crystallized growing problems within the traditional, corporate social order.

The relationships between the three estates, subjects and their monarch, and believers and their god, were no longer the only relationships existing between individuals. The notion of society itself as a realm of human independence and interdependence was being invented. In Keith M. Baker’s words, “the Enlightenment invented society as a symbolic representation of collective human existence and instituted it as the essential domain of human practice.”<sup>16</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup>Regarding fears of social collapse as a result of depopulation, see Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), and Leslie Tuttle, *Conceiving the Old Regime: Pronatalism and the Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern France* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Among a multitude of texts on political culture, see Jay Smith, “Social Categories, the Language of Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution: The Debate over noblesse commerçante,” *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72, no. 2 (June 2000): 339-374, and his *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Marisa Linton, *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

<sup>16</sup>Keith Michael Baker, “Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History,” in *Main Trends in Cultural History: Ten Essays*, eds. Willem Melching and Wyger Velema, 95-120 (Amsterdam and



decades surrounding the turn of the eighteenth century saw an ontological space open up as religion slowly came to be interiorized and the material world, which operated by natural laws, distanced from an omnipresent deity. David Bell has concluded that “[t]he intellectual achievements of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, by so clearly delineating the terrestrial sphere, also demanded a new vocabulary to describe it and to help human beings discern and maintain order and stability in the face of the terrifying absence of God.”<sup>17</sup> What Bell labelled “foundational concepts” (*société, civilisation, patrie, nation, and public*) replaced the authority of religion and the unquestioned subjugation of subjects to their sovereign. The bonds that linked humans together in society preceded the political.

By the mid-eighteenth century, therefore, religious and political boundaries circumscribing the "social" had been loosened, commerce challenged the foundations of traditional society, and luxury confused the symbols that represented the corporate socio-political hierarchy. Consumer culture and new sociable practices were the material referents in the process of being constituted semantically as “society.” They were natural, necessary, and autonomous.

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Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 96. See also Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), chp. 4; Yair Mintzker, "'A Word Newly Introduced into Language': The Appearance and Spread of 'Social' in French Enlightenment Thought, 1745-1764," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 500-513; Amalia D. Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce: the Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), chp. 4; Dena Goodman, “Difference: An Enlightenment Concept,” in *What’s Left of Enlightenment?* eds. Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hanns Reill, 129-147 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon, 1715-1799* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 174, 177, 198; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994). For “intellectual companionate and collaborative marriages” as spurs to sociability and social utility, see Meghan K. Roberts, “*Philosophes Mariés and Epouses Philosophiques*: Men of Letters and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century France,” *French Historical Studies* 35.3 (Summer 2012): 509-39.

<sup>17</sup>Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, 29. Beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, according to Charles Taylor, the “modern” social imaginary consists of a society “disembedded” from a metaphysical order and created and populated by legally-autonomous, individual beings. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), chp. 4.

The novelty of commercial life—the wider distribution of wealth, luxury, and social mobility—forced writers to reconsider the bases of the corporate social order. Supporters of the traditional order, who sought new foundations for the system of *corps*, and opponents of the traditional order both employed a new social understanding of “commerce.” By the eighteenth century, “commerce” was a polysemous term that “came to refer not only to the activities of merchants...but to an increasingly resonant image of civil society as a whole, as in phrases such as ‘an agreeable commerce,’ ‘an easy commerce,’ the ‘commerce of letters,’ or the ‘commerce between the sexes’.”<sup>18</sup> Commerce was not simply the transportation and exchange of goods or activities of the market, according to the Marquis de Mirabeau (1756); it was akin to sociability: “Commerce is the useful and necessary connection of all sociable beings with each other. In this sense, the territory of commerce is moral as well as physical; all is commerce here below.”<sup>19</sup> Commerce brought material bodies and material goods together to constitute incipient society, which provided contemporaries with the key to understanding both “economic” commerce and “social” commerce. Critics of commerce and luxury and theorists of “society” focused their efforts on the corporeal component of society. In his dialogue *Physique de la Beauté* (1748), for example, É-G Morelly’s charming character Thémire proclaimed to her lover-interlocutor Théramène, “Yes, I know that we have five senses. They are the organs that create a certain commerce between us and exterior objects. But it is necessary that you explain to me how this happens.”<sup>20</sup> The importance of the body as sense receptor registered across a variety of debates,

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<sup>18</sup>Henry C. Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), xiii.

<sup>19</sup>Mirabeau, *L’Ami des hommes ou traité de la population*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1970; reprint of Avignon edition of 1756–8), II.I.5.

<sup>20</sup>Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, *Physique de la Beauté, ou Pouvoir naturel des ses Charmes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Éditions Coda, 2004; written in 1748 but unpublished), 215.

journals, and texts during the second half of the eighteenth century, all of which explained just how the sensory organs created “a certain commerce between us and exterior objects.”

*The Primacy of the Corporeal*

The growth of the public sphere, illustrated by an expansion of print media and intellectual cosmopolitanism, coupled with new, urban institutions of sociability and new commercial practices demonstrates to us that “society” was throwing off political, religious, and hierarchical restrictions. Through an increased distribution of the periodical press, Parisians and those in provincial urban locations could learn about products filling the new stores on Rue St. Honoré or being produced in the faubourg Saint Antoine. In this dissertation, I will argue that it was only a few decades into the eighteenth century that the French began to *think through* the changes taking place. I take seriously Michael Kwass’ challenge that historians should begin

to assess the cultural and intellectual transformations that accompanied the proliferation of consumer goods in this period. How did men and women living in what remained, in many ways, a highly traditional social and political order come to understand the upward spiral of consumption? How did the expansion of the world of goods influence the social imagination of the French in the decades before the French Revolution?<sup>21</sup>

The idea that there was an abstract *and* physical space inhabited by human bodies, characterized by “commerce,” and adorned with material goods came to exercise the minds of French writers. Metaphors of the body politic were not enough to understand the multitude of changes that took place in the eighteenth century. Their gauge, their tool of measurement, was the human body itself.

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<sup>21</sup>Michael Kwass, “Consumption and the World of Ideas: Consumer Revolution and the Moral Economy of the Marquis de Mirabeau,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 187-213, here p. 187. Kwass repeated this challenge to historians in his “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 111, n.3 (June 2006): 634.

By the mid-eighteenth century, the primacy of the corporeal had proceeded from three developments. First, challengers of the mechanical philosophy and Cartesian dualism, both of which viewed matter as inert and lifeless, produced new hypotheses of the inherent activity of matter. Isaac Newton's analysis of gravity and the "active forces" of matter lent natural philosophical majesty to the idea that matter possessed various forms of inherent mobility (e.g. attraction and repulsion).<sup>22</sup> Human bodies and matter were part of nature and subordinate to nature's laws, whether providential or not; both were conceived as not only being affected by exterior objects, as in the case of the mechanical philosophy, but effecting change in exterior objects as well. In society, humans absorbed and responded to the passions, emotions, or behaviors of others. The mechanical philosophy could not account for the ability of bodies to self-organize via active properties in either the natural world or society.

Second, and closely following the first development, the human body filled the space slowly evacuated by the immaterial human soul and God, as noted by David Bell above. Late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century natural philosophers, physicians, and doctors debated the physiology and materiality of the soul. The enhanced physicality of the human body, alongside the decreasing belief in an immaterial and spiritual realm, primed contemporaries to credit socio-economic interaction as the space to perform ethical behavior and achieve moral rectitude. That is to say, if the soul was physiological or tied in some physical way to the body, then corporeal performance was equivalent to moral performance.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Chapter two will discuss this material in far more detail.

<sup>23</sup>For the materiality of the soul, see Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chps. 4-5, and Charles T. Wolfe and Michaela van Esveld, "The Material Soul: Strategies for Naturalizing in an Early Modern Epicurean Context," in *Conjunctions of Mind, Soul and Body from Plato to the Enlightenment*, ed., Danijela Kambaskovic, 371-420 (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014). For problems with Cartesianism and the role of God, see Sheehan and Wahrman, *Invisible Hands*, chps. 1-2. Although their canvas is much broader than mine, our scopes are similar in that we want to unearth and explore an analytical framework shared by contemporaries of all religious, political, social, and economic types. We both seek

The recognition of active properties within matter and the ebbing of the explanatory power of providence was part of a larger trend. Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman have recently argued that the turn toward “self-organization”—the ability for inanimate matter to become animate or an aggregate system to be born from individual objects—became an ordering principle and directing force for late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought. Sheehan and Wahrman define the “language of self-organization” as the “notion that even if God was no longer the active hands-on guarantor of order, complex systems, left to their own devices, still generated order immanently, without external direction, through self-organization.”<sup>24</sup> They suggest that the turn-of-the-century application of the principle of self-organization to “*human* systems...required a concomitant investment in imagining individuals as if they were free agents, self-moving and unpredictable in their actions.”<sup>25</sup> I find their argument quite suggestive, and, when applied to France, the potential for self-organization was reflected in visions of a society guided by commerce and no longer anchored by the system of *corps* and *états*. The possibility of individuals as “self-moving agents” or “autonomous moral subjects” transcending their *états* drew attention, then, to the active properties of corporeal matter.<sup>26</sup>

It was indeed the fear of “free agents” or the praiseworthy awareness of one’s own agency that led contemporaries to disapprove or approve the self-organizing capacity of individuals in society. To either counter the effects of free agency or extend their role in social

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a pervasive undercurrent that gave shape to seemingly disparate thought. We argue that “the corporeal” or “self-organization,” respectively, could solve a multitude of contemporary problems, while being promulgated in vastly different ways.

<sup>24</sup>Sheehan and Wahrman, *Invisible Hands*, 9, xi too.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>26</sup>The two quotes are from Ibid., 77.

interaction, contemporaries turned toward the third development that announced the primacy of the corporeal: the flexible language of sensibility and sensationalism. Sensationalism was an empirical-linguistic philosophy, a physiological theory, and a set of moral values. A “sensible” body was one that absorbed or “felt” external sensory data and reacted by exhibiting sympathy and empathy. The ability to empathize and sympathize not only characterized accepted behavior but also came to ground social interaction. As material bodies came increasingly into contact with other bodies in new socio-economic spaces, contemporaries became attuned to and fearful of the physiological ramifications of commerce, luxury, and sociability.<sup>27</sup> Bolstered by the principles of natural philosophy and the dual language of commerce *and* sensibility, corporeal actions could be measured and predicted. Fanciful flights of the imagination and overwrought senses were just two foreseeable ways that defects in the human body could arise from socio-economic activity outside of the corporate social order. The language of the senses and the new attention toward the corporeal would bring order to the anticipated chaos of autonomous bodies in physical spaces.

Alongside philosophical arguments over the corporeal and new socio-cultural behaviors, my argument uses the extensive metaphors that color eighteenth-century texts, but it does not focus on them. Instead, I hope to show that eighteenth-century writers framed their understandings of society— new forms of social interaction pre-existing “the political”—through the physical body itself. Metaphors are important linguistic and rhetorical devices to transform one’s ideas into more comprehensible formats. Metaphors also, as Lorraine Daston has argued,

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<sup>27</sup>In an analysis of André Morellet and abbé Pluquet, Henry C. Clark correctly challenged the notion that salon culture most recognizably advanced the “public sphere” of the eighteenth century and shifted attention to commerce. Clark, “Commerce, Sociability, and the Public Sphere: Morellet vs. Pluquet on Luxury,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22.2 (May 1998): 83-103.

“demand a chasm to bridge...It is because we are persuaded that such a chasm yawns between the natural and the human that we so often dignify (or revile) the concourse between the biological and social sciences as ‘metaphorical’.”<sup>28</sup> Linguistic choices, then, reflect more than just rhetorical tools or unconscious idiomatic usage; they are tracers, markers, or signposts of cultural shifts and assumptions.<sup>29</sup> The fact that metaphors of the body pervaded eighteenth-century texts proves to us that the body became a crucial tool used to link the world of physics, medicine, and natural laws to the world of society, politics, and economic structures. Terms such as *organisation*, *constitution*, *circulation*, *sensible/sensibilité*, and *monstreux* alert us to a particular frame of mind consistently mixing the “natural” and the social or political.

The eponymous terms used for the title of this dissertation also represent a commitment by diverse eighteenth-century writers to enunciate the corporeal foundations of social interaction. Contemporaries made repeated use of the words “dazzled,” “blinded,” and “numb,” which united the new sensationalist language of the senses with the perceived deleterious physiological effects of material culture. To be “dazzled” and “blinded” was to be transfixed by both the material glitter of luxury and “populuxe” goods and the elevated social capital gained by ownership. To become “numb” to both moral and physical sensibility was a physiological process of habituation. The Physiocrats and opponents of luxury promulgated a “corporeal critique of luxury” alongside the ideas of their contemporaries that humans must “feel” sociability and

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<sup>28</sup>Lorraine Daston, “How Nature Became the Other: Anthropomorphism and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern Natural Philosophy,” in *Biology as Society, Society as Biology: Metaphors*, eds. Sabine Maasen, Everett Mendelsohn, and Peter Weingart, 37-56 (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 37.

<sup>29</sup>For a succinct case for “historical semantics,” see Jean Starobinski, *Action and Reaction: The Life and Adventures of a Couple*, trans. Sophie Hawkes with Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2003; orig. pub. Editions de Seuil, 1999), 13-19. I follow too Susan Reynolds in her discussion of the words surrounding the term “feudalism”: “But it may be more rewarding not to attempt definitions until after one has looked at usage and thought hard about what is being discussed (the phenomena) and about what may be implied about the notions of the time.” Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 13.

sentiment to ensure social fluidity. Both feared that if individual French *corps* developed habits that dulled their senses—either through social isolation, a rigid corporate system, or the excessive pursuit of luxury—then French society would become weak, lifeless, and unnatural.

In essence, I reinforce a traditional understanding of the Enlightenment as defined by the application of physical laws to human behavior; but, in many texts and documents something more complex than analogy was happening.<sup>30</sup> Bodies were not simply *like* physical objects in motion; they *were* physical objects whose physiology embodied a set of socio-moral principles. For example, in his 1788 work *De la morale naturelle*, Jacques-Henri Meister argued that the laws of government and religious institutions were built upon necessary and anterior connections. Meister described the sentiments bolstering society in the following way: “Upon self-reflection, I perceived that that which determined all my actions are either purely physical and nearly involuntary impressions or an initial feeling which is hardly less, or the memory of a series of reflections to which experience and habit have given fervor.”<sup>31</sup> For Meister, the physical body served as a conduit for social interaction. Or, to put it another way, the physical body was a sieve through which the necessary and important forms of behavior were sifted. Physical impressions from material stimuli could either blunt or heighten that *premier sentiment* so crucial to social interaction. In addition, the cognitive faculties of habit and memory,

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<sup>30</sup>For example, see John Marks, *Science and the Making of the Modern World* (London: Heineman, 1983), 105-6: “The universal laws of motion and gravitation set out by Newton in his *Principia* had an enormous impact on 18<sup>th</sup>-century thought...Instead of being mysterious, nature was now seen as an orderly and predictable system which could be known and understood. And such knowledge could provide the basis for prediction and for control...Men like Voltaire, Diderot, and Condorcet enthusiastically devoted themselves to spreading new ideas and knowledge. And they went on to try to apply the scientific approach to the study of society. As Condorcet put it ‘What we can do for bees and beavers, we ought to do for man’.” Or, equally illustrative are the words of abbé Galiani: “the laws of commerce correspond with no less exactness to the laws of gravity and the laws of fluids. The desire for gain, or the desire to live happily, is to man what gravity is to physics.” Quoted in Clark, *Compass of Society*, 179. The latter idea can be found also in Baron d’Holbach’s *Système de la nature* (1770).

<sup>31</sup>Jacques-Henri Meister, *De la morale naturelle suivie Du Bonheur des Sots* (Breinigsville, PA: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2011), 10.



corporeally imprinted, often determined actions; sensations of too strong or too long a duration could form incurable habits detrimental to the fluidity of social commerce. To learn about the body was both powerful and indispensable. P.-L. Roederer and J.-L. Alibert discovered this, as did Meister: the most basic definition of morality “is knowledge of the means which can assure us enough of an empire over our faculties, in order to make the best usage possible of them; it is the science of the habits proper to perfect our being, to conduct us to the state of the most constant happiness.”<sup>32</sup>

The cultural changes rooted in the late-seventeenth century reached their climax by the mid-eighteenth century and produced robust documentation of the human body in a changing world. Society was the “world of all human interaction.”<sup>33</sup> It could be independent of the legal and moral imperatives of both church and crown, but it nevertheless required an organizing principle. My dissertation will show that fears of luxury, open commerce, and the destabilizing effects of a faltering corporate order were all channeled through the body.

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My analysis begins at mid-century when the pace of commercial life intensified and when it became clear to authors that commerce and luxury would dictate the future direction of France. It will end with the French Revolution, though the themes on which I focus persisted. Political economists, moralists, clerics, philosophers, social reformers, and guild masters all identified the corporeal as the primary place where socio-economic changes manifested. I argue that individuals with different perspectives and different intentions nevertheless agreed that it was through the physical body that the positive and negative consequences of change could be

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<sup>32</sup>Meister, *De la morale naturelle*, 19.

<sup>33</sup>Edelstein, *The Enlightenment*, 32.

located. I have attempted to avoid simply teasing out every use of the term *corps* or *organisation* or *sentiment* as the substantive evidential base for my argument. Language is not the only constituent of life, and visions of society are not solely constructed from metaphors and representations. The choice of terms by eighteenth-century authors is nonetheless indicative of a cognitive shift. By the middle of the eighteenth century, growing material and social changes related to commerce and the instability of the corporate order overlapped with a new theoretical understanding of the human body. Sensationalism provided contemporaries with the tools to digest socio-economic changes and articulate responses. I do not, therefore, identify a specific chronological turning point, nor will the following chapters necessarily build from each other as chronological cause and effect. Instead, I will present a *problématique* novel to the eighteenth century—the increase in social and commercial life—and the solution: the corporeal must be used to measure the consequences of both.

To clarify this point, I rely on the concept of the “social imagination.” My argument analyzes a cognitive shift that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the social imagination helps to frame this widespread change. Succinctly stated, the social imagination comprises “the cultural elements from which [individuals] construct [their] understanding of the social world.”<sup>34</sup> The social imagination refers to the shared set of assumptions that undergird the social order, provide meaning to the interactions of citizens or subjects, and are represented in social and political institutions. The eighteenth century saw a decisive shift away from the merely metaphorical use of corporeal imagery toward sweeping and

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<sup>34</sup>Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 10. See also, Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*; Eileen Hunt Botting, “Mary Wollstonecraft’s Enlightened Legacy: The ‘Modern Social Imaginary’ of the Egalitarian Family,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 49, n. 5 (January 2006): 687-701, here 687; Samuel Moyn, “Imagining Intellectual History,” in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, 112-130 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Bronislaw Baczko, *Les Imaginaires sociaux* (Paris: Payot, 1984).

systematic attempts to reconceptualize the social frameworks of human interaction through knowledge of the physical body and its sensory network. The body became the key source of the social imaginary, even as it provided the language with which to describe society.

For historians, the concept of the social imagination improves upon the notion—employed consciously or not—that certain ideas were “in the air.” To find a principle that unifies a past society, even in discordant ways, can easily lead historians to retrospectively apply modern concepts rather than allowing the sources to generate a conceptual framework. The totalizing project of constructing the social imagination of the eighteenth century is overwhelming for a single scholar. It is still a crucial, and hopefully fruitful, task because it “anchor[s] representations in practice.”<sup>35</sup> To accurately depict the social imagination, historians must not simply place a set of philosophical texts in dialogue with each other, for example, or analyze solely the efforts of journeymen to undermine the corporate order through subversive labor practices. Instead, the traditional approaches of social and intellectual history must communicate and work in tandem. It is important to understand not only how individuals in a given era lived, but also how they interpreted their own behavior and interaction. “The essential purpose of the category [social imagination],” according to Samuel Moyn, “is that representations help constitute the social order, to the point that there is no choosing between the study of one and the other.”<sup>36</sup> To this end, I have culled from a variety of primary sources and attempted to comprehensively depict the socio-economic changes that occurred during the eighteenth century.

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<sup>35</sup>Moyn, “Imagining Intellectual History,” 114.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 117. Daniel Wickberg’s observation is equally thoughtful: “What distinguishes the ontological status of a railroad timetable from that of a novel? One is not a social history document, and the other an intellectual history document. Both texts record or constitute a pattern of mental organization; neither gives us an unmediated set of facts about the objects to which they refer.” Wickberg, “Intellectual History vs. the Social History of Intellectuals,” *Rethinking History*, 5:3 (2001): 391.

The two Parts that follow move from a deep analysis of context to thorough readings of diverse sources. Part I demonstrates the multiple ways that contemporaries used physiology and the language of the senses to either construct new images of society or to prop up the social order. Chapter one focuses on the structure of the corporate social order, the expectations of French subjects in their different *états*, and the metaphorical language of the body politic used to represent social and political relationships. Corporeal language was embedded in the traditional social order, but it changed with revisions in medical knowledge. Chapter two reveals two critical themes: the invention of “society” as a plane of human interaction prior to political and religious strictures and the growth of sensationalism. The latter provided contemporaries with a new theory of the human body that linked physical sensibility to moral sensibility. Individuals experienced social change physically, which affected their interaction with others, and the French began to conceive sympathy, empathy, and sociability as embodied categories. Chapter three explores the application of sensationalist principles to social intercourse in the works of three, disparate French writers: Dominique-Joseph Garat, Jacques-Henri Meister, and Abbé Pluquet. Chapter four broadens out from the texts of intellectuals to public health debates and the crisis of Turgot’s 1776 abolition of the guilds. The “Remonstrance” by the Parlement of Paris against Turgot’s “Six Edicts” and a number of petitions written by guild masters reveal updated corporeal foundations of the corporate order, as supporters of the traditional social order justified their positions by appealing to the language of the senses.

Part II shifts from an analysis of society itself to an analysis of changes brought on by commerce and luxury—both real and perceived. Chapter five examines the growth of the French economy, particularly the social implications of the consumer revolution. In new social and economic spaces, more bodies interacted with each other and material goods. Critics of luxury

and of the porousness of the system of *états* approached these changes through the perceived degenerative effects on the human body. Chapters six and seven make up the densest parts of this dissertation, as I treat the “corporeal critique of luxury” and the political economy of the Physiocrats. Opponents argued that the pursuit of luxury and populuxe goods effeminized men, corrupted the practice of *représentation*, in which material symbols served to represent social *état*, and habituated the body to sensible decay. Critics of luxury drew deeply from sensationalist physiology to argue for the dependence of both moral character and social stability on the health of the physical body. The Physiocrats approached the problem of luxury and commerce similarly, but they did so within the context of a grandiose political economy. François Quesnay, the marquis de Mirabeau, and their acolytes built Physiocracy from an understanding of the corporeal that linked socio-economic processes to epistemology.

## **PART I**

### ***Embodying Society: From Social Structure to Social Bodies***

The purpose of Part I is to layer contexts and analyses of primary sources to instantiate the centrality of the body in the eighteenth-century French social imagination. In order to clearly demonstrate the conjoining of new ideas about the body to the creation of “society,” as the conceptual framework to analyze human interaction, it is imperative to begin chapter one with the theoretical and corporeal underpinnings of the traditional, corporate social structure. I will move in chapter two to the invention of society as a response to the growing instability of the social order, then overlay an analysis of sensationalist physiology and the language of the senses. A new medical understanding of the body and the feared physiological consequences of social change provided social critics with a way to examine social interaction and pronounce moral judgments. Chapters three and four will delve into different sets of primary sources that put forward corporeal principles to ground the social order: philosophical treatises; guild petitions to the Parlement of Paris (1776); and, debates over public health issues found in the burgeoning press.

In chapter one, I will present the traditional image of the French social structure alongside the principles that supported it (e.g. honor, rank, *état*). The purpose of this is to indicate how comprehensively the social structure was expected to anchor the identities of subjects and thus how fundamental the challenges to the traditional organization of society were. The body was crucial to the structuring principles of corporate society prior to and during the

eighteenth century. The French social structure incorporated the bodies of Third Estate laborers as ontologically inferior and therefore necessarily destined for physical labor. Yet, the body was also embedded linguistically in terms such as “corporation” and “constitution,” concepts such as the king’s “two bodies,” and the multitude of body-politic metaphors that reiterated or criticized the social structure. The constant appeal to body-politic metaphors indicates the connection between socio-political structures and the human body, which changed over time in response to changing medical theories. Once the principles of sensationalist physiology became widespread, however, metaphors were no longer powerful enough to prove the deep connections between individual bodies interacting in society.

The body politic metaphor was one vital ingredient to the traditional socio-political hierarchy. Supporters and opponents of traditional society built from and expanded the tradition of using the human body as a model for political relationships, social structures, and economic theories; however, as I argue in chapter two, contemporaries imagined “society” as an autonomous space of human interaction freed from the stratified social structure, and metaphors were simply not stable enough to ground and ensure social cohesion. Writers thus moved beyond metaphors and envisioned the body as a physical substance capable of pulling individuals together to form an organized society (whether in support of or as a challenge to the corporate order). The shift from using metaphors of the body politic to an understanding of the human body itself as an organizing principle reflected changes in both cultural understandings of the body and new medical theories. In chapter three, I examine the works of three discrete writers to demonstrate the principles developed in chapter two (Abbé Pluquet, Dominique-Joseph Garat, and Jacques-Henri Meister). These writers appropriated the language of the senses

and conceptions of the body as inherently sensual and sympathetic to redefine or reaffirm the bonds that unite individuals.

As I show in chapter four, the eighteenth-century social imagination associated social reform, or even a new society, with corporeal principles. Whether in treatises on the morality of nature or debates on urban renewal, the social imagination was channeled through the entire human body rather than simply its rational faculty. The 1776 guild petitions and debates over public health reveal a concern for the body politic that transcended metaphor by embodying French subjects. The guild petitions particularly reinforced the established understanding of *état* via new medical theories.



## **Chapter One**

### **The Structure of Society and the Body Politic**

#### *The Social Structure of Early-Modern France*

Early-modern French society was characterized by a three-tiered, social hierarchy. The structure of French society—three estates (*ordres, états*), guilds, corporations (*corps*), and privileges—circumscribed the lives of individuals and solidified hierarchical relationships from the celestial to the mundane and a multitude of layers in between. Power and privilege were classified and ordered, and the social organization was a taxonomy of distinction and rank.<sup>37</sup> The expectations of individuals and their contribution to the state were determined by birth and social position.

France was organized into three estates: clergy, nobility, and the remainder of the populace (Third Estate). The First and Second Estates represented a minority of the French population but enjoyed the majority of tax exemptions, privileges, and social reverence. The nobility was not a static group consisting solely of centuries-old families; many members of the Second Estate purchased nobility through judicial or financial posts and, by the eighteenth century, wielded enormous economic power. The honor and rank of the centuries-old nobility nevertheless stemmed from their ancient legacy as warriors, advisors to the king, and their purity

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<sup>37</sup>Steven Laurence Kaplan, “Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot’s ‘Carnival’,” in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, eds. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp, 176-228 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986). The question whether this idealized conception matched reality is integral to early-modern French scholarship. For a succinct summary of the historical debates about and attributions of a society of orders (e.g. honor, symbolic actions, incorporation), see Gail Bossenga, “Estates, Orders, and Corps,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*, ed. William Doyle, 141-166 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

of blood, perpetuating an ethos of natural superiority and moral rectitude. The Third Estate possessed its own internal, though only customary, hierarchy, as doctors, lawyers, men of letters, and wealthy merchants expected respect and deferential treatment from manual laborers.

Within the Third Estate, there existed two urban groups, both legally-defined categories: trade corporations and the *bourgeoisie*. The latter were most generally known as town-dwellers who enjoyed some privileges and rights for owning property and paying taxes in a town. The *bourgeoisie* was an expansive group, which led to the ambiguity of the term during the eighteenth century; it excluded as many individuals as it included.<sup>38</sup> More important were the guilds (*jurandes*) and trade corporations that employed the bulk of the French urban body politic. A corporation could be any number of legally-defined institutions, consisting of mixed-*état* membership: universities, *parlements*, professional groups, town councils, or the 120 recognized trade corporations. The trade corporations detailed and monitored the lives of their members (nearly two-thirds of the adult male population in Paris) and were essentially a hierarchical community government within the Third Estate.<sup>39</sup>

French society through the eighteenth century, then, consisted of privileged groups rather than autonomous individuals. The conventional explanation and justification for such a hierarchy came from nature and religion. In order to achieve social harmony, the natural, but disruptive and sinful, passions of individuals required a chain of command beginning with the

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<sup>38</sup>David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 103-108. For an analysis of the bourgeoisie as “an imaginary other against whom the nation’s values and destiny were forged” in the French “social imagination,” rather than a cohesive group of individuals with shared values, see Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 13.

<sup>39</sup>Some members of the Six Corps—drapers, grocer-apothecaries, furriers, silk merchants, goldsmiths, and mercers—that became *échevins* (aldermen, municipal magistrates) vaulted into the Second Estate. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 67.

sovereign and guaranteed by god. As the Parlement of Paris wrote in 1776, mixing metaphors of the unbreakable chain and the micro/macrocasm:

The justification for corporations has been sought in their [historical] origins, when it ought to have been sought in nature. From the greatest [*corps*], which are empires, to the least, which are families, men have always united to protect themselves, always commanded or been supervised by parents, responding to general calm with internal calm. It is a chain, all the links of which are joined to the first, the authority of the Throne, which it is dangerous to break.<sup>40</sup>

The structure of society guaranteed by a natural, unbreakable chain of dependence was reinforced by a set of cultural meanings embedded in the social vocabulary. Defining one's *état*, meeting the expectations of one's *ordre*, or performing one's appropriate organological function in the body politic bridged the theoretical and practical act of living in a society in which one's body and mind were fixed.<sup>41</sup> The term *état* encapsulated both legal and abstract definitions of life in early-modern France. Structurally, *état* equated to "estate" or "order," and, in the overlapping categories within the three Estates, one's *état* consisted of a number of other legal categories (e.g. married, journeyman, bourgeois). Included in the multiple meanings of *état* was a cultural understanding of rank, esteem, or "condition of being." One's *état* was defined by the social order, certainly, but one was also expected to live out one's *état* in a "culture of appearances."<sup>42</sup> To be a member of the *bourgeoisie* and wear the crested escutcheon, for

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<sup>40</sup>"Remontrances sur l'édit supprimant les jurandes... (2-4 March 1776)," in Jules Flammermont, ed., *Remontrances du Parlement de Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, vol. 3, 293-324 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1898), 309.

<sup>41</sup>For the *ancien régime*'s "social vocabulary," see William H. Sewell, Jr., "Etat, Corps, and Ordre: Some Notes on the Social Vocabulary of the French Old Regime," in *Sozialgeschichte Heute: Festschrift für Hans Rosenberg zum 70 Geburtstag*, ed. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 49-68 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1974), and *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). For an incisive look at "defining one's *état*," see Christine Adams, "Defining État in Eighteenth-Century France: The Lamothe Family of Bordeaux," *Journal of Family History*, vol. 17, n. 1 (1992): 25-45, and *A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000).

<sup>42</sup>"Culture of appearances" comes from Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, orig. pub. 1993), 548-9, 666.

example, was a privilege, a mark of distinction. The *état* of a member of the Second Estate consisted of dignity, proper social behavior and leisure activities, and a certain amount of *éclat* in one's appearance and possessions to signify one's rank.

Bodies of individuals were not just scaffolding upon which to hang the appropriate adornments, however; what one did with one's body was equally important to *état*. In fact, the *ordre* of French society, a frequently used term connoting arrangement or hierarchy of groups and corresponding legal privileges, demanded that some use their bodies for labor and some not. The *état* of a nobleman forbade his participation in physical labor, and the state legally forbade his participation in commerce (the result of which would theoretically be *dérogeance*, or deprivation of nobility).

Labor was reserved for members of the Third Estate; it was menial, mundane, base, and undignified.<sup>43</sup> According to Charles Loyseau, whose *Traité des ordres et simples dignitez* (1610) was the most authoritative and comprehensive text on the organization of French society, those trades that “resided more in bodily strength than in the practice of commerce or in mental subtlety...are the most vile...[And,] those engaged neither in manufacture nor commerce, and who gain their living only by the labor of their arms, whom we call *gens de bras*, or mercenaries, such as porters, masons' laborers, carters, and other day laborers, are the most vile of the common people.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the bodies of laborers imbibed the particular smells of their

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<sup>43</sup>For one attempt to carve out a space for “intellectual labor” between the menial activities of working with one's hands and the aristocratic, recreational pursuit of knowledge, see E. C. Spary, *Utopia's Garden: French Natural History from Old Regime to Revolution* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 32-3. One of innumerable reasons Rousseau's *Émile* was lacerated and burnt was because early on he challenged the notion that boys should be educated for a particular *état*. Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 31.

<sup>44</sup>Loyseau, *Traité des ordres et simples dignitez*, quoted in Laura Mason and Tracy Rizzo, eds., *The French Revolution: A Document Collection* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 23. Echoing Loyseau's point, but redefining concepts of strength, Claude de Marois, in *Le Gentilhomme Parfait* (1631), argued that the “people of the state who take their origin from roturiers and plebeians cannot have honor imprinted vividly

trades and transported this identifying mark throughout the city. In his “Mémoire sur les odeurs que nous exhalons” (1789) for the Société Royale de Médecine, Dr. Jean-Joseph de Brieude asked, “Who could not tell a cesspool clearer, tanner, candlemaker, butcher, etc. solely by the sense of smell?...A certain quantity of those volatile particles which penetrate the workers is expelled from their bodies almost intact, along with their humor, with which they probably partly combine.”<sup>45</sup> The body was an ordering principle for French society; laborious activity was a visual cue for social rank and disparate smells were olfactory markers.

There was no honor in working with one’s hands and no dignity in the corporeal moniker *gens de bras*. Within the Third Estate, working with one’s mind in the liberal arts was superior to that of the mechanical arts, a division captured in totalizing body-politic metaphors with the king as the head and mind. “Taxes, industry, and *les travaux corporels*,” according to the Parlement of Paris’ “Remonstrance” of 1776, were the fate of the majority of the French.<sup>46</sup> The body, therefore, was a tool of labor or a container and transmitter of the Second Estate’s sanguinary lineage; it was at the center of French society, and the uses to which it was put depended on one’s *ordre* and the proper expression of one’s *état*.<sup>47</sup>

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in their soul...those of the third estate always have weak constitutions...and never elevate their thoughts [above] infamous and dishonest gain...their courage is timid.” By “constitutions,” Marois meant a combination of anatomical structure and moral disposition. Quoted in Jay M. Smith, *The Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 44.

<sup>45</sup>Quoted in Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: Picador, 1994), 40 (see also 53, 141).

<sup>46</sup>“Remonstrances sur l’édit supprimant les jurandes...(2-4 March 1776),” 287. According to Jacques Savary des Brulons, in the 1741 edition of his *Dictionnaire universel de commerce*, within the guild structure the mercers prided themselves on being “the most noblest and most excellent of all the merchant guilds, since those who belong to it do no manual labor.” Quoted in Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 67.

<sup>47</sup>The determinate use of one’s body was not only reified in the social structure, it was also hardened during debates over public opinion in the late-eighteenth century. As Arlette Farge noted: “The belief that popular thought was inane was founded on the assumption that because the lower classes suffered the hardships of labor and want, they had neither the possibility nor the opportunity to bother themselves with anything that was not directly linked to their physical or material needs.” Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013, orig. pub. 1989), 104.

The royal incorporation of a trade, the membership of an artisan in a trade corporation, and the ordination of a clergyman fixed the *états* of all three. In the social vocabulary of the period, *état* and *ordre* implied permanence and stability in the daily lives of individuals and in the entire social structure. The order of the state demanded inequality and subordination, and, according to the prolific Jesuit writer Père Claude Buffier, even though the pursuit of happiness made all humans equal, their specific “conditions” and *état* channeled their activities toward the harmony of the greater whole:

Indeed, without the degrees of subordination that are found in mankind, each would want to take for his own that which he believed would contribute to his own happiness, not being disposed to cede anything to others. And, all being independent, each would refuse the mutual aid that comes from the different *états*. The Prince is served by his subjects, and his subjects are defended by the Prince; such is their mutual connection. One contributes in his own manner to the common happiness and others in a different manner. They must contribute to the happiness of society, in their own way according to the institution of *États*, to which they have an equal right being of the same nature.<sup>48</sup>

Although Buffier praised happiness and sociability, a subject explored in chapter two, he nevertheless reinforced the necessity of conforming to one’s *état*. The organization of society and expectations of French subjects conveyed by the terms *état* and *ordre* were invested with even more authority through the innumerable images of the body politic. Body-politic metaphors were just as crucial to early-modern understandings of society—linking nature, politics, and religion to legally-defined roles—as the division of physical labor contained in the language of *états*.

### *The Human Body and the Body Politic*

Using the human body as a grid on which to map social orders, political arrangements, economics, and urban geography extends at least as far back as ancient Greece. Images of the

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<sup>48</sup>Buffier, *Traité de la Société civile, et du moyen de se rendre heureux, en contribuant au bonheur des personnes avec qui l'on vit* (1726), Book IV, pgs. 1-2.

state as a political organism can be found in Aristotle's *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, particularly his view of the natural connectivity between humans, the polis, and slavery. In *The Republic*, Plato divided the state in a manner corresponding to metaphysical and medical conceptions of the human body; through the voice of Socrates, he offered up the tri-partite division of the human body—rational, irascible, and appetitive “souls”—as an analogy for the state. The “souls” of the state, or classes, needed to function harmoniously in order to achieve stability and justice.<sup>49</sup> Italian Renaissance theorists extended the Classical glorification of the human body by applying corporeal ratios and proportions to architectural constructions.<sup>50</sup>

In early-modern France, Classical body-politic metaphors persisted, but to that tradition was added medieval conceptions of the *corps mystique* (or *corpus mysticum*: “mystical union of all Christians in Christ”) and the king's “two bodies” (one “natural,” one “divine” and “immortal”).<sup>51</sup> The famed “touch” of the king supposedly cured scrofula, uniting the healing

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<sup>49</sup>Paul Archambault, “The Analogy of the ‘Body’ in Renaissance Political Literature,” *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et Renaissance*, vol. 29 (1967): 21-53, here 22-23. See also Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. and intro. W. C. Helmond (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc), 78-83, for the relationship of humans and the state within the “cosmos.”

<sup>50</sup>See, for example, Leon Battista Alberti's *On the Art of Building* (1452) and Francesco di Giorgio Martini's *Trattato di Architettura* (1480).

<sup>51</sup>For the long-term history of the body politic and *corpus mysticum*, see Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Archambault, “The Analogy of the ‘Body’ in Renaissance Political Literature;” S. Todd Lowry, “The Archaeology of the Circulation Concept in Economic Theory,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 35, no. 3 (July-September 1974): 429-444; Sergio Bertelli, *The King's Body: Sacred Rituals of Power in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, trans. R. Burr Litchfield (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Andreas Musolff, *Metaphor, Nation, and the Holocaust: The Concept of the Body Politic* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), chps. 5-7; Daisy Delogu, *Allegorical Bodies: Power and Gender in Late Medieval France* (Toronto, Buffalo, and New York: University of Toronto Press, 2015). For pan-European perspectives, see Laura Lunger Knoppers and Joan B. Landes, eds., *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004). Paul Friedland has argued that the French Revolution should be understood as a simultaneous political and theatrical revolution of representation. Upon the “execution” of the *corpus mysticum* in the summer of 1789, theatrical and political actors no longer embodied an intangible presence but abstractly represented a character or the nation, respectively. Friedland, *Political Actors: Representative Bodies and Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002).

powers of the king's physical body to the metaphorical, eternal regeneration of the monarchy ("The King is dead; long live the king!"). Metaphors of the body politic, or in some cases the "social body," proliferated during the eighteenth century, and the human body served as "the ultimate visual compendium, the comprehensive method of methods, the organizing structure of structures. As a visible natural whole made up of invisible dissimilar parts, it was the organic paradigm or architectonic standard for all complex unions."<sup>52</sup>

Jean-Jacques Rousseau provided a representative description of the body politic worth quoting at length:

The body politic, taken individually, can be considered to be like a body that is organized, living and similar to that of a man. The sovereign power represents the head; the laws and customs are the brain, source of the nerves and seat of the understanding, the will and the senses of which the judges and magistrates are the organs; the commerce, industry and agriculture are the mouth and stomach which prepare the common subsistence; the public finances are the blood that is discharged by a wise economy, performing the functions of the heart, in order to distribute nourishment and life throughout the body; the citizens are the body and members that make the machine move, live and work, and that cannot be harmed in any part without a painful impression immediately being transmitted to the brain, if the animal is in a state of good health.<sup>53</sup>

Rousseau's comprehensive image of the body politic covers the gamut of socio-political functions and corporeal features. His illustration, though, contains elements specific to the eighteenth century, much like other depictions of the body politic preceding his era. As Otto Mayr pointed out, metaphors differ from concepts and ideas because they are not the "*subjects* of the discourse but only auxiliary devices adduced for emphasis and illustration."<sup>54</sup> In early-

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<sup>52</sup>Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 12.

<sup>53</sup>Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. Donald Cress and intro. Peter Gay (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 166.

<sup>54</sup>Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 30.



modern France, metaphors served as vehicles to transmit assorted political messages; however, metaphors were more than literary conventions. Even though the trope of the “body politic” could take uninspired forms or reflect an unconscious reliance on Greco-Roman devices, metaphors consistently reinforced the significance of the human body to the social imagination. Rousseau often expressed his conception of the general will through metaphors of the body politic, for example, but his subversive efforts updated the metaphor and adapted contemporary medical knowledge to changing political scenarios.

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Prior to the eighteenth century, the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598) and the subsequent foundation of the absolutist state gave rise to unique applications of anatomical and medical theories to the body politic. Metaphors of the body politic could be marshaled either to advance politics as a distinct science, and thus “naturalize” politics, or for purely rhetorical and polemical purposes. Whatever the authors’ intentions, corporeal metaphors gained intensity and relevance throughout the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. Civil war had disrupted the balance and harmony of the organs that only a political doctor could assuage. And, before the images of nature as a grand machine became widespread in the seventeenth century, the link between the body politic and the natural, human body transcended heuristic value to achieve an ontological one; metaphors could reflect more than analogy, expressing a material relationship between parts.<sup>55</sup> The increased availability of anatomical knowledge from the early-fourteenth century, which culminated in Andreas Vesalius’ *De humani corpora fabrica* (1543), provided an

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<sup>55</sup>Or, as Lorraine Daston put it: “Conversely, those who insist upon analogies between these domains [biology and society] also typically insist upon the proximity of the terms compared, narrowing the gap between them until the figurative collapses into the literal: society is an organism; physiological specialization of body organs is a division of labor.” Lorraine Daston, “How Nature Became the Other: Anthropomorphism and Anthropocentrism in Early Modern Natural Philosophy,” in *Biology as Society, Society as Biology: Metaphors*, eds. Sabine Maasen, Everett Mendelsohn, and Peter Weingart, 37-56 (Dordrecht, Boston, London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 37.

“ever clearer vision of the inner architecture of the body and its organs.”<sup>56</sup> This extensive new detail allowed political and religious commentators to assume the ontology of the body politic and pursue more specific, clinical descriptions of the state’s condition.<sup>57</sup>

The Wars of Religion elicited a visceral reaction from Protestants and Catholics, and the animosity between the two manifested in violent encounters to cleanse the body politic of pollutants, infections, and gangrenous members.<sup>58</sup> To Catholics, Protestants were not only heretics, they were also a plague, an illness, a parasite, and a cancer, corrupting and rotting the *corps mystique* from the inside. Contemporaries appealed to the Galenic and Hippocratic traditions of humors, seeking to balance the fluids of the body politic and return a diseased body back to health either through political resistance or surgical expurgation. Authors also used the Classical perspective, updated by Machiavelli, that the state experienced the same organic cycles as humans: birth, growth, decay, and death.<sup>59</sup> Civil war was perhaps necessary to stave off infection or sever a decaying limb before sepsis set in.<sup>60</sup> Metaphors were further employed to

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<sup>56</sup>Jacob Soll, "Healing the Body Politic: French Royal Doctors, History, and the Birth of a Nation, 1560-1634," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 1259-1286, here 1268.

<sup>57</sup>Kathryn Banks, "Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies in Late Sixteenth Century France," in *Metaphor and Discourse*, eds. Andreas Musolff and Jörg Zinken, 205-218 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 213-4. For the popularity of body-politic metaphors during the French Wars of Religion, see Carol E. Clark, "Montaigne and the Imagery of Political Discourse in Sixteenth-Century France," *French Studies* XXIV, 4 (Oct. 1970): 337-355.

<sup>58</sup>For an interpretation of the Wars of Religion that emphasizes competing desires to “purge” the social body, see Mack Holt, *The French Wars of Religion, 1562-1629* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, second edition). It is important to dwell on the Wars of Religion here because, as David Bell has noted, they served as a constant source of anxiety in moments of religious and political tension through the eighteenth century. Bell, *The Cult of the Nation: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 30-32, 82-4, 101-104.

<sup>59</sup>Clark, “Montaigne and the Imagery of Political Discourse,” 345-7. For the eighteenth-century use of this analogy, see George Armstrong Kelly, “Mortal Man, Immortal Society? Political Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Political Theory*, vol. 14, n. 1 (February 1986): 5-29, here 15-19.

<sup>60</sup>See also, Jean du Tillet’s *Escript touchant la paix des secondz troubles* (1568). This was a position taken in the eighteenth-century by abbé Mably in his *Des droits et des devoirs du citoyen* (1758, published 1789). He loathed political inaction and found that civil war was necessary, for “without the help of this sad operation, [society] would

support either the continuation of warfare to excise recalcitrant organs or the cessation of violence to heal the social body. The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (1572) would be the most extreme example of purification through amputation. The zealous preacher Simon Vigor inflamed Parisians' passions and fears by commanding the king, as divinely-appointed sovereign, to "cast out the putrid infection of heresy" lest the entire Catholic social body face the sinful charge of harboring heretics.<sup>61</sup>

Political theorists, theologians, priests, and even some physicians competed over the locus of political power: the head (king) or the body (parlements, nobility, and constitutions).<sup>62</sup> For the latter, the French "constitution" necessitated a mixed monarchy in which the "limbs" balanced out the will of the "head." Or, in the words of Jacques de Silly, the "human body...[has] two principal parts, the head, which represents to us the king, and the heart which is the noble part, which if one or other is injured, it is no longer possible for the man to live...[the nobles] defend and preserve him, and are always the first to assist him: as is commonly said, the good blood always flows to the injured part."<sup>63</sup> As the head becomes too engorged, it distorts humoral balance and siphons off life-giving fluids. Some critics of the king went so far as to prescribe regicide to "bleed" the body politic and return to stasis.<sup>64</sup>

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be in danger of perishing from gangrene, and, not to speak metaphorically, would run the risk of dying from despotism." Quoted in Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 94.

<sup>61</sup>Barbara Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 153.

<sup>62</sup>This was the central concern of Paul Archambault, "The Analogy of the 'Body' in Renaissance Political Literature." That is to say, he argued that one's metaphorical use of the body politic reflected one's political orientation ("liberal" or "absolutist").

<sup>63</sup>Quoted in Penny Roberts, "The Kingdom's Two Bodies? Corporeal Rhetoric and Royal Authority During the Religious Wars," *French History*, 21 (2007): 147-164, here 150.

<sup>64</sup>Banks, "Interpretations of the Body Politic and of Natural Bodies," 209.

For supporters of the monarchy, especially royal doctors, the king was likened to a physician, possessing the singular ability to heal the body politic.<sup>65</sup> The royal doctors and preceptors Rodolphe Le Maistre, Abraham-Nicolas de La Framboisière, and Jean Héroard all seamlessly transferred their knowledge of the human body to the state. By applying their training in observation and medical history, they became advisers to French kings about the health of the royal family *and* the body politic. Le Maistre “prescribed” history as a diagnostic method and cure to a disorderly body politic, and La Framboisière prescribed natural philosophy and medicine so that the king and ministers of state could learn “‘the Anatomy that shows the eye the admirable construction of the body’.”<sup>66</sup> Héroard insisted that the king use “‘Empiricism of State’” and argued that the “‘body of a State...is composed in the same way [as the human body]: and maintains its integrity by an exact observation of the good and diverse laws, and falls just as quickly by ambition, avarice, and prodigality, or by some other similar cause, one sees their forces failing, and their vigor fading, and slipping away in decadence according to the weakness, or strength of the body’.”<sup>67</sup> The desire of these doctors to empower the king with medical knowledge, rather than divine powers, reflected three features of the early-seventeenth century: the increasing knowledge of nature and the human body; the persistent belief in the natural relationship between animal bodies and political bodies; and the unique ability of the king to heal the wounded body politic. After the Wars of Religion, peace and unity could be achieved through the unifying force and therapeutic touch of sovereign power.

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<sup>65</sup>Other Catholic preachers used corporeal metaphors to describe the Protestant heresy as cancerous or gangrenous, necessitating sacramental medicine to maintain the organic unity of the Church (Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross*, 150).

<sup>66</sup>Quoted in Soll, “Healing the Body Politic,” 1276.

<sup>67</sup>Quoted in Ibid., 1277.

The political and confessional divisions that rent the organic unity of the French body politic were partially mended by investing the king with increased power. The centralizing, supra-confessional tendencies of the monarchy that resulted in the absolutism of Louis XIV emerged out of the French Wars of Religion. Even though the metaphor of the body politic could be used ontologically as much as heuristically, the analogy of the state as a political organism was no longer sufficient; instead, the state required an artificial assemblage of parts that resembled the human body but also improved upon it. This could be found in theories of the social contract and the mechanical philosophy.

Thomas Hobbes provided the most well-known version of the artificial body politic (social contract) headed by an absolute sovereign. The engraved title page of his *Leviathan* (1651) illustrated precisely this understanding. Brandishing a sword and scepter, the head of a monarch, with arms and a torso consisting of a collective “body” of individuals, stands over the countryside. This image conveyed Hobbes’ “social physics,” a philosophy deeply embedded in the context of the English Civil War (1642-49). For Hobbes, a sovereign is necessary for civilized society because humans are incorrigible and desirous of power; it is in their best interest to transfer their individual power to a sovereign to ensure protection from other individuals. The subjects and structures that composed the body politic were symbiotic because any imbalance or disturbance would disrupt the entire body. Hobbes proposed the following analogy in the first pages of *Leviathan*, returning the body-politic metaphor to its heuristic value: “For by Art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMON-WEALTH, or STATE, which is but an Artificiall Man...in which, the Sovereignty is an Artificiall Soul, as giving life and motion to the

whole body.”<sup>68</sup> Art enhanced nature, and the body politic incorporated the passions, physiology, and fundamental nature of humans.

In the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, body-politic metaphors merged with efforts in natural philosophy to describe the universe as a detailed conglomeration of matter in motion. The French state came to be understood as a rational mechanism directed by a prime mover, or “sun” in the case of Louis XIV, and body-politic metaphors continued to emphasize the harmony of structure: mechanical, anatomical, or cosmic. Metaphors of the clock, the watch, or Bernard de Fontenelle’s “backstage of the theatre” gained in popularity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>69</sup> Henri Duc de Rohan likened the Spanish state to a “huge machine composed of divers parts,” and La Framboisière envisioned a “doctor-architect” both healing and repairing the body politic.<sup>70</sup> In *Traité des Systèmes* (1749), Abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac perpetuated the view of the machinery of state with the ruler at the helm:

A people is an artificial body; it is up to the legislator...to maintain the harmony and the strength of its members. He is the mechanic who must adjust the gauges, and put the machine back into working order as often as circumstances require...To lead the people, one must establish a discipline which maintains a perfect balance among all orders, and which thus makes each citizen identify his interest as the interest of society. The citizens must...conform necessarily to the views of the general system.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, intro. C. B. MacPherson (New York: Penguin Books, 1981), 81. For a study of how physiological and psychological theories of the body were directed toward ideas of the polity in the Dutch Republic, see Harold J. Cook, “Body and Passions: Materialism and the Early Modern State,” *Osiris*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Series, vol. 17, Science and Civil Society (2002): 25-48, and his *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>69</sup>In *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* (1686), Fontenelle compared the universe to an opera; observers are unable to see the intricate mechanisms that make a performance succeed (“First Night”). Craig Koslofsky has recently noted the importance of light/dark contrast in theatrical performances to enhance the power of the ruler. Koslofsky, *Evening’s Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chp. 4.

<sup>70</sup>Rohan quoted in Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery*, 102-3, and La Framboisière quoted in Soll, “Healing the Body Politic,” 1275. The “sovereign’s gaze” was both a metaphor for the king’s “panoptic” ability to govern his subjects and an expression of elite cultural codes necessitating the presence of the king to “see” one’s merit. See Smith, *The Culture of Merit*, chps. 1-2.

<sup>71</sup>Quoted in Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 80. For mechanical understandings of society and

Condillac spoke essentially of the need to discipline the bodies of subjects.<sup>72</sup> Even if not the central focus of Condillac's metaphor, the human body never failed to serve as a useful guide to theorists of politics and society. Metaphors of the body politic as a grandiose machine or an enlarged anatomical structure were mixed through the eighteenth century. We can, however, identify a transition.<sup>73</sup> Corporeal language saw a general shift in the second quarter of the eighteenth century from the body as a machine, with anatomical pulleys, springs, and pipes, to the body as a composition of potentially-autonomous organs, functions, and characteristics that together formed an "organized," living being.<sup>74</sup> The principles of new medical theories—sensibility, irritability, attraction—resided in each independent subject, limiting the accuracy of centralized, mechanical analogies in body-politic metaphors. Bringing the body politic to life required the unity of already sentient creatures rather than the vivifying powers of a directing

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the state, see Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery*; George A. Kelly, "Mortal Man, Immortal Society?"; M. Norton Wise, "Mediations: Enlightenment Balancing Acts, or the Technologies of Rationalism," in *World Changes: Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science*, ed. Paul Horwich, 207-258 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993). For an understanding of Louis XIV's state as an "instrument of monarchical power [and] a model of its functioning," see Jean-Marie Apostolides, *Le roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1981), 125, and, for the number of ways that power was enacted upon bodies, see the essays in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>72</sup>Approaching citizens/subjects/workers as cogs or automata and sovereigns as omniscient and omnipotent mechanics transcended national boundaries. See Mayr, *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery*, and Simon Schaffer, "Enlightened Automata," in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, eds. William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer, 126-167 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

<sup>73</sup>As George A. Kelly observed, after Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* and the Montpellier vitalists' attack on iatromechanism, politics was no longer "the engineering science of building the frictionless machine, [but] the art and practice of ministering to a body aging or disordered in some particular vital function." Kelly, "Mortal Man, Immortal Society?" 21.

<sup>74</sup>The narrative of the displacement of mechanism has a long history. Here are four notable, recent works and one classic: Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman, *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), chps. 1-2; Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et Développement du vitalisme en France, de la deuxième moitié du 18e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); Sergio Moravia, "From Homme Machine to Homme Sensible: Changing Eighteenth-Century Models of Man's Image," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 39, n. 1 (January-March, 1978): 45-60.

head. The application of novel principles to the body politic represented an increased commitment to think about society through the body and “incorporated” challenges to the socio-political structure.

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The social vocabulary of *états*, *ordre*, and *corps* combined images of the human body with the mechanistic structure of the mechanical philosophy. Corporate society consisted of a number of smaller *corps* (“organs”) that operated with their own unique guiding principles, which, when examined in totality, formed a harmonious and unified *corps*.<sup>75</sup> From the king to the *gens de bras*, each subject and corporate body had its place and function in the body politic, which corresponded to a physical “embodiment” of individuals and metaphorical “incorporation” of *corps*. Members of the Third Estate were expected to use their physical bodies (embodiment) to nourish and maintain the entire *corps* (incorporation).<sup>76</sup> The king served as the head, will, or soul of corporate society, as well as the point through which the mundane met the divine (the king’s “two bodies”). By the eighteenth century, commentators articulated new metaphors that challenged corporate society, and the king’s physical body came under much scrutiny as it occupied a dual role in the body-politic metaphor that sustained monarchical rule.

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<sup>75</sup>The term *corps* and a number of derivatives occupied a central position in the early-modern French lexicon. The *Encyclopédie* provided entries for *corps*, *corporation*, *corporeity*, *incorporation*, *corporal*, and *corpulence*, all of which ranged in meaning but ultimately converged on the overlap of human bodies and the social structure of the body politic.

<sup>76</sup>La Fontaine’s fable *Les Membres et L’Estomac* reinforced the social hierarchy in which the “limbs” labored in order to fill the “stomach,” which necessarily directed the entire body politic. According to Loyseau, French society reflected the ordered arrangement of the heavens: “Since the people is a body with several heads, it is divided by orders, Estates, or particular occupations...But each one of these three orders is again subdivided into subordinate degrees, or subalternate orders, following the example of the celestial hierarchy.” Loyseau, *Traité des ordres et simples dignitez*, in Mason and Rizzo, *The French Revolution: A Document Collection*, 17. Loyseau’s extraordinarily rigid stratification of *ancien régime* society was a reaction to political theorists like Philippe Duplessis-Mornay, who, during the Wars of Religion, empowered the people to elect and depose kings based on their timelessness as a singular corporate body (*corps*).



The legal fiction of the king's "two bodies" carried rhetorical ambiguities for a living king.<sup>77</sup> The health of the king's physical body became an expression of the health of the body politic. If the king behaved irrationally, then he neglected his duty as head or mind of the body politic; if the king did not properly tend to the welfare of his subjects, then he was not the caring *paterfamilias* that his subjects expected (and his supporters extolled); and, if the king was not virile and masculine, then he could be charged with weakness, effeminacy, or cuckoldry. Thus, any mistreatment of the king's body exposed the frailty of the metaphors of the king's "two bodies" and body politic. This is precisely what occurred in the eighteenth century.

Louis XV's libertinism and sexual promiscuity drew the ire of critics and excitement of caricaturists. Addicted to pleasures of the flesh, Louis XV was portrayed as a prisoner of desire, and, through his debauched body, the French state was both debilitated and effeminized. To critics, Louis XV's reign exhibited idleness, a lack of ambition, and an unseemly affection for women (even three sisters), which reached an apex with the arrival of his most famous mistress, Madame de Pompadour. The power she wielded through her network of clients—financial, political, and supposedly sexual—cinched the argument that the king-cum-body politic was lethargic, spent, and governed by uncontrollable passions.<sup>78</sup> Pornographic libels about Madame

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<sup>77</sup>For the long-term "desacralization" of the king, see Jeffrey Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), and Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

<sup>78</sup>Thomas E. Kaiser, "Louis le Bien-Aimé and the Rhetoric of the Royal Body," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body*, eds. Melzer and Norberg, 131-161. For a look at the influence of Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette and the politically-explosive inversion of gender roles at the royal court, see the essays by Thomas E. Kaiser ("From Fiscal Crisis to Revolution: The Court and French Foreign Policy, 1787-1789") and Jeffrey Merrick ("Gender in Pre-Revolutionary Political Culture") in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, eds. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011). Robert Darnton published a translated excerpt from a particularly scandalous *libelle* about another of Louis XV's mistresses, Madame du Barry (*Anecdotes sur Mme la comtesse du Barry, 1775*): *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 337-390.

de Pompadour's voracious sexual and political appetite abounded, and rumors spread that Louis XV was a blood-craving King Herod abducting children to cure leprosy, a form of divine punishment for concupiscence.<sup>79</sup> Louis XV's confidant and adviser, the maréchal de Noailles, feared the "enervation, indolence, and numbness" of the head of the body politic.<sup>80</sup> As Louis XV had his vital forces drained, so too did the body politic, leading at mid-century to a series of debates regarding the extent of royal power and the possibility of bisecting the king's "two bodies."

While Louis XV was unable to curb his desires, Louis XVI had the opposite problem: he was supposedly unable or unwilling to consummate his marriage to Marie Antoinette for eight years.<sup>81</sup> Images of an emasculated king cuckolded by his Austrian queen flourished in the two decades before the Revolution. Once again, the fear that female excesses governed France transformed the rational, protective father/king into a politically- and sexually-impotent simpleton incapable of fulfilling either his wife or his kingdom. In conjunction with the sacred half of the king's two bodies, the mortal body was expected to be virile, fertile, and physically active. The necessity of giving France a dauphin haunted the king and queen's sexual life, and the health of the body politic took a turn for the worse when scurrilous libels, bawdy drinking songs, sexually-explicit images, and even diplomatic correspondence promoted the image of an unsatisfied wife finding comfort in the arms and bed of other members of the royal family. A

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<sup>79</sup>Arlette Farge and Jeffrey Ravel, *The Vanishing Children of Paris: Rumors and Politics before the French Revolution*, trans. Claudia Miéville (London: Polity Press, 1991).

<sup>80</sup>Kaiser, "Louis le Bien-Aimé and the Rhetoric of the Royal Body," 145.

<sup>81</sup>This has been the assumption since the late-eighteenth century, but David Andress noted that it was Marie Antoinette who required "a minor surgical intervention" to ensure coitus. Andress, *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 13.

cuckolded king left France to the whims of Marie Antoinette's insatiable sexual craving, which potentially put affairs of state in the hands of the Austrian Habsburgs.<sup>82</sup>

According to deputies at the Estates-General, and other civilian "doctors" of the state, by 1789 the body politic of France had been desiccated by a parasitic nobility, eviscerated by two successive kings, and debauched by Marie Antoinette, whom Revolutionaries even accused of sexual indecency with her son.<sup>83</sup> The corporeal language of the body politic helped pre-Revolutionary writers and Revolutionaries interpret the socio-political problems confronting France and shape the future of France with a new set of images. As J.-P. Brissot de Warville wrote in his periodical *Le Patriote français* in March 1791: "If by 'head' [chef] one understands *caput*, the head, it is the legislative body that is the head of the body politic—that is where the thinking of the nation is formed, the general will, in a word the law. The executive power is only the arm of the body politic."<sup>84</sup> Brissot reduced the king to a mere appendage and placed the directing force of the state in the general will; the "body" replaced the "head" as the people

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<sup>82</sup>For the impotence of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette's sexuality, see Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), chp. 1, and the essays by Sarah Maza ("The Diamond Necklace Affair Revisited (1785-6): The Case of the Missing Queen") and Lynn Hunt ("The Many Bodies of Marie Antoinette: Political Pornography and the Problem of the Feminine in the French Revolution") in *Eroticism and the Body Politic*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

<sup>83</sup>Abbé Sieyès used the metaphor of France as a diseased body and the nobility as parasites to the best effect in his *Essay on Privileges and What is the Third Estate?*. For example, in the latter, he wrote: "In the end it is not worth asking what kind of place there should be for privileged classes [*corps*] in the social order. It is like asking what kind of place a malignant tumor should have in the body of someone who is ill, as it devours and ruins its health. But you seem to have been told that you are not yet ready for good health, and you accept this pearl of aristocratic wisdom...Keep, then, ill!" At the moment of reconceptualizing French politics, Sieyès had recourse often to metaphors of the body politic: "It is impossible to create a body for an end without giving it the organization, forms, and laws it needs in order to fulfill the functions for which it has been established. This is what is meant by the constitution of that body." Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *Political Writings*, trans. and intro. Michael Sonenscher (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 162 and 135. See also de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France*, chp. 2.

<sup>84</sup>Quoted in de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France*, 62.

displaced the king. The language of the general will stemmed primarily from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, an expert at body-politic images.<sup>85</sup>

From the extended quote above, it is clear that Rousseau easily integrated comparisons of the human or animal body to the political body. The body was primary in Rousseau's critique of luxury and modernity, but he also used a number of medical terms to describe the state of society and politics. Rousseau spoke of the "natural dispositions" of social bodies, feared the imbalance of organs and internal systems, and examined political societies as they experienced birth, growth, decay, and death. He invoked the polysemous concept "constitution" and the physical/moral dyad that viewed morality as contingent upon a properly-functioning body(politic).<sup>86</sup>

Rousseau cultivated an image of the general will and the body politic especially through the problem of *organisation*: the notion that life itself is a product of an "organized body" (*corps organisé*) and the method of transforming individual parts into an active, collective body. The idea of an "organized body," or *organisation*, was at the center of mid-century debates about the origins and processes of human animation and political bodies. Like Théophile de Bordeu's model of *organisation*, the swarm of bees, Rousseau argued that each individual in the body politic possesses its own "life," but the concurrence of each creates a coherent, organized body.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Rousseau was, of course, not the creator of the notion of a "general will" but merely its most famous promulgator. See Patrick Riley, *The General Will before Rousseau: The Transformation of the Divine into the Civic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), and his "Social Contract Theory and its Critics," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, 347-378 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>86</sup>For the physical/moral, see Sergio Moravia, "'Moral' – 'Physique': genesis and evolution of a 'rapport'," in *Enlightenment Studies in honour of Lester G. Crocker*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio, 163-174 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1979).

<sup>87</sup>For Bordeu, "the organs of the body [bees] are linked one to another; they each have their own district and action; the connectivity of these actions, and the harmony which results from them, equate to one's health." From Bordeu's *Recherches anatomiques sur la position et l'action des glandes* (1751), quoted in Charles T. Wolfe, "Organisation ou Organisme? L'Individuation organique selon le vitalisme Montpellierain," *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, n. 41 (2009): 99-

In *On the Social Contract*, the body politic was vivified and sustained by the aggregation of bodies committed to the preservation of the common “self.”<sup>88</sup> The confederation of individuals and associations, in Rousseau’s understanding, complete with the “reciprocal sensibility and the internal coordination of all the parts,” forged a body politic whose general will “always tends toward the conservation and well-being of the whole.”<sup>89</sup> Although the act of the social compact was artificial, Rousseau appropriated the image from contemporary notions of an “organized body.”<sup>90</sup>

For Rousseau, there was no representative sovereign, as in Hobbes’ work, who contained political knowledge and directed political action through his will; instead, unity was the result of an ongoing production of will culled from the many experiences of citizens. The concept of the “general will” empowered citizens, not subjects, and depicted the nation as a political

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119, here 108 (trans. mine). For recent perspectives on Bordeu and vitalism, see Wolfe, “Sensibility as Vital Force or as Property of Matter in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Debates,” in *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment*, ed. Henry Martin Lloyd, 147-170 (New York and London: Springer International Publishing, 2013); Alexandre Wenger, *Le Médecin et le philosophe: Théophile de Bordeu selon Diderot* (Paris: Hermann-Essais, 2012); Caroline Warman, “La vie et l’âme de l’organe dans la pensée vitaliste de Bordeu, Diderot et Bichat,” in *Repenser le Vitalisme*, ed. Pascal Nouvel, 157-165 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011). I will discuss *organisation* in more detail in subsequent chapters.

<sup>88</sup>Rousseau, *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, 24.

<sup>89</sup>Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, 166.

<sup>90</sup>Rousseau’s model of the general will contained an even more detailed application of contemporary medical theory. His reorganization of the political resembled a “cybernetic” form of order, which, according to David Bates, emphasized the artificial nature of Rousseau’s political arrangement based on eighteenth-century conceptions of the nervous system. Rousseau envisioned a communication (nervous) system that mediated between the artificial general will (“soul”) and the embodied citizens to form a unified body politic that perceives and feels. Rousseau looked to replicate on a grander scale a *sensorium commune* (common sensorium) that made of an individual more than the sum of its parts. David Bates, *States of War: Enlightenment Origins of the Political* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 172, 193 (*sensorium commune*). For a similar perspective from Scotland, see Christopher Lawrence, “The Nervous System and Society in the Scottish Enlightenment,” in *Natural Order: Historical Studies of Scientific Culture*, eds. Barry Barnes and Steven Shapin, 19-40 (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1979). For the common sensorium, see Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), esp. 28-37. In this instance, Rousseau’s imagery reflected that of certain doctors and *médecins-philosophes* who found the “soul” to be either the “principle” of motion or thought, and thus material rather than spiritual, or distributed throughout the body instead of centralized. As Thomas L. Hankins succinctly put it, materialists “distributed the soul throughout matter in order to get rid of it.” *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 127.

construction, which stripped the monarchy of any inherent sacredness and the nobility of any inherent glorious character.<sup>91</sup> Rousseau was engaged with the mid-century medical community and found theories of human physiology profitable to express his vision of the body politic. Although Rousseau was uncommonly influential in the eighteenth century, his contribution to the corporeal-centered social imagination was only one of many.

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The body-politic metaphor was a crucial ingredient to eighteenth-century understandings of the socio-political structure; linguistically, it could reinforce or subvert the “corporate” order and expectations of *états*, and aesthetically it could represent either nature itself (hierarchically or through confederations) or improvements upon nature (Hobbes’ artificial sovereign and Rousseau’s general will). The corporate order of French society was challenged by yet other metaphors during the eighteenth century. Rousseau’s notion of the general will was the key political competitor to body-politic metaphors that emphasized the traditional hierarchy and harmony of organs, but economic and financial metaphors equally emphasized policies anathema to corporate society. On the eve of the meeting of the Estates-General, P. Le Maître “examined” France and concluded that “France is now very sick...[it is necessary that] we probe everywhere, and that we dwell mainly on the most painful places in its great body, particularly close to that gravest of the crises affecting intestinal difficulties, that overabundant evacuation called *deficit*.”<sup>92</sup>

Le Maître’s diagnosis of the French body politic in crisis drew from the work of his predecessors. The deficit had exhausted the French body politic in the 1770s and 1780s and was

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<sup>91</sup>Bell, *The Cult of the Nation*, 39.

<sup>92</sup>Quoted in de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France*, 81, see also 93-4.

a recurring theme since at least the reign of Louis XIV; yet, before the acute financial crisis of the late 1780s, the study of political economy matured alongside the increasing importance of commerce to the economic health of the body politic. Political economists had at their disposal a number of metaphors linking commerce and trade to nature and the human body: circulation, equilibrium, and balance. The deficit, according to Le Maître, blocked circulation, created a financial imbalance, and ultimately led to hemorrhage.

At the turn of the eighteenth century, Pierre Le Pesant de Boisguilbert put forward a financial representation of the body politic to argue for the necessity of taxing the privileged: “The poor, in the body of the State, are the eyes and skull, and are, therefore, the most weak and delicate parts; the rich are the arms and the rest of the body. The blows that strike the body for the needs of the state are nearly imperceptible when they fall on the strong and robust parts, but fatal when they reach the weak areas, which represent the impoverished.”<sup>93</sup> Expressing an idea that would fully flower in the eighteenth century, Boisguilbert sought to cure the “gangrenous” self-interest of the privileged by expanding taxation. His analysis of the critical condition of the French economy struck at the heart of corporate society and, before Vincent de Gournay coined the term, challenged the king to *laissez agir la nature* and *laissez faire la nature*.

Boisguilbert altered the traditional body-politic metaphor that depicted the Third Estate as the arms and laboring hands, opting instead to conceptualize it as the more delicate eyes and skull. He saw the degradation of the body politic as a consequence of an inordinately-imbalanced system of taxation. Similarly, Louis-Sébastien Mercier praised the Third Estate as

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<sup>93</sup>From Boisguilbert’s *Factum de la France* (1705), quoted in Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 226. According to Kwass, Boisguilbert blamed “the impoverishment of France on Louis XIV’s unnatural fiscal policies, which disrupted a ‘natural state’ of economic growth” (225).

the creators of wealth. Unlike the financiers and parasitic nobility, who sent their money off to India or China in pursuit of luxury, the body politic would “languish, decay, and die” without *les hommes de travail*.<sup>94</sup> In his *L’An 2440*, Mercier’s guide condemned luxury as a “burning acid” that had turned “gangrenous the healthiest parts of your state and covered the entire body politic in ulcers.”<sup>95</sup> Political economists and social commentators feared that the French economy would become stagnant as Paris and the court nobility resembled a swollen head. If all of the financial and natural resources, alongside taxation, fed the capital, then the entire body politic would be sapped of life-sustaining fluids. What was needed in France was the proper movement of resources.

The *philosophe* and short-lived Controller General of France (1774-1776), Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, acknowledged precisely this point through the ubiquity of the organic metaphor of circulation: “It is this advance and this continual return of capitals which constitute *what one must call the circulation of money*; that useful and fruitful circulation which gives life to all the labors of the society, which maintains movement and life in the body politic, and which is with great reason compared to the circulation of blood in the animal body.”<sup>96</sup> The utility of circulation as a metaphor for the unobstructed mobility of goods, resources, taxes, or blood stemmed from the Aristotelian tradition of the perfection of the circle and was given added

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<sup>94</sup>Mercier, “Mes Jambes (la finance),” in *Le Tableau de Paris*, intro. and ed. Jeffry Kaplow (Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 1992), 121.

<sup>95</sup>Mercier, *L’An 2440* (1786 edition), preface Alain Pons (Paris: F. Adel, 1977), chp. 8, “Le nouveau Paris,” pg. 64. For a reading of Mercier’s gendered, body-politic imagery in *L’An 2440*, see Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*, chp. 2.

<sup>96</sup>Turgot, *Reflections on the Formation and the Distribution of Riches*, trans. William J. Ashley (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1971; originally published in *Ephémérides du citoyen*, in three parts: Nov. and Dec. 1769, and Jan. 1770), 63. Anne-Claire Hoyng has recently analyzed Adam Smith’s reading of this text as a springboard for his *Wealth of Nations*. Hoyng, *Turgot et Adam Smith: Une étrange proximité* (Paris, Honoré Champion, 2015).



impetus through William Harvey's experiments on the circulation of blood.<sup>97</sup> Before modern disciplinary divisions were established, concepts like circulation were seen as "natural" to the functioning of both human and political bodies. The extension of circulation to both fields was made possible, too, by the term "economy." In the eighteenth century, there was no "economy" that represented a discrete aspect of modern life. Instead, "economy" generally meant the "wise and legitimate government of the household, [then the state]," as well as the "order, mechanism, and the ensemble of functions and movements that sustain the lives of animals."<sup>98</sup> Just as the principles that governed the structure and function of animal bodies and bodies politic were natural, so too were those that governed the growth and distribution of wealth. It was only by the end of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries that "economic theorists [came] to posit and identify an economy as a distinct entity and maintain that it was subject, not to natural processes, but to the operation of human laws and agency."<sup>99</sup>

In France, François Quesnay and the Physiocrats presented the stoutest argument that "nature" demanded the removal of restrictions on trade, as Adam Smith would in Great Britain. Their *laissez-faire/laissez-passer* approach emphasized the nourishing effects of circulation on

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<sup>97</sup>*Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus (On the Motion of the Heart and Blood)*, 1628. Georg Ernst Stahl renewed the importance of circulation by making it the vivifying principle preventing stasis of the blood through secretion and excretion. Stahl's vital force (*anima*) conserved life through circulation (*Theoria medica vera*, 1708).

<sup>98</sup>The first quote comes from Rousseau, *Discourse on Political Economy*, in *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, 163, and the second from Jean-Joseph Ménéret de Chambaud's entry in the *Encyclopédie*, "OEconomie animale (Médecine)," XI, 362: *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, etc., eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>. For an analysis of Ménéret's and others' understandings of animal economy, see Charles T. Wolfe and Motoichi Terada, "The Animal Economy as Object and Program in Montpellier Vitalism," *Science in Context* 21.4 (2008): 537-79.

<sup>99</sup>Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2. See also the essays in Margaret Schabas and Neil de Marchi, eds., *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), and Emma C. Spary, "Political, natural and bodily economies," in *Cultures of Natural History*, eds. N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E. C. Spary, 178-196 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

the body politic, and they grounded their argument in nature itself: “In nature everything is intertwined, everything runs through circular courses which are interlaced with one another.”<sup>100</sup> According to the Physiocrats, hoarding wealth and restricting the flow of goods and money, through privileges, customs, and duties, was an unnatural act that stymied the “circulation and recreation of capital.”<sup>101</sup> The famous zig-zags of the *Tableau Économique* gave quantitative and visual expression to the circulation of wealth and its foundation in agriculture, renewed naturally and perennially by the sun and rain. The social order envisioned by Quesnay correlated to the circulatory system—veins, arteries, capillaries, and heart—and he replaced the corporately-ordered, body-politic metaphor with a body politic inseparable from natural processes. Quesnay and a number of Physiocrats sought to centralize power in a “legal despot,” whose authority would be limited by nature rather than enlarged by providence and the king’s “two bodies.”

Urban planners also appealed to the purifying effects of constant movement in their creation and design of cities. In his *La Métropolitée* (1682), Alexandre Le Maître equated metropolitan cities with “heads” of state, both responsible for the welfare of rural towns and subjects.<sup>102</sup> One of the more curious eighteenth-century examples came from Pierre I<sup>er</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Quesnay, “Dialogue on the Work of Artisans,” in Ronald L. Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy: Essays and Translations* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), 204. I will detail Physiocracy in chapter seven. Circulation metaphors pervade the work of the Physiocrats.

<sup>101</sup>Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 53. For Quesnay’s naturalistic approach to economics, see Vernard Foley, “An Origin of the Tableau Economique,” *History of Political Economy* 5 (Spring 1973): 131-150; H. Spencer Banzhaf, “Productive Nature and the Net Product: Quesnay’s Economies Animal and Political,” *History of Political Economy* 32:3 (2000): 517-551; Paul P. Christensen, “Fire, Motion, and Productivity: The Proto-Energetics of Nature and Economy in François Quesnay,” in *Natural Images in Economic Thought*, ed. Philip Mirowski, 249-288 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, 45-50.

<sup>102</sup>“What the head is to the body...a metropolitan city is to towns and townships, villages and hamlets. The head works to preserve all the other members, and all the parts of the body cooperate and act in concert to sustain the head. The prince sacrifices his rest and energy to protect the honor, life, and belongings of his subjects, who are obliged, if need be, to immolate their possessions and their blood for the life and glory of their prince, and who are like small veins pouring their money into his treasury, which the prince then pours back into all the parts of the state.” Quoted in Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 641.

Rousseau's architectural "Plan de la Ville de Nantes et des projets d'embellissement" (1760).<sup>103</sup>

In order to deal with the urban problems of congestion and overcrowding, and ensure the stability of a prosperous, sea-faring, commercial city, Rousseau drew a diagram of Nantes in the shape of a heart with a second, smaller heart enveloping the crowded city center. The human heart provided the best reflection of form and function to circulate material goods and material bodies. Despite Pierre Lelièvre's pejorative characterization of Rousseau's imagination as "fertile" and "completely arbitrary," his plan nevertheless reinforces the perceived parallel between the principles of nature and human society.<sup>104</sup>

Body-politic metaphors and the application of anatomical and physiological principles to the social body of France often blurred the line between heuristic device and sustained commitment to the ordering power of nature. As medical knowledge became more precise, the authority of nature cemented analogies between social, political, and human/animal bodies. After all, one of the defining characteristics of the Enlightenment was a commitment to nature as a totalizing force, replacing the divine.

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The influential works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Physiocrats indicate that new visions of politics did not hinder the use of the human body to chart socio-political relationships. In fact, from the French Wars of Religion through the demise of the "absolutist" state, writers applied changing conceptions of the human body in a multitude of ways. The traditional metaphor of the king as the head directing the various organs of the body politic persisted well

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<sup>103</sup>Rousseau's plan can be found in Pierre Lelièvre, *Nantes au XVIIIe siècle: Urbanisme et Architecture* (Nantes: Durand, 1942), 88. See also Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-8*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 17 and 26 n. 32.

<sup>104</sup>Lelièvre, *Nantes au XVIIIe siècle*, 90 (see also 205).

into the eighteenth century but met fierce resistance. The social vocabulary of the *ancien régime* reinforced the corporate hierarchy of the state both metaphorically and physically: one's *état* was equivalent to one's organological functioning. Body-politic metaphors that emphasized the unobstructed circulation of goods could be expressed simply, without veiled language. The Physiocrats, proponents of *laissez-faire* economics, Turgot, and other critics of the corporate system publicly challenged both the metaphorical underpinnings of society and the legal principles of social organization: individual subjects and goods necessitated freedom from privilege. They envisioned new, though different, social orders and put forward their ideas in an age-old, body-politic format but with different instruments.

Turgot espoused an artificial construction of society bereft of naturalistic impulses connecting the hierarchy of human bodies to a universal, divine scheme.<sup>105</sup> For him, human nature, and thus society, was defined by liberty, and inequality was a natural development of socio-economic forces. In his *Encyclopédie* entry "Fondation," Turgot wrote:

Citizens have rights, and rights to be held sacred, even by the body of society—they exist independently of society, they are its necessary elements; they enter into society only to place themselves, with all their rights, under the protection of these same laws which assure their property and their liberty. But particular corporate bodies do not exist of themselves, or for themselves; they have been formed for society, and they must cease to exist immediately after they cease to be useful.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup>Turgot particularly challenged what Jean Terrier labeled the "personalist" metaphor that compared society "specifically with the living beings humans are," rather than emphasizing the anatomical structure of society. The personalist metaphor attributed "will" and psychological characteristics to the body politic, as revealed in Hobbes and Rousseau. And, as Edmund Burke argued, "instead of living in the mind of individuals as an abstract collection of individuals, society should be imagined as a concrete person," leading to affection, dedication, social cohesion, and loyalty (e.g. the king's "two bodies"). Terrier, *Visions of the Social: Society as a Political Project in France, 1750-1950* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 81 and 181.

<sup>106</sup>Quoted in Keith Michael Baker, "Enlightenment Idioms, Old Regime Discourses, and Revolutionary Improvisation," in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, eds. Kaiser and Van Kley, 165-197, here 172. Earlier in his entry, Turgot subtly criticized the limitations of *ancien régime* France and argued for the historical specificity of societies, an approach both historically sensitive and secular-minded: "Society does not always have the same needs...the proportion of its needs changes often and with them disappears or diminishes the utility of the foundations destined to meet them...What the state owes to each member is the removal of every obstacle that may impede their industry or disturb the enjoyment of the fruits which are the recompense of it" (trans. mine). *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, etc., eds. Denis Diderot and Jean

The “body” of society, for Turgot, did not consist of corporations or privileged groups that naturally and absolutely corresponded to human organs; instead, Turgot used “body” neutrally here, recognizing the artificiality of social cohesion based on utility. Once freed from the sinews, tissue, organs, and fluids that forged the corporate body, individuals could exercise their naturally-occurring rights in an arena unrestrained by cultural codes or the assumptions of natural hierarchy.

By the late-eighteenth century, the traditional social order no longer seemed capable of holding together the body politic. Metaphors no longer sufficed to illustrate the realistic interactions of individuals, and the corporeal system of *états* came under attack. Turgot’s vision of society was a culmination of at least three decades of political-economic thought, but it was only one vision of several in the eighteenth century. Metaphors of the body politic and social body persisted through the French Revolution, but we will see in the next three chapters that, much like the corporeal duties of the Third Estate, opponents and supporters of the traditional social structure found the human body to contain other principles necessary for social cohesion. Writers continued to draw on the long-term application of the human body to socio-political structures, but the linking together of sensationalist physiology and the invention of “society” produced a novel and pervasive understanding of the importance of the body to human interaction.

## **Chapter 2**

### ***Inventing and Embodying Society***

Under the corporate order of early-modern France, “society” was not an independent zone of human interaction. It was instead organized as a series of legal privileges and socio-cultural *états* that attempted to curtail the mixing of ranks and ensure economic productivity. Even if the rigid, social hierarchy was more porous in reality than in theory, it still served as a template according to which most economic, social, political, and cultural activities adhered.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, the traditional understanding of society came under fire as outdated, immoral, exploitative, and unnatural. Commerce and the luxury industry undermined the corporate order and the system of symbols that represented each *état*. A number of political crises saw the birth of utility and natural rights as categories to challenge the distribution of socio-political authority via privileges and *états*. Critics of the traditional order, and even many supporters, authored new images of society, culling from a variety of sources: nature, gender, and history. As Turgot’s vision of society in the previous chapter shows, one priority of reformers was to free the individual from the constraints of social stratification. Traditional body-politic metaphors and the social structure limited the human capacity for advancement and contained individual identity within corporate culture.

Once individuals were recognized as autonomous, “feeling” entities, however, their ability to interact and affect each other outside the social structure threatened an already unstable social order. Many writers put forward the individual body as the organizing principle for society; social bonds were to be found in individual *corps* rather than the collective harmony of

privileged *corps*. In what follows, I will deepen our understanding of the discursive invention of society by linking it to changing economic, cultural, and medical contexts. The desire to classify past forms of human interaction, criticize contemporary forms, and prescribe forms for the future led to numerous perspectives on socio-economic relationships. By mid-century, social commentators moved beyond body-politic metaphors to depict social interaction as a form of human connectivity forged through the sensations of the body: sensibility, sentimentality, and sympathy. New interpretations of the human body as physically and morally sensitive to external sensory data provided writers of all types with a perspective to conjoin nascent society and human nature. The capacity of the human body to “feel” became the critical framework to understand society. This perspective challenges posterity’s belief in the Enlightenment as an age of “reason.”

### *Inventing Society*

Historians of the Enlightenment have thoroughly parsed the intellectual, cultural, and social history of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the flowering of critical thought across Europe.<sup>107</sup> In spite of the complexity of the changes unfolding, one principle fastened the attention of historians: eighteenth-century efforts to reform society. Convinced of the universality of reason and nature, French *philosophes* “rose up against a state of society in which the liberties of an earlier day had turned into privileges, and privilege was accepted as a principle of social organization, dividing men, by

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<sup>107</sup>For useful summaries of Enlightenment historiography, see Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), and John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-43. In a recent trinity of works, Jonathan Israel has proposed a new set of principles to organize Enlightenment thought. The reviews of his *Radical Enlightenment* (2001), *Enlightenment Contested* (2006), and *Democratic Enlightenment* (2011)—all published by Oxford University Press—are exciting places to gather the heightened tensions of historiography and the continued importance of the Enlightenment to conceptions of “modernity.”

birth or occupation, into classes fixed by the laws of the country.”<sup>108</sup> Political progress would only be the result of a top-down reorganization of society.<sup>109</sup> The “Enlightenment,” in toto, was “a response to the dilemmas of a society standing at the confluence of the static, the traditional norms, with the rapid changes, fluidity, and pluralism so typical of modernity.”<sup>110</sup> If there ever was an “Enlightenment Project,” then it was a simultaneously mellifluous and discordant effort to construct a “philosophical language implying a reorientation of human thinking and action in the world.”<sup>111</sup>

The philosophical languages of individual happiness and social utility coexisted alongside the more well-known concepts freedom, liberty, nature, and reason and were oriented toward apolitical and nonreligious human interaction. Their articulation was compounded by “the commitment to understanding, and hence to advancing, the causes and conditions of human betterment in this world.”<sup>112</sup> In his entry “Idleness” (*Oisiveté*) for the *Encyclopédie*, for instance, the Chevalier de Jaucourt criticized the aristocratic *honnête homme* for eschewing labor and

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<sup>108</sup>R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1961, orig. pub. 1939), 3.

<sup>109</sup>Charles Frankel, *The Faith of Reason: The Idea of Progress in the French Enlightenment* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1948), 61.

<sup>110</sup>Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 3. In Part II, I analyze commerce, luxury, and political economy as both the “rapid changes, fluidity, and pluralism so typical of modernity,” as Israel stated, and the growing articulation of “society” as unbounded by the traditional social structure. Israel summarily dismissed any importance of social practices and spaces or concepts of sociability to the “Enlightenment” (4-5, 23-24).

<sup>111</sup>Keith Michael Baker, “Enlightenment Idioms, Old Regime Discourses, and Revolutionary Improvisation,” in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, eds. Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley, 165-197 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 168. The notion of an “Enlightenment Project,” which reduced the complexity of the Enlightenment to a singular, rationalistic ethic, was made famous by Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

<sup>112</sup>Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment*, 28. Carl Becker famously likened the *philosophes*’ efforts to construct a secularized version of heaven, with “more up-to-date materials,” to medieval philosophers’ “heavenly city.” Carl Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932), 31. Frankel, *The Faith of Reason*, also took up Becker’s language. The classic text on Enlightenment understandings of happiness is Robert Mauzi, *L’idée du bonheur dans la Littérature et la Pensée françaises au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: A. Colin, 1960).



defined work through its utility to society. From the backrooms of the Parisian merchant court to erudite, natural-philosophical texts to the interpretation of married intellectuals as socially-productive, social utility surged to the forefront of contemporary ideas outlining the contours of society.<sup>113</sup> Nature enjoined humans to seek out happiness, and society was to be a means of ensuring its pursuit. The Marquis de Chastellux supplied his contemporaries with a two-volume, historical examination of happiness that used a number of *indices du bonheur* to measure and determine “the greatest happiness of the greatest number of individuals.”<sup>114</sup> He concluded that with an increase in population and agricultural productivity and a decrease in prejudice and superstition the eighteenth century would become the happiest age yet. Chastellux believed that intellectual innovations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries galvanized the quest to uncover the laws of society *and* provided the tools. By foregrounding utility and happiness in debates over the place of commerce in the French economy or the toleration of Protestants, for example, contemporaries extracted the “social” from the socio-political hierarchy and elevated the individual over the structure.<sup>115</sup> Just as the concept of the general will depicted the nation as a political construct, new perspectives of “society” relied only on the interaction of individuals.

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<sup>113</sup>For shifting understandings of commerce—from a socio-political status symbol to a contributor to “social utility”—and the merchant *corps*’ place in the corporate hierarchy (one of the “Six Corps”), see Amalia D. Kessler, *A Revolution in Commerce: the Parisian Merchant Court and the Rise of Commercial Society in Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). For “intellectual companionate and collaborative marriages” as spurs to sociability and social utility, see Meghan K. Roberts, “*Philosophes Mariés and Epouses Philosophiques*: Men of Letters and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century France,” *French Historical Studies* 35.3 (Summer 2012): 509-39.

<sup>114</sup>Chastellux, *De la félicité publique, ou Considérations sur le sort des hommes dans les différentes époques de l’histoire* (1772). For analyses of Chastellux’ work, see Frankel, *The Faith of Reason*, 61-68; Darrin M. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 214-217; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 290-302. See also Jean-François Melon, *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734), who argued that the pursuit of happiness via the passions should replace military glory as the motor of society, and Madame du Châtelet’s *Discours sur le bonheur* (1746-7).

<sup>115</sup>According to Daniel Gordon, “the novel aspect of French social egalitarianism was not the affirmation of equality per se but the invention of the social as a distinctive field of human experience...Defenders of royal sovereignty did not formally recognize the existence of a social realm in the sense of a sphere of activities separate from the

Attempts to reform society set in motion a new understanding of human interaction and thus human nature. The Enlightenment “invented” society as the “ontological frame of our human existence” and the “autonomous ground” upon which individuals stood before the bonds created by political or religious authority.<sup>116</sup> Society became “the basic form of collective human existence, at once natural to human beings and instituted by them, a corollary of human needs and a human response to those needs.”<sup>117</sup> Alongside “foundational concepts” such as *civilisation*, *patrie*, *nation*, and *public*, *société* provided a way for eighteenth-century French authors to envision human interaction as a product of neither divine will nor monarchical fiat.<sup>118</sup> “Society” became terrestrial and mundane, which elevated the material colliding of human bodies to a central place in the study of the social.

Enlightenment thinkers did not coin the word “society,” and there was no singular moment when “society” was invented. It is clear, though, that by the end of the seventeenth century, “society” came to mean more than friendship, goodwill, or partnerships for a joint venture often based on contract. The invention of society as the bedrock of human existence occurred in reaction to a number of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century social, political,

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supervision of the monarch.” Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5. Gordon develops further his perspective in “Le principe de dématérialisation: Sociabilité et circulation au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *L’invention de la société: Nominalisme politique et science sociale au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, eds. Laurence Kauffman and Jacques Guilhaumou, 77-98 (Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS, 2003).

<sup>116</sup>Keith Michael Baker, “Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History,” in *Main Trends in Cultural History: Ten Essays*, eds. Willem Melching and Wyger Velema, 95-120 (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 96, 119. For Bernard Mandeville’s moral, economic, and medical contribution to the creation of “society,” see E. J. Hundert, *The Enlightenment’s Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>117</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>118</sup>David Bell, “Nation et Patrie, Société et Civilisation: Transformations du vocabulaire social français, 1700-1789,” in *L’invention de la société*, eds. Kauffman and Guilhaumou, 99-120. See also Bell, *The Cult of the Nation: Inventing Nationalism, 1680-1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 1-50, and George Armstrong Kelly, “Mortal Man, Immortal Society? Political Metaphors in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Political Theory*, vol. 14, n. 1 (February 1986): 5-29.

religious, and cultural developments: the Bourbon pursuit of centralized authority; the Augustinian and Jansenist vision of sinful humans nearly abandoned by god to the terrestrial sphere; the increasing material and infrastructural unification of France; and, the interiorization of religion. Order in the material world could be reliably had without recourse to divine-cum-political authority, as indicated by the rise of the “scientific” method (empirical and experimental procedures) and the willingness of natural philosophers to espouse epistemological modesty in the face of metaphysical quandaries (e.g. Isaac Newton’s famous *hypotheses non fingo*). Moreover, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, the editor of the French periodical *Le Mercure galant*, Jean Donneau de Visé, helped to transform a passive literary audience into an active and critical “public” empowered by the democratization of judgment and taste. Visé created a self-reflective and autonomous public sphere through literary engagement, which became enlarged and politicized by the tense cultural crisis of *la Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.<sup>119</sup>

All of these processes set in motion during the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries converged around the mid-eighteenth century to produce a focus on society as the realm of human interdependence and interaction. Historians have recently analyzed this shift in conceptions of society both qualitatively, as new interpretations of human interaction clustered around a number of concepts and practices (e.g. *sociable*, *sociabilité*, *social*), and quantitatively by charting the appearance of these terms across eighteenth-century texts. The use of “society” and its lexical associates emerged in the 1670s and 1680s, leaped in the 1730s, and then grew exponentially during and after the 1750s. The same is true with “social,” which was most prominently introduced by Diderot to describe “passions” and “virtues” in his translation of

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<sup>119</sup>Joan DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), chp. 2.

Shaftesbury's *An Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit* (1711, trans. 1745). By the early 1760s, however, "social" came to be attached to nouns that "did not designate human characteristics, but related, implicitly, to society itself" (e.g. *institutions, lois, confédération*).<sup>120</sup> The implication is that "society" had shifted from a constricted realm of hierarchical relations to an independent arena of sociability; society thus necessitated a proper adjective to describe its facets. The radical nature of this shift lay in its potential to challenge the entire socio-political hierarchy by prizing happiness and utility as the criteria by which to judge individual behavior rather than simple conformity to an *état*.<sup>121</sup>

After mid-century, the new language of society flourished. "Social" was a "word newly introduced into the language in order to designate the qualities that render a man useful to society," according to the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>122</sup> And, according to César Dumarsais, *les philosophes* touted "civil society" as "a divinity...on earth."<sup>123</sup> The collective social imagination of Enlightenment thinkers focused undeniably on (re)vivifying "society" itself. The spaces that Jurgen Habermas described as the "bourgeois public sphere" (e.g. coffeehouses, salons, journals, new literary forms, Masonic lodges), propelled by commerce and the early stages of capitalism,

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<sup>120</sup>Yair Mintzker, "'A Word Newly Introduced into Language': The Appearance and Spread of 'Social' in French Enlightenment Thought, 1745-1764," *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 500-513, here 510. Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 67, observed a similar process in Baron d'Holbach's *La Morale universelle* (1776): In contrast to seventeenth-century courtesy literature directed at small, elite audience, "Holbach defined politeness and the other agreeable qualities as constitutive of 'social life' or 'society' as a general field of human interaction."

<sup>121</sup>Yet, throughout the eighteenth century, as society came to be the central feature of human interaction, it could nevertheless be grounded on either secular, natural, or religious principles. Writers as diverse as Claude Buffier and Baron d'Holbach could agree that a system of *états* was still a necessary component of society. So, the invention of "society" was not necessarily incompatible with hierarchy; my argument is that even tradition-minded thinkers had to adapt to changing perceptions of social interaction.

<sup>122</sup>Unknown, "Social," in *Encyclopédie de d'Alembert et Diderot*, vol. XV (1765), 251. In Mintzker's words, "'A Word Newly Introduced into Language,'" 501: "The word 'social' was so marginal in French philosophical discourse before the mid-eighteenth century that its sudden introduction to enlightened philosophy after 1745 can be treated, for all practical purposes, as a new appearance" (501).

<sup>123</sup>Dumarsais, "Philosophe," in *Encyclopédie de d'Alembert et Diderot*, vol. XII (1765), 510.

provided examples of what “society” could become.<sup>124</sup> Modern “society” began to take shape within absolutist political culture and provided an impetus for thinkers to theorize it into existence. Although “civil society” and the “public sphere” were constitutive of “society” writ large, Enlightenment thinkers articulated views of human interaction that anteceded and undergirded the public sphere. Like “public opinion,” “society” was an abstract category brought to fruition linguistically but with a material, though amorphous, referent; it could be used for rhetorical purposes or deployed to express and obtain one’s interests, but it could not be separated from the intellectual, economic, and cultural changes taking place in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century France.<sup>125</sup> Contemporaries located “society” both inside the traditional social order, through a restricted, elite understanding of *le monde*, and outside of and anterior to any socio-political formation. In the process, they created a new set of conditions for understanding human interaction.

A number of discrete and overlapping approaches to social organization took center stage in the eighteenth century and challenged the traditional social order. French writers, such as Turgot, Rousseau, and Condorcet, and the Scottish writers Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, and John Millar put forward “conjectural” histories to explain the development of civilizations.

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<sup>124</sup>Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989). Generally, Habermas was right to say that “with the growth of a market economy arose the sphere of the ‘social’,” but he is uncritical of the category of “society” when he argued that the “bourgeois public sphere evolved in the tension-charged field between state and society” (141). Out of hundreds of works on Habermas and the public sphere, I have found the following helpful: Keith Michael Baker, “Defining the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century France: Variations on a Theme by Habermas” and Lloyd Kramer, “Habermas, History, and Critical Theory,” both in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun, 181-211, 236-258 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993); Laura Lee Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2004), chp. 8; Annie K. Smart, *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 10-16.

<sup>125</sup>For the notion of public opinion as a linguistic invention, in contrast to Habermas, see Keith Michael Baker, “Public Opinion as Political Invention,” in his *Inventing the French Revolution*, 167-202 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

These examinations often took the form of “rational reconstructions” of the state of nature that traced the emergence of society and politics and charted the growth of modernity, generally intertwining modes of subsistence and the arts and sciences as the motors of change. Instead of looking to a medieval past to strengthen the conventional roles of the nobility and monarchy, they found in the “four-stage” model of history a more suitable description of human interaction and the concomitant growth of political organization. From hunter-gathering to shepherding to large-scale agriculture, European civilization had progressed to a commercial stage accompanied by novel *moeurs*, cultural spaces, and social practices. Proponents of the stadial theory both lauded and criticized their own final stage of social and economic commerce.<sup>126</sup>

Alongside rational reconstructions, various interpretations of “natural law” grounded society in the necessary existence of inherent rights: property, freedom, ownership of one’s labor, and moral equality. John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government* (1690) and Rousseau’s *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) presented thorough images of pre-political man in order to reveal the fundamental nature of human relations before the growth of political authority and subsequent inequality.<sup>127</sup> Adherents of social contract theory envisioned forms of government

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<sup>126</sup>The classic text is Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976). See also Silvia Sebastiani, *The Scottish Enlightenment: Race, Gender and the Limits of Progress* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013); Sylvana Tomaselli, “Civilization, Patriotism, and Enlightened Histories of Woman,” in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, eds. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor, 117-135 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005); Johnson Kent Wright, “Historical Thought in the Era of the Enlightenment,” in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, eds. Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza, 123-142 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002); DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns*, chp. 4; Robert Wokler, “Anthropology and Conjectural History in the Enlightenment,” in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, eds. Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, 31-53 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

<sup>127</sup>Rousseau’s *Discourse* was written as a response to the Academy of Dijon’s question “What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by natural law?”

that would guarantee natural rights.<sup>128</sup> They constructed robust arguments for voluntary political action by members of society to fabricate a political system to protect individuals.<sup>129</sup>

Conjectural history, natural law, and social contract theory, then, revealed the unstable and artificial foundation of France's social hierarchy, challenged political authority, and demanded economic innovation.

In addition to recreations of the state of nature, theorists of natural law in France and Scotland debated the primacy of sociability or self-interest as the driving characteristic of human nature.<sup>130</sup> Politically, eighteenth-century writers linked sociability to human dignity and liberty and used it to classify "citizens" as contributing members of society and to ridicule "subjects" as representative of an unnatural socio-political hierarchy. This subversive political perspective was coupled with the possibility that natural rights required no supernatural being to ensure them, thus releasing individuals from both royal and divine control. In commerce, sociability became a purifying agent, cleansing self-interest and the passions of their unsavory flavor and

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<sup>128</sup>Yair Mintzker pointed out that neither Hobbes nor Locke used the term "social contract," and therefore, in those cases, it is an anachronism. Mintzker, "'A Word Newly Introduced into Language,'" 508.

<sup>129</sup>The extent to which members of society were free and equal and the form of government chosen depends on which author one is analyzing. As mentioned briefly in chapter one and to be analyzed in more depth in chapter seven, the Physiocrats put forward the most comprehensive argument for nature and natural law as the prime movers of socio-political institutions.

<sup>130</sup>This debate began in the seventeenth century with the works of Samuel Pufendorf, Hugo Grotius, and Thomas Hobbes. Jean Barbeyrac's translation of Samuel Pufendorf's writings on natural law—*Les Devoirs de l'Homme et du Citoyen* (1707) and *Le Droit de la Nature et des Gens* (1706)—made available to French readers Pufendorf's idea that humans are naturally weak and vulnerable; thus, for Pufendorf, sociability was a natural-historical, though not innate, expression of their self-interest to associate for protection. In a state of nature, human needs and desires surpassed those of animals, who could sate themselves through instinct. Pufendorf argued that sociability was the solution to meet the unlimited growth of desires, in contrast to Hobbes' assertion that political organization was contractual. See Istvan Hont, "The Language of Sociability and Commerce: Samuel Pufendorf and the Theoretical Foundation of the 'Four-Stage' Theory," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden, 253-276 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). For recent analyses of Grotius, Pufendorf, Hobbes, Christian Thomasius, and Locke, see David Bates, *States of War: Enlightenment Origins of the Political* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), chps. 2 -3, and T.J. Hochstrasser, *Natural Law Theories in the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

sinful taint. Adam Smith immortalized this process of the social satisfaction of economic needs through the natural, self-interested behavior of the butcher, brewer, and baker.<sup>131</sup> In the eighteenth century, “commerce” lived a double-linguistic life as the practice of merchants and traders and as an expression for social engagement: “an agreeable commerce,” “an easy commerce,” or the “commerce between the sexes.”<sup>132</sup> For social reformers, sociability and mutual cooperation channeled self-interest and other passions in socially-, economically-, and ultimately politically-productive ways, shredding the arguments that the corporate hierarchy represented nature’s intentions.

Beyond the political and commercial traditions of natural law, which highlighted sociability as an inherent impetus to social organization, sociability played a key role in *le monde*. Sociability was not inherently anti-hierarchical, as proven by salon culture. The socio-cultural spaces of the salons and the guiding spirit of *mondanité* grounded interaction in a more pleasant, often socially-elevated, understanding of sociability. Even if salons were not laboratories of equality based on intellectual exchange and literary production, as historians once thought, sociability nevertheless stood as a central principle and expected goal in these spaces; attendees traded in “social commerce” in spaces often located outside the tentacular reach of the

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<sup>131</sup>Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan and Preface George J. Stigler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), Vol. I, Book 1, Chp. 2, 18. For links between sociability and “character,” see the essays in Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning, eds., *Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

<sup>132</sup>Henry C. Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), xiii. See also, Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 150-160, on Jean-Baptiste Suard’s translation of William Robertson’s *History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V* (1769, Suard published his translation in 1774), which highlighted “commerce” as the motor of civilization. Joan DeJean has pointed out the role of Father Etienne-Simon de Gamaches’ *Système du coeur* (1704) in the consolidation of a new “science of the heart” that conceptualized the “emotions” as relational, establishing the function of sensibility in a “law of reciprocal commerce” between humans and objects and humans and other humans. DeJean, *Ancients versus Moderns*, 89.



royal court.<sup>133</sup> Sociability therefore carried a multitude of definitions and applications. It could be a leveling principle that expressed the universal nature of all humans (e.g. chevalier de Jaucourt's *Encyclopédie* entries "Sociabilité" and "Égalité naturelle"), or it could be a principle espoused by members of *le monde* to express their claims to natural, spontaneous, and exclusive interaction.

Finally, a new view of society based on the gendered division of labor and the natural division of physiological *organisations* emerged in the eighteenth century. Social commentators, *médecin-philosophes*, and philosophers recast the Biblical injunction that original sin commanded the superiority of men over women, and thus bolstered the sexual hierarchy, by appealing to the authority of nature. Female and male guild members, for example, proclaimed that women were naturally gifted at tasks that required finesse and dexterity.<sup>134</sup> This gender ideology further defined women's work as a form of protection from poverty and prostitution. The emerging modern society that allowed women and men new spaces for sociability, shopping, employment, and commercial exchange, however, elicited deep-seated fears of women's susceptibility to the salacious advances of male customers and their inability to resist luxury and fashion. Rousseau most notably signaled a reprisal of the Classical public/private divide in which women performed their civic duties as mothers and wives, only educated enough

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<sup>133</sup>For seventeenth-century salons, see Carolyn Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). And, for the eighteenth century, see the conflicting accounts of Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), and Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons: Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005). And, for an expanded chronological and geographical approach, see the essays in Annie Antoine and Julian Mischi, eds., *Sociabilité et politique en milieu rural* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2008).

<sup>134</sup>"Réflexions des Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris, sur le projet de détruire les Jurandes," Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection Joly de Fleury, vol. 596, folio 101. I discuss this evidence further in chapter four.

to control their passions, oblige their husbands, and complete domestic chores.<sup>135</sup> Rousseau's follower Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemaire similarly domesticated virtue and naturalized the relationship between men and women, exposing the complementary characteristics of the sexes and *claiming* that one sex was not superior to the other.<sup>136</sup>

Boudier's conception of the sexes' natural complementarity represented a transition from a Classical, vertical model of the sexes—males were superior to females and females were inversions of males—to an horizontal model in which each sex had its specific set of physiological and socio-moral characteristics (gender *and* sex were constructed).<sup>137</sup> Although the latter model was not so strictly rigid, it still found expression in the gendered division of labor and politics noted above and in views of women's intellectual capabilities. The entry “Femme [Morale]” in the *Encyclopédie* gave voice to the principle of complementarity: “nature has set on one side strength, majesty, courage, and reason; on the other, grace and beauty, finesse and feeling.” Eighteenth-century writers argued that women's physical and moral ability to “feel” and their biological responsibility to reproduce cemented their place in society. For Antoine Léonard Thomas, “Society needs direct and spontaneous human compassion to buffer

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<sup>135</sup>In his entry “Citoyen” for the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot did not extend citizenship to women, children, and servants. In *Citoyennes: Women and the Ideal of Citizenship in Eighteenth-Century France*, Annie K. Smart has questioned the public/private divide and underscored the importance of the home as a political space of civic education in Rousseau's and his contemporaries' works.

<sup>136</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'ami des femmes* (1758). Boudier clearly found women's intelligence to be inferior to men's (pgs, 57, 65-66). See the Preface and “Question préliminaire” to the 1788 version of *L'ami des femmes, ou morale du sexe*.

<sup>137</sup>Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). For an analysis of Laqueur's work and various scholarly applications and criticisms of it, see Dror Wahrman, “Change and the Corporeal in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Gender History: Or, Can Cultural History be Rigorous?” *Gender & History*, vol. 20, n. 3 (2008): 584-602. The following are the major eighteenth-century sources circumscribing women's intellectual capacities: Antoine Léonard Thomas, *Essai sur le caractère, les mœurs et l'esprit des femmes dans les différents siècles* (1772); Pierre Roussel, *Système physique et moral de la femme, ou tableau philosophique de la constitution, de l'état organique, du tempérament, des mœurs, et des fonctions propres au sexe* (1775); Denis Diderot, *Sur les femmes* (1772, enlarged 1777 and 1780).

the consequences of competition.”<sup>138</sup> Supporters of women’s natural occupations, inside or outside the corporate order, competed with supporters of women’s domesticity on the plane of “nature.” And, as new commercial, intellectual, and cultural developments helped to usher in competing visions of “society,” a totalizing anthropology created spaces for women based on both biology and utility.<sup>139</sup>

Certainly not all reformers argued for a universal, horizontal set of social relations to replace the vertical and hierarchical relations of French society.<sup>140</sup> Reference to the natural laws of human sociability, for example, could undergird theories of absolutism while simultaneously fueling criticisms of the repressive policies of throne and altar. Similarly, as society became the “world of all human interaction,”<sup>141</sup> the particular form of government became less important than its protection of unconstrained social interaction. “Society” was not simply an abstract, linguistic construction; instead, it was a field of social interaction made increasingly problematic because of commerce and consumer culture. Economic changes brought to the fore the instability of the traditional social structure and provided the impetus for a wide-ranging discursive space to assess social interaction (as will become clear in Part II).

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<sup>138</sup>Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex: Woman’s Nature in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 92.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid.*, chp. 2. In her magisterial *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), Isabel Hull acknowledged the primacy of gender in defining society: “What was a man? This question could not, by definition, be answered in any other way than by reference to what he was not, namely, a woman...[T]he fiction of natural universals (such as gender) seemed a logical extension of natural law and thus could both dissolve the old social status groups and ground the new in a single, efficient stroke. Gender was therefore a powerful tool in the self-creation made necessary by and contingent on the larger moral-political endeavor of creating civil society” (225).

<sup>140</sup>For an analysis of the changing conceptions of “society,” weighing heavily on the nineteenth century, see Jean Terrier, *Visions of the Social: Society as a Political Project in France, 1750-1950* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).

<sup>141</sup>Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy*, 32.

Changing perspectives of society led to an expansion of the social imagination. Reformers, social critics, moralists, political economists, and reactionaries all adjusted the lenses through which they viewed society. I challenge the presumption that during the Enlightenment “the social was envisaged as an artificial construct resulting, at least in an ideal situation, from the voluntary decisions of natural individuals.”<sup>142</sup> On the contrary, to many eighteenth-century thinkers, society was itself a product of the natural constitution of the individual, not an “artificial construct.” Contemporaries placed human nature and human interaction in a new ontological framework. The increasing contact of physical bodies and the emergence of a new language to discuss those bodies (sensationalist physiology) positioned the human body at the center of new, or recycled, visions of society. The new concepts of happiness and utility became embedded in human physiology. On the one hand, individual happiness and social utility could be found when one pursued one’s passions and sought to procure “agreeable sensations and sentiments.”<sup>143</sup> On the other, critics of luxury and the new social spaces of commerce feared that too much sensory stimulation would lead to the illusory happiness of materialism and thus blunt the feelings of sociability.

The idea that society was an “artificial construct” clearly indicated a distinct tradition of body-politic metaphors, which depicted humans together in society as a part of a grander whole. Scholars have often been distracted by the metaphorical language used to describe society and neglected the deeper meaning in contemporaries’ use of medical and physiological language. They envisioned a properly-functioning human body as necessary for “society,” giving

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<sup>142</sup>Terrier, *Visions of the Social*, 81.

<sup>143</sup>Madame du Châtelet, *Discours sur le bonheur* (1746-7), préface Élisabeth Badinter (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1997), 32-33.

“ontological primacy” to the individual’s body.<sup>144</sup> The human body itself was fitted perfectly for society. It is important to dwell on sensationalism, which provided a new set of epistemological and physiological instruments with which to investigate social interaction.

### *The Language of the Body and the Senses*

Society emerged as a conceptual framework to analyze human interaction alongside sensationalist philosophy and physiology. Those who elaborated new visions of society and those who sought to reconstruct the traditional social hierarchy both adopted and adapted the language of the senses as a particular and universal explanation for human interaction: each individual had a unique, organic disposition, but bodies universally operated according to the reception and transmission of sensory data. The universality of feeling preceded the hierarchical arrangement of *corps* and *états*, and those who upheld the corporate order renegotiated its bases by accounting for sensationalism and sensibility. “Feeling” was as much a characteristic of the Enlightenment as “reason,” and the grounding of society in this corporeal property was a defining feature of the eighteenth century.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>I adopted “ontological primacy” from Baker, “Enlightenment and the Institution of Society,” 109.

<sup>145</sup>There are countless texts that deal with various facets of sensationalism. In this section, I have profited from the following works: John Spink, “‘Sentiment,’ ‘sensible,’ ‘sensibilité’: Les mots, les idées, d’après les ‘moralistes’ français et britanniques du début du dix-huitième siècle,” *Zagadnienia Rodzajow Literackich*, 20, n. 1 (1977): 33-47; G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); John C. O’Neal, *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996); Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: a History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2007); Catherine Packham, *Eighteenth-Century Vitalism: Bodies, Culture, Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012). The best and most recent place to start for sensationalism and sensibility in Enlightenment thought is Henry Martin Lloyd, ed., *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (New York and London: Springer International Publishing, 2013).

The origins of modern sensationalism lie primarily in the work of John Locke, specifically his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690).<sup>146</sup> Locke posited two epistemological positions that would shape the eighteenth century: the generation of knowledge through the senses and the need to establish, or commit to, a vocabulary that accurately represented reality and matched words to ideas. Locke sought to purify language of linguistic misuse and erroneous associations that stymied cognitive processes. To do this, he put forward a comprehensive epistemology. Locke argued that, first, the mind was a blank slate born into the world without innate ideas, and, second, the body was equipped with sensory receptors, which take in impressions from the external environment, and mental faculties that reflect on sensations.

Locke's *Essay* created a paradigm for succeeding philosophers and doctors to analyze the far-reaching ways that bodies interact with environments (including other human bodies). He referred often to the motion of animal spirits as the cause of our sensations and the impressions made on the brain as responsible for memory. Through Locke, the Cartesian emphasis on "animal spirits" and "impressions," as a result of the impact of matter, would be blended with a focus on the nervous system and cerebral autonomy. The internal operation of reflection, part of Locke's "dualism," could only manufacture thoughts and images based upon previously-received sense data. "And if these organs, or the Nerves which are the Conduits, to convey them from without to their Audience in the Brain, the mind's presence room (as I may so call it) are any of them so disordered, as not to perform their Functions," Locke noted, "they have no Postern to be admitted by; no other way to bring themselves into view, and be perceived by the

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<sup>146</sup>I use "modern" because Aristotle put forward the well-known position that "Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses" ("*Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*"). Aristotle was not a "sensationalist," but many early-modern thinkers credited him as an empiricist.

Understanding.”<sup>147</sup> Without a properly-functioning body, the power of the mental faculties would be limited. The senses that absorbed and transmitted sensations had to be appropriately “sensible.”

An abridged, pirated translation of Locke’s *Essay* appeared in the *Bibliothèque universelle et historique* in 1688, but it was Pierre Coste’s translation twelve years later that provided French speakers with Locke’s groundbreaking epistemology.<sup>148</sup> There were at least seven printings of an abridgment of Locke’s *Essay* and five translations in the eighteenth century. The gradual dissemination of Locke’s epistemology received impetus from Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques* (1734), which contained a chapter dedicated to the man who established that “all our ideas come to us via the senses [and who followed] the human mind in all its operations.”<sup>149</sup> By midcentury, abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac had put forward three key texts that disseminated, engaged, and criticized Locke’s ideas: *Essai sur l’origine des connaissances humaines* (1746), *Traité des systèmes* (1749), and *Traité des sensations* (1754). The influence of sensationalism on all forms of knowledge (linguistics, natural philosophy, aesthetics, etc.) was complete by the mid-eighteenth century.

Two examples can make this point. In his provocative *De l’esprit* (1758), Claude-Adrien Helvétius opened his detailed table of contents with an overarching argument: “The object of this discourse is to prove that physical sensibility and memory are the singular causes of all our ideas.” He then explained in the first section that humans have two faculties or passive powers:

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<sup>147</sup>Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. and intro. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 121 (II.iii.1).

<sup>148</sup>There were at least seven printings of an abridgment of Locke’s *Essay* and five translations in the eighteenth century. For the dissemination of Locke on the continent, particularly France, see John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>149</sup>Voltaire, *Letters on England*, trans. Leonard Tancock (London: Penguin Books, 1980), 64.

“One is the faculty of receiving the different impressions that exterior objects make on us, which is called physical sensibility. The other is the faculty of preserving the impressions caused by these objects, called memory; and memory is nothing more than a continued, but weakened, sensation.”<sup>150</sup> Helvétius reduced all mental operations to sensibility, and, through the optic of pleasure/pain, he detailed our capacity to judge, act, and behave in socially-useful or avaricious ways.

Two entries for “Sensibilité” in the *Encyclopédie* provide a second example of the extensive usage of sensibility. The chevalier de Jaucourt briefly explained the moral resonance of sensibility (or “sensitivity”) as the “Delicate and tender disposition of the soul that makes it easily moved, touched.”<sup>151</sup> The Montpellier vitalist Henri Fouquet wrote the lengthier medical entry in which he defined *sensibilité* as

the faculty of sensing, the sensitive principle, or the sentiment even of the parts, the basis and conserving agent of life, animality *par excellence*, the most beautiful and singular phenomenon of nature, etc. Sensibility is in the living body a property that certain parts have of perceiving the impressions of external objects and of producing in consequence movements proportional to the degree of intensity of this perception.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup>Helvétius, *De l'esprit* (1758), 1-2. In his *De l'homme* (1773), Helvétius extended his analysis of sensibility and framed his text largely around the question whether one's education or *organisation* shaped one's intellect more. He concluded the former. Diderot wrote a famous *Réfutation* of Helvétius' Lockean-inspired approach, arguing that individual bodies influenced one's abilities more. Helvétius criticized Locke for not reducing “thought/reflection” to feeling or sensing, but he perhaps upheld Locke's claim to analyze well-organized bodies.

<sup>151</sup>Jaucourt, “Sensibilité,” *Encyclopédie*, XV (1765), 52. Charles T. Wolfe has recently suggested that “sensitivity” is a better translation of *sensibilité*, since the form specifically means “the property of organic beings to sense and respond to stimuli or impressions.” Wolfe, “Sensibility as Vital Force or as Property of Matter in Mid-Eighteenth Century Debates,” in *The Discourse of Sensibility*, ed. Lloyd, 147-170, here 148, n. 3.

<sup>152</sup>Fouquet, “Sensibilité, Sentiment” (*Médecin*), *Encyclopédie*, XV (1765), 38. See also Capucine Lebreton, “Être vivant, Être sensible: Le Rôle de la Sensibilité dans le Vitalisme des Lumières,” in *Repenser le Vitalisme*, ed. Pascal Nouvel, 145-156 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011).



Sensibility in Fouquet's understanding incorporated both the ability to receive sensations and act on or respond to those sensations. Locke's quest to clarify cognitive processes and ground epistemology in the senses quickly grew to involve nearly all facets of human existence.

Although Locke's influence on the eighteenth century was matched only by Isaac Newton's, it is true that the moral and physiological language of the senses had an alternative history. Literary works by Madeleine de Scudéry and the comtesse de LaFayette initiated a conceptual shift in the language and psychology of the passions. Joan DeJean has argued that in France a new "affective vocabulary and a revised vision of emotional structure" came to fruition in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>153</sup> She observed that "*émotion* and *affection* acquired medical significance only once their implantation in the psychological realm had been assured."<sup>154</sup> Scudéry and LaFayette fixed "sentiment" and "tenderness" into a semantic cluster that redefined the passions and affections psychologically as part of an individual's interior *and* exterior experiences. The "emphasis on shared experience" created in the process of reading novels grew to define "sentiment," which soon found expression in medical theory that linked the "impressions" made by external objects on the senses to the activities and feelings of the soul.<sup>155</sup> In this case, Locke's work was not *the* catalyst. More importantly, both Locke's

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<sup>153</sup>DeJean, *Ancients versus Moderns*, 109.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., 82. DeJean's pitch contrasts G.S. Rousseau's argument that Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* achieved paradigmatic status and allowed for the application of the physical sciences to aesthetic, social, and moral realms. Aesthetic sensibility and sentimentalism were posterior to Locke and other medical doctors such as Thomas Willis. G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility," in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century, III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, eds. R. F. Brissenden and J. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976). For an analysis of sensibility as a new set of cognitive standards in natural philosophy, more thoroughly encompassing "nature" than previous mechanical and micro-corpuscular models, see Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), chps. 6, 11. Gaukroger accepts DeJean's view of the role of the mid-seventeenth century novel in this shift.

<sup>155</sup>For a recent conception of the "relational self," see Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

epistemology and the literary analysis of the passions and the senses resounded with social repercussions.

The notion that human beings were feeling entities shaped natural philosophy, physiology, medicine, and theories of morality. Sensationalism imbricated different realms of knowledge and entwined the physical body and morality. From the 1740s, the human characteristic of sensibility was part of a “more dynamic notion of man, man as a unified biological organism...Thought and feeling (in all their modes) take their place alongside properties such as irritability, muscular contractions, blood flow, and numerous physical processes, taking place in organs, nerves, and brain.”<sup>156</sup> Pierre-Louis Moreau de Maupertuis, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, Charles Bonnet, and Denis Diderot, among innumerable others, constructed different roles for sensibility within grand metaphysical questions about the nature of the human body and the properties of matter. Following Newton’s work on gravitation and attraction, natural philosophers recalibrated their positions regarding the forces internal or external to matter. The discovery of Trembley’s self-reproducing polyp in 1744 demonstrated that matter itself could possess the qualities of autogeneration or automobility, and the “thinking matter” debate, which stemmed from a provocative query by Locke, put defenders of an immortal and immaterial soul further on their heels.<sup>157</sup> Natural philosophers sought to understand the stages and vital processes of life—generation, development of the organs, senescence, sensibility, thought—and, through a variety of experiments and philosophical

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<sup>156</sup>Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, 205. A great place to start for medical and metaphysical debates on the body and soul is Thomas S. Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter: Studies in the History of General Physiology*, 600 B. C. – 1900 A. D. 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969).

<sup>157</sup>Locke’s statement: “God can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a faculty of thinking.” John Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), and, for the “thinking matter” debate in France, see Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism*, and Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, chp. 37 and *Enlightenment Contested*, chps. 29, 33.

conjectures, many thinkers found in the notion of *organisation* a way to account for these processes. *Organisation* became both a mechanical means of describing the arrangement of the organs and a more active way of linking that arrangement to larger vital properties in humans and animals (e.g. Bordeu's metaphor of the swarm of bees).<sup>158</sup> To uncover the process of *organisation* or explain the ways in which a conglomeration of organs, nerves, muscles, and tissues gave rise to thought and sensibility was the key to understanding human life, morality, and society.

The implications of new medical and philosophical speculation brought to the fore a number of critical questions about the vivifying principles of human life. Where did sensibility fit in corporeal *organisation*? Was sensibility a product of *organisation*, or did it inhere in matter itself? Could the sensibility of matter explain the generation of life without spiritual infusion? Could a natural, non-religious ethics be derived from the sensibility of an organized body? These questions increased the pressure on religious thinkers to demonstrate the location and function of the soul in a body clearly organized, activated, and mobilized by natural procedures.

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<sup>158</sup>Although there is a growing recognition of the importance of *organisation* (alongside *matière organisée* and *corps organisé*) to the vocabulary of the eighteenth century, it has not yet received a thorough treatment that analyzes its semantic evolution from the seventeenth century and use in a wide range of metaphysical, medical, religious, and socio-moral arenas. See Karl Figlio, "The Metaphor of Organization: An Historiographical Perspective on the Bio-Medical Sciences of the Early Nineteenth Century," *History of Science* 14 (1976): 17-53; Joseph Schiller, *La notion d'organisation dans l'histoire de la biologie* (Paris: Maloine S. A. éditeur, 1978); Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, "Limitations of the Mechanical Model in the Cartesian Conception of the Organism," in *Descartes: Critical and Interpretive Essays*, ed. Michael Hooker, 152-170 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); L.S. Jacyna, "Immanence or Transcendence: Theories of Life and Organization in Britain, 1790-1835," *ISIS* 74 (1983): 311-329; Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et Développement du vitalisme en France, de la deuxième moitié du 18e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); Harmut Hecht, ed., *Julien Offray de La Mettrie: Ansichten und Einsichten* (Berlin: BWV, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2004); Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2005); Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charles T. Wolfe, "Organisation ou organisme? L'individuation organique selon le vitalisme montpelliérain," *Dix-huitième siècle* 41 (2009): 99-119; Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman, *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), esp. chps. 4-5.

Sensibility figured prominently in the work of medical doctors too. Newton's understanding of active matter and Trembley's polyp showed that mechanical descriptions of the body were incapable of explaining vital processes. Medical doctors looked to forces or properties inherent in the organs themselves to explain growth and development, ratiocination and the formation of sensory networks. Antoine Le Camus (1753) ostensibly conceived a mechanical body, but he endowed the body's fibers with three inherent properties—tonic force, elasticity, muscular force—and observed that sensibility was the defining property of life (“the aptitude to receive impressions from objects”).<sup>159</sup> Albrecht von Haller's (re)discovery of the irritability of muscular fibers and the sensibility of nerves provided a framework for subsequent medical doctors and natural philosophers to link anatomical structure, physiological function, and metaphysical speculation (1752).<sup>160</sup> Organic parts were irritable if they contracted upon physical provocation, and sensible parts were responsible for transmitting external impressions to the soul within the brain, according to Haller.

The most well-known medical response in the debate over which vital forces animate the body arose in Montpellier with a loose confederation of “vitalists,” who defined sympathy in physiological terms.<sup>161</sup> For vitalist physicians Théophile de Bordeu, Paul-Joseph Barthez, Henri

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<sup>159</sup>Mary Terrall, “Material Impressions: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance,” in *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, eds. Helen Deutsch and Mary Terrall, 109-29 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 119.

<sup>160</sup>The inherent mobility and activity of matter was advanced in the seventeenth century by Francis Glisson. See two works by Guido Giglioni, “Anatomist Atheist? The ‘Hylozoistic’ Foundations of Francis Glisson's Anatomical Research,” in *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England*, eds. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham, 115-135 (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company and Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1996), and “Panpsychism versus Hylozoism: An Interpretation of Some Seventeenth-Century Doctrines of Universal Animation,” *Acta Comeniana* 11 (1995): 25-45. Haller's work was contested by Robert Whytt in Edinburgh for positing a principle of consciousness in the brain and by the Montpellier vitalists who objected to experimental procedures because they disrupted vital processes and created an artificial environment. For Haller, see Hubert Steinke, *Irritating Experiments: Haller's Concept and the European Controversy on Irritability and Sensibility, 1750–90* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005).

<sup>161</sup>See Elizabeth Williams' two works, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and*

Fouquet, and Jean-Joseph Ménuret de Chambaud, sensibility was the foundational and spontaneous property of life, from organic fibers to organs. They did not find Haller's distinction between irritability and sensibility to be a productive one. Sensibility alone accounted for both the reception of sensory data and reaction of internal organs to stimulation. The universality of sensibility allowed for a materialist conception of humans necessitating no spiritual principle to guide morality or vitalize bodies.<sup>162</sup>

In Bordeu's view, the nerves were constantly tense, ready to receive an impulse that they transformed and transmitted throughout the interior fibers, tissues, organs, and glands. Bordeu considered organs to be independent; they were sensible and possessed an ability to "feel" their own unique directives. Sympathy became the means of achieving *organisation* for the Montpellier vitalists, another polysemous term in their medical lexicon that overlapped with socio-moral understandings of sensibility. Sympathy was the ability of internal organs to perceive the movement of neighboring organs. Sympathy was also the action that held together and perpetuated human life, as illustrated by the swarm of bees metaphor. But, organs that were overly sympathetic created a constant state of heightened sensibility and thus affective disorder.<sup>163</sup> Whether as one of at least two corporeal attributes, according to Haller, or the

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*Philosophical medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and *A Cultural History of Medical Vitalism in Enlightenment Montpellier* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Rey, *Naissance et Développement du vitalisme en France*; Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment*.

<sup>162</sup>See Dominique Boury, "Irritability and Sensibility: Key Concepts in Assessing the Medical Doctrines of Haller and Bordeu," *Science in Context* 21.4 (2008): 521–535.

<sup>163</sup>Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral*, described Bordeu's overall approach in the following way: "Life was not, then, a unitary phenomenon of the body but the end result of the activities and the interdependent properties of the individual organs. The 'lives' of all the organs of the body functioned in constant reciprocal relations" (38). See also, Charles T. Wolfe and Motoichi Terada, "The Animal Economy as Object and Program in Montpellier Vitalism," *Science in Context* 21.4 (2008): 537–79, and Philippe Huneman, "Montpellier Vitalism and the Emergence of Alienism (1750-1800): The Case of the Passions," in *Ibid.*: 615–647.

Sympathy was most famously and thoroughly explored by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759, updated a number of times through 1790). The faculty of sympathy, for Smith, relied on the disposition of each individual's body and their imaginative capacity to place themselves in the bodies of others. Sympathy was

fundamental principle of life, as for the vitalists, sensibility linked interior organs, exterior sensations, and physical contact between humans.

The natural and spontaneous ability to feel was key to the development of literature in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. As philosophers searched for a moral sense or interior sentiment, derived in part from Locke's view of reflection as an "interior sentiment," novelists created memorable and identifiable characters whose fictional experiences elicited emotion and sympathy from readers. Novels from Madeleine de Scudéry's *Artamène, ou le grand Cyrus* (1649-1653) to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748) and Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1762) were characterized as "sentimental," pertaining to their affective qualities operating through the senses and binding the moral to the physical.<sup>164</sup> Especially in the epistolary novels of Richardson and Rousseau, readers shared the experiences of the characters and, in the process, constructed their own subjectivity as sensual beings by recognizing the emotional autonomy of others (empathy).<sup>165</sup> In contrast to the prevailing framework of the emotions provided by Descartes—solitary, internal disruptions of the soul or passion—emotions

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therefore a social necessity. See Part I, sections 1-2. See Evelyn L. Forget, "Evocations of Sympathy: Sympathetic Imagery in Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Physiology," in *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton*, eds. Neil De Marchi and Margaret Schabas, 282-308 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>164</sup>Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, defined "sentiment" as an "emotional 'movement' in response to a physical sensation" (1) and used it to characterize a distinct strand of empiricism that relied upon sentimental responses alongside, or in contrast to, methodological procedures. Sarah Knott has recognized that physicians too were supposed to display the proper amount of moral sensibility in their profession: *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press and the Omuhundro Institute, 2008), chp. 2.

<sup>165</sup>DeJean, *Ancients versus Moderns*, chp. 3; O'Neal, *The Authority of Experience*, Part II; Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, chp. 1. DeJean highlighted the second half of the seventeenth century as the rise of subjectivity through reading, whereas Hunt argued that it was the particular narrative form of epistolary novels and their often socially-inferior characters that gave birth to empathy. To the latter point, in an analysis of reader responses to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Robert Darnton noted a "young woman [who] wrote that she could identify with Rousseau's characters, unlike those in all the other novels she had read, because they did not occupy a specific social station but rather represented a general way of thinking and feeling, one that everyone could apply to their own lives and thus become more virtuous." Darnton, "Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity," in his *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, 215-256 (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 247.

became relational and interactive, the internal became externalized and the external internalized.<sup>166</sup>

“Sentiment” and “sympathy” became moral guides in sensationalist physiology, rather than the erratic passions, which deepened the connection between the well-organized, feeling body and a refined, elevated, or sociable morality. Although sensibility, compassion, sympathy, and fellow-feeling were considered natural in humans, these qualities still needed to be cultivated. This education could take place either at home, in *le monde*, or even privately by reading sentimental novels.<sup>167</sup> The moral realm of feeling was as instrumental to “enlightenment” as reason.<sup>168</sup>

Through three distinct paths—Locke’s epistemology, the new “affective vocabulary” propounded by late-seventeenth-century novelists, and medical conceptions of *organisation*—the ability to feel became the *sine qua non* of epistemology and morality. In 1746, Marquis d’Argens challenged the Cartesian heritage and proclaimed: “I believe that one could just as easily prove existence by saying I sense, therefore I am, as by saying I think, therefore I am.”<sup>169</sup> The moral and epistemological centrality of “feeling” merged with the embryonic concept of society by the 1750s. Linking the two not only prioritized the corporeal aspects of the social

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<sup>166</sup>DeJean, *Ancients versus Moderns*, 92.

<sup>167</sup>It should be said that the latter evoked fears that young girls would create idealistic illusions and perform reading practices in solitary environments away from society. Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 55-59, and Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 50-58. For one example, Abbé Charles Batteux found novels to be dangerous to young girls because they powerfully stir the passions: *Les Beaux arts réduits à un seul principe* (1746).

<sup>168</sup>The Enlightenment’s most influential polymath, Diderot, wondered “How unfortunate would those children be who had never seen their parents’ tears flow at the recounting of a generous action.” Diderot’s entry “Locke, philosophie de” in the *Encyclopédie* IX (1765), quoted in Terrall, “Material Impressions: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance,” 110-111.

<sup>169</sup>Quoted in David W. Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 42.

hierarchy and *états*, and reinvigorated images of the body politic, but the combination also forced the human body to the forefront of social thought. If society was to be the fundamental ground of human interaction, then each individual's sensory experience constituted the origins of their ability to interact. Society was an empty space that necessitated embodiment; the organizing principle, so to speak, of society came to be *organisation* itself.

*Embodying Society: Diderot, the Blind, and Natural Law*

Denis Diderot merged a new understanding of society with the human body, and his work serves as a representative vignette of the changes articulated in this chapter. Not only did he have a life-long interest in all aspects of the “feeling” body, but he nearly single-handedly brought the word “social” into the French lexicon.<sup>170</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Diderot struggled with the question whether sensibility was a product of *organisation* or a property of matter. He nevertheless linked matter, thought, and social action through sensibility: “Assuming that sensibility were indeed the first germ (or seed) of thought, if it were a general property of matter; if, distributed unequally through all of nature, it acted with more or less energy according to the variety of organization. What disturbing consequence could we draw from that? None at all. Man will always be what he is, judged by the good and the bad uses he makes of his faculties.”<sup>171</sup> Diderot would go on to conclude in his unpublished *Le Rêve de d'Alembert* (1769) that the ability to feel and perceive were the radical properties of organic matter and corporeal components of humans. He thus made an argument similar to that of Théophile de Bordeu, who was the primary character in *Le Rêve*. Human life resulted from the interdependence of sensible,

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<sup>170</sup>Mintzker, “A Word Newly Introduced into Language,” 508-513.

<sup>171</sup>Diderot's entry “Locke, philosophie de” in the *Encyclopédie* IX (1765), quoted in Terrall, “Material Impressions: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance,” 111.



organic parts; human thought and social commerce were forged simultaneously through the interaction of the senses with different environments and through internal mechanisms of communication converting sensory data into cognitive thought and moral action.<sup>172</sup>

Early in his literary career, Diderot was already focused on the necessary relationship between a healthy, sensual body and the circulation of social passions and virtues. In his *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749), Diderot addressed the long-standing Molyneux problem—whether a person blind from birth, who became suddenly capable of sight, could recognize objects having had no sensory experience of them or innate ideas. Diderot slipped into his analysis a social interpretation of the blind.<sup>173</sup> Much of his text is taken up with two blind men, notably the savant Nicholas Saunderson (Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge).<sup>174</sup> The blind, Diderot concluded, reasoned like geometers, abstractly and in solitude. Caught up in a solipsistic world exemplified by the disembodied Cartesian “ego,” the blind were capable of sensations but not “feelings.” They lacked the ability to convert external, physiological sensations into the moral realm of *sensibilité*. Their antisocial disposition and absence of imagination as a cognitive faculty deprived them of empathy.<sup>175</sup>

At a moment when Diderot and French thinkers in general increasingly worried about the nature of “society,” the blind seemed to combine the worst features of sensory deprivation and an

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<sup>172</sup>The “internal mechanisms of communication” were conceptualized by the action/reaction dyad. For the place of action/reaction in eighteenth-century philosophy and physiology, see Jean Starobinski, *Action and Reaction: The Life and Adventures of a Couple*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2003).

<sup>173</sup>This paragraph owes much to Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, chp. 2.

<sup>174</sup>I have used Diderot’s *Letters on the Blind* contained in Diderot, *Thoughts on the Interpretation of Nature and Other Philosophical Works*, intro. and annotated David Adams (Manchester: Clinamen Press, 1999). In 1782-3, Diderot appended a short “Addition to the preceding letter” in which he discussed the blind niece of his lover Sophie Volland, Mademoiselle Melanie de Salignac.

<sup>175</sup>*Ibid.*, 158, 197.

overly-rationalistic, mathematical mind. The Molyneux problem became transformed in the hands of Diderot and his French contemporaries. The problem of blindness revolved around the dual meaning of sensibility—linking moral sensibility to physical sensibility—and hinged on the importance of both for social interaction. The blind were often “inhumane,” even though their other senses were abnormally heightened.<sup>176</sup> As Diderot moved toward a Vitalist-tinged materialism and non-religious ethics, he hinted that “the state of our organs and our senses has a great influence on our metaphysics and our morality...Our virtues depend so much on the sensations we receive and the degree by which we are affected by external things.”<sup>177</sup> Deprived of sight, the blind operate at both a sensory and moral deficit.

The ability to feel linked the physical and the moral together, replacing the previous binary of mind(soul)/body.<sup>178</sup> Instead of two separate substances or two separate faculties working in tandem, sensibility united the physical and the moral on one epistemological and moral spectrum. Blindness or deafness impaired one’s sensory experience and thus limited the cultivation of sympathy or social propriety. Although philosophes, and often a number of their religious opponents, touted reason as *the* tool of reform and path to truth, “feeling” was an equally important corporeal instrument.

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<sup>176</sup>Ibid., 156, 194. For heightened senses of the blind, see 154, 171, 195. Diderot interviewed a man from Puisaux “born blind” who, despite a rambunctious and pleasurable youth, spent his days shut up at home, preferring to keep waking hours opposite his kin so as not to be in the way (150).

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., 155-156.

<sup>178</sup>Sergio Moravia, “‘Moral’ – ‘Physique’: genesis and evolution of a ‘rapport’,” in *Enlightenment Studies in honour of Lester G. Crocker*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio, 163-174 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1979).

The *Encyclopédie* articles “Droit naturel” (Diderot) and “Loi naturelle” (unknown) illustrate the tension of balancing both corporeal properties.<sup>179</sup> “Droit naturel” is generally considered important to eighteenth-century political thought because Diderot put forward an interpretation of the general will prior to Rousseau’s *Du contrat social* (1762). Within his vague description of the general will and its role in clarifying natural rights, he signaled his commitment to both “reason” (as the “means for discovering truth”) and “feeling.” Diderot appealed to the “general will” to define the parameters of natural rights. Human choices and actions were not the product of “incorporeal substances” but of the passions and needs that humans feel (*se sentir*). Those who do not conform to “truth” once it is discovered through the application of reason are “mad” (*insensé*), according to Diderot. And, the unfeeling enemy of the human race “listens” only to his private will, while “the general will is in each individual a pure act of understanding that reasons in the silence of the passions about what man can demand of his fellow man.” Diderot’s sensual language here belied his insistence on reason. In his opening paragraph, he suggested that “natural law” was a term familiar to all because it was an “interior feeling” (*sentiment intérieur*).<sup>180</sup> Diderot naturalized a previously spiritual concept to assert that natural law was virtually innate. Humans “felt” social bonds, and Diderot expected

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<sup>179</sup>Diderot, “Droit naturel” (morale), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, vol. X (1755): 115-116, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>.

<sup>180</sup>The term *sentiment intérieur* was not specific to sensationalist philosophy and was used from at least the late-seventeenth century to the early nineteenth. Its meaning changed depending on user and context, but essentially it connoted a locus of emotion, selfhood, or conscience (either divinely or naturally drawing individuals toward the good). By midcentury, the notion of a *sentiment intérieur* embraced both spiritual and sensual understandings. See Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 26-7, 56. The Chevalier de Jaucourt used the same phrase in his article to describe *civilité* (an “interior feeling consistent with reason”): “Civilité, Politesse, Affabilité” (Grammaire, Morale), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, vol. III (1753): 497, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>. Jacques-Henri Meister, to be discussed in chp. 3, defined “conscience” as the “interior sentiment” that agrees or disagrees with the nature of our being. Meister, *De la morale naturelle, Du Bonheur des Sots* (Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2011), 69.

the arguments he put forward to be acceptable to “sensible men” (*hommes sensés*). While Diderot seemed to harness the power of reason as a superior weapon against the intractable and dangerous passions, his position is less clear when we observe the consistent appeal to the senses and an interior feeling. Like the blind and deaf, humans who resisted the powerful, rational call of natural law were lacking in sense; the ability to feel manifested selfhood and recognition of the autonomy of others.

The author of the *Encyclopédie* article “Loi naturelle” similarly mixed reason and feeling to arrive at a moral truth.<sup>181</sup> The truth of natural law could be found through reason, according to the unknown author; it was written at “the bottom of our soul” and engraved on our hearts “in characters so beautiful, expressions so strong, and traces [*traits*] so luminous that it cannot be rendered unrecognizable.”<sup>182</sup> The body is metaphorically imprinted with the tenets of natural law, but the author’s vocabulary subtly slid from metaphor to ontological supposition. In translating a passage from Cicero’s *De Legibus* (*On the Laws*), the author used a specific phrase connoting a physiological process that did not appear in Cicero: “Natural law is not an invention of the human mind, nor is it an arbitrary establishment made by the people [*les peuples*]; natural law is the impression of eternal reason that governs the universe.” By invoking the concept of an “impression,” the author called to mind one process by which external sensory data was thought to be transmitted to the brain via the animal spirits or an ethereal fluid, which create grooves, traces, or impressions on the brain. Natural law as a moral principle, then, required the body to

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<sup>181</sup>Unknown, “Loi naturelle” (morale), *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, vol. IX (1765): 665-666, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed), <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>.

<sup>182</sup>One of the definitions for “trait” put forward in the *Dictionnaire de l’Académie française* (fourth edition, 1762) was “une ligne qu’on trace avec la plume.” The *Dictionnaire* also accessed through the ARTFL site.

receive and access impressions. Even if strong passions can hide or render numb the impression of eternal reason, the author declared, the impression itself was ineffaceable.

As a brief survey of Diderot's work demonstrates, instead of a shift from rationalism to sensationalism, or "sensualism," it is perhaps better to depict the eighteenth century as a period of overlap.<sup>183</sup> The key was the new language of "feeling" that united the physiological, moral, and social. Philosophers, moralists, political economists, and doctors developed an "alertness to the sensory environment" unique to the eighteenth century.<sup>184</sup> The bodies moving in society received and sent out sensory transmissions, and their material interaction affected all of the senses.<sup>185</sup> Those same bodies, as we will see in Part II, were also affected by the plethora of material objects that characterized commercial society. Passions were no longer considered inherently irrational, and opinions differed as to how one controlled the passions: from a rationalist's ability to will them away to a materialist's acceptance that certain *organisations* simply "felt" at an accelerated rate or in an abnormal manner.<sup>186</sup> Thinkers unwilling to abandon either institutionalized religion (Catholic or Protestant) or some form of spirituality navigated

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<sup>183</sup>Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex*. Like sensationalism, there was never a singular "rationalism" either. As with Diderot, Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Suard condensed the activities of reason and feeling: "There are virtues that are the sole fruit of knowledge. The very word *humanity* was absolutely unknown in the era of ignorance. It is a virtue of educated people, that can only be born in souls whose natural sensibility has been purified by reflection." Quoted in William M. Reddy, *Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 160.

<sup>184</sup>Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: Picador, 1994), 5-6.

<sup>185</sup>For an analysis of corporeal functions and the senses in support of and in contrast to a Cartesian paradigm, see Erec Koch, *The Aesthetic Body: Passions, Sensibility, and Corporeality in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008).

<sup>186</sup>For example, Julien Offray de La Mettrie wrote: "For what equity is there to take the life of a wretch, who is the slave of the blood galloping in his veins, as the hand of a watch is the slave of the works which make it move?" *Anti-Seneca, or the Sovereign Good (Discours sur le bonheur)*, in *Machine Man and other writings*, ed. and trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143. For a recent look at the pessimism regarding the rational ability to control passions, see E. C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), chp. 5.

through corporeal properties to account for an “internal feeling” and to demonstrate the relationship between society and the body. Even supporters of the social hierarchy could not dismiss the language of the senses and the necessity of a well-organized body to ensure the fluidity of social interaction.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***The Natural Law of Feeling Beings***

With the pervasive influence of sensationalist physiology and the language of the senses, the realms of cognition and morality became indivisible. From midcentury to the 1780s, attention to sensibility generated a variety of opinions regarding social interaction. The plane of contention shifted to the corporeal, as knowledge of the body became integral for thinkers who wanted to populate society with sympathetic, sensible bodies. As Diderot indicated in “Droit naturel,” natural law was not only a clear and distinct idea, but it was also a “feeling” that human beings shared. Diderot’s contemporaries Abbé François-André-Adrien Pluquet, Dominique-Joseph Garat, and Jacques-Henri Meister similarly argued that natural law could be felt. For them, nature intended humans to be happy, which they defined as feeling the benefits of social commerce. The “natural law of feeling beings” was to seek out happiness in the company of others. This process, though, grew from the connection between moral and physical sensibility. Without a body calibrated to properly absorb the verbal and non-verbal forms of social interaction (e.g. kindness, empathy), society would deteriorate into a set of disorganized beings. The bedrock of the social order and social interaction was the sensible body.

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Although Pluquet, Garat, and Meister were intellectually disparate, they highlighted the primacy of the corporeal in the new thinking about society. In fact, their distinctiveness lends credence to the argument that the corporeal became the contested terrain of social interaction. Additionally, none of these thinkers were trained doctors, nor could they be considered

*médecins-philosophes*. Their willingness to marshal corporeal evidence cannot be viewed as a product of medical training. Therefore, their knowledge of physiology and the senses, and their application of that knowledge to society, is a sign that eighteenth-century social thought had come to be rooted in the human body.

Abbé François-André-Adrien Pluquet (1716-1790) cast the natural pursuit of happiness in the guiding hand of a Supreme Being.<sup>187</sup> Pluquet's extensive *De la sociabilité* (1767) laid a corporeal foundation for social interaction that transcended potential religious and political disagreements and blurred the line between "feeling" and "reason." *De la sociabilité* also garnered much attention as an implied critique of Rousseau's view of man as not naturally sociable in *Discours sur l'origine et fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755).

Pluquet's most famous works, however, attacked heterodox thought: *Examen du fatalisme, ou Exposition et réfutation des différents systèmes de fatalism*, 3 vols. (1757) and *Dictionnaire des hérésies* (1762).<sup>188</sup> By the time he published *De la sociabilité*, Pluquet had become a well-respected man of letters, even refusing an offer to contribute to the *Encyclopédie*, and was appointed professor of moral theology at the Collège de France (1766).<sup>189</sup> Pluquet would later

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<sup>187</sup>See *De la sociabilité*, Vol. I, Section II, chp 2, article XI, 380-399.

<sup>188</sup>See Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212-3; Patrick Coleman, "The Enlightened Orthodoxy of the Abbé Pluquet," in *Histories of Heresy in Early Modern Europe: For, Against, and Beyond Persecution and Toleration*, ed. John Christian Laursen, 223-238 (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2002). Pluquet was certainly not alone in his fears of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy. See also the classic work of R. R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1939); Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2001); Guy Chaussinaud-Nogaret, *Comment Peut-on Être un Intellectuel au Siècle des Lumières?* (Brussels: André Versailles, 2011), 83-97.

<sup>189</sup>The "invitation" is still speculative. According to Patrick Coleman, Pluquet's *Dictionnaire des hérésies* resembles the organization and cross-referencing strategy of the *Encyclopédie*. Coleman, "The Enlightened Orthodoxy of the Abbé Pluquet," 224. Pluquet was certainly not an opponent of natural philosophy; he praised Bacon, Gassendi, and Descartes (*De la sociabilité*, II, 6).



bring the weight of his crusade against materialism and his passionate plea for providential, corporeally-grounded sociability to bear on the problem of luxury in *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe* (1786). *De la sociabilité* signifies Pluquet's initial efforts to portray his criticisms of materialism and the burgeoning *philosophes* in a social frame, but it also demonstrates how he adapted contemporary theories of the body to instantiate his fears of social disorder. By collapsing together theological, metaphysical, social, *and* physiological ideas, abbé Pluquet sought to take back the principles of *sensibilité* and *organisation* so crucial to his materialist counterparts.<sup>190</sup>

In contrast to Pluquet, Dominique-Joseph Garat (1749-1833) and Jacques-Henri Meister (1744-1826) argued that the goal of society should be the happiness of individuals, eschewing the need for supernatural guidance or a divinely-sanctioned hierarchy.<sup>191</sup> Garat's notable *Éloges* to abbé Suger (1779) and Michel de l'Hôpital (1778) represent the early socio-political thought of a future revolutionary; they represent too his process of using the corporeal to work through elements of the French past and present. During the French Revolution, Garat served in two ministerial roles under the Republic and was a member of the Idéologue group after the establishment of the Directory.<sup>192</sup> In this capacity, Garat created and briefly taught a course at

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<sup>190</sup>For Pluquet on luxury and sociability, see Henry C. Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), chp. 8, and his "Commerce, Sociability, and the Public Sphere: Morellet vs. Pluquet on Luxury," *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 22.2 (May 1998): 83-103.

<sup>191</sup>Jacques Necker's name appeared on the 1788 cover of *De la morale naturelle* ("M. Necker"), but Michael Sonenscher has argued that it was written by the Swiss Jacques-Henri Meister the previous year. Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 221, note 42. Meister published a new, extended edition in 1788. I will consider Meister the correct author and am using the following text, which disseminated the 1787 version: *De la morale naturelle, Suivie du bonheur des sots* (1788) (Breinigsville, PA: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2011).

<sup>192</sup>David Andress, *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005). Andress does not mention Garat's role with the Idéologues or his schematic educational plan noted next. See too Jeremy Popkin, "Saint-Domingue, Slavery, and the Origins of the French Revolution," in *From Deficit to Deluge: The Origins of the French Revolution*, eds., Thomas E. Kaiser and Dale K. Van Kley, 220-248 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 319, n. 88 (see also 244-5, 248).

the École normale (1795) that analyzed epistemological stages of the “understanding” (*entendement*). Garat’s course formed a link with the sensationalist program of the Idéologues and the Class of Moral and Political Sciences created by the French National Institute. Garat claimed to have meditated on this material for twenty years, thus marking the *Éloges* as central to his early understanding of society and the body.<sup>193</sup>

Meister’s esoteric work, *De la morale naturelle* (1787), crystallizes the trends found in Garat, Pluquet, and the writers from chapter two. By the late 1780s, this “Cosmopolitan Swiss” was, at various times, both a follower and opponent of Rousseau and Voltaire, friend of Diderot, Melchior Grimm, Jacques Necker, and Germaine de Staël, and editor of the *Correspondance littéraire* (1773-1813).<sup>194</sup> Although generally considered a literary man of letters, Meister wrote critically of religion in 1768 (*De l’origine des principes religieux*), critically of the early stages of the French Revolution in a 1790 pamphlet (*Des premiers principes du système social appliqués à la révolution présente*), and critically in 1795 of the violence of the Republic (*Mes souvenirs personnels du commencement de la révolution*). He would look back at the causes of the Revolution and judge *la philosophie, les philosophes*, and the increased dissemination of knowledge as having been responsible for subverting religion and co-opting public opinion

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<sup>193</sup>Caroline Warman, “Les Éléments de physiologie de Diderot: inconnus ou clandestine? Les cas de Garat,” in *Les Lumières en mouvement: La circulation des idées au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Isabelle Moreau, 65-89 (Paris: ÉNS, 2009), 76. According to Warman, Garat drew on and replicated parts of Diderot’s unpublished *Éléments de physiologie*. See also Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 187-194, 210-216, and Jonathan Israel, *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

<sup>194</sup>Yvonne de Athayde Grubenmann, *Un Cosmopolite Suisse: Jacques-Henri Meister (1744-1826)* (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1954), and Simone Zurbuchen, “Les philosophes et la révolution : L’analyse de Jacques Henri Meister,” *Carrefour*, v. 24, n. 1 (2002): 85-98. Later in life, Meister would return to his earlier religiosity and reject aspects of Voltaire and Rousseau that he previously admired.

(1806, *Des causes générales et particulières de la puissante influence obtenue par la philosophie dans le dix-huitième siècle*).<sup>195</sup> On the eve of the French Revolution, though, Meister argued that the corporeal should replace the supernatural and would serve as a better grounding for society than the “hydra with twenty million heads, as incapable of willing as of obeying, of acting as of thinking” that the revolutionaries sought to generate.<sup>196</sup>

These three authors—a philosopher/theologian, a socio-political thinker and future revolutionary, and an itinerant literary *philosophe* critical of his intellectual milieu—display the struggle of Enlightenment thinkers to balance the role of reason with that of the corporeal constraints of a “feeling,” sensitive body. More than that, they grounded sociability and moral sensibility in the “well-organized” body. By analyzing their works in three stages, we get a sharper image of this method in action. Their conceptions of humans as naturally sociable, their interpretations of “human nature” as a series of corporeal processes, and their efforts to rethink the role of *états* according to *organisation* reveal that individual bodies were the key to social intercourse.

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As we saw in the previous chapter, two concepts shaped eighteenth-century goals of society: the pursuit of happiness and social utility. The former could only take place in society, and, for Garat, Meister, and Pluquet, the natural, sociable disposition of humans incorporated both.<sup>197</sup> Meister’s *De la morale naturelle* was geared toward *l’homme social* (63), the individual

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<sup>195</sup>For this point, see Zurbuchen, “Les philosophes et la révolution : L’analyse de Jacques Henri Meister.”

<sup>196</sup>From Meister’s *Des premiers principes du système social appliqués à la révolution présente*, quoted in Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 35.

<sup>197</sup>In what follows, I will cite page numbers for Meister and Pluquet’s works within the text.

necessarily connected to others. “Man can no longer be considered as an isolated being,” Meister proclaimed, “his moral existence depends on his relations with his fellow man, and this existence can only become happier in the *milieu* of our grand societies” (61-2). Garat’s *Éloges* to abbé Suger (1779) and Michel de l’Hôpital (1778) are rife with concerns for *le bonheur public*. Even though nature “made man a social being,” Garat concluded, six-hundred years had elapsed since the life of abbé Suger with no advancement in the happiness of society.<sup>198</sup> In both *Éloges*, Garat emphasized the positive attributes of Suger and Hôpital that resonated with his contemporaries; he used the *Éloges* to criticize the eighteenth century, drawing perhaps too from his own experiences in *le monde* as a frequent guest in the household of J.B. Suard and in the well-known Masonic lodge *Neuf Soeurs*. Garat found contemporary society to be addicted to luxury, marks of distinction, and the distribution of symbols according to *état*. In contrast, he defined “virtue”—a term with renewed importance after Montesquieu’s political/moral typology in *De l’esprit des lois* (1748)—as simply a passion for the happiness of individuals brought together in society.<sup>199</sup> “Man is born in order to be happy and good, not in order to astonish and strive for celebrity,” Garat implored, and the desire for happiness is the “first natural law of all feeling [*sensible*] beings” that leads individuals to associate.<sup>200</sup> Meister and Pluquet shared the premise that the human body registered natural happiness in accordance with social commerce.

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<sup>198</sup>Garat, *Éloge de Suger...Discours qui a remporté le prix au jugement de l’Académie Française, en 1779* (Paris, 1779), 45. Garat originated from the Basque region, but he came to Paris in 1777 where he quickly established literary notoriety (writing for the *Journal de Paris* and *Mercure de France*) and social acceptability through the Suard household and the Masonic lodge *Neuf Soeurs*. Garat’s governmental experiences during various phases of the Revolution and Napoleonic period cemented his legacy. For his pre-Revolutionary work, with which I am concerned, see Michel Duhart, *Dominique-Joseph Garat (1749-1833)* (Biarritz: Atlantica, 2009, orig. pub. 1994), 27-63.

<sup>199</sup>Garat, *Éloge de Michel de l’Hôpital* (Paris, 1778), 11. For another reading of this text, see Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 273-282.

<sup>200</sup>*Ibid.*, 78.

Pluquet opened his wide-ranging *De la sociabilité* with a rational reconstruction of the state of nature to illustrate the principles of social organization, and he placed natural sociability at the base of all interaction. The principles of natural sociability should precede all disciplines of knowledge and legislative thought. Humans could only achieve happiness by following nature, which “conducts all humans to the peace and happiness for which she has destined them by the principles of sociability interior to all” (xviii). Nature created humans weak in order to force them to unite together and forge reciprocal links; the ability to create societies, alongside the capacity to reason, made humans unique and superior to animals (I, 32, 88-90, 153). Over two volumes, Pluquet addressed the state of nature, the socially-useful and socially-harmful passions, and the role of the sovereign in channeling the activities of subjects toward society. His refrain, however, was always the irreducibility of sociability as a natural part of corporeal *organisation*.

Garat, Meister, and Pluquet shared a second framework that coupled the body and society. When they invoked the power of nature (*la nature de l’homme* or *la nature humaine*), they implied something less abstract and more material: the human body. The process of transforming society required knowledge of corporeal properties, particularly the ability to feel and the interrelated moral and physical realm characteristic of sensationalism. According to Garat, the legislator must “know the nature of man...[and] must have especially...a good theory of all the sensations that are converted into sentiments, in order to distinguish those that are proper to produce social affections and those on the contrary that awaken in hearts passions that are socially-disruptive [*des passions funestes à la société*].”<sup>201</sup> Morality for Garat began with the

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<sup>201</sup>Garat, *Éloge de Michel de l’Hôpital*, 81. Garat wrote this for another *concours* sponsored by the Académie Française, but he was unable to submit it in time. Nearly half of the text consists of “Notes,” which are more engaging than the *éloge* itself. The “note” from which this quote was extracted dealt specifically with the definition

senses and the impressionability of humans; the ability to feel grounded morality in the physical body and demanded a social environment characterized by virtue, sociability, and empathy.<sup>202</sup>

Garat found a common, yet debilitating, link between pre-civilized man and many of his own contemporaries: they were both led just by their sensations. The only lively sentiments experienced by pre-civilized man were for physical needs, and modern man experienced desires only for the egoistic and dazzling pleasures of luxury.<sup>203</sup> A society of individuals whose bodies were bound to their individual sensations lacks “all the sentiments that nature inspired in them to render them sociable,” a simultaneous principle of reason and interior feeling.<sup>204</sup> In dissecting the interaction between the legislator and citizens/subjects, Garat invoked three of the eighteenth-century’s key words: nature, happiness, and society. Nature created humans to be social and to desire happiness; the latter was to be found through the former, and both were contingent on the ability to feel. Garat claimed that, in contrast to the ancients, the eighteenth century had uniquely discovered that “all the links that constitute the social order” were corporeal.<sup>205</sup> This was especially true of children, whose physical bodies and moral capacities were shaped by their education and environment. Inveterate habits forged at a young age

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of “la nature de l’homme” and “la nature des choses.” Garat recognized that the terms were abstract but necessary, and he proceeded to define them.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., 78. In a discussion of jurisprudence and the work of Cesare Beccaria (*On Crimes and Punishment*, 1764), Garat deepened his argument that legislators needed knowledge of human nature because they would be able to foresee the circumstances in which passions reign and because relying on the memory and testimony of witnesses (based on sensations and character) could endanger legal procedures (63-69). Garat also agreed with Beccaria that the letter of the laws should be followed, not interpreted by *jurisconsultes*, but he added the importance of the legislator in creating laws and social institutions based on human nature that would severely curtail crimes.

<sup>203</sup>For luxury, see Garat, *Éloge de Suger*, 17, and *Éloge de l’Hôpital*, 23, 88, 91.

<sup>204</sup>Garat, *Éloge de l’Hôpital*, 4.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid., 11-12, 78.

become corporeally ingrained, and a society that prized self-interest and wealth blunted natural sentiments early in life.

Like Garat, Meister's vision of society was a product of contemporary understandings of the body. Meister equated eighteenth-century society to a whirlwind (*tourbillon*) of prejudices, tastes, opinions, vain disputes, and politically-sanctioned religious customs that distracted its members from the fundamental basis of human interaction: "Upon self-reflection, I perceived that that which determined all my actions are either purely physical and nearly involuntary impressions, or an initial feeling [*premier sentiment*] which is hardly less, or the memory of a series of reflections to which experience and habit have given fervor" (9-10).<sup>206</sup> The ability to feel physically and thus morally, with which all humans were endowed, should determine social interaction, according to Meister. Reflecting on his own corporeal experiences led Meister to depict the "order of nature" through the human body (16-8): ideas derived from sensations, and habits formed from the physical repetition of activities. In order for social interaction to be smooth and fluid, individuals must test their sensibility and find the proper balance. The extremes of feeling too much or too little either harden the body to social commerce or weaken the body to the point of delicacy and fragility (56, 125-126). We can know our obligations and duties to society rationally, but feeling the *premier sentiment* is the most basic definition of morality: "knowledge of the means which can assure us enough of an empire over our faculties, in order to make the best usage possible of them; it is the science of the habits proper to perfect [*perfectionner*] our being, to conduct us to the state of the most constant happiness" (19).<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>206</sup>It is worth noting that *tourbillon* was the term used by Descartes to describe the motion of the universe filled with matter (no void). In the 1788 edition, Meister extended his complaint that modern society had corrupted the natural disposition and sentiments of individuals (see chp. VI, "Morale du sentiment").

<sup>207</sup>Meister argued not only that forging the proper habits was necessary to an individual's and society's growth, but that each person must exercise her faculties and avoid languor through physical labor (54, 133, 143).

Sensibility preceded humans' rational capacity, but the two faculties worked in tandem to ensure that the passions (or natural sentiments)—the love of liberty, shame, modesty, empathy, ambition—corrupted neither society nor one's internal disposition (66).

Pluquet wielded an entire corporeal vocabulary to elaborate *la nature humaine*: *disposition, tempérament, constitution*, and, most importantly, *organisation*. All of the tenets of “nature” and the characteristics necessary for “society” could be found in the human body. Although Pluquet noted regional variations in bodies—climate, education, and *moeurs*—he argued that humans possess a universal *organisation* capable of registering and fulfilling basic physical needs, translating sense data into impressions (information), storing this information in memory, and reflecting upon it (I, 82, 287).<sup>208</sup> Reason was the “torch” or “lights” that guided humans to understand their reciprocal relationships (I, 91); yet, the most important attribute of human bodies was the ability to feel social connections. Individuals were naturally-constituted for sociability. Not only did they need each other to defend from animal aggressors and obtain sustenance in early societies, but nature built human bodies sensitive to the moral existence of others: “In order to distinguish actions that are useful or harmful to others, man received from nature an *organisation* which makes him feel [*ressentir*] the good and the bad that they feel [*éprouver*]” (I, 123; II, 13-14). Human bodies were the sources of sociability, just as nature intended. This interior feeling could be blunted or stifled in bodies hardened by destructive

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<sup>208</sup>The human *organisation* was not self-activating, however; it did not possess any inherent motion or sensibility but relied for its movement and life on active, intelligent, immaterial beings (I, 361-2; II, 4-9). Pluquet's conception of the relationship between sensibility and the soul may have been influenced by Haller (see chp. 2), since Pluquet argued too that the ultimate destination of impressions is the soul. Bodies were constructed by a Supreme Being and possessed an immaterial soul. The Supreme Being gave existence to all men, “submitted them to all the needs that they feel, and arranged on the earth everything needed to satisfy them. [It] deposited in man's heart the germ of all the social virtues, and the desire for immortality; [it] gave to man the faculty of memory and the ability to reason, the desire to know, and arranged all the phenomena of nature.” All of this the Supreme Being placed “in the *organisation* of man's bodies and in the multitude and development of his needs and inclinations” (II, 2-3).



corporeal habits, as Pluquet feared in a world of materialist philosophy and luxury, but it could not be totally erased (I, 348; II, 53, 308-311). What Pluquet defined as *une loi naturelle* (I, 346) was timeless, corporeal, and should serve to undergird society.<sup>209</sup> Yet, it would be undermined by neo-Epicureans, materialists, and fatalists, such as Bernard Mandeville, Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza, and La Mettrie, who claimed to find utility in the most ignoble passions. Pluquet repeated often that nature gave to mankind the ability to reason and the inherent drive to find happiness in benevolence (*bienveillance*) and goodwill (*amitié*), characteristics that were on the brink of extinction when mankind turned toward luxury and corporeal pleasures.

Pluquet paired a moral vocabulary of the social virtues with a corporeal vocabulary. The social virtues (or *le sentiment de l'humanité*, I, 116; II, 13) were embodied, but they could only flourish in a body whose organs and sensory network were properly disposed. The physiology of corporeal conservation processed sensations similar to the way it processed social interaction:

The disposition of the organs is such that it carries to the brain all the impressions from exterior bodies. The creative intelligence united to this part of the human body a soul, and it established that the impressions made on the brain would produce in the soul either pleasurable or painful feelings, according to whether or not the impressions were useful or contrary to the conservation of the body” (II, 12-13).<sup>210</sup>

Pluquet argued throughout *De la sociabilité* that sentiments derived from sensibility. Individuals communicated their emotions through all of the senses, and, just as the touch of a hot stove initiates a series of sensory operations, by the connection of the *organisation* and sensibility

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<sup>209</sup>Pluquet provided a general definition of society in vol. II, chp. IV.

<sup>210</sup>This position is similar to that of Albrecht von Haller, who argued that sensible parts transmitted external impressions to the soul. See chapter two. Pluquet claimed that humans did not process the images of an agreeable fruit, for example, in the same way they did a suffering individual; nature’s *organisation* equipped humans with a sentiment or sensibility that somehow felt social interaction differently (II, 14-15; I, 107). Pluquet struggled, though, to clearly articulate this difference, and it remains clear that bodies were affected by stimuli in one manner. For Rousseau’s similar differentiation between “feeling” and “sensing,” see John C. O’Neal, *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 86-87.

humans express their happiness and pain. In the process of expression, they communicate with and to their spectators (I, 119):

Cries, moans, and tears act on the organs of other humans, and their organs shaken [*ébranlés*] by this stimuli convey the impressions to their soul. Their soul is found affected by the image of pain, so to speak, as wax is stamped by the imprint of a seal. Such is the nature of the human soul and of its union with the body that it cannot be moved by the image of pain without itself feeling the sentiment. In this way, by the corporeal *organisation*, if one suffers, his soul acts not only on the organs in order to manifest the feelings, but also on the souls of all others, which makes those who hear his cries or see his tears feel his pain (I, 109).

Individual bodies record and share the pleasures and pains of others, linking the immaterial soul and material sensations of one organized body to another in an empathetic relationship and a totalizing social web of empathy. The transmission of such emotion and the corporeal reception by neighboring bodies describes the principles necessary to society that Pluquet labeled *amitié* and *reconnaissance*. Essentially, *amitié* “is the pleasure produced by the resemblance that a man perceives between himself and others,” which generates universal, moral harmony just as gravitational attraction does in the physical universe (I, 214-216). Feeling *amitié* is the natural state of *organisation*, and *reconnaissance* is “the sentiment of attachment and zeal produced by the memory of a kindness or service” (I, 164-165). We are naturally compelled to please others and strive to earn their esteem; nature, therefore, placed within us a corporeal reward for doing so. Our cognitive faculty of memory recompenses our beneficent actions, or those actions of which we were the beneficiary, by reproducing the sensory elation when we recall the *bienfait* or *bienfaiteur*. Pluquet linked the metaphor of the rebirth of sentiments in one’s heart (I, 164) with the physical retracing of the impression on the brain during the process of *reconnaissance*. The image of an individual with whom we are in perfect *amitié* makes on our brain “an impression more profound than all other objects; the animal spirits accustomed to circulating in the traces that represent it to us do not permit us to forget. The idea

exists always in our memory as one of kindness and fellow-feeling, which cannot be effaced from our memory and continues to exist in our mind and heart” (I, 213). Our *organisation*, then, is programmed to be sociable and love all members of society. When individuals stray from this path by engaging in self-interested or voluptuous activities, they suffer the pain of a disordered *corps*; the fleeting sensations of pleasure cannot compare to the enduring sentiments of sociability (I, 154).<sup>211</sup>

Although Meister’s *De la morale naturelle* could be considered a set of meditations compared to Pluquet’s sweeping *De la sociabilité*, Meister nevertheless advocated a similar set of corporeal-social principles; he still envisioned human nature as corporeally bound. We do not need to rationalize the fact that we “feel,” according to Meister, and he named *des premiers sentiments* our inherent ability to empathize with others (chp. 2). In a manner reminiscent of Condillac’s famous statue, Meister described the process by which we form an individual identity separate from the objects that surround us and strike our sensory organs. Yet, instead of releasing individuals from the flurry of sense data, Meister perpetuated the incorporation; the collision of individual bodies blurs the physical and the moral, exposing compassion and empathy as involuntary, physiological reactions (14-15). The problem for Meister was that contemporary society forged corrupt and prejudicial habits: individual bodies had become habituated to degrading sensations to the point of either becoming numb and languorous or needing constant repetition of sensations (24). To return to the morality intended by nature—finding happiness through social interaction and the exercise of our *forces* and *facultés* (55)—these habits must be corporeally reformed. Meister argued that our natural disposition is to share in the suffering of others (*compatir*): “it is to identify with the object that strikes [our senses] or

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<sup>211</sup>Garat put forward a similar point in *Éloge de l’Hôpital*, 91.

interests us; it is to confuse, so to speak, its existence with our own” (31).<sup>212</sup> What Meister defined as *compatir* and *sympathie* was the physical interaction of individuals striking each other’s sensory organs in the same way as material objects. Society cohered because moral principles were grounded in involuntary, physical sensations that could be molded and perfected.

Garat, Meister, and Pluquet claimed, therefore, that sociability was fundamental to human nature, and they repeatedly depicted human nature through physical, bodily processes. In the third shared theme, they sought also to redefine *états* by naturalizing them based on their new physiological principles. The term *état* signified one’s condition of being, the socio-cultural significations of one’s occupation, and ultimately one’s place in the hierarchical and privileged three estates. None of the three authors explicitly stated the need to perpetuate the social hierarchy, nor did they explicitly state the need to entirely tear down the social hierarchy. To do the latter would certainly have gained the unwanted notice of royal officials.<sup>213</sup> They did, however, engage the question of hierarchy: whether or not nature intended a hierarchy or form of subordination based on corporeal principles. The idea that individuals were largely predetermined by their *état* came under fire as sensationalist pedagogy opened up the possibility of shaping individuals through education and environmental factors, possibly even perfecting them. Although Rousseau is credited with coining the term “perfectibility,” maximizing human

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<sup>212</sup>It is likely that Meister had in mind Rousseau’s conception of pity from *Discours sur l’origine et fondemens de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), which was one of two natural impulses, along with self-preservation (*amour de soi*) in Rousseau’s explanation of the mankind’s natural state. See chapter six for more on Rousseau’s conception of modernity and rational reconstruction of nature.

<sup>213</sup>Meister did challenge dueling as a preposterous cultural practice based on perceived slights of honor incongruent with one’s social *état* (118-119). Garat faulted his contemporaries for lauding birth and fortune and greedily using venality to leap over the boundaries of *états*, but he couched his positions as a commentary on the sixteenth century (*Éloge de Michel de l’Hôpital*, 10-13). As Duhart noted, prior to the Revolution, Garat was cosmopolitan in orientation; he disdained prejudices within and between nations and balanced support for the principles of British liberty and the notion of the French king as beneficent. Duhart, *Dominique-Joseph Garat*, 35, 39-40.

potential became the quest of a number of thinkers, as revealed in the title of Charles Augustin Vandermonde's *Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l'espèce humaine* (1756). Not only Enlightenment physicians like Vandermonde but social critics found that the significance of sensible beings "could only truly be conceived in terms of his or her relation to the greater, resonating whole of which he or she was a part."<sup>214</sup>

Garat recognized the crux of the problem of sensible bodies: "Put two men in front of the same tableau of nature, either a work of art or society itself. In a single instant, one of these two men is able to receive five or six lively and different impressions, whereas the other will feel only a single, cold, and slow impression."<sup>215</sup> The two individuals would approach each other suspiciously. The first would view the second as an unfeeling automaton, and the second would view the first as experiencing excessive sensations to the point of convulsion. Bodies presented a new concern for eighteenth-century thinkers; if the social hierarchy was considered unnatural and weighted against the majority of French citizens, then building society up from the human capacity to feel certainly seemed meritocratic. This, however, was not always the case. As Garat observed, every individual felt differently, and inequality of *organisation* potentially prepared the way for new forms of subordination.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup>Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 88. For Vandermonde, see also Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6-7, 224 n. 11, and Mary Terrall, "Material Impressions: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance," in *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, eds. Helen Deutsch and Mary Terrall, 109-29 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 115-118.

<sup>215</sup>Garat, "Lettre aux auteurs du *Journal de Paris*, sur la notice qu'ils ont donnée de la vie de Sénèque," *Mercure de France* (15 February 1779): 180. Vandermonde's project of "good breeding" demanded that children have "no vice of conformation, either in the parts essential to the two sexes, or in the organization of the rest of the body'...they must be free of deformities (like 'hollow eyes' or 'excessive portliness')." Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 89.

<sup>216</sup>For Garat, society could not be managed by idealistic, philosophical principles; society required knowledge of the human body so that the legislator could channel human nature in socially-productive ways. Aside from the sensations that generate social affections, the legislator must have "a good theory of all the sensations that are converted into ideas in order to distinguish those that give to man just ideas of all that which surrounds him, of all

Baron d'Holbach provides a provocative example of the socially conservative aspect of materialism. In his *Système de la nature* (1770), d'Holbach argued for the existence of a natural inequality among individuals based on the diversity of physiological *organisations*. He built a social system on this inequality, emphasizing the social utility of different natural abilities, and, in doing so, he showed that *organisation* could be the organizing principle of metaphysics, physiology, and society. Politically, d'Holbach asserted equality before the law and between men, but, socially, he used “the inequality which nature or industry may have made between [individuals’] respective powers” as the basis for a stratified social sphere. “The diversity found among the individuals of the human species,” d'Holbach proclaimed, “creates inequalities between them: this inequality constitutes the structure of society.”<sup>217</sup> D'Holbach based his social and political theory on reciprocal utility. The variation of *organisations* and faculties suggests that what one human excels in, another may be deficient, and vice versa. People would have no need for each other if their bodies were constituted in the same manner: “Thus, the diversity and inequality of the corporeal, mental, and intellectual faculties render man necessary to his fellow man, makes him a social being, and incontestably proves to him the necessity of morals.”<sup>218</sup> In d'Holbach's conception, some individuals were more suited to become legislators or cobblers, which clothed subordination in social utility and the authority of nature.

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the links that unite him to his fellow man, and those that carry to the understanding only false notions.” *Éloge de Michel de l'Hôpital*, 81. On the question of natural equality/inequality, see Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, chps. 1-2; John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chps. 5-7; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*.

<sup>217</sup>D'Holbach, *Système de la nature* (1775, new edition), chp. IX, 139.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., 140. Even the Marquis de Condorcet, so famous for his “progressive” thinking, argued that the natural inequality of corporeal faculties necessitated specific social institutions. See Keith Michael Baker, “Political Languages of the French Revolution,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, 626-659 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 641-642.

Meister drew upon his “reason” to identify the principle of order established by nature in which all the parts form a harmonious whole (47). Society could achieve similar order by following the path that nature gave individual bodies. Meister envisioned a social order in which chance did not necessarily place one in a particular *état* (58). He even criticized certain cruel and violent *états* that seemed to suffocate the natural sentiment of compassion and sensibility (29). Furthermore, Meister found the passions of individuals to be natural and necessary to social commerce and the pursuit of happiness, in contrast to the corporate order and its defenders exemplified in the 1776 petitions to overturn the abolition of the guilds (66-67).<sup>219</sup>

Instead, Meister argued, social institutions should either be made to develop all of the faculties of an individual together (strength, sensibility, imagination, etc.)—pointing toward the perfectibility of humans and the beauty of order (16-17, 49-51)—or society should create concord by capitalizing on the unequal distribution of *organisations*:

At the heart of such a multitude of combinations, there is formed a universal mass of strengths, [corporeal] gifts, and rational capacities in which each can exchange what they have too much of, with more or less advantage, for what they are lacking. The best organized society is perhaps the one in which this sort of exchange is made with the most justice, ease, and good faith (59).

Meister located *le bonheur public* in the bodies of feeling individuals colliding in society, and he used the term *état* to describe both the “state” and its laws and the desired condition of being of individuals in society (60). If sage laws protected the liberty of citizens/subjects, they would be able to develop and perfect their new *état* alongside others, which would be “born from social influences” (62-63, 120-121). Meister did not extend his vision far enough to illustrate the results of a newly-naturalized *état*, as did d’Holbach, but he did restrain his optimistic rhetoric enough to plead with those who had been granted a superior *état* to repay their debt to nature and

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<sup>219</sup>I will treat these documents in chapter four.

society by helping those less fortunate (124). Nevertheless, the rhetoric of a mutual exchange of corporeal endowments could be marshaled to undergird subordination, similar to Père Claude Buffier's belief that social happiness required social hierarchy, as we saw in chapter one.<sup>220</sup>

This is precisely what we find in the abbé Pluquet's conception of society. Pluquet challenged certain aspects of the traditional social hierarchy, but he nevertheless found *états* to be a useful, divinely-sanctioned, ordering principle. Happiness could be found by feeling the interior sentiments of *amitié* and *reconnaissance* that linked individual bodies in society, and reason tells us, according to Pluquet, that *grandeur*, *élévation*, and *crédit* are either distributed by chance or appropriated through base behavior (II, 117). Yet, happiness could not be found in attempting to elevate one's *état* by wearing the symbols of a superior rank (II, 118, 170-172), and Pluquet lamented the untoward displays of wealth and the unnecessary violence accompanying slights of honor (I, 274-276). Pluquet did not argue that universal *organisations* necessitated a leveling of society or a redistribution of *états*. In fact, Pluquet calculated that our habits formed at a young age added to our natural dispositions equaled our "social character." Through this formulation, Pluquet justified stratification: "one could render the practice of social virtues necessary to an individual's happiness in the *état* they would be placed" (II, 183-184). Despite the use of the conditional tense, we have no reason to believe that Pluquet imagined tearing down the traditional *états*; after all, he maintained the early-modern analogy between sovereigns/monarchs and fathers, who ruled singularly but tenderly in their domain (II, 250-253), and he praised the noble, hereditary distinctions of virtuous families.

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<sup>220</sup>Meister leaned politically toward this point in *Des premiers principes du système social appliqués à la révolution présente*: "The nation really exists only among an elite of men chosen from among the different classes who compose it, chosen freely on the trust of public opinion or of those who have acquired the right to guide it." Quoted in Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 36.



Pluquet repeated that individuals find happiness in the social virtues and that nature crafted the *organisation* specifically for social commerce, but the uniformity of body did not lead him to demand a society of equals. He still defined the social destiny of members of the Third Estate by the robustness of their bodies rather than their natural sentiment: “All individuals [*les hommes*] are not born with equal dispositions for cultivating the earth, for managing herds, or for hunting down ferocious animals... It would be necessary for some public authority to assign individuals to their class and their functions” (II, 250). Pluquet did question the foundation of a society of distinctions and privileges, arguing that distinction should be a product of social function or utility, and alluded to a reshuffling of useless members of various *états*; yet, Pluquet claimed to have demonstrated that “humans are not naturally envious and jealous, and that nature attaches happiness to the practice of social virtues in whichever *état* or conditions an individual finds himself; [therefore,] the equality of happiness can exist with the difference that subordination puts between men in a society” (II, 264). Pluquet diagnosed individuals who assert their superiority and scorn inferiors as suffering from a blunted and numb *sentiment d’humanité* (I, 276). This was similar to the Marquis de Mirabeau in his wildly-popular *L’ami des hommes* (1756-1758); both presented a case for a moral revolution but not a social one.

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Despite the marked social, political, and religious differences between Garat, Meister, and Pluquet, all three sought to ground society and social interaction in inherent corporeal properties. They appealed to the language of the senses as a natural foundation for the association of peoples and articulated a “natural law of feeling beings” that bound happiness to the corporeal nature of social commerce. The interior sentiment or *premier sentiment* was not a disembodied spirit identified only by rational meditation; it was consubstantial, affected by

external objects, and invigorated through social interaction. Human nature did not exist outside the *organisation*, which was naturally-constituted to feel pleasure by assembling in society. Abbé Pluquet recognized the potency of sensationalism as a moral and epistemological philosophy, but he attempted to undercut its physicality by clinging to an immaterial soul and Supreme Being. Ultimately, though, he relied on physiological and cognitive processes within the body to explain natural sociability and its moral resonance. If “society is bonds [and] society is human order,” as Keith M. Baker noted in his analysis of the invention of “society,” then the bonds were not artificially-construed but naturally-occurring.<sup>221</sup> The human body contained all the principles necessary to secure social bonds by the transmission and reception of sensations and the activation of interior feelings. It was the *être désorganisé* who upset society. As we will see next, proponents of the traditional social hierarchy feared the consequences on the collective and individual *corps* if the principles of corporate order were eliminated.

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<sup>221</sup>Keith Michael Baker, “Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History,” in *Main Trends in Cultural History: Ten Essays*, eds. Willem Melching and Wyger Velema, 95-120 (Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 100. For the artificiality of society, see Jean Terrier, *Visions of the Social: Society as a Political Project in France, 1750-1950* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 81.

## **Chapter 4**

### ***The Social Imagination***

In the minds of many eighteenth-century writers, feeling and the transmission of sensations between individuals underlay a healthy society. The corporeal parameters of society were not merely the imaginative constructions of a handful of intellectual elites, however. On the contrary, the human body was central to a variety of debates surrounding efforts to reform both the social order and the city of Paris. Conceptions of the body were integral to the 1776 reactions to Turgot's *laisser-faire/laisser-passer* "Six Edicts" and merged metaphorical notions of the body politic with ontological concerns for individual bodies. Following the humiliating defeat of France in the global Seven Years War (1756-1763), the dissolution of the Parlement of Paris by Chief Minister Maupeou (1770-1774), and the recent ascension of Louis XVI, Turgot's "Six Edicts" renewed anxiety that the socio-political structure of France was imperiled. As we saw in chapter one, economic principles were inseparable from the system of *états* and *corps*, and, by uprooting this system, the "Six Edicts" invalidated centuries of French history and the religious basis of French society. 1776 marked a crucial moment in which leaders of the Parlement of Paris and the trade corporations were forced to match the "modernity" of Turgot's proposals with contemporary physiological ideas; they were forced to provide new grounding for ancient doctrines. Guild petitions to the Parlement of Paris exhibited the concern of *maîtres* and *maîtresses* that without the corporate social order the bodies and minds of laborers would no longer be restrained. Even though the individual *corps* of each subject was metaphorically

“incorporated” into the larger body politic, the physical bodies of individuals were thought to suffer from Turgot’s “Six Edicts.”

In addition to the primacy of the corporeal in the 1776 debates, reformers of public health and government-sponsored public hygiene programs appealed often to medical authority to meet a plethora of insalubrious urban conditions. This “medicalization of society,” though, was not simply about reforming public health. The condition of the body became the locus of social order and provided contemporaries with a matrix to think through the problems of society. The efforts of the Parlement of Paris, guild petitioners, urban reformers, and the writers discussed previously helped forge a specific eighteenth-century social imagination, at the center of which was the physical body. For society to be healthy, according to opponents of Turgot’s “Six Edicts,” the collective and individual *corps* had to be preserved; for reformers of public health, a healthy society necessitated a healthy body.

*The Corporate Body Unravels: Abolition of the Guilds (1776)*

When Turgot became Controller General in 1774, there was an air of excitement among the community of *philosophes*. Turgot’s impulse to reform France was marked by his quest for economic freedom: “The freer, the more animated and the more extensive trade is, the more swiftly, efficaciously and abundantly can the people be supplied.”<sup>222</sup> Turgot was sympathetic to the *laissez-faire/laissez-passer* ideas put forward by Vincent de Gournay and the Physiocrats. He advocated lifting restrictions, privileges, and customs, particularly on the grain trade. These principles would limit the movement of goods and resources and abolish the guilds as privileged, corporate entities that obstructed the movement and occupations of French subjects. This was

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<sup>222</sup>Quoted in Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon 1715-99* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 295-296.

precisely what he did in 1776. In what was known as the “Six Edicts,” Turgot replaced the *corvée* with a new property tax, from which the clergy was exempt, and, most notoriously, he eviscerated corporate society by abolishing the guilds.<sup>223</sup>

In the furious debate elicited by the “Six Edicts,” the Parlement of Paris’ “Remonstrance” and a number of petitions issued by various guild masters reinforced the certainty and customs of corporate society (the Parlement was itself a corporation). Aside from the metaphors of the unbreakable chain and micro/macrocosm noted in chapter one, the Parlement argued that the guilds served to police the capital and monitor commerce. An attack on the guilds and abolition of the *corvée* were blows to the entire corporate system of concentric and overlapping *corps* and *ordres*. Parlementaires appealed additionally to the language of natural rights and the prerogatives congenital to one’s *état*. The harmony maintained by the gradation of powers and distinctions “holds in place and keeps all *états* from falling into confusion,” according to the “Remonstrance.” The source of the socio-political order was in “divine institutions,” and the necessity of an “inequality of conditions” stemmed from the “infinite and immutable wisdom in the plan of the Universe.”<sup>224</sup> Despite a handful of dissident masters and parlementaires, both viewed Turgot’s edict as “a kind of apocalypse.”<sup>225</sup>

Guild petitions, drawn up by the masters, equally subjected Turgot’s edict to a critical and panicked reading. They argued that the system of corporations ensured the quality of goods from fraudulence and exorbitant prices, protected the public welfare through internal discipline

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<sup>223</sup>The Corps of goldsmiths and apothecaries were exempted from this legislation.

<sup>224</sup>“Remonstrances sur l’édit supprimant les corvées (2-4 March 1776),” in *Remonstrances du Parlement de Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, vol. 3, ed. Jules Flammermont, 275-293 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1898), 279.

<sup>225</sup>Steven Laurence Kaplan, “Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France: Turgot’s ‘Carnival,’” in *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice*, eds. Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia Koepp, 176-228 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 182.

and control of laborers, and maintained the cultural systems of honor and *état* concomitant with each organ in the body politic.<sup>226</sup> “It is clear,” wrote one petition, that the “system of unrestricted liberty...can only destroy and is incapable of edifying; by dissolving the union of all *Corps*, it will weaken all the individuals who compose it.”<sup>227</sup> The abolition of the guilds would debase the elevated social identity of masters. “This terrible revolution,” according to the “*Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris*,” would erase the “indestructible social character” imprinted on merchants, artists, and traders.<sup>228</sup> And, “*la communauté des Fruitiers-Orangers*” of Paris accused egoistic modern philosophers of no longer respecting “religion, subordination, and the essential differences that characterize *les états*.”<sup>229</sup>

The guild hierarchy necessarily mirrored that of the social hierarchy, and the foreseeable expectation of confounding ranks, so central to the luxury debate to be discussed in Part II, heightened the rhetoric and urgency of these supplications: masters would be cast “without honor” into “an immense void” with the dregs of society.<sup>230</sup> Masters would be reduced to *gens*

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<sup>226</sup>Similar to the sovereign’s gaze, the masters’ petitions and Parlement’s “Remonstrance” acknowledged the gaze of the masters, inspectors, and confrères as a principle of discipline and emulation. “Parlementary Remonstrance,” 313; “Réflexions sur l’edit concernant la suppression des jurandes, par les Maîtres et Marchands Tissutiers-Rubbaniers Frangers, Ouvriers en draps d’or, d’argent et soie de la ville, Fauxbourgs & Banlieue de Paris, plus connus sous de titre de Fabriquans de Galons d’or et d’argent,” Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection Joly de Fleury, vol. 596, folio 98 (hereafter BNF, Coll. Joly), “Observations présentées par les Maîtres composant la communauté des Graveurs, Ciseleurs de la Ville et Fauxbourgs de Paris sur l’édit de Suppression des Corps des Marchands et des Communautés des Arts et Métiers,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 108.

<sup>227</sup>“Réflexions sur l’edit concernant la suppression des jurandes, par les Maîtres et Marchands Tissutiers-Rubbaniers Frangers, Ouvriers en draps d’or, d’argent et soie de la ville,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 99<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>228</sup>“Réflexions des Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris, sur le projet de détruire les Jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 101.

<sup>229</sup>“Observations pour la communauté des Fruitiers-Orangers de la ville de Paris,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 103.

<sup>230</sup>“Mémoire A Consulter, sur l’existence actuelle des Six Corps, et la conservation de leurs privileges,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folios 151-153, here 153. Like the observations of the Fruitiers-Orangers, this memoir found fault with the dominant philosophical “system” (*l’esprit de système*). For Enlightenment debates over the “spirit of systems” versus the “systematic spirit,” see Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951, orig. pub. 1932), and Jessica Riskin,

*de bras*, a corporeal moniker for those who worked with their hands. No longer the legal, official head of their tiny *corps*, they would be arms and hands with no directing will other than the nebulous, yet leveling, “market.” Furthermore, the circulation of *crédit*—the reputation and personal relationships that constituted the “soul of commerce” and the “aliments of workshops”—would dry up, supplanted by unreliable monetary currency, greed, and competition.<sup>231</sup> The fear that *une liberté indéfinie* would render both masters and journeymen equal and “isolated beings” (*un être isolé*) is palpable throughout the petitions. The same fear is reflective of a deeper complexity over the abolition of the guilds. The petitions reveal how concerns for the body were fundamentally embedded within arguments over social structure.

Even though guild masters and *parlementaires* sought to protect their interests and reinforce the traditional social structure, the corporeal language through which they expressed themselves is illuminating. The “maîtres queulx, cuisiniers, porte-chapes, et traiteurs” warned of “pernicious ragouts” made by untrained hands, which endangered public health. Knowledge of animal bodies and vegetables was necessary to properly prepare food, and the masters claimed that their trade was as important and precise as apothecaries.<sup>232</sup> In some instances, food preparation was as artful as creating medicines or restoring the body to health. To add authority to their petition, the masters put forward an image of the body consistent with the mechanical philosophy: “The human body is a hydraulic machine that is composed of solids and fluids. It is

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“The ‘Spirit of System’ and the Fortunes of Physiocracy,” in *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton*, eds. Margaret Schabas and Neil de Marchi, 42-73 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>231</sup>“Réflexions des maîtres tailleurs de Paris,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 173-174, here 173<sup>1</sup>. For the diverse meanings of *crédit*, see Clare Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economic of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

<sup>232</sup>The Corps of wine merchants and parfumeurs made a similar argument. “Représentations du corps des Marchands de Vin,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 105, and “Observations pour la communauté des Maîtres et Marchands Gantiers...parfumeur de paris,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 114.

therefore necessary that the cook knows how to properly season ragouts in order not to put the machine in disorder and to maintain an equilibrium of fluids and secretions.”<sup>233</sup> The masters continued to compare food preparation with medicinal remedies, claiming that it was a danger to society to have untrained cooks poorly preparing, seasoning, or storing meats. The policing mechanism of the guild *corps* guaranteed protection from that oversight, and unprofessionalism would not be a public health hazard.

The human body was of central concern to petitioners from other guilds as well. The linen merchants argued that the system of *corps* restrained the potentially unruly mob of “robust individuals” made powerful by their intense labor.<sup>234</sup> Workers perfected their trade and *état* through “daily exercise,” and the forging of hardened, skilled bodies could only come through the habit of work in a single *corps*. If the *corps* were destroyed, the Six Corps of Paris argued, then workers would acquire no unique abilities; they would be “eternally novice[s],” and their bodies “would arrive at the age in which the organs are deprived of their flexibility, no longer permitting them to acquire new knowledge [*lumières*].”<sup>235</sup> Moreover, a man without an *état* would choose a life of “sterile libertinage” and “voluntary bachelorhood,” preferring a “shameful debauchery” to the modest, secure, and sexually-unadventurous married life.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>233</sup>“Observations sur l’edit concernant la suppression des jurandes, par les jurés, anciens bachliers, Maîtres Queulx, cuisiniers, Porte-chapes, & Traiteurs de la ville et fauxbourgs, Banlieue, Prévôté & Vicomte de Paris,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 95. For an analysis of food preparation in accordance with medical and social theories, and debates over medical or artisanal authority, see Susan Pinkard, *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chp. 6, and E. C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>234</sup>“Réflexions des Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris, sur le projet de détruire les Jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 101.

<sup>235</sup>“Réflexions des six corps de la ville de Paris sur la suppression des jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 154-156, here 154<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>236</sup>“Réflexions des maîtres tailleurs de Paris,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 174<sup>2</sup>.



The most prominent attention given to the body came in the documents considering female work, as women of all *états* were determined by their biology. Both Turgot and his parlementaire opponent avocat-général Séguier founded their concerns on female sexual morality and a “natural” division of labor, fearing that “female unemployment would lead to prostitution,” destitution, and social disorder.<sup>237</sup> The petition drawn up by the “Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris,” a group of female linen-drapers and –sellers, expressed women’s *état* as a natural product of femininity.<sup>238</sup> Whereas men were considered naturally, physically superior and forceful, women were dexterous. The *lingères* were “modern Amazons” whose weapons were the needle and scissors, skills learned from childhood; their exclusivity rested on the exactitude of their functions and the maintenance of decency and *honnêteté*.<sup>239</sup> The need to preserve and supervise women’s modesty served as the crux of the *lingères*’ arguments, especially those women of “lively desires and a pleasant figure.”<sup>240</sup> The “Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris” argued without hesitation for their corporate privilege based on the natural skills of the female body, constantly reinforcing the point: “The commerce of fabrics...offers an honest sanctuary [for women], [whose occupations are] relative to their tastes, their character, and their natural faculties...[and who] fear the dangers and insidious gentleness of seduction.”<sup>241</sup> Without the watchful eye of a *maîtresse* and *corps*, women’s individual *corps*

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<sup>237</sup>Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: the Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 210, 215.

<sup>238</sup>The linen drapers and merchants contested the artisanal hegemony of the seamstresses, for example, because they worked “both within and without the corporate structure.” Both *corps* still couched their arguments in the specificity of women’s *états* and femininity. Jennifer M. Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (New York: Berg, 2004), 85-88, here 85.

<sup>239</sup>“Réflexions des Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris, sur le projet de détruire les Jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 101.

<sup>240</sup>*Ibid.*, 102<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>241</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

would be released into the lascivious hands of men and their own capricious desires. The natural domesticity of women, advocated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemaire, had its parallel in the legal documents and guild petitions that established women's occupational *corps* and demanded their continuance.

The Parlement's "Remonstrance" and guild petitions reveal a final, vital ingredient of eighteenth-century corporeal conceptions of the social structure: the epistemological suppositions undergirding the debate over Turgot's "Six Acts."<sup>242</sup> The corporate social order not only disciplined and controlled the physical behavior of its laborers, but it also served to circumscribe their mental operations. Finding and committing to an *état* connected individuals to, and maintained order among, the larger body politic by ensuring that each *corps* was directed by the hierarchical head. In so doing, it buttressed social, cultural, and economic status. With Turgot's abolition of the guilds, however, the knots cinching one's self-interest to one's imagination would be severed. The imagination, according to Jan Goldstein, "was the most vulnerable component of the person, the one that would unfailingly wreak havoc...if certain kinds of alterations in the social fabric were undertaken."<sup>243</sup> The events of 1776 provided the catalyst to unleash imaginations, and both the Parlement and guild masters took notice.

The journeymen, apprentices, and other day-laborers no longer bound to a determinant hierarchy and *état* would fantasize about their new prospects and be guided by the uncertain epistemological faculty of the imagination. Inhabitants of nearby villages would flock to the capital expecting to find profitable jobs and become the equals of former masters. They would

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<sup>242</sup>See Jan Goldstein's expert analysis in *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chp. 1.

<sup>243</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

be “seduced” and “dazzled” by the luxury of the cities—terms that connoted a sensationalist epistemology—and their mental faculties would be unconstrained by *état*. They would rush madly to the supposed plethora of easily-accessible jobs when “the barrier that stifles their imagination” is lifted.<sup>244</sup> Liberty would overwhelm workers who then flit from job to job, imagining that they would be happier and more prosperous elsewhere. Yet, reason does not obey interest, the “Six Corps” proclaimed, and the unhappy laborer will stew in a life of mediocrity and indigence.<sup>245</sup> In the traditional corporate order, tested and sustained through centuries, both bodies and minds were channeled in a structurally profitable direction. Under a regime of unlimited liberty, though, laborers’ bodies would no longer restrict their minds, and their newly-unfettered minds would soon direct their bodies. To supporters of the corporate order, “mental fixity” and “social/physical fixity” were coterminous.<sup>246</sup> The epistemological associations linking socio-economic success and happiness to being *sans état* would lead to social disorder. Laborers would be incapable of working according to social utility, thus rendering society unstable, because they could not receive and properly act on external sensory data.

These justifications for perpetuating the traditional corporate order were novel. They had been conditioned by anxiety over commercial modernity and fear of an anchorless society and channeled through sensationalist epistemology. While Charles Loyseau and his successors spoke of the natural, moral, and legal necessity of the French social hierarchy, which exemplified divine order and privileged certain physical bodies, the Parlement of Paris and guild petitioners

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<sup>244</sup>“Réflexions des six corps de la ville de Paris sur la suppression des jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 154-156, here 155<sup>2</sup>. See also, “Mémoire A Consulter, sur l’existence actuelle des Six Corps, et la conservation de leurs privilèges,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folios 151-153, here 151, and “Parlementary Remonstrance,” 305.

<sup>245</sup>*Ibid.*, 154<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>246</sup>Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, 28.

rationalized hierarchy in a new way. Elements of the body-politic metaphor certainly persisted, and commitment to the naturalness of *gens de bras* was maintained, but the language of the senses and the homogeneity of corporeal matter drove the arguments of Turgot's opponents. By applying sensationalist language, opponents of the "Six Edicts" shifted the emphasis from social structure to the corporeal in considering the Third Estate. Whereas Loyseau's model linked what one *did* with one's body to one's *état*, the model emerging in 1776 analyzed the *experiencing* body. That is to say, in Loyseau's model the social hierarchy served as the organizing principle for society, but in the 1776 model the corporeal preceded the social structure.

Overly-passionate laborers no longer constrained by an *état* would become "volatile beings," according to the master tailors. During the *Lit de Justice* held to force registration of the edict, the Parlement succinctly summarized the epistemological degeneration of the worker: "each worker will regard himself as an isolated being, depending on himself alone, and free to give space to an often disorderly imagination."<sup>247</sup> This conception of the "self" bound the human body to "corporate classification and social stratification."<sup>248</sup> The Parlement of Paris expected that simply relaxing corporate strictures would unleash "the most dangerous passions" of the workers whose tempestuousness was "less suppressed by education [and] joined to a brute energy" intensified by arduous labor.<sup>249</sup> The guild masters and Parlement of Paris, therefore, organized corporate society around, and defended corporate society by, a sensationalist epistemology.

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<sup>247</sup>"Réflexions des maîtres tailleurs de Paris," BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 173<sup>1</sup>, and "Lit de Justice pour L'enregistrement de l'édit...(19 March 1776)," in *Remonstrances du Parlement de Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, vol. 3, ed. Jules Flammarion, 324-356 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1898), 346.

<sup>248</sup>Kaplan, "Social Classification and Representation in the Corporate World of Eighteenth-Century France," 223.

<sup>249</sup>"Parlementary Remonstrance," 300, 310.

The Parlement of Paris' "Remonstrance" and the petitions of guild masters attest their commitment to the corporate order as a restraint on the bodies of workers. Turgot's "Six Edicts" constituted an act as revolutionary as any of the summer of 1789, and its repeal after only six months indicates that the social structure was expected to connect the lowliest *gens de bras* to the king through a series of concentric *ordres* and *corps*. Each possessed a certain degree of honor according to one's *état*, constantly kindled by the invigorating rays launched from the head of the body politic and "weakened but not altered" by their descent.<sup>250</sup> Whether bound by corporate shackles—the Parlement's "indissoluble chain"—or released into socio-economic independence, it was clear that the physical body was fundamental to the maintenance of the social order.

### *Corporeal Concerns and Public Health*

Advocates of the traditional social hierarchy may have still viewed bodies through the prism of *états*, but, as the debate surrounding the 1776 abolition of the guilds and the previous chapter showed, there was no ignoring the reoriented perspectives regarding the body and society. The concept of the social imagination allows historians to bridge representations of social anxieties and practical applications of corporeal knowledge elicited by those fears. The social imaginary "is a common set of social expectations and practices that enables ordinary persons of a given community to imagine how their interactions with each other in a particular aspect of life should work and, thus, shape how they do work."<sup>251</sup> The articulation of ideas about

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<sup>250</sup>"Réflexions des six corps de la ville de Paris sur la suppression des jurandes," BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folios 154-156, here 156. In their petition to repeal the "Six Acts," the master tailors also used the image of the body politic to argue that "If old age rendered the body politic respectable," then there would be no other Parisian institution as respectable as the master tailors. "Réflexions des maîtres tailleurs de Paris," BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 462, folio 173.

<sup>251</sup>Eileen Hunt Botting, "Mary Wollstonecraft's Enlightened Legacy: The 'Modern Social Imaginary' of the Egalitarian Family," *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 49, n. 5 (January 2006): 687-701, here 687. See also, Samuel Moyn, "Imagining Intellectual History," in *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, eds. Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, 112-130 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Sarah Maza, *The Myth of the*

the body did not work singularly to construct the social imagination; instead, they were brought to action by contemporaries responding to changing social practices and lived experiences. Philosophical tracts and legal discourses coexisted with broader changes in the daily lives of French men and women. The desire to reform society by considering the corporeal effects of Paris' urban environment provides further proof that bodies came to define the eighteenth-century social imagination.

Jean-Baptiste Moheau's masterpiece of demography ("political arithmetic"), *Recherches et considérations sur la population de la France* (1778), drew attention to the effects of urban civilization on French bodies. The *Recherches* was co-authored with the *intendant* Antoine-Jean-Baptiste-Robert Auget, Baron de Montyon. Montyon spearheaded the research and marshaled governmental resources to calculate the French population. Moheau's tables and figures put forward a clearer method of tallying the number and distribution of individuals than previous models.<sup>252</sup> Importantly, Moheau began the *Recherches* by not only appealing to the beneficence of the king in adopting his work and applying it to ameliorate *le bien public* through administrative reform (*Avertissement*), but he also argued that humans in society had lost their natural *force*: their senses of sight and hearing degenerated.<sup>253</sup> Moheau suggested that touch, taste, and smell had been perfected in society; yet, the human body was more than ever

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*French Bourgeoisie: An Essay on the Social Imaginary, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Bronislaw Baczko, *Les Imaginaires sociaux* (Paris: Payot, 1984).

<sup>252</sup>Andrea A. Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chps. 6-7, and Leslie Tuttle, *Conceiving the Old Regime: Pronatalism and the Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151-159. The science of statistics was being developed at the same time and used at this point to generate data on urban mortality, a study directly linked to the effects of urban life on the body.

<sup>253</sup>Jean-Baptiste Moheau and Antoine-Jean-Baptiste-Robert Auget, Baron de Montyon, *Recherches et considérations sur la population de la France* (Paris: Moutard, 1778), 2, n. 2. See also a recent edition, Eric Vilquin, ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, "Institut National d'Études Démographiques," 1994).

susceptible to either decline or perfectibility, depending on the manner in which the government created institutions or environments that increased the health of individual bodies. More thoroughly than Montesquieu in *De l'esprit de lois* (1748), Moheau explored the “physical causes that influence populations”: climate, air quality, mountains and forests, alimentation, availability and quality of water, and the necessity of labor for the human body.<sup>254</sup> Bodies in society were particularly affected by cesspools of stagnant water that collected and contained putrid matter and released vaporous odors and miasmas. The insalubrious conditions of urban societies would further deplete the health and sensory capacities of human bodies if governments did not enact change (e.g. public baths to ensure proper transpiration).<sup>255</sup>

Before Moheau implored the French government to create public baths, the weekly newspaper *Avantcoureur* (1759-1773) ran announcements for public bath systems, alongside innumerable other public health programs and concerns.<sup>256</sup> The *Avantcoureur* dedicated a section to this purpose, “Médecine-Cosmétique,” which could often be qualified as in the 8 December 1760 entries under “Médecine-Cosmétique-Orthopédie.” In the 29 September 1760 issue, an author advertised a system of public baths to be installed on the Seine with hot and cold water, and he sought the expert eyes of *Académiciens* and government officials to scrutinize the health risks and rewards. As the project advanced, the *Avantcoureur* provided more space in its pages, noting the importance of public baths to promote cleanliness, decency, and salubrity (6

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<sup>254</sup>Ibid., Book II, Part I, chps. 1-8. For medical theories of contaminated air, see Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam Kochan (London: Picador, 1994), chp. 1.

<sup>255</sup>Ibid., Book II, Part II, chp. 9. Moheau did note the importance of sweat for laborers, which kept up proper circulation.

<sup>256</sup>The full title of the daily was *L'Avantcoureur: feuille hebdomadaire, où sont annoncés les objets particuliers des sciences & des arts, le cours & les nouveautés des spectacles, & les livres nouveaux en tout genre*. E.C. Spary has recently argued that the *Avantcoureur* “played a particularly important role in uniting science and commerce.” Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, 149, see also 157-160, 177.

April and 18 May 1761) and acknowledging the support for the project given by the Paris Faculté de Médecine (11 April 1763). The proposed public bath system was one instance of many in which the *Avantcoureur* disseminated medical and health information and attuned its public to the interaction of human bodies with their sensory environment.

In other ways, the importance of the body to society absorbed the social imagination. Alongside the *Mercure de France* and *Avantcoureur*, medical advertisements (*Affiches*) appeared throughout Paris and the provinces, publicizing myriad courses in the “life sciences,” available to the public, and touting not only the commercial value of health products but also their curative properties: *de santé* became a fixed qualifier for items only tangentially related to the maintenance of public and private health. In the printed spaces of the *Affiches*, consumers from a variety of socio-economic brackets also read about *concitoyens* and *compatriotes* and the ubiquitous goal of social utility.<sup>257</sup> The “great chain of buying” that connected consumers, sellers, producers, and the press thus capitalized on the increasing interest in the human body and grounded a burgeoning society in “human sociability and [commercial] exchange, [positing] an open and relatively egalitarian social organization.”<sup>258</sup> Moreover, an entire journal was founded that devoted its pages to health issues (*Gazette de santé*), and the success of smallpox inoculations by the late 1760s placed new significance on knowledge of and authority over the

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<sup>257</sup>Colin Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 101, n. 1 (February 1996): 13-40, here 24 (for *de santé*, see 28). See also Colin Jones and Rebecca Spang, “Sans-culottes, *sans café*, *sans tabac*: Shifting Realms of Luxury and Necessity in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850*, eds. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 37-62 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 52 (for *de santé*), and Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press and the Omuhundro Institute, 2008), chp. 2.

<sup>258</sup>Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying,” 14. By the 1780s, the *Affiches* in a wide-range of provincial cities had grown into and changed their names to *Journal*.



body. “By the 1780s,” as David Garrioch stated, “when someone collapsed in the street the passers-by were as likely to call a doctor as a priest.”<sup>259</sup>

Urbanites were confronted with a number of public health hazards that drew their attention to the corporeal effects of city-living. Debates on hospital reform in Paris (the Hôtel-Dieu), breast feeding and midwifery, public baths, poor relief, urban development, sanitation, effluvia from slaughterhouses, the cleanliness of the Seine, and especially the location of cemeteries in town galvanized the public and glued the corporeal to the social imagination.<sup>260</sup> Responding to a petition from Parisians to halt the construction of a cemetery in their *quartier*, a member of the Parlement of Paris (M. le Peletier de Saint-Fargeau) addressed the physiological dangers to Parisians rather than Catholic strictures or superstitious beliefs: “The fetid odor that cadavers exhale is a warning from nature to keep our distance...Their impure exhalations...are today concentrated by the buildings that prevent the winds from dissipating them.”<sup>261</sup> Prior to the nineteenth century and Pasteur’s germ theory, scents carried by the air were thought to be the primary culprits of disease. The potential contagions and miasmas emanating from cemeteries were thought to infect the bodies of Parisians via their respiratory system, resulting in clogged senses, inflamed throats, high fevers, and adulterated blood. Death resonated among the living

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<sup>259</sup>David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 197. For a recent examination of competition over authority and between authorities—medical, commercial, artisanal—see Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment*, esp. chp. 4.

<sup>260</sup>Many of these issues were made the subject of Academic essay contests (*concours*), which provided a space for the involvement of *le public* and came to be directed at “social utility” and public welfare. See Jeremy Caradonna, *The Enlightenment in Practice: Academic Prize Contests and Intellectual Culture in France, 1670-1794* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), esp. chps. 5-6.

<sup>261</sup>*Avantcoureur*, 16 May 1763, 311. This incident predated the more famous debate over closing the centralized cemetery of the Innocents, which began in 1765 and elicited a firestorm of protest from Paris *curés*. By the mid-1770s, the parish priests changed their tune and found it necessary to shut down Innocents cemetery based on health reasons; though, the final closing did not occur until 1780. Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 213-216.

as a public health concern as much as a period of mourning or spiritual rebirth.<sup>262</sup> As a consequence, medical experts became “social surgeons” or “officiers de santé” whose expertise played an increasingly key role in conveying medical information through controversies over public health.<sup>263</sup> Bodies were therefore considered susceptible to a variety of effluvia, particles, odors, and miasmas that penetrated in virtually unobserved ways, creating an intense awareness of the effects of matter visible and invisible on the body. As individuals in society came to be seen as linked by reciprocal physical-cum-moral sentiments, they were also linked by “social emanations” emitted from their own bodies.<sup>264</sup>

The interaction of environmental corruption and human bodies led doctors and writers to attempt to reform society. We saw in chapter one Pierre Rousseau’s representation of Nantes as a heart in order to ensure the efficient circulation of goods, individuals, water, and air, especially when ““some of the diseases that afflict mankind...arise from the fact that the air we breathe is

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<sup>262</sup>To solve the problem of cemeteries, Peletier called for a report to be drawn up by the *commissaire* of each *quartier* and members of the *corps et communautés* on the condition of each cemetery. It is important too that the *Avantcoureur* found Peletier’s speech to be worth reprinting as he supposedly spoke to and for *l’humanité*. The debate over the Innocents cemetery provides an useful example of a “controversy” that saw the intersection of ideas—religious, medical, moral, demographic, urban development—a method advocated, though not clearly practiced, by Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 13-26. The purpose of the controversialist method is to cut deeply into a moment of time to expose the confluence of different perceptions and ideas and thus unite social history to intellectual history.

<sup>263</sup>“Officiers de santé” quoted in Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying” from Dora B. Weiner, *The Citizen-Patient in Revolutionary and Imperial Paris* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). For the social utilitarianism and political importance of doctors, see Peter Gay, “The Enlightenment as Medicine and Cure,” in *The Age of Enlightenment Studies presented to Theodore Besterman*, eds. W. H. Barber et al., 375-386 (University Court of St. Andrews: Oliver and Boyd, 1967), and Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, “La Mettrie and Quesnay: physician-philosophes of the Enlightenment,” in *Enlightenment Studies in honour of Lester G. Crocker*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio, 263-282 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1979); and, during the Revolution, Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 85-93, and Michael Sonenscher, ““The Moment of Social Science”: the *Decade Philosophique* and Late Eighteenth-Century French Thought,” *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 6, n. 1 (2009): 121-146.

<sup>264</sup>Etienne Senancour quoted in Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 47. In fact, *le peuple* of Paris, *le pauvre* in particular, lived in and with their bodies and the bodies of their *confrères* more so than individuals of higher *états*. What Arlette Farge has called “un tempo sensuel.” See Farge, *Effusion et tourment, le récit des corps: Histoire du peuple au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007), 233.

infected with the smell of decaying bodies’.”<sup>265</sup> Circulation in human bodies and cities was a purifying and disinfecting agent. The putrefaction of excrement also sparked anxiety among Parisians who feared the human inhalation, or absorption by meats, of decomposing matter lodged in the streets, gutters, pipes, and even in homes with internal plumbing. To avoid the congestion, unhygienic conditions, and moral dissipation of the city, contemporaries heralded the virtues, particularly aerial, of the countryside—e.g. Marquis de Mirabeau’s *L’ami des hommes* (1756-8) and Saint Lambert’s poem *Les Saisons* (1769)—or sent their children to a rural wet nurse supposing that the environment better suited children’s growth. Others sought to recreate natural spaces in urban environments, thus helping disperse “bad air” and toxic exhalations and allowing both humans and cities to breathe well.<sup>266</sup>

Moheau’s claim that the sense of smell had become keener in modern society accompanied other accounts of the alertness of individuals to the invasive odors of the city that crippled social welfare.<sup>267</sup> Smells could be insidious agents sabotaging the body; water in both liquid and gaseous form could do the same. While Moheau and associates of the journal *Avantcoureur* sought to clean the public via baths, medical authorities like Théophile de Bordeu

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<sup>265</sup>Quoted in Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 214 (for traffic and congestion, 221-225); a medical authority writing to the Parlement of Paris during the debate over the Innocents cemetery and collected at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection Joly de Fleury.

<sup>266</sup>In his highly-acclaimed poem *Les Saisons*, Saint-Lambert argued for the importance of the sense of smell: “Odor gives us the most intimate sensations, a pleasure more immediate and more independent of the mind than the sense of sight. We get profound enjoyment from an agreeable odor in the first moment of its impression, [whereas] the pleasure of sight stems more from reflection.” *Les Saisons* (1775, seventh edition), 69, n. 47. The comprehensive “Notes” that Saint-Lambert separated from his verse represented to Dominique-Joseph Garat the best effort to examine the “sensations that produce social affections.” Garat, *Éloge de Michel de l’Hôpital*, 81, n. 10. Even street signs “choaked up the free circulation [of air], which ever administers health,” according to Richard Phillips in 1810. Quoted in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, “Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France,” *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 4. n. 2 (2007), 151.

<sup>267</sup>New theories of the olfactory system, according to Alain Corbin, “merely expressed their contemporaries’ particularly acute sensitivity to smell...Crucially, [the sense of smell] was able to reveal the precarious nature of organic life.” Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 20.

argued that water in general, and baths in particular, was not a panacea. Extended submersion in water could render the body's fibers languid and its humors thinned, and constant bathing deadened the senses and weakened transpiration.<sup>268</sup> Perfumes and aromatics used to mask smells, excessive ablutions, and cosmetics all augmented the delicacy of the senses and rendered bodies either numb to external sensations or dizzyed by them.<sup>269</sup>

Historians have come to call the extension of medical knowledge to public health and social reform the "medicalization of society."<sup>270</sup> This is certainly a valuable description of the second half of the eighteenth century, but I suggest that the "medicalization of society" was not just about the growth of scientific authority. It can be extended further to include the application of the language of the senses to a society under immense pressure. Knowledge of the body was used not simply to diagnose the maladies of urban life but to demonstrate how the physical body shaped one's morality and social commerce. In the social imagination of the eighteenth century, "every danger became apparent through the senses," but so did opportunities for, and the necessity of, sociability, empathy, and *sensibilité*.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup>Ibid., 32, 37, 72.

<sup>269</sup>These trappings of luxury and attempts at fumigation were famously denounced by Rousseau, and a trend toward natural smells, clothing, and foods became a staple of the second half of the eighteenth century. For cosmetics, see Morag Martin, *Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce, and French Society, 1750-1830* (The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 2009).

<sup>270</sup>Jean-Pierre Goubert, *La médicalisation de la société française, 1770-1830* (Waterloo, Ontario: Historical Reflections Press, 1982), and Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris*, 216. For other helpful texts on the efforts of doctors and reformers to apply medical knowledge to society, see Toby Gelfand, *Professionalizing modern medicine: Paris surgeons and medical science and institutions in the 18th century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); James C. Riley, *The Eighteenth-Century Campaign to Avoid Disease* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1987); L. W. B. Brockliss and Colin Jones, eds., *The Medical World of Early-Modern France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

<sup>271</sup>Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 60.

The eighteenth-century social imagination shared a language of the body that was characterized by shades of opinion. Whether or not Bordeu and Moheau agreed on the purifying process of bathing, or Diderot and Pluquet disagreed that interior feelings were a product of *organisation* or an immaterial attachment respectively, all sought to ground social interaction in the physical body. The new language of sensationalism collapsed the physical and the moral and allowed, or forced, thinkers to describe a fledgling society through the human capacity for absorbing external sensory impressions and transforming them into moral actions.

The physical body became immersed in a new environment replete with other bodies of differing *états*, new consumer goods and material objects, and the corporeally-destructive emissions of unsanitary cities. Medical theories of *sensibilité* spread to programs of public welfare and became embedded in arguments for the foundation of society. Discussions of the human ability to feel were met with fundamental changes in feeling itself. Contemporaries became more aware of their bodies and the necessity of privacy and hygiene. Readers across the continent interacted with novels in new ways, writing to book publishers and authors themselves to express the physical ways in which their bodies were affected. And, the language and spaces of “sentimentalism,” represented by laudatory and effusive expressions of emotion, came to be an “emotional refuge” within the hierarchical “emotional regime” constitutive of Bourbon France.<sup>272</sup> The eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of “society,” defined by one contemporary as a “theatre of bodies.”<sup>273</sup> The fusion of incipient society and the human body characterized the social imaginary. A shared set of assumptions about the corporeal undergirded

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<sup>272</sup>William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chp. 5.

<sup>273</sup>Quoted in Farge, *Effusion et tourment, le récit des corps*, 125.

the social order, provided meaning to the interactions of subjects, and shaped debates in social and political institutions.

Part I has shown the social hierarchy as it existed in theory, with concomitant privileges and legal jurisdictions, but also noted the grey areas in which *états* were perpetuated or challenged. The reform of society at the heart of the Enlightenment took a multitude of forms and efforts to amend traditional society joined at midcentury with a new language of the senses. Metaphors of the body politic cultivated the centrality of the body and adapted to shifting medical conceptions, but contemporaries pursued a deeper physiological analysis. Perspectives as seemingly divergent as those of d'Holbach and Pluquet converged on the body, crafting new ways to conceive subordination and refound *états*. The social imagination of the second half of the eighteenth century observed society through the human ability to feel and the mental faculties of memory and imagination. The guild petitions of 1776 and the Parlement's "Remonstrance" highlighted the necessary role played by the corporate order in reining in human bodies. The hierarchical, collective *corps* that dictated socio-economic behavior was imperiled by the destabilized imaginations and material addictions of individual bodies. From dense texts like Garat's *Éloges* to municipal debates over cemeteries and cesspools, individual bodies rather than privileged *corps* emerged as the ordering principle of society. As we will see in Part II, commerce and luxury played a unique role in calling into question the traditional social structure, and the anxiety produced by these economic changes further buttressed the link between the body and society.

## **Part II**

### **Political Economy and the Corporeal Critique of Luxury**

A new social imagination emerged by midcentury. The traditional social structure and metaphors of the body politic placed radical restraints on the ability of subjects to transcend their *états* and *corps*. The “invention” of society, though, challenged the corporate order, and the language of sensationalism provided contemporaries with a theory to populate society with “feeling” bodies. The diverse sources of Part I grounded the social imagination in a new language of the senses and the pervasive role of the body in social interaction. Part II will build from all facets of Part I through two case studies: *la querelle du luxe* (the luxury debate) and the comprehensive political economy put forward by the Physiocrats.

The invention of society was propelled in large part by changes in the French economy. In response to these changes, the discipline of political economy grew exponentially in the eighteenth century. Practitioners sought to understand both the various ways in which wealth was created and the significance for the traditional social order of a shift in the distribution of wealth. Integral to the discipline of political economy and the multifarious debates over the French economy was the question of luxury. The trade in luxury goods gave rise to fervent debates over morality, the basis of the socio-political order, the role of commerce, the extension of material culture, and the position of the nobility within these changes. The anxiety elicited by luxury helped forge the discipline of political economy and give impetus to new ideas about society, both of which were inseparable from the human body. Disciplinary divisions that characterize modern thought were blurred in the eighteenth century, and an understanding of

human nature and corporeal faculties were as essential to political economy as the circulation of money or the monetary value of labor.

In chapter five, I examine the expansion of French commerce from the late-seventeenth century through the 1750s. During this period, the increase in global and local commerce engaged French subjects in new ways, which threatened the order of *corps* and *états* that defined the roles of individuals in society. Supporters of either unrestrained or mitigated commerce sought to realize visions of “society” unrestricted by throne and altar; commerce provided a new means of structuring society by profitably channeling human passions and altering the relationship between birth and social clout. Commerce did not just challenge the corporate social order by redistributing wealth, though; it also fundamentally changed the daily interaction of individuals. Shops and markets provided new arenas for sociability, and as the plethora of objects available for purchase decreased in price they became attainable to more individuals. This “consumer revolution” destabilized the social hierarchy, and the perceived unity of politics, society, and economy experienced constant tension and instability.

The anxiety produced by changes in the French economy led to a welter of political-economic texts addressing the problem of luxury. The corporeal-social linkage examined in Part I pervaded *la querelle du luxe*. Having constructed social, economic, and medical/physiological contexts in previous sections, in chapters six and seven I treat a range of political-economic texts. Chapter six focuses on *la querelle du luxe*. From a general analysis of the debate, I move to a detailed study of what I call the “corporeal critique of luxury.” For critics, luxury effeminized men, turning their bodies soft and flabby (*la mollesse*). By confusing the symbols that represent social *états*, luxury also corrupted the practice of *représentation*. The visual sensory information communicated by external ornamentation could create cognitive error when



an individual of a lower *état* donned the garb of a higher *état*. Finally, critics of luxury specified the processes through which luxury habituated the body to sensible decay, rendering bodies languid and incapable of feeling the proper form of sociability. This was especially evident as more and more individuals had access to cheap, knock-off luxury products and began to socialize *en masse* in shops selling baubles and trinkets. In attempting to solve socio-political problems engendered by luxury, then, writers thought through the deleterious physical effects of luxury using sensationalist concepts and medical theories.

The last chapter is dedicated to the Physiocrats, particularly the Marquis de Mirabeau and François Quesnay. The political-economic system of Physiocracy was the most thorough of the eighteenth century, and, even though short-lived, Physiocracy exerted a huge influence over government administrators and the population writ large. The Physiocrats disdained the pursuit of luxury, and their system was grounded on a corporeal critique of luxury. In chapter seven, I burrow deeply into Mirabeau's popular *L'ami des hommes* (1756-1758) and the unpublished "Traité de la monarchie" (1758-1760), which he wrote under the tutelage of Quesnay, to connect body-politic metaphors back to chapter one and to extract the corporeal bedrock of their critiques of luxury. The arguments that undergirded early physiocratic texts persisted into other works by Mirabeau, Quesnay, and their followers. The Physiocrats pivoted an entire political economy on the nature of the human body and the degenerative effects of abjuring "natural law" by succumbing to luxury. The nascent society born of increased commerce was as unnatural to the Physiocrats as the traditional social hierarchy with privileges and *états*. The social imagination that emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century, therefore, invented competing visions of social interaction, socio-political institutions, and processes of creating wealth all through the human body.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The French Economy and Consumer Culture**

In *L'An 2440*, Louis-Sébastien Mercier envisioned a futuristic Paris without rampaging, ostentatious carriages, without “imbecilic fops” wasting their not-so-hard-earned wealth, and without constricted bodies forced into unnaturally-designed, but utterly fashionable, outfits. Mercier’s Paris of the future served as an obvious critique of eighteenth-century Paris, and his denigration of luxury was one of many criticisms against the excesses of men and women of all social classes. Every recognizable *philosophe* voiced his or her opinion on luxury, and for each celebrated man or woman of letters there were numerous others participating in *la querelle du luxe*. But, did opponents of luxury actually have anything to fear? Were their cries of semiotic confusion and consumer frivolity as baseless as their concerns over depopulation?

In fact, France experienced rapid commercial growth and a booming consumer culture during the eighteenth century. In what follows, I will expand upon this affirmation by demonstrating the growth of French commerce, beginning with Louis XIV, and subsequent controversies, such as the *noblesse commerçante* debate. I will then construct an image of French consumer culture, the goods desired by a growing consumer base, and the spaces in which consumers interacted in order to illustrate the extent to which there was a “consumer revolution.” Critics of luxury always had in mind, and perhaps in hand, the physicality of objects—trinkets, clothing, mirrors, human bodies, etc.—and they dwelled on the tangible effects of consumer and product interaction. Luxury goods and human bodies met in “society,” as they simultaneously interacted to become one of the driving forces of “society.”

### *The Political Economy of France*

Historians have demonstrated that France experienced economic growth comparable to that of England in the eighteenth century. Luxury items were at the center of what historians sometimes call a “consumer revolution.” They were part of state-sponsored manufacturing projects of the late-seventeenth century, as well as other expensive indicators of “power” and “nobility” that became signs of “wealth.” Many luxury goods decreased in price over the eighteenth century. They were then increasingly available to a wider range of people and increasingly visible in boutiques and advertisements. Moreover, by the French Revolution, many goods originally thought to be luxuries became “necessities.”<sup>274</sup> The luxury debates were inseparable from the fluctuations and peculiarities of the French economy and the cultural pursuits of the “science of commerce” and “political economy.” From the commercial enterprises inaugurated by Louis XIV and Jean-Baptiste Colbert to the internationally-known boutiques of the rue Saint-Honoré, luxury goods stood at the center of the French economy. Its advocates and detractors pursued debates over the role of luxury through all avenues of the French economy and expressed themselves through innumerable tracts on morality, commerce, social theory, and political economy.

Luxury became a critical social, moral, and economic issue in the second half of the seventeenth century as France developed into a commercial nation that traded globally and imported luxury products such as silk, porcelain, mahogany, sugar, coffee, and chocolate. In 1686, for example, the Café Procope opened its doors to Parisians and created an exotic, elegant

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<sup>274</sup>The now classic statement of this position is Colin Jones and Rebecca Spang, “Sans-culottes, *sans café, sans tabac*: Shifting Realms of Luxury and Necessity in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850*, eds. Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 37-62 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999). This point was put forward by the *maîtresses lingères* de Paris as an argument against the abolition of the guilds in 1776. “Réflexions des Marchands et Maîtresses Lingères de Paris, sur le projet de détruire les Jurandes,” BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 101.

atmosphere of foreign drinks and treats worlds away from the beer-swilling, cigarette-smoking English coffeehouses. Cotton, which began as a luxury good imported with other desirable products from India, was a consumer favorite and necessary part of French lives in the eighteenth century—eminently adaptable and capable of bearing designs and colors.<sup>275</sup>

French commerce took shape under Louis XIV through a series of Crown-sponsored initiatives to compete globally with the English and Dutch. Louis and his finance minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert developed an economic strategy that Henry Clark has termed “royal patriotism.” The king defined the public interest and generated loyalty to it through the intertwining of his “dynastic affection” and his subjects’ concomitant love of the *patrie*.<sup>276</sup> Curbing foreign imports and bolstering domestic industry, Colbert planned, would produce jobs and wealth for all French subjects. Colbert regulated the manufacture of wool, silk, and lace in his ordinances of 1669, and he incorporated numerous guilds through the 1673 Ordinance of Commerce, empowering and commanding them to produce and sell luxury goods a certain way.<sup>277</sup> He also founded the

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<sup>275</sup>Joan DeJean, *The Age of Comfort: When Paris Discovered Casual—and the Modern Home Began* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury USA, 2009), chp. 13. Cotton became popular too because it could be easily washed. If the French under Louis XIV were obsessed with all things Indian, by the mid-eighteenth century *chinoiserie* had become *la mode*. Both though were often classified as Persian or Oriental, and it was not uncommon for *marchands merciers* to recombine or re-mount objects in order to control fashion. See William H. Sewell, “The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present*, 206:1 (February 2010): 81-120; Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 176-81; Maxine Berg, “Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution,” in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, eds. Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, 228-44 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003); Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: the Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum with the J. Paul Getty Museum, 1996), chp. 4.

<sup>276</sup>Henry Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 42-5.

<sup>277</sup>Clare Crowston, *Fabricating Women: the Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 187-9. For a general pitch on the French economy under Louis XIV, see David J. Sturdy, *Fractured Europe, 1600-1721* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 295-9.

French East Indies Company in 1664 and gave to the Company a monopoly on colonial trade.<sup>278</sup>

Corporate privileges and exclusive monopolies doled out and sold to various commercial and manufacturing ventures would be a continual sore point for political economists, social critics, and merchants who viewed royal patronage as a series of collusive relationships between the court, financiers, and privileged elite.<sup>279</sup>

The fashion industry also took flight in the late-seventeenth century. Louis' theatrical display of power and hierarchy at Versailles necessitated expensive, sartorial representations of rank and control over all aspects of *la mode*.<sup>280</sup> In order to accomplish this task, Colbert and Louis set up and gave the privilege of monopoly to, for example, the Royal Mirror Manufactory at Saint-Gobain (1665) and the royal manufactory at Gobelins (1663)—collectively known as *manufactures royales*—which produced furniture, statues, and tapestries for royal palaces and the market. The tapestries often depicted the glory of the king through both the luscious fabric and a detailed *histoire du roi*, a fundamental part of the king's image.<sup>281</sup> The economic policy developed by Louis and Colbert sought to protect French industry and export the Crown-

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<sup>278</sup>Colbert was equally responsible for creating the unsuccessful West Indies Company (1664), Northern Company (1669), and Levant Company (1670); though the WIC initially failed, France established a financially-profitable presence in Saint-Domingue and Guadeloupe.

<sup>279</sup>Colbert's efforts persisted into the eighteenth century, and two results of frustration with his reforms were the suspension of the East Indies Company's privileges during the "affair of the Indies Company" (1769) and the temporary abolition of the guilds (1776). For the "affair," see Anoush Fraser Terjanian, *Commerce and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chp. 4, and John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 123-4. During the crisis following Turgot's abolition of the guilds (1776), both *parlementaires* and guild masters praised Colbert as the architect of the enviable French economy and preserver of privileges. See "Parlementary Remonstrance Against the Edict Suppressing Guilds and Communities of Arts and Trades (2-4 March 1776)," in *Remonstrances du Parlement de Paris au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, ed. Jules Flammarion, vol. 3, 275-324 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1898), 314, and "Représentations du corps des Marchands de Vin," BNF, Coll. Joly, vol. 596, folio 105.

<sup>280</sup>Jennifer Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (New York: Berg, 2004), 9-25. Louis was never truly successful in disciplining *la mode*.

<sup>281</sup>Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), chps. 4 and 11.

sponsored luxury goods indicative of French fashion.<sup>282</sup> Louis prohibited the thousands of nobles and courtiers surrounding him at Versailles from wearing foreign fashions or imported luxury items, and he promoted the French production of textiles, lace, and other luxury products through the *manufactures royales* and the ordinances of 1669 and 1673. One contemporary claimed that as fashion theoretically spread from Versailles to Paris to the provinces and then to foreign countries, French cultural influence and economic supremacy would be assured: “The more that fashions change and renew themselves, the more they give movement to our manufactures, the more outlet we will have and the less our merchants will be burdened with old material, because people will everywhere change their clothing and their finery more often.”<sup>283</sup>

The French East Indies Company and the new focus on international trade gained impetus through Louis’ desire for profit and glory. Louis and Colbert conceived of trade as a mercantile zero-sum game in which the winner profited at the loser’s expense. There was a finite amount of gold and silver to be had, commerce was a form of battle, and Colbert ensured proper defenses with trade regulations and import duties.<sup>284</sup> Louis’ militaristic zeal that accompanied his economic tactics stretched French finances to the breaking point. The corporate privileges he bestowed upon the East Indies Company and *manufactures royales*, coupled with

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<sup>282</sup>As Joan DeJean recently commented: “As soon as an exotic commodity became fashionable, merchants were ordered to stop importing the foreign product, and French manufacturers were ordered to copy it.” DeJean, *The Age of Comfort*, 210-11.

<sup>283</sup>Jean Pottier de la Hestroye, “Mémoire touchant le commerce de la France et les moyens de le rétablir” (1698), quoted in Clark, *Compass of Society*, 48. On Louis and Colbert’s mercantilist and political attempts to control fashion through sumptuary laws, see Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* 30-3. For a delightful romp through the extensive luxury creations and clandestine operations of the French during Louis XIV’s reign, see Joan DeJean, *The Essence of Style* (New York: Free Press, 2005), and for Louis’ ultimate linguistic success in the eighteenth century, see Marc Fumaroli, *When the World Spoke French*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: New York Review of Books, 2005).

<sup>284</sup>The consequences of tariff policies and restrictions on trade often led to war, as was the case with Louis XIV’s wars with the Dutch in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The eighteenth century would see an upsurge in support for freeing the grain trade within French provinces and Europe as a whole.

the swirling expenses of war, led many contemporaries to question the nature of the French economy. Moreover, the escalating costs of war strained the people through new taxes, while Versailles continued to emit *éclat* (dazzling splendor) that was considered by Louis as much foreign policy as the wars.<sup>285</sup>

The explosion of material goods, the excessive expenditures of the ultra-elite in constant competition at Versailles, Louis' own subsidization of his most prized courtiers through favors and pensions, and the privileges given to the East Indies Company and *manufactures royales* were not the only issues with luxury at their heart. Louis sought to control luxury, fashion, and hierarchy, but, in his attempts to bolster centralized authority and harness the power of socio-economic symbols, he continued the practice of venality begun by his predecessors. Louis created and sold royal offices, and he conferred honors and privileges, hoping to fill royal coffers for wars and *éclat*. Many of these dispensations, which could lead to ennoblement, were purchased by an emergent, wealthy, non-noble class of merchants, financiers, and magistrates.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>285</sup>For war expenses and increased taxes, see Sturdy, *Fractured Europe*, 298-9, and Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>286</sup>Although Louis XIV centralized and extended royal power, his relationship with the nobility of all status levels was generally one of cooperation and respect for corporate privileges. For a succinct summary of Louis' relationship to the nobility, see Colin Jones, *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 6-18, and for the seminal treatment of this topic, see William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Although venality angered both the traditional elite, who saw the recently-ennobled as base and dishonorable, and members of the Third Estate, because ennoblement meant exemption from the *taille* (the primary direct tax on everyone), it was nevertheless necessary to the king's finances. Those *bourgeois gentilshommes* who purchased venal offices with the desire for ennoblement allowed the king to extract more money from them, through *augmentations de gages*, borrowing through the corporations from the public, and/or revocation and reconfirmation of privileges, and thus "tightening [the] connection between what was called the 'cascade of vanity,' the continuance of privilege, and the state's financial need." David Bien, "The *Secrétaires du Roi*: Absolutism, Corps, and Privilege under the Ancien Régime," in *Vom Ancien Régime zur Französischen Revolution: Forschungen und Perspektiven*, ed. Albert Cremer, 153-68 (Göttingen, 1978), 161. See also William Doyle, *Venality: The Sale of Offices in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), and David Bien, "Offices, Corps, and a System of State Credit: The Uses of Privilege under the Ancien Régime," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 1, ed. Keith Michael Baker, 89-114 (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1987).

The practice of venality and distribution of honors threatened the traditional nobility. Consumer culture and royal privileges spread through the ranks of society; both supposedly disrupted the socio-political hierarchy, which was based on expensive symbols designating rank. Consumer culture also implicated luxury in a larger argument over the desire for France to be a commercial nation at all.

Throughout the eighteenth century, contemporaries would fight fiercely over the following questions: What should be the role of the state in commerce? Does commerce breed equality or inequality? What happens to agriculture in a commercial society? What should be the role of the nobility in commerce? Can the traditional social taxonomy coexist with commerce? Does luxury promote or halt economic growth and morality? Ultimately, "Was there...a way of embracing the growth potential of a vigorous commercial economy without giving comfort to a court culture increasingly seen as inadequate or even corrupt?"<sup>287</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt a simplistic summary of French commercial thought throughout the eighteenth century. For the remainder of this section, I will focus on one episode that captures the essence of French debates on commerce, the state, and the social order: the *noblesse commerçante* debate.

The death of Louis XIV in 1715 coincided with France's loss of the *asiento* as a result of the War of Spanish Succession (Treaty of Utrecht, 1713).<sup>288</sup> With these two hallmarks of state-sponsored commerce gone, the period between the death of Louis XIV and the 1750s was characterized by anxiety over the role of the state in commerce, the debacle of John Law's

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<sup>287</sup>Clark, *Compass of Society*, 257.

<sup>288</sup>Spain gave the *asiento* to Britain, which allowed the British the right to transport slaves to Spanish America and to a limited trade in other items.



“System” in 1720, the persistence of state-sponsored trading monopolies that potentially hindered economic growth (e.g. the 1728 *Exclusif*), and the presumed ability of commerce to neutralize international military antagonisms. In response, the French “developed a science of commerce, the central focus of which was reconciling a new political order founded upon commerce with the peculiarities of France’s government, social structure, and customs.”<sup>289</sup> Competing reactions to these developments culminated in 1756 with the *noblesse commerçante* debate.<sup>290</sup>

Montesquieu, Jean-François Melon, J.-C.-M. Vincent de Gournay, and numerous others had argued for the civilizing capacity of commerce freed from governmental constraints, what Albert Hirschman called *le doux commerce*.<sup>291</sup> In their view, commerce could overcome the myopic strategy of mercantilism by balancing the pursuit of wealth and virtue through the passion of “interest.”<sup>292</sup> The drive to acquire was thought to be rational, controllable, and

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<sup>289</sup>Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3-4.

<sup>290</sup>Upon the death of Louis XIV, in order to straighten out the French economy and government finances, through a proper mobilization of credit and a solution to the staggering state debt, the Regent Duc d’Orléans turned to the Scottish financier John Law. Colin Jones summarized Law’s System as the “far-reaching attempt to establish public credit through a state bank which would receive tax revenue, keep interest rates low, boost the economy and liquidate royal debt.” Jones, *The Great Nation*, 61-2. Law’s “System” is convoluted. In *The Great Nation*, Jones nicely simplifies it and connects it to political wrangling with the *parlement de Paris* and criticisms from across the social spectrum.

<sup>291</sup>Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before Its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, twentieth anniversary edition), esp. 58-63, 70-81, and Clark, *Compass of Society*, 75-108, who makes use of Istvan Hont’s phrase “commercial sociability.” For an argument against sociability as a positive consequence of commerce, see M.C.C.A., *Le Négociant Citoyen* (1764), and an interpretation by Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 137-42.

<sup>292</sup>Historians have recently been rethinking Hirschman’s enormously influential work by analyzing alternative understandings of commerce. For commercial activity repackaged as patriotic, see Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, chp. 3; Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*; Shovlin, “Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Economic Thought,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36:2 (2003): 224-30. For the ambivalence of commerce, see Terjanian, *Commerce and Its Discontents in Eighteenth-Century French Political Thought*.

virtually innocuous; it would force individuals, and thus nations, to practice commercial exchange peacefully and reciprocally. Advocates of commerce as a softener of manners, polisher of mores, and ultimately new foundation for society, however, addressed the social hierarchy in competing ways. Noble fears of losing their status to a budding, moneyed group of merchants and venal office holders crystallized in the question whether nobles should participate in commerce.<sup>293</sup>

The increasing necessity of commerce to the French economy, and the increasing presence of texts supporting commerce in the literary sphere, opened up a new arena in which to redefine French society.<sup>294</sup> The texts that filled this space demonstrated that there existed varying strands of argument between the two poles of the “spirit of commerce” (*esprit de commerce*), espoused by Montesquieu in *De l’esprit des lois* (1748), and the “spirit of conquest” (*esprit de conquête*). By the 1750s, the *intendant* of commerce Vincent de Gournay put forward a critique of French commerce, the foundation of which was a dichotomy between the productive and unproductive classes. For Gournay and his colleagues, the idleness and parasitism of the privileged order explained French stagnation.<sup>295</sup> The question whether or not the nobility should participate in commerce highlighted a number of ongoing debates: the role of luxury; the extent

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<sup>293</sup>There was never any one “noble” position or even a simple dichotomy of “reactionary” versus “adaptable” nobility. The Second Estate included a range of traditional and recently-ennobled nobles who participated politically and economically in new ways, intransigent nobles who maintained claims of honor and privilege, and poorer nobles who suffered from lack of funds and loss of status. See John Shovlin, “Nobility,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ancien Régime*, ed. William Doyle, 111-26 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*. For Charles Taylor, commerce was a liberating process that created a “direct-access” society and annulled intermediary organization (e.g. *corps*) that separated individuals from each other and from the state. Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), chp. 10.

<sup>294</sup>The most famous texts supporting commerce were Voltaire’s *Lettres philosophiques* (1734) and Jean-François Melon’s *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734).

<sup>295</sup>For the most recent work on the Gournay Circle, see Loïc Charles, Frédéric Lefebvre, and Christine Théré, eds., *Le cercle de Gournay, Savoirs économiques et pratiques administratives en France au milieu du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, INED, 2011).

to which France should be a commercial society; the homogeneity of the Second Estate; and a flexible political language that mixed the traditional values of honor and virtue with new definitions of patriotism, citizenry, social utility, and nobility itself.<sup>296</sup> Importantly, there were two general ideas competing over the future of France: commerce would either mar the Second Estate, and thus undermine the social hierarchy, or commerce would revitalize the French economy, by redefining merchants and traders as patriots, and thus the Second Estate.

With a groundswell of support behind him, including Vincent de Gournay, abbé Coyer commenced the debate in 1756 with *La noblesse commerçante*. He contended that the nobility, especially the poorer nobility, should be encouraged to participate in commerce; those who chose this path should not be penalized, either legally by derogation of noble status or culturally through noble prejudice against commercial activity.<sup>297</sup> Coyer did not seek to undermine the social hierarchy as much as redefine merchants as “noble” and “honorable.” He observed society through the utility of its members and found that frivolous courtiers, idle landowners, and undeserving plutocrats contributed nothing productive to the ineluctable, modern commercial nation. Commerce, Coyer asserted, “has begun to acquire nobility in the eyes of the public.”<sup>298</sup>

In *La noblesse militaire, ou le patriote françois* (1756) and *Histoire du commerce et de la navigation des peuples anciens et modernes* (1758), Coyer’s opponent, chevalier d’Arc, also

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<sup>296</sup>Jay M. Smith, “Social Categories, the Language of Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution: The Debate over *noblesse commerçante*,” *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 72, n. 2 (June 2000): 339-374. This section also draws from Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, chp. 2 and 95-102; Clark, *Compass of Society*, chp. 4; Michael Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 100-8; Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 58-65; Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, chp. 3. For an analysis of “commercial honor” in Restoration France, see Erika Vause, “‘He Who Rushes to Riches Will Not Be Innocent’: Commercial Values and Commercial Failure in Postrevolutionary France,” *French Historical Studies* 35.2 (2012): 321-349.

<sup>297</sup>The participation of the Second Estate in commerce had been legitimated in 1629 by the *Code Michau*, though most nobles still found commerce beneath them.

<sup>298</sup>Quoted in Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 116.

modified the language of honor, glory, and utility, but his intent was to bolster traditional corporate privileges and the moral superiority of the nobility, as exemplified through the profession of arms. In *Histoire du commerce*, Arc attempted to prove that in commercial nations of the past subjects or citizens lacked the courage and military zeal to protect *la patrie*. He recoiled at the thought of nobles becoming “mere calculators,” pursuing only financial gain and constantly concerned with money and numbers.<sup>299</sup> Arc chastised fellow members of the Second Estate for eschewing honor, self-sacrifice, and noble sentiment for the caprice and cupidity of luxury, a direct consequence of commerce. Like Montesquieu, Arc argued that commerce was not the arena in which nobles should best express their honor, but unlike Montesquieu he challenged the importance of commerce to the French economy in general, as did the Physiocrats concurrently.<sup>300</sup>

The debate over the commercial nobility aroused the French public and political economists to the instability of the traditional corporate system. One of the long-term consequences of the death of Louis XIV and the failure of John Law’s “System” was that the “public” became more aware of both itself and its relationship to state finances, forcing members of the royal family and government officials to develop public confidence and heed “public opinion.”<sup>301</sup> If, as abbé Coyer claimed, commerce had attained nobility in the eyes of the public, then it would behoove government officials to take note. The *noblesse commerçante* debate

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<sup>299</sup>Quoted in *Ibid.*, 126. Arc did not blindly support the king; his target was equally the culture of Versailles where money, not noble merit or lineage, earned one a prized place in the army or a sinecure. For other perceived effects of luxury on the army, see David Bien, “The Army in the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution,” *Past and Present* 85 (November 1979): 68-98.

<sup>300</sup>Also like the Physiocrats, Arc argued in *Mes loisirs* (1755) that agriculture should surpass trade as the basis for the French economy. Montesquieu’s famous assertion that a commercial nobility is contrary to the “spirit of monarchy” comes in *De l’esprit des lois*, Book 5, chp. 8; Book 20, chps. 21, 22.

<sup>301</sup>Thomas Kaiser, “Money, Despotism, and Public Opinion in Early Eighteenth-Century France: John Law and the Debate on Royal Credit,” *Journal of Modern History* 63.1 (March 1991): 1-28.

signaled too the creeping anxiety over what Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman called “free agents.” Chevalier d’Arc and abbé Coyer both sought a directing hand to restructure or restore traditional French society, as commerce appeared to release individuals from their *états* and *corps*. For d’Arc, the undesirable consequence of commerce was the dilution of the Second Estate’s natural moral status and military capacity, and, for abbé Coyer, commercial modernity provided new mechanisms to bolster and assess the traditional social structure: social utility and public opinion. By the mid-eighteenth century, the stress that commerce put on the social order turned the question of a commercial nobility into a *cause célèbre*.

The efforts to reconcile the privileges and prejudices of the corporate nobility, and the monarchy that sustained them, with a world governed more and more by commerce would continue to exercise the minds of French thinkers, particularly after defeat in the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). The commercial and manufacturing policies enacted by Louis XIV and Colbert continued to bear fruit, but they elicited criticism from two fronts: those who demanded freedom of commerce to enhance the wealth and social polish of the French nation and more tradition-minded nobles who saw commerce as undermining the social hierarchy, extending an acquisitive ardor through society, and neglecting agriculture.

The spread of commerce touched all facets of the French *constitution*: “social structure, forms of government, and even *moeurs* (customs, manners, or mores).”<sup>302</sup> Montesquieu’s important *De l’esprit des lois* augmented the popularity of French commerce in the literary sphere, and the debates about luxury intertwined commerce and the social order. Eighteenth-

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<sup>302</sup>Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 25 (see pg. 61 also). For *moeurs*, see Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 22-23, 164-6, and Sarah Maza, “Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France,” *The Journal of Modern History* 69 (June 1997): 221-23. As we saw in chapter one, “constitution” could also describe one’s physical body, signaling the importance of the human body in considerations of society.

century “science of commerce,” or what would become “political economy,” never truly distinguished between the components of a modern conception of the economy—models of value, labor, supply, demand, and equilibrium, all under direct human control.<sup>303</sup> It is for this reason that the early-modern linkage of the concept of “commerce” to social, moral, and political conditions is so important: “commerce came to refer not only to the activities of merchants...but to an increasingly resonant image of civil society as a whole, as in phrases such as ‘an agreeable commerce,’ ‘an easy commerce,’ the ‘commerce of letters,’ or the ‘commerce between the sexes’.”<sup>304</sup> The idea of “commerce” became inseparable from a new idea of “society” and social interaction, and contemporaries performed commerce as consumers and sociable beings in the boutiques and streets of Paris.

### *The Culture of Consumption*

The growth of literature on political economy beginning at midcentury was matched in the marketplace by an intensification of purchasing and consumption. The *état* of consumers became less clear. In fact, some historians have rightfully asserted that the publishing boom in economic affairs was in response to the swelling of consumption and changes in the material

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<sup>303</sup>For the shift in thinking of the economy as part of nature to an autonomous sphere, see Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Regarding labels, Paul Cheney preferred to use “science of commerce” rather than “political economy” because the latter is too entangled with modern economics and Whiggish interpretations of economic history. Science of commerce, in Cheney’s view, expresses more clearly contemporaries’ concerns for the interconnectivity of “economics” with social, political, geopolitical, and moral questions throughout France and the world. Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 7-13. The following prefer “political economy”: Arnault Skornicki, *L’économiste, la cour et la patrie: L’économie politique dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), and Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 10-12. For a contemporary definition of political economy, see Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), Book IV, Introduction.

<sup>304</sup>Clark, *Compass of Society*, xiii. For a link between seventeenth-century natural law theory and eighteenth-century dual understandings of “commerce,” see Catherine Larrère, *L’invention de l’économie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992).

realm.<sup>305</sup> These two changes provided visual evidence to critics of luxury that new forms of social interaction driven by commerce would have pernicious moral consequences as the sensory network of human bodies would be overwhelmed.

Moving from a macro perspective developed above to a micro perspective, the day-to-day interaction of individuals as consumers and sociable beings will exemplify France as a consumer society. There is no doubt that more French subjects consumed more in the eighteenth century than ever before, and that this growth of consumption fed the fruition of “society” as a realm of unrestrained human interaction.<sup>306</sup> Although the state’s finances may have been in ruins by the late 1780s, this was not the case for the economy in general.<sup>307</sup>

Daniel Roche described the growth of eighteenth-century consumption as “The Appearance of Luxury and the Luxury of Appearances.” He linked a new “culture of appearances” to the rise of “individualism” and changes in social attitudes.<sup>308</sup> The ability to

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<sup>305</sup>John Shovlin, “Political Economy and the French Nobility, 1750-1789,” in *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-40 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 112. For figures on political economic literature, see Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France*, 216-222; Christine Théré, “Economic Publishing and Authors: 1566-1789,” in *Studies in the History of French Political Economy: From Bodin to Walras*, ed. Gilbert Faccarello, trans. Valérie Cauchemez, 1-56 (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Jean-Claude Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique: XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992).

<sup>306</sup>For consumption patterns and statistics, see the following works by Daniel Roche: *The People of Paris: An Essay in Popular Culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, trans. Marie Evans with Gwynne Lewis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, orig. pub. 1981); *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, orig. pub. 1993); “Between a ‘moral economy’ and a ‘consumer economy’: clothes and their function in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries,” in *Luxury Trades and Consumerism in Ancien Régime Paris: Studies in the History of the Skilled Workforce*, eds. Robert Fox and Anthony Turner, trans. J. Debouzy, 219-29 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 222. See also Cissie Fairchild, “The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in eighteenth-century Paris,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter, 228-248 (London and New York, Routledge, 1993), and Jones, *The Great Nation*, 350-63.

<sup>307</sup>Jones, *The Great Nation*, xxiii, 350-63.

<sup>308</sup>*Ibid.*, 349-63, and Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 548-9, and “Between a ‘moral economy’ and a ‘consumer economy’,” 228 (“emancipation through consumption”).

purchase a wide range of luxury goods increased in the eighteenth century, but the social practice of “appearance” had multiple motives. One could wear an “appearance” as a mask or perform it as a diversion to distract from either one’s depleted finances or base background. Roche focused on the emancipatory capacity of consumption. In his words, “The quick succession of fashions which attracted observers’ notice...was thus part of a more considerable change, inducing and expressing a new relationship with the body, a new appearance in society (i.e. a new way of looking at people), that could be seen in the streets, places, markets...and at festivals.”<sup>309</sup> Roche suggested what I have been describing as the social imagination: a set of corporeal-social principles that undergirded the perception of “society” in the second half of the eighteenth century. Integral to this new social imagination was the ability to purchase more goods, to decorate and care for the body, and to interact with others through participation in commerce. This dynamic culture of consumption extended below the upper crust of the Second Estate, and commercialization of eighteenth-century culture imbricated all aspects of modern life.

A short list of (luxury) goods includes sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, silks, gold/silver brocades, bonnets/hats, ribbons, blouses, cuffs, stockings, perfumes, cosmetics, gloves, buttons, fans, shoes and buckles, wigs, snuffboxes, umbrellas, watches, mirrors, desks, pens, ink (inkstands), paper, seals/wax, *indiennes*, and *chinoiserie* (tea cups, porcelain, incense burners, folding fans, porcelain *magots*). Most of these objects were considered luxury goods, consumed or purchased only by elites with significant disposable income. They were capable of being transformed in order to match seasons, colors, or designs *à la mode* and were appropriated to the state’s manufacturing apparatus. Alongside a surfeit of items for use and display emerged new expressions of taste and desires for comfort in the home. Sofas, arm chairs, garments, bath

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<sup>309</sup>Roche, “Between a ‘moral economy’ and a ‘consumer economy’,” 223.



fixtures, and new approaches to interior decoration and architecture united changes in the articulation of luxury to new forms of production and consumption irrespective of social hierarchy and courtly etiquette.<sup>310</sup>

Whether expressive of *commodité* or the egoism of rank, luxury goods were “caught between pleasure and social competitiveness.”<sup>311</sup> And, what began as luxury, the exclusive property of a few, became necessity by the French Revolution (e.g. sugar, coffee, tobacco, cotton, stockings). Historians have shown that the demand for luxury goods not only made the border between the Second and Third Estate porous, but that the French “consumer revolution” was propelled by the lower classes purchasing “populuxe” goods, or “cheap copies of aristocratic luxury items.”<sup>312</sup> Jewelry, gold watches, stockings, umbrellas, and fans were favorite populuxe accessories. From 1700-1789, workers’ expenditures on clothing and undergarments rose 215% and those of nobles 233%, outpacing workers by only 18%.<sup>313</sup> In his recent work on wigs, Michael Kwass addressed the economic and social limits of the “consumer revolution” and

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<sup>310</sup>DeJean, *Age of Comfort*, 1-21. See also Roche, *The People of Paris*, 148-50, and *France in the Enlightenment*, chp. 19; Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 43-7; Adams, *A Taste for Comfort and Status*, for a provincial, professional family’s cultural values.

<sup>311</sup>Laurence Fontaine, “The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris: Social Redistribution as an Alternative Currency,” in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, trans. Vicky Wittaker, 89-102, here 90.

<sup>312</sup>Fairchild, “The Production and Marketing of Populuxe Goods in eighteenth-century Paris,” 228. See also Natacha Coquery, *Tenir Boutique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle: luxe et demi-luxe* (Paris: Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2011), 266-77. Fairchild argued that the presence of items like gold watches indicates the desire to “ape the aristocracy” (230) because if one only wanted to tell time then the less expensive silver watch would do the trick. Daniel Roche has suggested that emulation is complicated, and that we should look equally at use value versus exchange value and the role of domestic servants as “cultural intermediaries.” Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 557-8, and *The People of Paris*, chp. 5. Laurence Fontaine provided an additional, partly conflicting, argument. In Fontaine’s words: “The activity of the Parisian pawnshop also provokes questions about the enthusiasm of the ordinary people for the gold watches and jewelry which appear in inventories drawn up after a death: their presence may not be explained solely in terms of their usefulness or a desire to imitate the upper classes – they were also valuable objects which were easily turned into cash.” Fontaine, “The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” 99.

<sup>313</sup>Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 558.

found that “the wig’s diffusion demonstrates a dramatic expansion in an intermediate zone of consumption situated between aristocratic luxury and popular necessity.”<sup>314</sup> The number of master wigmakers in Paris and provincial cities grew exponentially in the eighteenth century, as did consumers of this formerly-exclusive product. The social diffusion of the wig, Kwass declared, does not support arguments for “mass” consumption, but it does support arguments for a marked growth in demand and purchasing power. The Marquis de Mirabeau, well-known for his exaggerated rhetoric, was perhaps not off the mark when he complained, “everyone has become a *Monsieur*.”<sup>315</sup>

A deepening consumer base learned of such products through a variety of media. To create and channel demand, producers and sellers sought to capture the public’s attention in new ways. In addition, as luxury items representative of status became populuxe goods available to the majority of consumers, they had to revitalize the elite market through advertising.<sup>316</sup> New forms of marketing looked to stimulate desire and focus consumer energies toward their own distinguishable products. In the process, they created a “culture of publicity.”<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>314</sup>Kwass, “Big Hair: A Wig History of Consumption in Eighteenth-Century France,” *American Historical Review*, vol. 111, n.3 (June 2006), 634. Like other scholars (643), Kwass contested emulation as the foundation for consumer expansion; he identified the role of “taste leaders” as enunciating new consumer values—“convenience, natural authenticity, and self-expression”—that blur the motivations of conspicuous consumption and status (634, 644). Coiffeurs often framed their trade as artistic as much as artisanal. See Faycal Falaky, “From Barber to Coiffeur: Art and Economic Liberalisation in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36.1 (March 2013): 35-48.

<sup>315</sup>Victor de Riquetti, marquis de Mirabeau, *L’Ami des hommes ou traité de la population*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1970; reprint of Avignon edition of 1756–8), vol. I, Part I, chp. VIII, 152.

<sup>316</sup>Fairchild, “The Production and Marketing of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” 234-5, 237-8. See also Coquery, *Tenir Boutique à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*, 53-7; Morag Martin, *Selling Beauty: Cosmetics, Commerce, and French Society, 1750-1830* (The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, 2009), chps. 3 and 6; Kwass, “Big Hair,” 644-59; Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* chps. 1 and 6.

<sup>317</sup>Martin, *Selling Beauty*, 57.

The growth of the literary public sphere, which incorporated academies, essay contests, coffeehouses, and the periodical press, gave to shop owners, entrepreneurs, and merchants an outlet to make the public aware of their goods and the ability to shape usage. Journals like the *Mercure de France* (formerly *Mercure galant*), *Avantcoureur*, and *Cabinet des modes* reported on the latest goods *à la mode*, ways to wear or apply those goods (e.g. clothes and cosmetics), and places in which to buy particular items.<sup>318</sup> Advertisements for all varieties of consumer goods could be found in the weekly *Affiches* that reached a large readership in urban areas across France, as we saw in chapter four.<sup>319</sup> Merchant trade cards merged text with detailed images of their (often exotic) merchandise to provide necessary information and suggest ways for consumers to display their wares; they were both seductive and practical.<sup>320</sup> The expansion of almanacs and guides attest not only to the increased tourist interest in the monuments of Paris but also to a “commercial literature,” a veritable geography of shops and products.<sup>321</sup> Finally, domestic servants became cultural intermediaries; they were “both spectators and actors, serving

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<sup>318</sup>Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* 25, 180-98. Many merchants, such as the “minister of fashion” Rose Bertin, could sell themselves through their clients, famous actors or the queen Marie Antoinette in Bertin’s case. The importance attributed to “utility” over “frivolity” (associated with court luxury perceived to harm society) can be found in the prospectus for *Le Courrier de la Nouveauté, Feuille hebdomadaire à l’usage des Dames* (1758), which never achieved the privilege of publication: “The work that we propose to give to the Public would seem to suggest, by its title, the genre of frivolity, but the reader will come to know its utility” (Bibliothèque nationale de France, LC14-1).

<sup>319</sup>Colin Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 101, n. 1 (February 1996): 13-40, and Jones and Spang, “Sans-culottes, *sans café, sans tabac*,” 49-62.

<sup>320</sup>Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, 177, 185-193, and Martin, *Selling Beauty*, 58-9. Trade cards were often attached after a sale had been made but nevertheless served as advertisements, as the cards changed hands or shoppers remembered or reported their experiences. Trade cards too not only sold products but put forward images of how one should display or use them. For a focus on British cards, in comparison to French, see Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, “Selling Consumption in the Eighteenth Century: Advertising and the Trade Card in Britain and France,” *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 4, n. 2 (2007): 145-170. For the “double seduction” of the trade card, see Natacha Coquery, “The Language of Success: Marketing and Distributing Semi-Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Design History*, vol. 17, n. 1 (2004): 75-76.

<sup>321</sup>Coquery, *Tenir Boutique*, chps. 2 and 3.

as models to the affluent lower classes.”<sup>322</sup> Servants and more prosperous workers were able to transmit new fashions, innovative goods, or modern concepts (e.g. comfort) to those unexposed to luxury items through other visual methods.

Luxury and populuxe items did not necessarily sell themselves. “Taste masters” or “taste leaders” shaped fashion and enticed consumers. In the *Affiches*, advertisers often attached “de santé” to products as a way to highlight or fabricate the health benefits of commodities, thus “embodying” the consumer further and cementing the role of the body in the social imagination.<sup>323</sup> “Taste leaders” shifted common perceptions of wigs away from the domain of a competitive, courtly aristocracy and promoted them as convenient (easy and pleasant), natural (though capable of fixing nature’s defects), and authentic representations of one’s subjectivity.<sup>324</sup> “Taste masters” redefined not only products but also consumers, sweetening the pitch by characterizing them as “modern” or “educated” or subtly disciplining them by competing with each other.<sup>325</sup> Contemporary social commentators blamed or praised the *marchandes de modes* for setting *la mode*, as fashion, frivolity, and taste all came to be linked in print to women. *Marchandes de modes* were primarily female merchants who specialized in “finishing garments, decorating hats with feathers and artificial flowers, selling lace and ribbons, designing hairstyles, and making simple ready-made items such as capes and neckerchiefs.”<sup>326</sup> The larger category of

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<sup>322</sup>Roche, *The People of Paris*, 132. See also Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 558; Roche, “Between a ‘moral economy’ and a ‘consumer economy,’” 223; Jones, *The Great Nation*, 358.

<sup>323</sup>Jones, “The Great Chain of Buying,” 28.

<sup>324</sup>Kwass, “Big Hair,” defined “taste leaders” as *philosophes*, critics of society, morality, and fashion, and producers of goods, but most importantly they were “self-proclaimed experts” who “used the printed word to influence consumer practices” (644).

<sup>325</sup>Martin, *Selling Beauty*, 6-7.

<sup>326</sup>Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* 91-2. See also Crowston, *Fabricating Women*, 67-71 and her recent *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

*marchand-merciers* dealt in furniture and jewelry; they were a hub for exotic imports, and the *marchands* “finished” products to stimulate or satisfy fashion.<sup>327</sup>

Many (men) feared that the *grisettes* who worked fashion boutiques exerted a dissolute influence over fashion, consumption, and sexuality, the latter often the selling point. Their status as *le petit peuple* combined with the association of coquetry, caprice, commerce, and female independence added an acrimonious moral critique to the “consumer revolution.”<sup>328</sup> Yet, the entirety of the shopping experience became another force driving the consumer revolution. Populuxe items could be purchased at fairs and markets throughout France, and *colporteurs* hawked merchandise on foot and through correspondence. *Chambrelans* produced and sold goods illegally, skirting guild and corporate regulations, and the itinerant *revendeuses/revendeurs* sold second-hand clothes (*fripiers* possessed shops in Les Halles). Both connected multiple worlds—production/consumption, urban/rural, supply/demand, upper/lower class—and exemplified the interlacing elements of commercial culture.<sup>329</sup>

The most dazzling spaces of consumption were the shops and boutiques of Paris that combined shopping and sociability, commodity and spectacle. Parisian shop windows shimmered in both the midday sun and the new, evening street lighting.<sup>330</sup> The interactions between male shoppers and *les grisettes*, female shoppers and the *galant* male mercer, and

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<sup>327</sup>Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, 162-4. See also Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: the Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris*, chps. 3, 4, and 5.

<sup>328</sup>Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s perspective was ambivalent where others’ were negative. Mercier, “Femmes d’artisans et de petits marchands” and “Grisettes,” in *Le Tableau de Paris*, intro. and ed. Jeffry Kaplow (Paris: La Découverte/Poche, 1992).

<sup>329</sup>Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* 152; Fontaine, “The Circulation of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris;” and Fairchild, “The Production and Marketing of Luxury Goods in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” 232, 234, 237.

<sup>330</sup>Craig Koslofsky, “Court Culture and Street Lighting in Seventeenth-Century Europe,” *Journal of Urban History*, vol. 28, no. 6 (September 2002): 743-68, and *Evening’s Empire: A History of the Night in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), chp. 5.

shoppers of both sexes and all socio-economic statuses became itself an event. Parisian boutiques were central sites of exchange: social, economic, production, consumption. Shopping became a socio-cultural activity indicative of leisure, diversion, and instruction.<sup>331</sup> Parisians and tourists could promenade the Tuileries, sip coffee or chocolate in modern, elegant *cafés* (rather than seedy cabarets), and stroll through the Palais Royal or rue Saint-Honoré window-shopping or purchasing any number of goods. Pleasure derived from these activities contributed to a culture of consumption and appearance, a rise in individual self-awareness and expression, and an attractive public space unfettered by the social laws of hierarchy or even the exclusivity of salons. Likening Parisian culture to a “perpetual ball,” an experience that overwhelmed all the senses, became a key critique of luxury and its effects on the body.<sup>332</sup>

Luxury debates took place within this context of accelerated consumption and continued dialogue over the role of the government and the nobility in commerce. Texts on political economy positioned critiques of guild regulations and corporate privileges, for example, alongside moral analyses of the gradually more mixed social composition of France. Contemporaries did not just imagine the effects of consumer culture in their fearful or febrile writings; they observed on a daily basis new individuals with the purchasing power to obtain once exclusive goods and consumers of indeterminate social status performing the sociability of commerce. The periodical press, *Affiches*, boutiques, “taste-makers,” *grisettes*, and *chambrelans* all linked French consumption, exchange, and manufacture in what Colin Jones has called a “Great Chain of Buying.” Even if magistrates, social commentators, guild members, and the

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<sup>331</sup>Coquery, *Tenir Boutique*, 23. See also Coquery, “The Language of Success,” 77-80; Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters*, 166-75, 191-2; Jones, *Sexing “La Mode,”* 150-69; Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, 548-56. These texts also detail spaces in which poorer members of society purchased goods, which was certainly not characterized by charm and sociability, and acknowledge that many of the wealthy still had clothes made to order and delivered.

<sup>332</sup>For example, see A.-P. Lottin, *Discours contre le luxe* (1783; I have used the 1784 version), 10.

fashion press gendered feminine an entire package of modern consumer culture—desire, excess, frivolity, fashion, sexuality—it is clear that this prejudiced veneer did not hinder men from purchasing goods such as wigs, handkerchiefs, buckles, and cosmetics. The new consumer was born in the eighteenth century and stood at the center of the luxury debates; he or she was *sans état* but distinctly corporeal.<sup>333</sup>

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<sup>333</sup>For an investigation into the intertwining concepts of “consumer” and “citizen” in Europe and America from the eighteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, see Sheryl Kroen, “A Political History of the Consumer,” *The Historical Journal* 47:3 (2004): 709-736.

## **Chapter 6**

### ***The Corporeal Critique of Luxury***

In 1755, Diderot wrote in the fifth volume of the *Encyclopédie* that the purpose of a universal dictionary was to fix the meaning of terms, to expose and correct the abuse of language. He proposed "luxury" as a pertinent example of a term which "we say of a great many objects, without any of us ever getting it wrong."<sup>334</sup> Diderot's choice of "luxury" indicates the far-reaching resonance of this term in mid-eighteenth-century France, and he was not the only writer to express discontent with its ambiguity or imprecision. Earlier in the eighteenth century, Bernard Mandeville found "luxury" to lack any semantic force as an economic or moral category unless widely expanded to encompass everything "not immediately necessary to make Man subsist as he is a living Creature" (1714).<sup>335</sup> Jean-François Melon too thought "luxury" to be a composite of "vague, confused, and false" ideas" (1736).<sup>336</sup> Moreover, definitions of luxury changed over time. As the abbé Morellet argued, "in defining luxury...[one] cannot but be an historian" (1786).<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>334</sup>Denis Diderot, "Encyclopedia," *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Philip Stewart (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2002). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.004> (accessed July 3, 2013). Originally published as "Encyclopédie," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 5:635–648A (Paris, 1755).

<sup>335</sup>Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, ed. F. B. Kaye (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), 107 (Remark "L").

<sup>336</sup>Melon, *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734; I am using the second edition published in 1736), 113.

<sup>337</sup>Quoted in Henry Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 271.



Mandeville, Melon, and Morellet supported the growth of luxury as an economically- and socially-profitable enterprise, and they sought to defuse the controversy surrounding its meaning by demonstrating its pervasiveness. The problem of luxury, though, was more than conceptual confusion or historical relativism. To quote historians Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, "Enlightenment culture adapted itself to luxury as a positive social force, viewing it with confidence as an instrument (and indication) of the progress of civilization. On the other hand, [Enlightenment culture] feared luxury as a debilitating and corrosive social evil, clinging to classical critiques of excessive indulgence and wanton profligacy, urban chaos and plebeian idleness."<sup>338</sup> Similar to the *noblesse commerçante* debate, arguing for or against luxury was a strategy to comment upon morality, the social and political order, commerce, and material culture.<sup>339</sup>

*La querelle du luxe* captivated the minds of contemporaries precisely because it united so many facets of French society in flux. From 1762-1791, there were forty-seven texts published with the word “luxury” (*le luxe*) in the title.<sup>340</sup> Most importantly, the anxiety produced by commercial culture and luxury came to be conceived corporeally. Opponents of luxury

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<sup>338</sup>Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., "Introduction" to *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 2. Speaking of England, E. J. Clery remarks: "The term has been sometimes narrowly defined by twentieth-century commentators as excessive consumption, an outgrowth of selfish passions, which threatens to destabilize the *polis*. But in context, in the writings of civic humanist and enlightenment authors, it is apparent that luxury represents much more than this. It signifies change *per se*. Its excess is of an historical nature: the supersession of a social and political order, and the inability to contain forces of transformation that subvert the existing parameters of the state...Almost invariably in the first half of the century, this change is understood as a decline." E. J. Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England: Literature, Commerce, and Luxury* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 7. For the perspective of French army officers on the perceived effects of luxury, see David Bien, "The Army and the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution," *Past and Present*, n. 85 (November 1979): 68-98, here pgs. 73-4.

<sup>339</sup>Writing a text on luxury, or merely attaching a phrase to that effect, was perceived as a way into the literary world. See Audrey Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières, et la Révolution* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2014).

<sup>340</sup>*Ibid.*, 159-162. Provost provides a list of these texts, a list of works sparked by the Académie française from 1770-1786, and excerpts from forty-two texts on luxury and commerce.

expressed their fears and anxieties about the deleterious effects of luxury through the sensible body. They moved beyond corporeal metaphors of the social body in a diseased condition and generic references to the utility of the passions—a popular argument made by supporters of luxury—to more direct evidence of the destructive capacity of luxury on the body itself. The human body was affected by new contact with material goods and other humans in a society gradually brought to fruition by commerce. Fears that luxury could damage the body were compounded by the increasing flexibility of the social order in which people of uncertain rank interacted more and more.

### *La Querelle du Luxe*<sup>341</sup>

In France, the luxury debates began as a reaction to the economic and foreign policies of Louis XIV and Colbert, simmered during the Regency, and were rekindled at mid-century. Late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers engaged the luxury debates and used the question of luxury to criticize or reinforce the intricately-woven web of society, politics, and economics. Although famous supporters of luxury, such as Jean-François Melon, Voltaire, David Hume, and Montesquieu, were the most vocal, after mid-century the public sphere became glutted with

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<sup>341</sup>Luxury has become a central and unavoidable topic in early-modern European history. Alongside primary sources, I have crafted the following analysis on the luxury debates from the following: Ellen Ross, “Mandeville, Melon, and Voltaire: The Origins of the Luxury Controversy in France,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 155 (1976): 1897-1912; Christopher Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Pierre Rétat, “Luxe,” *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, n. 26 (1994): 79-88; Sarah Maza, “Luxury, Morality, and Social Change: Why There Was No Middle-Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary France,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 69 (June 1997): 221-23; Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, eds., *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger, eds., *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999); John Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006); Istvan Hont, “The early Enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, 379-418 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Clark, *Compass of Society*; Stéphane Castelluccio, ed., *Le Commerce du Luxe à Paris aux XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siècles* (Bern: Peter Lang SA, 2009); Jeremy Jennings, “The Debate about Luxury in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Political Thought,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 68, n. 1 (January 2007): 79-105 and his *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 140-6; Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières, et la Révolution*.

critiques of luxury. These critiques were based largely on the perceived, degenerative effects of luxury on the human body, and supporters of luxury were unable or unwilling to match the breadth and depth of their opponents' physiological arguments. Before identifying the context-specific ways supporters of luxury integrated the body into their analyses, I want to briefly highlight the major positions in the luxury debate, which reflect the anxiety over the social order and spread of commerce.

In the years surrounding the turn of the eighteenth century, François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon spearheaded the critique of luxury with *Les aventures de Télémaque, fils de Ulysse* (1699). On his heels, Bernard Mandeville unleashed a scathing attack on *Télémaque's* idealistic vision of human behavior and moral virtue.<sup>342</sup> In his extraordinarily popular work, Fénelon laced an epic adventure with a thorough critique of Louis XIV for abandoning his subjects, wasting the resources of the state, and prizing vanity and the corruption of Versailles over the public good. Fénelon's attack on Louis XIV was not necessarily an attack on absolute monarchy as a form of government but on the despotism and luxury under which the Bourbon regime had sunk.<sup>343</sup> According to Fénelon, Louis had elevated the artificiality and dissimulation of flattery, ornamentation, and wealth over virtue, honor, and rank, which allowed courtiers and financiers to profit at the country's expense. To avoid the social confusion stimulated by the

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<sup>342</sup>Even though Mandeville acknowledged Shaftesbury as his designated target in 1723, he still clearly had Fénelon in his sights early on. His critique is even more biting when one considers the overlap of Fénelon's "quietistic" theology and his political philosophy, both lauding disinterestedness and self-sacrifice to the greater good. Mandeville put forward his support of luxury primarily in two places: *The Grumbling Hive: Or, Knaves Turn'd Honest* (1705; a satirical pamphlet in verse most likely mocking Fénelon's 1689 text *The Bees*), and *The Fable of the Bees; or, Private Vices, Publick Benefits* (1714, a republication of *The Grumbling Hive* with twenty additional, alphabetical Remarks expanding out his argument). For the latter, see the still-relevant, two-volume edition of F. B. Kaye (1924) republished by Liberty Fund, 1988.

<sup>343</sup>Fénelon, *Telemachus, son of Ulysses*, ed. and trans. Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), book 10. In his introduction, Riley stated that Fénelon combined monarchical rule with republican virtues, a potent mixture that would influence Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Marquis de Mirabeau.

bodily adornment of courtiers, financiers, and recent *anoblis*, he advocated sumptuary laws and a sartorial ranking system in order to present by exterior grandeur the class structure of the city.<sup>344</sup>

Fénelon also criticized the mercantilist policies of Louis and Colbert, which neglected agriculture and gambled with French economic success in the ephemeral trade and manufacture of luxury goods. Ultimately, in Fénelon's account, Louis's commitment to luxury and constant warfare would depopulate France and lure peasants from rural areas to cities searching for employment and the glamour of *le luxe*.<sup>345</sup>

Bernard Mandeville's mantra, "Private Vices, Public Benefits," provided a new moral and psychological argument in support of luxury. He presented the selfish and often dishonorable motivations of humans in society—observably passionate rather than hopefully virtuous—and the consequences of their actions as proper guides to economic policy. Pride, envy, and vanity, Mandeville explained, propelled commerce and industry, and thus distributed wealth, as individuals defined themselves through their possessions.<sup>346</sup> Modern commercial

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<sup>344</sup>Ibid., 162-3. Fénelon likened luxury to a poison that infected the entire nation: "[The] whole nation goes to wreck; all ranks are confounded...all live above their rank and income, some from vanity and ostentation, and to display their wealth; others from a false shame, and to hide their poverty" (297). Étienne-Gabriel Morelly proposed a set of sumptuary laws based on age and with the goal of repressing vanity in his *Code de la Nature* (1755, part IV), in *Oeuvres philosophiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Éditions Coda, 2004), 360.

<sup>345</sup>Ibid., 152-3, 165-8 (Mentor's prescription for revitalizing agriculture and the population). Fénelon did not bemoan the attention to trade and industry but merely wanted it to accord properly with agriculture (See Book III for a discussion of the commercial city of Tyre and Book X for the changes Mentor made to Salente). See Rousseau's prediction in *Discours sur l'origine et fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755): "To the degree that industry and the arts expand and flourish, the scorned farmer, burdened with taxes necessary to maintain luxury and condemned to spend his life between toil and hunger, abandons his fields to go to the cities in search of the bread he ought to be carrying there. The more the capital cities strike the stupid eyes of the people as wonderful, the more it will be necessary to groan at the sight of countrysides abandoned, fields fallow, and main roads jammed with unhappy citizens who have become beggars or thieves...Thus it is that the state, enriching itself on the one hand, weakens and depopulates itself on the other." *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, trans. Donald A. Cress, intro. Peter Gay (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), 201.

<sup>346</sup>For Mandeville's larger political economy and investigation of human behavior, see Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), chp. 4; Edward Hundert, *The Enlightenment's Fable: Bernard Mandeville and the Discovery of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Hundert, "Mandeville, Rousseau and the Political Economy of Fantasy," in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Berg and Eger, 28-40. For Mandeville's

societies benefitted from the self-interest of their members and their search for esteem and pleasure (physical, social, or moral). Although deeply embedded in the socio-political context of early-eighteenth century England, Mandeville's message would resonate in France during the 1730s.<sup>347</sup> Whereas Fénelon set a critique of luxury that would be repeated often during the eighteenth century, Mandeville provided one particularly strong argument in support of luxury.

Jean-François Melon, Voltaire, and Montesquieu argued as steadfastly, though less provocatively, as Mandeville in support of luxury, and Melon and Voltaire praised the strategies of Colbert that theoretically spread wealth throughout France.<sup>348</sup> Melon had been an associate of the Scottish financier John Law, working as secretary to the *Compagnie des Indes*, and his *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734) defended some of Law's financial schemes (e.g. public credit, devaluation). Although a firm advocate of France's agricultural strengths, Melon supported the development of a luxury trade that would advance the commercial success of France (*esprit de commerce*) as an alternative to military aggrandizement (*esprit de conquête*).<sup>349</sup> Luxury would promote industriousness in the French people and thus solve the rampant problem of idleness and drunkenness. It would circulate money, prevent hoarding, and would not render the French military weak because humans are moved by their passions to action: "the legislator must seek

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debt to the works of Pierre Bayle, who he most likely studied under in Rotterdam, see John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261-80.

<sup>347</sup>See Ellen Ross, "Mandeville, Melon, and Voltaire: The Origins of the Luxury Controversy in France"; Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, esp. 127-35; Istvan Hont, "The early Enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury;" Elena Muceni, "Mandeville and France: The Reception of the *Fable of the Bees* in France and Its Influence on the French Enlightenment," *French Studies*, vol. LXIX, n. 4 (2015): 449-461.

<sup>348</sup>For an examination of Melon as a mercantilist and opponent of Forbonnais, who later authored the entries "Commerce" and "Agriculture" for the *Encyclopédie*, see Catherine Larrère, *L'Invention de l'économie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), chp. 3.

<sup>349</sup>Melon redefined both "commerce" and "luxury." "Commerce is the exchange of the superfluous for the necessary" (8), and, although relative to time and place, luxury is generally "an extraordinary sumptuousness that proceeds from the wealth and security of a government" (106).

ways to make the passions useful to society. Ambition alone makes the soldier brave, and greed spurs the merchant to work.”<sup>350</sup>

Voltaire augmented Melon’s economic case with a cultural argument that luxury and “progress” (intellectual, artistic, and scientific) were intertwined, and Montesquieu put forward the most comprehensive set of social, political, and economic principles with luxury and commerce at their center.<sup>351</sup> Even though Montesquieu promoted *le doux commerce*, a softening of manners and increased socio-cultural interaction was not the first step toward a leveling of society. Montesquieu built luxury into his typology of governments as a symbol and regulator of the social inequality necessary to a monarchy.<sup>352</sup> For Melon, Voltaire, and Montesquieu, commerce and luxury would fuel national success at all levels.

The years following Montesquieu’s *De l’Esprit des Lois* (1748) saw a reinvigorated critique of luxury. Rousseau’s vituperative first and second discourses appeared in 1750 and

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<sup>350</sup>Melon, *Essai politique sur le commerce*, 106 (see also chp. VII, “Du gouvernement militaire”).

<sup>351</sup>Voltaire contributed to the luxury debates in a number of texts: *Le Mondain* (1736), *La Défense du mondain ou l’apologie du luxe* (1737), *Anti-Machiavel* (1740, with Frederick the Great), *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751), and the entry “Luxe” in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1769, enlarged version). According to Ellen Ross, Voltaire’s accomplishments were more groundbreaking than Melon and Mandeville’s: “But the earlier proponents of luxury did not make the search for a pleasurable existence a virtue. This Voltaire did. In his didactic poems, he presented nothing less than a new vision of civilisation, an alternative set of values. For Voltaire, art and science replaced Christianity as authorities; pleasures supplanted virtue as the goal of private life; luxury replaced pious self-denial.” Ross, “Mandeville, Melon, and Voltaire,” 1911. Darrin McMahon has located luxury and consumer society at the nexus of a long-term transition to the search for pleasure and happiness on earth and in society. McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 205-8.

<sup>352</sup>Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone, trans. and ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), Book VII, esp. chps. 1 and 4. This is not to say that Montesquieu approved of the nefarious behavior of courtiers and flatterers at court (Book III, esp. chp. 5). For a brief but poignant analysis of Montesquieu’s uncertainty regarding his own description of governments and the principles that best fit them (virtue, honor, and fear), see Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 67-78. For the question of equality and the leveling of society, see Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville: Liberty in a Levelled Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20-32. And, for a helpful treatment of the furor unleashed by *De l’Esprit des Lois* due to surrounding political, intellectual, religious, and economics events, though couched within a problematic argument, see Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 824-39.

1755, in which he ascribed the destructive capacity of luxury and the arts to vanity, idleness, inequality, and cowardice. In 1754 Jean-Bernard Le Blanc published a translation of David Hume's *Political Discourses* (*Discours politiques de Monsieur Hume*), which contained "the single most powerful and compelling argument made to date in favor of *le luxe*."<sup>353</sup> In *L'ami des hommes* (1756-8), the excitable Marquis de Mirabeau attacked both Melon and Hume's appraisals of luxury, while his soon-to-be mentor François Quesnay denounced luxury in his entry "Grains" for the *Encyclopédie* (1757).

As the public sphere bulged with opponents of luxury, Jean-François de Saint-Lambert's entry "Luxe" for the *Encyclopédie* (1765) captured the polarized arguments for and against luxury and put forward a compromise.<sup>354</sup> By the time of Saint-Lambert's text, luxury had become the central issue of "modernity." On the one hand, the commercial and manufacturing infrastructure of luxury goods remained for many French subjects the only triumph of Louis XIV's reign. The less than spectacular results of the War of Austrian Succession (French territorial and commercial gains were minute) coupled with France's failed efforts in the Seven Years' War demonstrated that the "spirit of conquest" should finally be abandoned for the "spirit of commerce." "I believe," Saint-Lambert declared, "that it is better for a people to obey frivolous Epicureans than savage warriors and to nourish the luxury of voluptuous and

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<sup>353</sup>John Shovlin, "Hume's Political Discourses and the French Luxury Debate," in *David Hume's Political Economy*, eds. Carl Wennerlind and Margaret Schabas, 203-222 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 205. See also Loïc Charles' contribution to the same volume: "French 'New Politics' and the Dissemination of David Hume's Political Discourses on the Continent." Contained in Le Blanc's translation was Hume's essay "Of Luxury," the title of which he changed to "Of Refinement in the Arts" in the 1760 edition to avoid the baggage associated with the word "luxury."

<sup>354</sup>Not only did the burgeoning academies sponsor more and more essay contests regarding commerce and luxury, but Daniel Roche has suggested that between 1736 and 1789 "more than a hundred works were published in response to the issues raised by the debate among Christian economists, expansionist economists, and Mandeville." Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998, orig. pub. 1993), 567.

enlightened rogues than the luxury of heroic and ignorant thieves.”<sup>355</sup> On the other hand, by the time Saint-Lambert wrote, increased pressures to tax the privileged orders, the recent primacy at court of Madame de Pompadour (who crystallized fears of financier power), and a misguided belief that the French population was diminishing rapidly, and thus ruining agriculture and *les mœurs*, strengthened arguments against luxury.<sup>356</sup>

Saint-Lambert identified good and bad luxury, and he approved of orderly luxury as a means to develop *esprit de communauté*. It was the duty of governments to not only protect their citizens but to also channel their passions toward the communal good: “[Governments] must maintain and excite *l’esprit de communauté, l’esprit patriotique*; they must pay attention to the ways in which citizens enrich themselves and the ways they enjoy their wealth.”<sup>357</sup> The French government had created an imbalance between luxury and *l’esprit de communauté*, leading luxury to become vicious, moved by “extreme greed,” and in conflict with the well-being of society. According to Saint-Lambert, depopulation and the inequality of wealth, for example, could be attributed to destructive governmental policies that sustained financiers, *rentiers*, and

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<sup>355</sup>Saint-Lambert, “Luxe,” in *Encyclopédie*, vol. IX (1765): 770, accessed from *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert (University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Spring 2013 Edition), Robert Morrissey (ed). <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/>. ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, Robert Morrissey, General Editor.

<sup>356</sup>For taxes, see Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For the reaction of nobles to luxury, see Renato Galliani, *Rousseau, le luxe et l’idéologie nobiliaire*, in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, n. 268 (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1989). For Madame de Pompadour’s connection to the world of finances and politico-intellectual reactions to her ascendancy, see James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 275-78, and Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 26-38. And, for depopulation, see Leslie Tuttle, *Conceiving the Old Regime: Pronatalism and the Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 151-61, and Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction, and Power in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). According to Tuttle, “Population was understood as a measure of national strength, so contemporaries interpreted population decline as a harbinger of national doom. It was a symptom of a hidden sickness that afflicted France, a ‘malady of declining’ (as the philosophe Montesquieu would put it) that demanded a response” (151).

<sup>357</sup>Saint-Lambert, “Luxe,” 766. Hume, Montesquieu, Diderot, Helvétius, and Vincent de Gournay all identified “good” versus “bad” forms of luxury.



privileges for trading and manufacturing. Saint-Lambert adopted aspects of Fénelon's critique of luxury, and he affirmed the need for a social hierarchy representing rank and represented by distinctive marks, but he maintained that luxury and proper governmental institutions could preserve the "positive, vivifying effects of commerce and consumption."<sup>358</sup> He ultimately sought to steer definitions of luxury away from excessive consumption and toward a more meaningful understanding of human nature and political economy.<sup>359</sup> Saint-Lambert wanted to stabilize the shifting conceptions of "society" by encouraging the increasingly-unfettered interaction of individuals.

After mid-century, the luxury debate consisted mostly of critiques of luxury.<sup>360</sup> This trend can partly be explained by the fact that approaches to luxury became more nuanced, as indicated by Saint-Lambert's "Luxe." Istvan Hont has suggested that the luxury debate took place on two levels: the ancients versus the moderns and among the moderns themselves ("unregulated" versus "well-ordered luxury"). After the debacle of John Law's "System," "the flare-up of the luxury controversy in France in the 1730s was a result of the re-examination of the remaining options for restoring France to greatness and economic health."<sup>361</sup> Moreover, with each new crisis that beset the last decades of the Old Regime—the controversy over the French Indies Company, the Maupeou coup, the Turgot administration and the Flour War, etc.—writers

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<sup>358</sup>Shovlin, "Hume's Political Discourses and the French Luxury Debate," 219.

<sup>359</sup>Hont, "The early enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury," 379.

<sup>360</sup>There were a handful of notable texts supporting luxury: Butel-Dumont's *Théorie du luxe* (1771), Marquis de Casaux' *Considérations sur quelques parties du mécanisme des sociétés* (1785-8), an unpublished manuscript by abbé Morellet on the eve of the Revolution, and the publications of Jacques Necker. For Butel-Dumont and Morellet, see Clark, *Compass of Society*, chp. 8. Also, Maza, "Luxury, Morality, and Social Change in Prerevolutionary France," 217.

<sup>361</sup>Hont, "The early enlightenment debate on commerce and luxury," 404. As noted above, luxury was an integral part of both political economy and the upsurge of texts dealing with economic matters as the eighteenth century progressed.

challenged the perceived collusion between financiers and the court and fitted luxury and commerce into the French political economy in a variety of ways.

Opponents of luxury, such as the Physiocrats and a budding group of middling elites—those caught between the wealthier nobles and non-nobles—sought to regenerate virtue and patriotism by developing a political economy based on the “real” or “true” wealth of agriculture rather than the “unreal” or “imaginary” wealth of finances, speculation, and bonds. Furthermore, the antiluxury discourse was essentially modular and fissiparous, applied better as a critical tool than a source of unification. Advocates of this discourse turned all forms of spectacular consumption into symbols of parasitism by idle plutocrats, severing the centuries-old link between nobility, *éclat*, and socio-political authority.<sup>362</sup> The antiluxury discourse, which disavowed the link between consumption and socio-political power, was not the only discourse available to contemporaries. Opponents of luxury put forward a corporeal critique of luxury, adopting and adapting sensationalist physiology to elucidate the destructive effects of luxury on the human body.

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Even though opponents of luxury came to dominate the public sphere after mid-century, through a systematic use of sensationalist physiology and medical theories, they did not have exclusive priority over the body as a framework to analyze the effects of luxury. The linking of the body to society characterized the eighteenth-century social imagination, and supporters of luxury did not dispute the central role of the body. Unlike anti-luxury writers, advocates of the

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<sup>362</sup>For “middling elites” and “antiluxury discourse,” see, alongside his *The Political Economy of Virtue*, Shovlin, “The Cultural Politics of Luxury in Eighteenth-Century France,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 23, n. 4 (Fall 2000): 577-606, and “Toward a Reinterpretation of Revolutionary Antinobility: The Political Economy of Honor in the Old Regime,” *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (March 2000): 35-66. See also Michael Kwass, “Consumption and the World of Ideas: Consumer Revolution and the Moral Economy of the Marquis de Mirabeau,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 37, No. 2 (Winter 2004): 187-213.

trade in and consumption of luxury goods found the sensible body to be affected positively by the growth of commerce; or, at least, they found more positive ramifications for society when individuals pursued their passions. They used the language of sensations but did not articulate extensive or detailed arguments about the corporeal effects of luxury as did their opponents.

Supporters found that the natural way to channel human nature, and simultaneously achieve economic prosperity, was through the pursuit of pleasure and resultant “agreeable sensations.” As we saw in chapter two, the pursuit of happiness became one organizing principle for society in the eighteenth century, and the nascent society brought to fruition through commerce carved out the path to achieve happiness via the passions. In her aptly-titled *Discours sur le bonheur*, Madame du Châtelet dismissed the “moralists” who demanded that humans repress their passions and master their desires in order to be happy; instead, humans must only seek out and procure “agreeable sensations and sentiments.”<sup>363</sup> Proponents of luxury, primarily before mid-century, couched their arguments in a similar understanding of the passions without penetrating deeply into the sensory network.<sup>364</sup> Their primary target was a Catholic and Classical tradition that equated the passions (e.g. self-love, interest) with irrationality, immorality, and a lack of virtue—a standard incommensurate with the actual behavior of individuals in society, according to thinkers like Pierre Bayle and Mandeville. In contrast,

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<sup>363</sup>Du Châtelet, *Discours sur le bonheur* (1746-7), préface Élisabeth Badinter (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 1997), 32-33. In his *Lettres sur les animaux* (1768), the *encyclopédiste* and attendee of d’Holbach’s salon Charles-George Leroy argued that in “‘order to be happy, we are thus forced either to change objects constantly or to experience sensations of the same kind to excess. This produces an inconstancy by virtue of which our wishes can never reach an end, and a progression of desires which, forever extinguished by being satisfied, but reawakened by memory, stretch to infinity. This disposition, which soon causes the disease of boredom to succeed the most interesting emotions, is the torment of idle civilized man.’” Leroy’s comment had much in common with corporeal critics of luxury to be discussed below. Quoted in E. C. Spary, *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 237.

<sup>364</sup>For a specific look at the transformation of the passions from a moral to a medical problem, see Philippe Huneman, “Montpellier Vitalism and the Emergence of Alienism (1750-1800): The Case of the Passions,” *Science in Context*, vol. 21, n. 4 (2008): 615-647.

supporters of luxury drew from various seventeenth-century views that individuals acted from their passions to redefine human nature.<sup>365</sup>

*Le doux commerce* was predicated on the novel grounding of human nature on the passions, rather than simply reason, virtue, and the unrealistic expectations of living without sin.<sup>366</sup> As François Véron de Forbonnais argued: luxury "humanizes mankind, polishes their manners, softens their humors, spurs imagination, [and] perfects their understanding."<sup>367</sup> The emergent view that "interest" was a rationally-driven passion capable of uniting individuals in society via commerce guided supporters of luxury before the centripetal force of sensationalism united the physical and the moral in the corporeal critique of luxury. Social fluidity, national prosperity, and the refinement of the senses could derive from a proper channeling of the passions.

Forbonnais, Voltaire, Melon, and other French supporters of commerce and luxury drew from English arguments linking the trade in luxury goods to cultural and corporeal refinement. In *A Discourse of Trade* (1690), Nicholas Barbon wrote: "The wants of the Mind are infinite, Man naturally Aspires, and as his Mind is elevated, his Senses grew more refined, and more

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<sup>365</sup>The most prominent example is Pierre Bayle, whose *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet* (1682) sought to prove that humans act from their passions more than their beliefs and, thus, the idealistic expectations of Christianity could not form the basis of a legal system. The ideas of Epicurus were renewed by Pierre Gassendi and others and became a whipping post for moralists who argued that libertines and materialists simply revived this ancient bogey man. In his entry "Luxe," Saint-Lambert declared: "I believe that it is better for a people to obey frivolous Epicureans than savage warriors and to nourish the luxury of voluptuous and enlightened rogues than the luxury of heroic and ignorant thieves" (770). In his denunciation of luxury, Abbé Pluquet baldly stated that luxury led to philosophical materialism, and he primarily blamed adherents of the Classical philosopher Epicurus. *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe* (1786), vol. I, 11, 363-7.

<sup>366</sup>Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition); Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); the triumvirate of Michael Moriarty (all published by Oxford University Press): *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion* (2003); *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves: Early Modern French Thought* (2006); and *Disguised Vices: Theories of Virtue in Early Modern French Thought* (2011).

<sup>367</sup>Quoted in Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 46.

capable of Delight; his Desires are enlarged [sic], and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for everything that is rare, can gratifie [sic] his Senses, adorn his Body and promote the Ease, Pleasure and Pomp of Life’.”<sup>368</sup> Bernard Mandeville too found luxury to be a refinement of the senses and argued more forthrightly that “the lumpish machine” of the human body would be galvanized to action only by the “influence of the passions.”<sup>369</sup> Similarly, David Hume defined luxury as a “great refinement in the gratification of the senses,” advocating a moderate pursuit of mental and physical pleasure to ward off the possibilities of excess.<sup>370</sup>

Barbon, Hume, and Mandeville agreed that mankind was spurred by the passions and pleasure. Mandeville highlighted the necessity of stirring even the nastiest passions of humans toward the profit of society, and Hume cut reason largely out of epistemology and the processes of decision-making. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume famously stated that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.”<sup>371</sup> For Hume, it was through the passions and customs that his contemporaries developed habits, which consciously or unconsciously determined behavior. While philosophers and theologians may pontificate on the virtues of reason, Hume argued that humans are driven to action by their passions. It is for this reason that he could articulate a vision of *le doux commerce*; luxury and the refined arts advance together, increasing sociability and softening the

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<sup>368</sup>Quoted in Berg and Eger, “The Rise and Fall of the Luxury Debates,” in *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, 9. See also Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, 108-111.

<sup>369</sup>Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, Remark Q, 184. Other Remarks deal with pride (M), envy (N), and courage/honor (R), which Mandeville explains as a product of an individual’s “constitution.”

<sup>370</sup>Hume, “Of Refinement in the Arts,” in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller, 268-271 (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 268-70.

<sup>371</sup>Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2003, orig. pub. 1739-1740), Book II, Part III, chp. III, 295.

tempers of humans.<sup>372</sup> Behavior previously labeled a vice came to bear the mantle of “civilization” and refinement, as sensory pleasures and agreeable sensations became the necessary and useful consequences of luxury. Supporters of luxury found that this former vice cultivated the pleasures of the mind and the body, and the “more men refine upon pleasure, the less will they indulge in excesses of any kind.”<sup>373</sup> Opponents of luxury, however, feared that the pernicious effects of luxury would destroy the pleasure of sociability by vitiating the senses.

Refining the pleasures of the senses was an optimistic approach to the possibilities engendered by luxury and the development of a society based on commerce. According to Georges-Marie Butel-Dumont, who wrote after the landmark texts by Melon, Montesquieu, and Voltaire in support of luxury, the search for agreeable sensations stimulates industry, and the diversity of passions generated by luxury limits the ability of one passion to subdue the others.<sup>374</sup> What Butel-Dumont called “civil morality” would grow when “the taste for expenditures leads to dissipation [of the passions] and engages individuals to communicate continually. By this commerce, the soul, feeling such distractions, is less susceptible to strong passions, and the need to please those with whom one communicates habitually accustoms one to exercise self-control.”<sup>375</sup> In an unpublished response to abbé Pluquet’s *Traité philosophique et politique sur*

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<sup>372</sup>Jonathan Sheehan and Dror Wahrman make a similar point in *Invisible Hands: Self-Organization and the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 199: Hume “had no doubt that the mind was a product of embodied experience in the world....Philosophy must understand what minds are by looking at what they *do* in the world—it must tell stories of how a mind and its qualities are generated in and through its encounter with a world.”

<sup>373</sup>Hume, “Of Refinement in the Arts,” 268-71.

<sup>374</sup>This argument in support of luxury fits into Sheehan and Wahrman’s new account of the language of self-organization: a diversity of passions channels the individual toward the aggregate, thus creating a socially-useful, complex system out of particulars.

<sup>375</sup>Butel-Dumont, *Théorie du luxe*, two vols. (1771): II: 148-9. Butel-Dumont adapted the language of the senses more than any other supporter of luxury, arguing that without the passions and luxury the body would submit to *la mollesse*, become numb and languid, and the soul uninspired (esp. I, 70, 76-77).

*le luxe* (1786), André Morellet too recognized the prevalence of the passions in dictating human behavior and the ability of luxury to dissipate them. Morellet argued that the quest to obtain agreeable sensations propelled labor and sociability: “It is only to procure new or agreeable sensations that the farmer, the laborer or the members of any classes at any level of society will work. There you have the principle of change and of progress in society’.”<sup>376</sup> The limited, corporeal arguments of Butini and Morellet were similar to those of Mandeville and Hume. They all shared a view that society was in transition and the pursuit of happiness and national prosperity could be linked through commerce and luxury.

Critics of luxury, however, shared a deeper concern to examine the devastating effects of luxury on the human body. They feared that the habits developed by individuals would debilitate the sensory network on which social interaction depended; “the passions” had become a product of moral and physical “feeling.” For Jean-François Butini, the “Creator” endowed humans with senses to experience pleasure and the drive to find pleasure in society, but the passions of avidity and social competition forged habits that prized inequality and became engrained in bodies.<sup>377</sup> The pursuit of agreeable sensations and the refinement of sensual pleasures could too easily overrun reason and fellow-feeling to take control of the human body. The language of the senses and overlapping physical and moral characteristics of human *organisations* heightened the stakes of commerce and luxury as individual passions were not simply redefined according to social utility. On the one hand, the antiluxury discourse succeeded politically after mid-century by criticizing all forms of spectacular consumption, targeting members of the Second and Third

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<sup>376</sup>Quoted in Clark, *Compass of Society*, 271.

<sup>377</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe* (1774), 9-11. Butini alternated between attributing omnipotence to god and nature.

Estates.<sup>378</sup> On the other hand, the anxiety elicited by the faltering social structure combined with sensationalism and the ubiquitous concern over the human body to produce a corporeal critique of luxury that re-moralized the luxury debate based on the ability of individuals to “feel” sociability.<sup>379</sup>

### **The Corporeal Critique of Luxury**

In 1786, abbé Pluquet published a two-volume diatribe against luxury that could be considered a companion to his previous *De la sociabilité* (1767): *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe*. In many ways, Pluquet’s text was a compendium of *la querelle du luxe*, a catalog of luxury’s devastation: “Luxury deprives society of all the advantages provided by religion,” he wrote; it prescribes *le faste, la volupté*, and vice over virtue. Luxury destroys the “empire of conscience,” compels men to use violence and artifice to obtain their desires, depletes ratiocination, and produces scorn for and raillery toward religious ministers, ceremonies, and morality.<sup>380</sup> As a society becomes ensnared by luxury, its members no longer teach their children the “truths” of religion; society breaks down as passions are unleashed, crime increases, and nobody feels duty-bound to their fellow citizens.<sup>381</sup>

Pluquet also provided the most thorough corporeal critique of luxury, combining and extending the perspective that the deleterious effects of luxury could best be studied in the human body. Whereas supporters of luxury argued that the pursuit of agreeable sensations

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<sup>378</sup>See the works by John Shovlin.

<sup>379</sup>In his important work *The Idea of Luxury*, Christopher Berry argued that luxury became “de-moralized” by the eighteenth century and incorporated more fully into international and domestic economic debates.

<sup>380</sup>Pluquet named *la conscience* the “interior principle of strength and resolution” that nature placed in man in order to “render him capable of resisting those causes that carry him to transgress his duties” toward others (I, 417). See Pluquet’s *De la sociabilité* (1767), vol. I, Section II, chp. II, article XI, §II-III.

<sup>381</sup>Pluquet, *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe*, II, 161-66; I, 132, 336-45, 444-5.



through luxury and commerce was an important ingredient in the expansion of modern society, Pluquet and other opponents of luxury found that the goods and lifestyle associated with increased consumption worked through physiological processes to undermine the body. The pernicious influence of luxury could be found in the insatiable pursuit of “agreeable sensations,” which diminished the power of the mind and the interior sentiment to forge proper social relationships and bind together society with an invisible string of sympathy.

Critics of commerce and luxury accepted *le doux commerce*, but they found luxury worked *too* well at softening or altering the body. They redefined this process as a numbing of the senses and a corporeal inability to experience the pleasures of social interaction. Happiness must be found in society, but it required corporeal moderation and attention to “feeling” sociability. At a time when society was being defined by the mixing of bodies as much as an *a priori*, socio-political hierarchy, opponents of commerce and luxury feared that both could anesthetize the body to social commerce. For opponents of luxury, this was truly the crux of *la querelle du luxe*; it not only depleted courage and virtue, feminized men, confounded ranks, depopulated the countryside, and spread dissolute *moeurs*, but it also fundamentally degenerated sentimentality and sociability that subjects felt for each other. While Saint-Lambert focused on revitalizing the *esprit de communauté* by channeling the passions, opponents of luxury sought to ground social interaction in the physiological capacity to feel.

Opponents of luxury drew on the body to criticize luxury in three ways. First, opponents connected the spread of luxury to the feminization of society. They claimed that luxury softened and enervated the robust body (a quality known as *la mollesse*), which rendered men incapable of hardening, physical activity. Men would be turned into women, they contested, and would become too inert to labor or defend their country. Second, critics of luxury exposed the

physiological underpinnings of the *ancien régime* concept of *représentation*, an external display of power capable of dazzling (*éblouir*) the eyes of *parvenus* and therefore exuding the wrong “impressions.” Visual representations of *état* and rank were built into the social hierarchy, but, as more wealth was generated through commerce, members of the Third Estate often competed with the nobility for symbols of power. French subjects of lower orders succumbed to brilliant displays of ostentation (*éclat*), imagining themselves of a higher order, but they were also capable of claiming those symbols for themselves and challenging the system of *états*. Third, alongside the problems of *la mollesse* and *représentation*, opponents of luxury detailed the processes by which luxury overwhelmed the senses, inflamed the imagination, and created physiological habits that render addicts of luxury beholden to the sensual pleasures of material objects. Luxury threw the body into disequilibrium. For critics of luxury, an overwhelmingly commercial society would be full of enervated men and benumbed machines actuated by disorderly impressions and sustained by a self-perpetuating series of desires and emptiness.

### *Effeminacy and la Mollesse*

Critics of luxury generally structured the unstable space of emergent society by applying the Classical division of separate male and female spheres. Male and female bodies were integral to the luxury debates because luxury was repeatedly said to effeminize, fatigue, and pervert the bodies of men. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century critics of luxury recycled the arguments of Roman moralists, historians, and philosophers—e.g. Sallust, Livy, Plutarch, Epictetus, Seneca—who explained the corruption and decline of Rome through luxury. For them, a pattern emerged in which increased wealth led to luxury (learned from the conquered Asian territories), which conflated private and public affairs and rendered men weak, indolent, gluttonous, servile to women, and ultimately incapable of military virtue. The emasculating vice

of avarice was conceptually linked to a substitution of dissolute carnal pleasures and feminine softness for the frugal, austere, and virtuous characteristics associated with Cicero and the Roman Republic (and later Stoicism). Ambition too privileged private over public interest, usurping the role of civic virtue in a democracy or republic or leveling a social hierarchy in an aristocracy or monarchy.<sup>382</sup> Luxury was responsible then for diluting military discipline, confounding social ranks, and blurring the public/private roles of men and women. By the time of the Empire, and with the addition of Christian perspectives, luxury represented a lack of self-control and became inextricably linked to concupiscence and sin.

In the eyes of early-modern critics of luxury, the processes of emasculation and enervation were complete when women controlled *le monde* and *les mœurs*: men became idle, subservient to bodily pleasures and fashion, and ultimately impotent (another cause of depopulation).<sup>383</sup> Even though by the end of the eighteenth century many observers associated economic growth with women's inability to resist consuming fashionable goods, the same

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<sup>382</sup>For Greek, Roman, and early Christian critiques of commerce and luxury, see Berry, *The Idea of Luxury*, chps. 2-4, and John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollet* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), chp. 1. Both luxury and women were considered untamed, uncontrollable, and carnal, which is why Cato the Elder, according to Livy, likened luxury to a wild beast.

<sup>383</sup>Rousseau was, of course, the most vocal advocate of this point of view. Jean-Baptiste Moheau, *Recherches et considérations sur la population de la France* (1778), attempted to refute the depopulation thesis, but he still suggested that luxury effeminizes and sterilizes men (Book II, Part I, chps. 7-8, Part II, chp. 8). Supporters of luxury attacked the argument that luxury led to effeminacy and enervation, though they did not necessarily attack the process or category of feminization itself. See Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*, Remark L; Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes*, letter 106; Melon, *Essai politique sur le commerce*, 108; Hume, "Of Refinement in the Arts." See also Samia I. Spencer, ed., *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop Journal*, n. 20 (Autumn 1985): 101-24; and the essays in Section Two of *Women, Gender and Enlightenment*, eds. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

What E. J. Clery has said about England's "feminization debate" was echoed by Montesquieu (*De l'Esprit des Lois*, Book VII, chp. 9; Book XIX, chps. 5-15) and applies to France: the debate was "generated by the perception that the status of women in society was rising and that women were gaining an increasing influence over men and altering the manners and morals of the nation. This growing status and influence was variously condemned as cause and symptom of national decline, or celebrated as an index of increasing refinement or civility." Clery, *The Feminization Debate in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1. For expectations of masculine behavior in early-modern and modern France, see Robert Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

overwhelming desire was still not supposed to exist in men.<sup>384</sup> Out of numerous visions of society competing against the traditional, corporate social structure, as we saw in chapter two, gender proved a powerful conceptual tool capable of integrating luxury, consumer culture, and social interaction.

In his didactic tale *Télémaque*, Fénelon went to great lengths to discourage effeminacy, clarifying that Telemachus' advisor Mentor did not sing with an "effeminate softness" and having Mentor command Telemachus to love him in a "more manly" than "tender" way.<sup>385</sup> Fénelon lamented "that men of the highest rank should place their greatness in the dainties of a luxurious table, by which they enervate their minds, and quickly ruin the health and vigor of their bodies!"<sup>386</sup> To avoid the softening or flabbiness of the body that Fénelon linked to effeminacy and encapsulated in the word *la mollesse*, Fénelon extolled the virtues of hard work, agricultural labor, and a frugal desire for only the necessities of life.<sup>387</sup> The depopulation of rural areas and the corporeal decay of the peasants who remained had spent the land of Salente. To overturn the years of luxury and despotism that the people of Salente had to endure, Fénelon's protagonist Mentor implemented a dietary regime, promoted wrestling and exercise, prohibited "soft and

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<sup>384</sup>According to Nicolas-Toussaint Lemoyne Desessarts, *Dictionnaire universel de police* (1785-9), women's consumption of luxury goods was "fed by coquetry" and thrived "as long as the taste for frivolity is the ruling passion. To the eyes of the observer who seeks to discover the cause of moral corruption, the infinite number of boutiques of the *Marchandes de modes*, the art with which one decorates these boutiques, the different finery that one exposes there to the eyes of passersby, are all sources of danger...Almost all women stop gladly in front of these sanctuaries of frivolity and coquetry, and how can they resist the attraction they feel when seeing women of all ages and all conditions entering the enchanting places?" Quoted in Jennifer Jones, *Sexing La Mode: Gender, Fashion and Commercial Culture in Old Regime France* (New York: Berg, 2004), 145.

<sup>385</sup>Fénelon, *Telemachus*, 107, 155.

<sup>386</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>387</sup>In his *Dictionnaire philosophique, ou introduction à la connaissance de l'homme* (London, 1751), Didier Pierre Chicaneau de Neuville defined *la mollesse* in the following way: "*La mollesse* is the state of indolence and tranquility to which *la volupté* has plunged us. The soul in this state is entirely occupied with the senses, feeling a form of ecstasy...but *la volupté* ceases to be pleasurable for the one who delivers himself totally to it: the senses, which are the organs of pleasure, become fatigued through too much use and soon feel only pain" (240).

effeminate music,” and curbed the magnificence of apartments, all toward the goal of improving the physical condition of the inhabitants of Salente.<sup>388</sup> Furthermore, the noble youth should be sent to wars in order to maintain military strength and avoid the wasting away of physical bodies.<sup>389</sup> Fénelon feared that France suffered from these debilitating effects of luxury under Louis XIV. The bodies of his contemporaries were no longer able to work or defend themselves, having become soft, flabby, and idle.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was the most vociferous critic of luxury. In the *Discours sur l'origine et fondemens de l'inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755), written in response to an essay competition sponsored by the Academy of Dijon and published a year later, Rousseau pilloried the modern, domesticated man who, "becoming habituated to the ways of society...becomes weak, fearful, and servile; his soft and effeminate lifestyle completes the enervation of both his strength and his courage."<sup>390</sup> For Rousseau, luxury was born of inequality, idleness, and vanity; it grew in tandem with the sciences and arts, and together they corrupted the body, depleted courage and military virtues, and rendered citizens morally disingenuous and physically frail. In the same *Discours*, Rousseau argued that man was not naturally sociable. Initially, as solitary beings, men and women possessed two passions: pity and self-preservation (*amour de soi*). With the gradual multiplication of societies, humans developed *amour propre*, a passion consumed with appearances and the judgment of others. The “deceitful and frivolous exterior” that characterized the “spirit” of commercial, or civilized, society represented a moral psychology in

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<sup>388</sup>Fénelon, *Telemachus*, 162-6.

<sup>389</sup>Ibid., 154.

<sup>390</sup>*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, in *On the Social Contract and Discourses*, 123. The question posed for this academic *concours* was “What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorized by the natural law?” In Book I, chapter VIII (“On the Civil State”) of *Du contrat social* (1762), Rousseau briefly tallies up the gains and losses of man’s transition from the state of nature to the civil state.

which “the man accustomed to the ways of society is always outside himself and knows how to live only in the opinion of others.”<sup>391</sup> Luxury became part of a physiognomy that concealed one’s true being but revealed to Rousseau the fundamental reshaping of both body and soul. Rousseau spoke often of the alteration to man’s “physical constitution” or “natural disposition,” which instantiated the physical effects of civilized man’s inequitable, immoral, and effeminate behavior.<sup>392</sup>

Especially in the *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750), Rousseau praised the virtue, transparency, and physical prowess of Spartan men and the “intrepid warriors” who followed Hannibal and Julius Caesar.<sup>393</sup> He condemned the languorous nobles of his own era whose “delicate sensibilities” rendered them incapable of stomaching “odious pictures” or undertaking hardening labor or battle.<sup>394</sup> Rousseau used physical, almost aggressive, language to promote the necessity of strong bodies to work and fight, and, according to his pedagogy, a student would be

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<sup>391</sup>Ibid., 161. For the slippages within Rousseau’s presentation of *amour de soi* and *amour propre*, see Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, chp. 7.

<sup>392</sup>Ibid., 113, 116, 120-3, 144, 197. Edward Hundert, “Mandeville, Rousseau and the Political Economy of Fantasy,” has argued that Rousseau saw at the heart of commercial society a “transformation of the self,” in which the superfluous goods of luxury not only defined but also dominated their possessors. In Rousseau’s words: “Like the statue of Glaucus, which time, sea and storms had disfigured to such an extent that it looked less like a god than a wild beast, the human soul, altered in the midst of society by a thousand constantly recurring causes, by the acquisition of a multitude of bits of knowledge and of errors, by changes that took place in the constitution of bodies, by the constant impact of the passions, has, as it were, changed its appearance to the point of being unrecognizable” (113).

<sup>393</sup>*Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, in *The Basic Political Writings*, trans. Donald A. Cress, intro. Peter Gay (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 7-8 and 16, 15. See also the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 120, 195, and, for Rousseau’s praise of Genevan industriousness and the physical superiority of the ancients, see *Letter to M. d’Alembert on the Theatre* in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Politics and the Arts*, trans. and intro. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 60-2, 102-5. Praising the robust bodies of ancient Greeks and Romans was another staple of the luxury debates. See Helvétius, *De l’esprit* (1758), Discours I, Chp. III; A.-P. Lottin, *Discours contre le luxe* (1783), 55; Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, *Considérations sur les richesses et le luxe* (1787), 24.

<sup>394</sup>Ibid., 10. “The healthy and robust man is recognized by other signs. It is in the rustic clothing of the fieldworker and not underneath the gilding of the courtier that one will find bodily strength and vigor...The good man is an athlete who enjoys competing in the nude. He is contemptuous of all those vile ornaments which would impair the use of his strength, most of which were invented merely to conceal some deformity” (4). See also Jacques-Henri Meister, *De la morale naturelle* (1787), 54, for a similar position on athletes as paragons of physicality.

better educated outside on a tennis court, firming up his body, rather than inside learning dead languages.<sup>395</sup> Cultivating the fine arts, so representative of the unnecessary ornamentation of bodies and buildings, corrupted the body and sapped the vigor of the soul.<sup>396</sup>

In his *Lettre à M. d'Alembert sur les Spectacles* (1758), Rousseau developed further the idea that the arts led to luxury, specifically here the creation of a theatre in his hometown of Geneva. Alongside despoiling the *moeurs* of a small republic and bankrupting Genevan citizens, the theatre would enervate and enfeeble Genevan bodies by lowering their resistance to the passions, blunting virtuous sentiments, and promoting inactivity and idleness.<sup>397</sup> Excessive adornment and dissipation would emerge as women competed to outdo each other in society, and the centrality of love in theatrical performances would heighten the realm of women and reduce the relations between the sexes to satisfying women's pleasures. Women and girls would become "preceptors of the public," bursting the natural and necessary public/private dividing line by commanding attention, eschewing modesty, and ruling imperiously over taste.<sup>398</sup> In extending their empire, women would emasculate and eviscerate men who would be forced to abandon their *moeurs* and lose their naturally-robust constitution.<sup>399</sup> Although in Rousseau's conception the essential characteristics of women were modesty, domesticity, and maternal duties, luxury even reduced women's sedentary life to a more violent form of torpor, making them more susceptible to the scourge of the eighteenth century—the vapors.

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<sup>395</sup>Ibid., 16. Rousseau put forward his own pedagogy in *Émile*, The first two Books advocated physical exercise and explained how one should cultivate the senses.

<sup>396</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>397</sup>Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 57, 64.

<sup>398</sup>Ibid., 47-9.

<sup>399</sup>Ibid., 100.

Rousseau extended the dystopian image of Geneva (his equivalent of eighteenth-century Paris) as a luxury-ridden, effeminate society in which women controlled social commerce by criticizing the education of boys. They would be raised “exactly like the women,” sheltered from the environmental elements that forged sturdy bodies, deprived of exercise, and primped with “white teeth” and “piping voices.”<sup>400</sup> The physical enervation and effeminacy brought on by luxury compounded the moral enervation of modern French subjects incapable of living transparently or authentically. “For my own part,” Rousseau wrote in *Émile* (1762), “I know no more terrible fate than that of a pretty woman in Paris, unless it is that of the pretty manikin who devotes himself to her, who becomes idle and effeminate like her, and so deprives himself twice over of his manhood, while he prides himself on his successes and for their sake endures the longest and dullest days which human beings ever put up with.”<sup>401</sup>

The Marquis de Mirabeau engaged the luxury debates and challenged the necessity of a commercial nobility in his two volume best-seller, *L’ami des hommes* (1756-8).<sup>402</sup> Mirabeau extended the critiques put forward by Fénelon and Rousseau, advocating a return to the land to regenerate France and relentlessly criticizing the “mad spending” of his contemporaries. Like Rousseau, Mirabeau lauded the physiques of his ancient and medieval forebears and even the butchers and blacksmiths of his own era. He ridiculed the overconsumption and luxurious living that turned the elite into “pygmies” and “demi-hommes.”<sup>403</sup> In the past, men and women

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<sup>400</sup>Ibid., 112.

<sup>401</sup>Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley, intro. P.D. Jimack (London and Vermont: Everyman, 1993), 378.

<sup>402</sup>I will address Mirabeau at length in chapter seven. In his own era, Mirabeau’s fame was nearly unmatched.

<sup>403</sup>Victor de Riqueti, marquis de Mirabeau, *L’Ami des hommes ou traité de la population*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1970; reprint of Avignon edition of 1756–8), Part II, Chp. V., 115. See also Saint-Lambert’s entry on luxury in the *Encyclopédie*, 768-9.



combined moderate luxury with a more active, hearty lifestyle, but by the mid-eighteenth century men and women both preferred leisurely comforts, indolence, and inactivity. One woman could be found supine "in an armchair six inches from the ground, her posture almost necessarily indecent, she appears to return to bed, her shoulders draw together, her chest sinks in, her entire body sags."<sup>404</sup> Mirabeau argued that luxury not only bred inaction, but the constant expectation to surpass one's social competitors led to over-activity and exhaustion. Parents dragged their children, particularly daughters, into *le monde* where they were overstimulated and left dizzy by a rush of sensations that their bodies could not handle. In two ways then—idleness and excessive movement—luxury led to "the vapors," "maladies of the nerves," and *la mollesse* (afflictions gendered feminine), stunting the growth of bodies and rendering them as numb as dolls.<sup>405</sup>

Examples of the supposed enervating influence of women and luxury could be multiplied endlessly. According to critics of luxury, men of the eighteenth century in the throes of luxury were no different than their Roman predecessors, as Sallust complained in the *Conspiracy of Catiline*: "Sulla had sought to secure the loyalty of the army he commanded in Asia by allowing it a degree of luxury and indulgence...and the pleasures they enjoyed during leisure hours in those attractive lands soon enervated the men's warlike spirit...Equally strong was their passion for fornication, guzzling, and other forms of sensuality. Men prostituted themselves like women, and women sold their chastity to every comer."<sup>406</sup> Like Cato the Elder, eighteenth-century

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<sup>404</sup>Ibid., 116.

<sup>405</sup>Ibid., 100-2.

<sup>406</sup>Sallust, *The Jugurthine War, The Conspiracy of Catiline*, trans. and intro. S. A. Handford (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), 182-3 (chp. 1, Preface). Like Rousseau and Mirabeau, abbé Pluquet, in his two-volume *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe* (1786), argued that the bodies of citizens or subjects of a state in which luxury dominates lose their robust constitution and suffer from a continuous malady; they are incapable of courage and military defense (II, 356-67). Soldiers and citizens would be enervated, and the population would dwindle (II, 321-

critics of luxury simultaneously mocked and feared the public presence of women, their “intractable nature” and “uncontrolled passions,” and their influence over men’s bodies in a society beholden to luxury.<sup>407</sup>

“Do you want to know men?” Rousseau famously asked: “Study women.”<sup>408</sup> In response, his disciple, an intendant of Champagne, Augustin Rouillé d’Orfeuil, found that luxury began with women’s vanity and jealousy, became inflamed by their overheated imaginations and fantasies, and then spread to men. Unhappy with their constant inferiority (within a particular social class), women directed their efforts for socio-cultural equality (or superiority) toward forcing men into culturally-recognized feminine terrain: *le salon, la toilette, le commerce agreeable, la politesse*, and so on.<sup>409</sup> In the process of establishing their empire over *le monde*,

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2). He also appealed to historical examples to demonstrate that bodies require an alternation of exercise and repos, which the Spartans mastered but not the Romans: “When luxury was established in Rome, one saw *la mollesse* banish the exercises on the Field of Mars and replace them with promenades on the streets, either in a carriage or chaise, in which the men were seated or laying down on a duvet” (I, 208; II, 358). The Athenians triumphed at the battle of Marathon before Pericles made luxury the dominant passion of Athens, and they were thus incapable of resisting the disciplined, hardened bodies of the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War.

<sup>407</sup>Cato’s speech on the Oppian sumptuary law was “recorded” by Livy, *The History of Rome*, “Cato on Extravagance,” in *The Portable Roman Reader*, intro. Basil Davenport, trans. Cyrus Edmonds, 440-6 (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 442. See also Juvenal, *Satire VI*, in *Juvenal and Persius*, trans. G. G. Ramsay (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Loeb Classical Library, 1965), 82-136, and Rousseau, *Letter to M. d’Alembert on the Theatre*, in *Politics and the Arts*, 111.

<sup>408</sup>Rousseau, *Politics and the Arts*, 83.

<sup>409</sup>Rouillé d’Orfeuil, *L’alambic des loix ou Observations de l’ami des Francois sur l’homme et sur les loix* (1773), 46. It is also to “exterior commerce” that Rouillé d’Orfeuil attributed the spread of luxury: “Exterior commerce is the first cause of all our misery...it introduced luxury...luxury gave birth to colonies...colonies have caused depopulation, and been the occasion for nearly continual wars, which emptied and ruined France” (291, the ellipses are Rouillé d’Orfeuil’s). According to Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemaire, *le commerce des femmes* has uprooted the natural charms given to both sexes, *la mollesse* feminized all, and men, having softened their character in the company of women, only contributed to the deepening weakness and dissipation of both sexes. Villemaire, *L’Andrometrie, ou Examen philosophique de l’homme* (1753, I am using the 1757 edition), 81-2. For the role of women in disseminating luxury, see, alongside Rousseau’s criticism in *Letter to M. d’Alembert* and *Émile*, Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, *Essai sur le Coeur humain* (1745), in *Oeuvres philosophiques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, Éditions Coda, 2004), 196-200; Boudier de Villemaire, *L’Andrometrie*, 80-2; abbé Nicolas Baudeau, “De Paris” (tome 1), “De Paris” (tome 2), and “De Paris” (also tome 2), in the Physiocrats’ *Ephémérides du citoyen*, 1765; Butini, *Traité du luxe*, chp. 5 and 7; and Sénac de Meilhan, *Considérations sur les Richesses et le Luxe* (1787), chp. XVI.

and after suffering an inexorable “excitation of the nerves,” women infected society with *la mollesse*, an irritation of the sweet and bitter bodily fluids (*liqueurs douces et balsamiques*), and a deadening of the organs of sensibility.<sup>410</sup>

Rouillé d’Orfeuil’s explanation points toward a difference between Roman critics and their eighteenth-century successors. While both were concerned with the body, eighteenth-century opponents of luxury possessed a thorough, physiological language in which to detail their fears. Through a language of the senses and the nerves, and corresponding theories of the cognitive faculties (i.e. reason and imagination), critics of luxury catalogued the ways in which their contemporaries’ minds and bodies were physically compromised by the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches of their society. They were able to add physiological precision to Classical and early-modern understandings of bodies debauched and enervated by luxury.

### *The Problem of Représentation*

One staple of the Old Regime social system, and a popular point of criticism for contemporaries, was the privilege and necessity of marking one’s superiority through external ornamentation, magnificence, and pomp. The social hierarchy communicated power and order through visual symbols: sigils, clothing, carriages, furniture, demeanor, and placement near the king. To differentiate oneself socially by donning the garments or behavior of one’s superiors was the worst offense in a society based on *représentation*, or “the use of commodities to create a dazzling display of wealth and social distinction.”<sup>411</sup> To secure the proper effects of

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<sup>410</sup>Ibid., 46-55. Perhaps extending Rousseau’s praise of “savage man,” Rouillé d’Orfeuil began *L’alambic des loix* with a reverie of living with a society of vegetarians in the “state of nature” (Book I, chp. 4).

<sup>411</sup>Shovlin, “The Cultural Politics of Luxury,” 590. For the ways in which Louis XIV and Colbert appropriated culture (e.g. historical writings, literature, opera, ballet) to the state apparatus, see Jean-Marie Apostolides, *Le roi-machine: Spectacle et politique au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1981). For an explanation of the political function of *représentation*, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), chp. 2, and, for contemporary critiques of the theatricality of *représentation* arousing passions,

*représentation*, the king, nobles, and wealthy interlopers used luxury to achieve *éclat*, which was a “keyword of the time, with meanings ranging from a ‘flash’ of lightning to a ‘clap’ of thunder, but always referring to something unexpected and impressive. Magnificence was considered to be impressive, in the literal sense of leaving an ‘impression’ on the viewers like a stamp on a piece of wax.”<sup>412</sup> In the process of both symbolizing *and* constituting power, *représentation* affected the senses and cognitive abilities of all French subjects. In his *Dictionnaire universel* (1690), for example, Antoine Furetière defined *représentation* as an “image which brings back absent objects to mind and to memory.”<sup>413</sup>

The system of *représentation* assumed a socio-political psychology that would render viewers awed and reverent and who, as spectators, would participate in the constitution of power. To illustrate the ubiquity of this practice and its epistemological construct, John Shovlin has shown that contemporaries brandished the methodological weapon of sensationalist philosophy, which I will distinguish from sensationalist physiology, to undergird their analyses of the semiotic chaos produced when spectacular consumption was used for the purposes of social distinction and the appropriation of political power by those of lowborn rank. For sensationalists, Shovlin stated, “one of the primary sources of error was the human tendency to confuse signs with reality...[furthermore,] the tendency of the low to take the pomp of the great

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see Erec Koch, *The Aesthetic Body: Passions, Sensibility, and Corporeality in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008), chp. 2 and 241-3. In the second half of the eighteenth century, D’Holbach and Louis-Sébastien Mercier both linked *représentation* to a corrupt socio-political system, the vanity of the elites, and the unfortunate inequality that resulted from their competitions in luxury. D’Holbach, *Système sociale, ou principes naturels de la morale et de la politique* (1773), Part III, chp. VI, 67, and Mercier, “Luxe,” in *L’An 2440* (1786 edition), preface Alain Pons (Paris: F. Adel, 1977), 336.

<sup>412</sup>Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>413</sup>Quoted in *Ibid.*, 8.

for power or authority...is a false connection of ideas."<sup>414</sup> Shovlin rightly read the Old Regime problem of spectacular consumption and chronic misrepresentation through the lens of sensationalism; however, he overlooked the ways in which writers expressed their fears through the physiological language of the senses.<sup>415</sup> The cognitive error of misconstruing signs with power was compounded by a defect of physiological processes.

In addition to a socio-political psychology and the potential for confusing signs with reality, *représentation* contained multiple layers of meaning and merged morality and physiology. For Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemaire, in *L'Andrométrie, ou examen philosophique de l'homme* (1753), "the vain display, which decorated the Great, was taken for grandeur itself; everyone has strived to imitate it, and believed themselves great in proportion to their expenditure: a bizarre idea, which confounds things so little linked."<sup>416</sup> Here is the core of contemporaries' fears of "confounding ranks" and *misreprésentation*, but Boudier de Villemaire explained further that luxury, by spreading day by day, "has managed to blunt all our senses...the excess to which we have carried feeling will soon reduce us to the point of feeling nothing at all."<sup>417</sup> Boudier de Villemaire's use of the words "blunt" (*émousser*) and "feeling"

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<sup>414</sup>Shovlin, "The Cultural Politics of Luxury," 578, 589. For a new account of language in the eighteenth century that does not see the "crisis of representation" as the only preoccupation of philosophers, see Matthew Lauzon, *Signs of Light: French and British Theories of Linguistic Communication, 1648-1789* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010). For an analysis of sensationalism and the role of "error" in Enlightenment thought, see David W. Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), and, for the premier epistemological understanding of *représentation*, see Condillac's *La Langue des calculs* and *Traité des systèmes*, alongside John C. O'Neal's reading of Condillac in *The Authority of Experience: Sensationist Theory in the French Enlightenment* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1996), chp. 1.

<sup>415</sup>In only one place does Shovlin acknowledge the dual meanings of sensationalism and sensibility. *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 24.

<sup>416</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 87 (see also 50).

<sup>417</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

(*sentiment*) signifies the physiological component of the language of sensationalism.<sup>418</sup> Critics of luxury plumbed the physical processes by which the body imbibed images and interacted with material objects. In so doing, they exposed the fault lines of harmless and harmful *représentations*. The goal of luxury and *éclat* was to dazzle (*éblouir*), shock (*frapper*), and impress viewers, which affected not just aesthetic taste and the power of political symbolism but also the physiological sensory network.<sup>419</sup>

Similar interpretations of the dangers implicit in *éclat* and *représentation* can be found in a variety of writers.<sup>420</sup> The moralist, member of the Académie française, and official “historiographer of France,” Charles-Pinot Duclos, expressed frustration over the adulteration of nobility and honor in France and targeted deceit in society as the culprit, much like Rousseau in *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*. It was not only “false politeness” that irked Duclos but the entire system of *représentation* so fraught with illusion.<sup>421</sup> “The majority of those who pass for

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<sup>418</sup>One of Boudier’s goals in *L’Andrométrie* was to expose the silliness of metaphysical philosophers who sought to deny, or at least call into the question, the sensory basis of knowledge. Mocking the plastic forms of Henry More, the monads of Leibniz, and the pursuits of disembodied reason, but still holding fast to epistemological modesty, Boudier argued that “nothing is more unreasonable than the forms of discredit under which false sages want to put the senses” (122-3, see also 51-66). Although we cannot know the deep, metaphysical questions, reason and the senses can and must work together to know the “just extension of man’s domain” (125).

<sup>419</sup>According to Pierre Nicole, in the essay “De la Grandeur” (1675 in *Essais de morale*), “The pomp and splendor [*éclat*] that go with the condition of the nobles is not what really makes them worthy of honor, but it is nevertheless what makes most people honor them. And because it is good that they be honored, it is also just that their greatness be joined with some exteriorized show of magnificence...Thus, in order for greatness to make the impression that it must make on their [men’s] minds, it is necessary that it first impress their senses.” Quoted in Koch, *The Aesthetic Body*, 242. In his entry in the *Encyclopédie*, Saint-Lambert suggested too that exterior decorations marking distinctions must make the right “impression” and be imposed on the senses (767). Villemaire found that these “distinctions” not only dazzled the viewer but also dazzled the bearer of *éclat*, awakening his vanity. Villemaire, *L’Andrométrie*, 11. See also abbé Pluquet, *Traité philosophique et politique sur le luxe*, vol. I, 119, 451-453.

<sup>420</sup>Many, though not all, of these writers feared confusing ranks and *états*. For a short critique of *représentation* that does not wholeheartedly endorse the social system of *représentation*, see Dominique-Joseph de Garat, *Éloge de Suger...Discours qui a remporté le prix au jugement de l’Académie Française, en 1779* (Paris, 1779), 17.

<sup>421</sup>Duclos, *Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle* (1751), 17 (chp. 1). “Politesse” could either express or imitate social virtues, and it was the art of feigning social virtues that Duclos recognized in his contemporaries (56-60). For an examination of Duclos’ understanding of honor as based on merit and moral excellence rather than lineage, see Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 85-90.

great lords,” Duclos detected, “are only so in the opinion of the people, who see them without approaching them. Struck [*frappé*] by their exterior *éclat*, they admire them from far away.”<sup>422</sup> Duclos abhorred unlimited luxury that, at a distance, affected and confused the sense of sight and thus cognitive processing. More than that, the cultural connotation of possessing a “noble air” no longer meant physical strength, moral fortitude, or characteristics elevated to distinction; by his own era, having a noble air was defined by exterior “marks of dignity” and indicative of *la mollesse*, the enervation of the body, delicacy, and weakness.<sup>423</sup> The progeny of well-honed ancestors plunged themselves into dissipation, expecting their *éclat* to project social and moral superiority and hide their corporeal frailties.

During the financial crisis of the late 1780s, the longtime courtier, Intendant, and literary figure Gabriel Sénac de Meilhan, who wanted to become *contrôleur général des finances* after the expulsion of Calonne in 1787, explained the difference between *le faste* (“splendor”) and luxury in his *Considérations sur les Richesses et le Luxe* (1787):<sup>424</sup> *Le faste* “announces the superiority of rank; it is expressed as pomp, *l’éclat*, *la décoration*...Luxury is more particularly an attribute of wealth...The former seems to indicate the love of greatness, the elevation of the

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<sup>422</sup>Ibid., 149 (chp. 5). Duclos argued too that luxury and *la mollesse* had corrupted virtue (28).

<sup>423</sup>This material cannot be found in the 1751 edition of *Considérations*. Duclos augmented chapter VI in the 1764 and 1784 editions (likely taken from the 1767 edition because Duclos died in 1772). F.C. Green used the 1784 edition in his publication of *Considérations* in 1939 by Cambridge University Press (reissued in 1946 and 2010). For a detailed analysis of the editions of Duclos’ *Considérations*, see the extensive introduction by Carole Dornier in the 2000 edition published by Honoré Champion Éditeur. I would hazard an explanation for Duclos’ addition of this material: Duclos was led to criticize the physical characteristics of nobles beset by luxury by an intellectual factor—the persistent corporeal critiques of luxury by his contemporaries—and a political factor—the debilitating defeat of the French in the Seven Years’ War. For charges of luxury leveled at soldiers and officers, see Bien, “The Army and the French Enlightenment: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution.”

<sup>424</sup>Colin Jones *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 307, 344, and Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières, et la Révolution*, 236-237.

soul, the other a taste for *la mollesse* and the empire of *volupté*.”<sup>425</sup> For Sénac de Meilhan, *le faste* was a necessary part of *représentation* in a society of orders. He took up the cause of the robe nobility, positioned between *les grands* and financiers, and supported *justes représentations* as securing virtue and *les mœurs*. Luxury, though, was the misappropriation of *le faste* and clearly linked to the vulnerabilities of the body. Luxury corrupts all *états*, and the rapid accumulation of fortunes characteristic especially of financiers increased vanity, sensuality, and social disorder.<sup>426</sup> Those enveloped in luxury were sensitive only to excess, *l’amour propre*, and the sweetness of pleasing others in society. Sénac de Meilhan dwelled on the physicality of gold and silver as the primary, material objects of luxury that dazzled eyes, damaged bodies, and enervated minds by arousing their fantasies.<sup>427</sup> The *éclat* emanating from *représentation*, and the desire for social and physical pleasures stimulated by luxury, worked through the body; luxury stroked the senses, activated sensuality, and rendered the sensory organs too supple to sustain durable impressions.<sup>428</sup>

Women in particular were misled by the system of *représentation*. As we will see in more depth below, women’s sensory network was considered different from men’s, livelier and hypersensitive. Their vision especially created a physical attraction to material objects and the display individuals made of them because women were more impressionable. Aesthetic theorists, art critics, and even the Royal Academy of Painting blamed the bad taste of women for

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<sup>425</sup>Sénac de Meilhan, *Considérations sur les Richesses et le Luxe*, 88 (chp. IX, see also chps. XVIII and XXXIV). Jacques Necker became director-general of finance, which reinforced Sénac de Meilhan’s desire to target Necker in his *Considérations*.

<sup>426</sup>*Ibid.*, 330 (chp. XXXIV, see also chp. XIII).

<sup>427</sup>*Ibid.*, 37 (chp. III), and 128 (chp. XIII).

<sup>428</sup>*Ibid.*, 37, 53 (chp. V), and 132 (chp. XV).



the decadence, frivolity, and artificiality of eighteenth-century art.<sup>429</sup> Their inordinately-rapid sense of sight produced inconstancy, gullibility, and naturalized their love for fashion (*la mode*), leading Boudier de Villemaire to the following metaphor: “Man is the arm, he bears the weight of the work; but woman is the eye, she surveys everything all the time.”<sup>430</sup>

Women’s peculiar ocular faculty meant they were more susceptible to the confounding effects of *représentation*. Their attraction to a man, according to Boudier de Villemaire, stemmed from his *éclat extérieur*, a visual representation of wealth that could belie his true *état*.<sup>431</sup> Women’s thirst for *la mode* and the trappings of luxury combined with their quick, visual stimulation to produce competition with other women. Luxury could not only be used by women to project *éclat* in their desire to outdo each other and conquer men, but, as Jean-François Butini argued, their obsession with luxury arose from a desire to mask deformities or old age. Women’s own impressionable vision led them to attempt to charm and deceive society, simultaneously using the process of *représentation* to their advantage and potentially becoming victims of it: “[During her youth,] she wants her finery to reflect her charms, but, in old age, she wants to dazzle the senses because she can no longer touch the heart.”<sup>432</sup> Women who no longer felt a sentimental attachment to humanity or who greedily coveted attention looked to *éclat* to seduce others. In a society of unregulated luxury, the bodies of elite men and women were meant to be decorated, in order to display their rank and beguile their contemporaries, but not

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<sup>429</sup>Sandrine Lely, “‘La massue d’Hercule soulevée par la main des Grâces’. Le débat sur la place des femmes dans l’art, entre 1747 et 1793,” in *Revisiter la “querelle des femmes.” Discours sur l’égalité/inégalité des sexes, de 1750 aux lendemains de la Révolution*, eds., Éliane Viennot and Nicole Pellegrin (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l’Université de Saint-Étienne, 2012). See also Jones, *Sexing* “La Mode,” chp. 4.

<sup>430</sup>Quoted in Jones, *Sexing* “La Mode,” 136.

<sup>431</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L’ami des femmes, ou Morale du Sexe* (1788), 114 (chp. V).

<sup>432</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe* (1774), 24-27.

hardened for military readiness; they were certainly still not required for labor as members of the Third Estate.

The enervating effects of luxury captured in the term *la mollesse* could be compounded by the sensory confusion of *représentation* and the desire to emit *éclat*.<sup>433</sup> To take one example, the Parisian bookseller and often pseudonymous author Antoine-Prosper Lottin wrote *Discours contre le luxe: Le Luxe corrompt les Mœurs, et détruit les Empires* as a response to an essay-contest question posed by the Academy of Besançon in 1782. Lottin's desire to enter the public sphere as an author led him to publish his text prior to the decision of the Academy, which violated the rules of the *concours*.<sup>434</sup>

In the *Discours contre le luxe*, Lottin attributed nearly every ill of society to luxury: capriciousness of fashion, the decreasing appeal of the arts, morality, and civic duty, and the abandonment of agriculture and military valor. He particularly pointed out the insufferable confounding of ranks, *états*, and even sexes in a society more akin to a theatrical performance than respectable order.<sup>435</sup> According to Lottin, supporters of luxury considered its multiple forms at court to be the brilliant (*éclatantes*) markers of royal splendor and nationwide happiness. When gold became more charming than courage and virtue, however, luxury

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<sup>433</sup>According to the Physiocrat Nicolas Baudeau, the honors and exterior decorations paraded by the nobility and *parvenus* (“*ces nouveaux Nobles*”) were meant to project status and clout. Their *éclat* was intended to stimulate respect, but more often they would be despised for contributing nothing to the public good, for not earning a “happier and more masculine virtue” by merit, or for valuing idleness as a quality to be emulated. Moreover, their grandeur and leisure suffocated their bodies; they lived a “soft and useless” life and were addicted to sensual pleasures that sapped their bodies of energy. Baudeau, “De Paris,” in *Ephémérides du citoyen*, tome 1 (1765), 153-4. For continued treatment of the same theme, see “Des Sciences et des Arts” (tome I) and two essays entitled “De Paris” in tome 2.

<sup>434</sup>Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières, et la Révolution*, 30-33.

<sup>435</sup>*Discours contre le luxe* (or, *Discours sur ce sujet*): *Le Luxe corrompt les Mœurs, et détruit les Empires* (1783). Lottin wrote *Discours contre le luxe* under the name M. de Saint-Haippy. The edition cited here is from 1784, 9-10, 55-7. For biographical information, see Louis-Gabriel Michaud, *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne, Nouvelle édition*, tome 25 (Paris: Ch. Delagrave et Cie, Libraires-Éditeurs, 1843), 143.

weakened and enervated both body and mind. His contemporaries were “seduced and enchanted by appearances, attached only to the outer shell of things, [and] they let themselves be dazzled by the *éclat* of a vain *représentation*, by that which flatters and abuses the senses[;] they will covet pleasures, *voluptés*, honors, and more still the wealth that brings all of this: in the conflict of so many different desires, virtue alone will be forgotten.”<sup>436</sup> The strong, virtuous, and heroic actions of their ancestors, immortalized in centuries past, no longer dazzled the eyes of the eighteenth-century French; instead, the human species had become visibly bastardized, and patriotic virtues dissipated in bodies softened by *la mollesse* and in souls mired in *voluptés*.<sup>437</sup> “To the simplicity of our fathers,” Lottin lamented, “has succeeded *le faste* of our pleasures” and the blunting or hardening of sensibility.<sup>438</sup>

Lottin agreed that *représentation* and *éclat* effectively dazzled the ignorant populace and poisoned the minds of its users, who sought to achieve a confounding of wealth and power. Additionally, he argued that those ensconced in luxury were incapable of overcoming lethargy, cerebral inconstancy, or *la mollesse*. “Delicious and sensual pleasures, which always accompany opulence,” Lottin observed, “soften and enervate bodies: they soon become weak and effeminate...incapable of extensive labor; the species finally degenerates.”<sup>439</sup> For Lottin and opponents of luxury, increased consumption, the innumerable spaces in which social and commercial interaction occurred, and the newly-widespread pursuit of pleasure exacerbated the

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<sup>436</sup>Ibid., 47 (see also 24).

<sup>437</sup>Ibid., 57.

<sup>438</sup>Ibid., 31, 30.

<sup>439</sup>Ibid., 55. In *De l'esprit*, Helvétius similarly acknowledged the ability of luxury to enervate bodies and reduce men to lassitude: “Yet, these different causes of depopulation, by plunging the whole country into misery, must necessarily weaken the constitution of bodies. The people given over to luxury are never robust: of all its citizens, some are enervated by *la mollesse* and others are exhausted by need.” *De l'esprit* (Paris: Chez Durand, 1758), 26.

effects of luxury: “the assemblage of all the pleasures to which luxury gives birth—music, the theatre, the baths, perfumes, exquisite food—by attacking the soul through all of the senses, weakens it and takes away all of its energy.”<sup>440</sup>

Lottin’s analysis incorporated the work of his predecessor Fénelon and his contemporaries: Rousseau, Mirabeau, Jean-François Butini, and Sénac de Meilhan. He echoed Boudier de Villemaire’s juxtaposition of luxurious women steeped in languor and those in “perpetual movement” in society.<sup>441</sup> From these critics, it is clear that luxury destroyed the body in two ways. Through *la mollesse* it sapped the body of its vigor and reduced the body’s taut fibers and solid organs to pulp, and by overstimulation it overwhelmed the sensory network, reducing it to numbness and dizziness. Butini identified precisely this problem: “As soon as a man possessed a fortune that previously would have made one hundred men happy, no longer being constrained to earn his living by work, he soon drifts to sleep in the heart of idleness [and] submits without reserve to all his desires: soon his organs fatigue either from repose or from the monotony of his incessant need for new pleasures.”<sup>442</sup> When the sensations of *le doux commerce* transcended the merely “agreeable,” individuals became addicted to the pleasures of luxury and forged physiological habits that stymied the corporeal connectivity of society.

### *The Processes of Corporeal Decay*

Luxury destroyed the body by three natural, physiological processes: impressions on the senses; acceleration of the imagination; and, formation of habits. The material objects used to create *éclat*, the noise of society, and the bumping of bodies during social and commercial

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<sup>440</sup>Ibid., 8.

<sup>441</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L’ami des femmes* (1758), chp. 3.

<sup>442</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 17.

exchange worked through the sensory and nervous systems. As Boudier de Villemaire stated: "All that exists outside of us is known to us only by the impressions made on us."<sup>443</sup> And, according to Rouillé d'Orfeuil, "The different ways of thinking...seeing...and feeling that we adopt, depend on the impressions that the exterior objects that surround us, and have surrounded us, make, and have made, on us."<sup>444</sup> The "impressionability" of humans was in no way a figurative term. It corresponded to the contemporary physiological conception of brain activity and sensory reception, and it was the physiological expression of (mis)*représentation*, described as the "false and seductive association of ideas that luxury forges."<sup>445</sup> Although doctors and natural philosophers weighed the importance of different elements of the body more heavily than others, in general the sensory network was a composite of brain and sensory fibers, liquids, organs, nerves, and animal spirits (rarefied fluid in the nerves that transmitted sensations). The latter two carried out the will of the brain, and sensations were thought to be channeled in one of two ways. Nerves were considered to be either hollow tubes through which animal spirits flowed to the brain and vital organs according to the impact of sensory data, or fibers were considered to be analogous to taut strings whose vibrations transmitted sensory data throughout the body.<sup>446</sup> Importantly, in either model, traces or impressions were left on the brain and

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<sup>443</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 57.

<sup>444</sup>Augustin Rouillé d'Orfeuil, *L'Ami des François* (1771), 636.

<sup>445</sup>Shovlin, "The Cultural Politics of Luxury," 594. Remember too the words of Burke above: "Magnificence [*éclat*] was considered to be impressive, in the literal sense of leaving an 'impression' on the viewers like a stamp on a piece of wax." Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, 5. For the use of auditory and visual stimuli in educational theory and political festivals, see Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); and, in the early American context, David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fêtes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill, NC: The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1997), esp. chp. 2.

<sup>446</sup>In a chapter titled "The Physiology of Thinking and Acting," John Yolton identified four physiologies used to explain mental operations in Britain: "(1) the scholastic theory of species, (2) the physiology of animal spirits and brain traces, (3) the physiological application of Newton's subtle elastic fluid (the aether), and (4) the Hartleian

sensory fibers, carving out channels or imprints according to the frequency, duration, or level of impact of sensory input.

Impressions were therefore crucial in epistemology and carried an especially heavy weight in criticisms of luxury. Impressions initiated a chain of cause and effect in the body that merged external sensory information with the internal organs and transformed that data into knowledge. Since the majority of people “neither think, observe, nor feel except by the impressions to which they are exposed,” d’Orfeuil commented, “it is essential that they be surrounded by appropriate ideas [i.e. not luxury, debauchery, confounding of ranks, or even sentimental novels that promoted dissolution].”<sup>447</sup> Twenty years prior to d’Orfeuil, Didier Pierre Chicaneau de Neuville defined *complaisance* as “a condescendence to the will of others...*complaisance* comes also from a weakness of mind, and announces a man incapable of thinking for himself, and who avidly receives all the impressions that one gives to him: these sorts of characters are insipid in the commerce of society.”<sup>448</sup> Social commerce should be an exchange of ideas and behaviors that impressed bodies, according to Chicaneau de Neuville. While impressions were not visible to the naked eye, it was clear that external stimuli affected all

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theory of vibrations.” Yolton, *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 153. Numbers two, three, and four co-existed in eighteenth-century France, and in 1746 Condillac was still uncertain whether animal spirits or vibrations were experimentally proven: “Here and elsewhere I suppose that the perceptions of the mind have their physical cause in the shock to the fibers of the brain, not because I take this hypothesis to be demonstrated, but because I find it best suited to support my thought. If the thing is not caused in this manner, it must be in some other not very different manner. The brain can work only by motion. Thus, whether one accepts that the perceptions are occasioned by shock to the fibers, by the circulation of animal spirits, or by some other cause, that is all the same in regard to the purpose I have in mind.” Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, trans. Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30, n. 14.

<sup>447</sup>D’Orfeuil, *L’ami des Francois*, 637-9. D’Orfeuil would go on to outline an intricate sartorial system to demonstrate social ranking and to assert the importance of the interior sentiment.

<sup>448</sup>Chicaneau de Neuville, *Dictionnaire philosophique, ou introduction à la connaissance de l’homme* (London, 1751), 69. In the 1762 edition, he defined “impressions” as “the effect that an object makes on our senses and on our soul.”

five senses and altered the composition of bodies. Lacking the self-awareness to recognize the physiological changes happening internally, most people did not realize that a frivolous or indolent lifestyle could weaken their bodies or that imbibing too much visual stimuli from *éclat* could impress the wrong association of ideas.

The ability to draw ideas from sensations, which did or did not correspond to reality, relied on the delicacy, coarseness, moisture, and pliability of the fibers, which were affected by age, sex, and usage. Not all natural philosophers, medical doctors, and social commentators agreed distinctly on the physiological processes—some emphasized impressions and traces and some vibrations of nerves—but contemporaries did find that the physical connected to the moral via sensibility.<sup>449</sup> Despite the universality of sensibility, with each different physiological organization came varying abilities to take in sense data and sustain balanced levels of cognitive activity. Most critics of luxury identified women's bodies as the most easily seduced. In his *Dictionnaire philosophique, ou introduction à la connaissance de l'homme* (1751), Chicanneau de Neuville perpetuated the connection between women and luxury using current physiological conceptions of gendered bodies.<sup>450</sup> He wrote: "The difference which one remarks in the man and

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<sup>449</sup>Karl M. Figlio, "Theories of Perception and the Physiology of the Mind in the Late Eighteenth Century," *History of Science* 12 (1975): 177-212; G. S. Rousseau, "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility," in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century, III: Papers Presented at the Third David Nichol Smith Memorial Seminar, Canberra 1973*, eds. R. F. Brissenden and J. Eade (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1976); John Sutton, *Philosophy and Memory Traces: Descartes to Connectionism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), esp. 34-35. The language of "impressions" has its roots in Cartesian physiology, even as far back as Aristotle. See Erec Koch, *The Aesthetic Body*, 28, 39-42.

<sup>450</sup>Although Katherine Hamerton has proven that Malebranche espoused similar gendered theories of the body in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, it was truly by the mid-eighteenth century that the view expressed by Chicanneau de Neuville became mainstream. Katharine J. Hamerton, "Malebranche, Taste, and Sensibility: The Origins of Sensitive Taste and a Reconsideration of Cartesianism's Feminist Potential," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 4 (October 2008): 533-558. See also Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind has no Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and philosophical medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), chps. 1-2; Ludmilla Jordanova,

the woman, comes not only from education, but also from their nature. The fibers of the woman are ordinarily more slender, which makes the senses more fine, and the interior sentiment more delicate. This natural disposition makes them prefer perceptible objects to metaphysical realities...the brilliant to the solid, luxury and ostentation to cleanliness and commodity."<sup>451</sup> Chicaneau de Neuville found women's bodies to be naturally constituted in such a way that they were drawn to luxury. It is perhaps for this reason that he stated in the entry "expenditure" (*dépense*) the need for sumptuary laws.<sup>452</sup>

Boudier de Villemare espoused a similar position in his *L'ami des femmes* (1758).<sup>453</sup> A *jurisconsulte* by trade, Boudier was also a prolific writer, though Melchior Grimm considered

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"Sex and Gender," in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, eds., Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, eds. 152-183 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*; Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitié du 18e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford, England: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), chps. 6-7.

<sup>451</sup>Chicaneau de Neuville, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (London, 1751), "Femme. Homme." 147-8 (see also "Finesse"). See also Jones, *Sexing "La Mode,"* 134-8. Similarly, the *médecin-philosophe* La Mettrie wrote: "In the fair sex, the soul also follows the delicacy of the temperament; hence the tenderness, affection, lively feelings based on passion rather than on reason, the prejudices, and superstition whose deep imprint can scarcely be erased, etc. In men, on the contrary, whose brain and nerves have the firmness of all solids, the mind, like the features, is livelier." La Mettrie, *L'Homme machine*, in *Machine Man and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 8.

Chicaneau de Neuville published at least two further editions of his *Dictionnaire*. In 1756, he published the *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*, and in 1762 he published a much augmented edition in which he acknowledged in the *Avertissement* plagiarizing from other authors in order to create "un livre utile, plutôt qu'un ouvrage agréable." In the 1762 edition, for example, he took part of his entry for luxury from Saint-Lambert's entry in the *Encyclopédie*.

<sup>452</sup>He would define luxury as "the love of splendor and magnificence. The luxury of buildings, of clothes, etc. is a sparkling veil, which often hides pettiness well" (225).

<sup>453</sup>Boudier de Villemare republished *L'ami des femmes* numerous times after 1758 (the edition I use) with different subtitles and additional material: *L'ami des femmes, ou la philosophie du beau sexe* (1774); *Le Nouvel Ami des Femmes* (1779, with an alphabetical list of famous French women); and *L'ami des femmes, ou morale du sexe* (1788, with an "Epître aux Femmes," a Preface, a "Question préliminaire," an added chapter on women and religion, and a concluding chapter, "De l'éducation et des devoirs des femmes," extracted from Fénelon). The spelling of Villemert/Villemare is a slight source of confusion. Most spell his name "Villemert," but I adhere to "Villemare" because this is how his name appeared on *L'Andrométrie*.



him a hack.<sup>454</sup> Boudier participated in the Academy of Dijon's essay contest on the arts and sciences that won Rousseau such acclaim, and he contributed to the expansion of the periodical press by creating and editing *Feuille nécessaire* in 1759, which became the weekly *Avantcoureur* through 1773. *L'ami des femmes* clearly mimicked Mirabeau's immensely popular *L'ami des hommes*, and Boudier sought to endear himself to critics of *le monde*, particularly its exclusivity, frivolity, and gender inversion.<sup>455</sup> The repeated publication, modifications, and various editions of *L'ami des femmes* in France, Britain, Austria, and America remind us that philosophes like Voltaire and Rousseau were not the only ones able to capture the stresses, strains, and anxieties of the eighteenth century.

Boudier subscribed to a vision of females as the complement to males, a seemingly "progressive" view but one that limited women's characteristics to those of a charming modesty, polisher of manners, and domestic sovereign. "Each sex has a particular destination that derives from its physical constitution and cannot be transported to the other," Boudier de Villemaire proclaimed.<sup>456</sup> Like Chicaneau de Neuville, he praised women's vivacity of senses and their ability to "seize objects" and the "connections between objects" quicker than men.<sup>457</sup> This talent

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<sup>454</sup>George B. Watts, "Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert: *L'ami des femmes*, the *Feuille Nécessaire*, and *L'Avant-Coureur*," *Tennessee Studies in Literature*, vol. 16 (1971): 169-173, here 170.

<sup>455</sup>For biographical information on Boudier de Villemaire, his writings on women, and his popularity in America, see Watts, "Pierre-Joseph Boudier de Villemert: *L'ami des femmes*, the *Feuille Nécessaire*, and *L'Avant-Coureur*;" David Williams, "The Fate of French Feminism: Boudier de Villemert's *Ami des Femmes*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 14, n. 1 (1980): 37-55; Jones, *Sexing "La Mode"*, 117, 135-6, 149, 181. Watts stated that Boudier was a lawyer of the parlement of Paris, but Williams did not confirm this. Boudier put forward an image of domesticated daughters and wives, but, unlike Sophie in Rousseau's *Émile*, Boudier wanted women to be educated (primarily to be suitable companions to men, as in Benjamin Rush's famous post-American Revolution contention).

<sup>456</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, "Question préliminaire" to *L'ami des femmes* (1788), xii. Although Boudier de Villemaire references without citation François Poulain de la Barre's maxim "L'esprit n'a point de sexe," it is clear that he *did* think the mind had a sex and a particular physiological consistency. *L'ami des femmes* (1758), 155. It is possible that Boudier was familiar with Florent de Puisieux' *La Femme n'est pas inférieure à l'homme* (1750), which reproduced a number of passages from Poulain's *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (1673).

<sup>457</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'ami des femmes* (1758), 23, 26. Similar to the vivacity of the senses, the vitalist physician Théophile de Bordeu wrote that "the natural pulse of women is, in general, quicker [than men's] and

inherent to their physiological organization, however, made them susceptible to the corrupting influence of luxury and the corresponding, interminable pursuit of pleasure. Having a more delicate sensibility, women were more easily led astray by the *éclat* of luxury or the gallantry of men. By necessity and habit, women became addicted to the noise and turbulence of society, and as a result the shock to their bodies of constantly refining and varying pleasurable sensations overheated their imaginations and left them immobile from dizziness.<sup>458</sup>

Chicaneau de Neuville's entry on "women" reveals a further assumption about women's corporeal organization and the physiological foundations for a critique of luxury: their natural disposition also "makes them sensitive to piety, inconstant and light, and often capricious. The trace which objects leave there not being deep enough, it is easily effaced by a new impression: in such a way that in their minds the present object often sweeps away that which is absent."<sup>459</sup> Both Boudier de Villemaire and Chicaneau de Neuville coated women's impulsiveness, love of fashion, and addiction to ornamentation in the authority of nature, thus bridging the natural and social order. The inability to sustain durable impressions and a delicate sensibility, then, were further examples of feminization brought on by luxury.

As impressions were embedded in the brain and sensory fibers, "the imagination," to quote Boudier de Villemaire, "increases still their charm by perpetuating them and by easing the imagination's ability to renew the images that luxury stamped."<sup>460</sup> The imagination was a notoriously-tricky faculty of the mind that could be a source of creativity or disorder. As it relied

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approaches that of children." Quoted in Ingrid J. Sykes, "The Art of Listening: Perceiving Pulse in Eighteenth-Century France," *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 35, n. 4 (2012): 473-488, here 481.

<sup>458</sup>Ibid., 138, 53-7.

<sup>459</sup>Chicaneau de Neuville, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, "Femme. Homme." 148.

<sup>460</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 45. See also Chicaneau de Neuville, "Extase."

only on the traces left by sensations, characterized as the “faithful depository of sensations” by Boudier de Villemaire, the imagination could skid off the grooves carved into the brain fibers and misconnect ideas.<sup>461</sup> The influential, Cartesian philosopher Nicholas Malebranche, who was disdainful of the frivolity and “noise” of society, differentiated between sensing and imagining.<sup>462</sup> Sensing was the agitation of the brain fibers by an external object upon the exterior surface of the nerves, and imagining was caused by the ruffling of the internal fibers by an absent cause through the flow of animal spirits.<sup>463</sup> In Malebranche’s words: “Since the

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<sup>461</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L’Andrométrie*, 127. The imagination was also considered by many, such as Spinoza, La Mettrie, and Adam Smith, as a source of (imperfect) knowledge, creativity, and sympathy, respectively, alongside its capacity for error. In his entry “Imaginer” for the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (vol. 8, 1765, which put forward the imagination, alongside memory and reason, as the three faculties of human knowledge), Voltaire treated both the positive and negative qualities of the imagination. In praise of luxury, François Véron de Forbonnais, quoted above, argued that luxury “humanizes mankind, polishes their manners, softens their humors, *spurs imagination*, [and] perfects their understanding.” Quoted in Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 46 (italics mine).

For the long-term history of the imagination, from the Greeks to postmodern theories, see Richard Kearney, *The Wake of Imagination: Toward a Postmodern Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). For specific early-modern understandings, see Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), chp. 1; Lorraine Daston, “Enlightenment Fears, Fears of Enlightenment,” in *What’s Left of Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question*, eds. Keith Michael Baker and Peter Hanns Reill, 115-28 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, NY: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997), esp. chp. 2. For the connection between impressions and the imagination in the process of generation, see Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Mary Terrall, “Material Impressions: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance,” in *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, eds. Helen Deutsch and Mary Terrall, 109-29 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

<sup>462</sup>Although Goldstein rightly pointed out that “because the external environment impinged less upon the Cartesian psyche than it did upon its sensationalist counterpart...the sensationalist construction of imagination had a more pronounced tendency to become involved in social, political, and economic discourse,” Malebranche and Poulain de la Barre aimed their works at a specific social context, *le monde* of the late seventeenth century. Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, 36. Malebranche particularly focused on the auditory faculty. Sensory and social interaction were “ce bruit confus” (78) and “le bruit continuel” (77); one needed to “silence de ses sens” (76) and “il faut tâcher de faire taire ses sens” (75). Truth, for Malebranche, was to be heard, or at least not disturbed, and the senses, especially hearing, were dulled or over-excited in society. Quotes from Malebranche, *Traité de Morale*, ed. Jean-Pierre Osier (Paris: GF-Flammarion, 1995), Part I, chp. 2.

<sup>463</sup>Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. and ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olshamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 88. Malebranche’s influence on eighteenth-century thought has only recently begun to be appreciated. See Terrall, “Material Impression: Conception, Sensibility, and Inheritance”; Hamerton, “Malebranche, Taste, and Sensibility: The Origins of Sensitive Taste and a Reconsideration of Cartesianism’s Feminist Potential”; J. B. Shank, *The Newton Wars and the Beginning of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Rise and Fall of the Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* (Notre Dame, IN : University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 33-54 and 180-7; Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of*

imagination consists only in the soul's power to form images of objects by imprinting them, so to speak, in the fibers of its brain, the greater and more distinct the traces of the animal spirits, which are the strokes of these images, the more strongly and distinctly the soul will imagine these objects."<sup>464</sup> The *éclat* of luxury and crafty *bon ton* of *le monde* particularly imprinted the brain fibers, binding the imagination to the degenerative aspects of society. Women, whose delicate brain fibers made them most susceptible to flights of the imagination, "cannot use their imagination for working out complex and tangled questions. They consider only the surface of things...because insignificant things produce great motions in the delicate fibers of their brains, [which] necessarily excite great and vivid feelings in their souls, completely occupying it."<sup>465</sup>

In his 1746 *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines*, Condillac argued that the imagination conserved and revived perceptions, which he defined as "impression[s] occasioned in the mind by the action of the senses...supplied only by reflection on what we experience when we are affected by some sensation...[and are] the first and least degree of knowledge."<sup>466</sup> As perceptions are embedded in the brain fibers, roused to action generally by a shock (*frappé*) to the senses, they become familiar through repetition and can often be revived with no external stimulation, as Malebranche noted. The imagination can also be brought to action by "unexpected impressions," so "solidly embedded" yet naturally occurring that "they act on our

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*Sensibility* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 24-30, 104-7, 140-7, 170-84, and 392-3; John W. Yolton, *Locke and French Materialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>464</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>465</sup>Ibid., 130. See also Boudier de Villemare, *L'Andrométrie*, 54, and *L'ami des femmes*, 79.

<sup>466</sup>Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, 27, quote from 19-20 (see also Part I, section 2, chapters 2, 9, and 10). According to John O'Neal, Condillac only fully developed his "sensationalism," in which reason/reflection became truly subordinate to sensations, eight years later in *Traité des sensations* (1754). O'Neal, *The Authority of Experience*, 18-9. For the importance of the body in Condillac's theory of language, see David Hagan, "Connections: Body and Sympathy in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Language Theory" (University of Iowa doctoral thesis, 2006), chp. 2.

minds with greater vivacity.”<sup>467</sup> Butini extended Condillac’s analysis to the problem of luxury: “When the imagination is shocked by some brilliant objects, [it becomes] ardent in its projects and attempts to do anything to satisfy them.”<sup>468</sup> He observed the contagious desire to imitate the luxurious *éclat* of the wealthy spread from the highest to the lowest ranks and inflame the imaginations of those unlucky enough to be occasionally welcomed into elite circles.

By repeatedly shocking the fibers, or forcing the animal spirits rapidly through their tubes, luxury could also disorient the natural processes of information-gathering. The imagination would feed off the ingrained perceptions, tentatively connected to reality, and reproduce the sensations caused by luxury without provocation. Condillac outlined the reciprocal interaction of the senses and the “organ of the imagination” in a way that critics of luxury repeated:

[A]s the senses act on the organ of the imagination, this organ reacts on the senses...I say that this organ’s reaction is more lively than the action of the senses, because this organ does not act on them with the mere force of the perception they produced, but with the united forces of all those that are closely linked to this perception and which for this reason have invariably been revived...In the same manner a pleasure I have pursued revives all the agreeable ideas to which it can be connected. The imagination returns several perceptions to the senses for every one that it receives. My spirits are moving with a force that dissipates all that could deprive me of the sentiments I am having. In this state, being entirely absorbed by the perceptions I receive from the senses and by those which the imagination reproduces, I enjoy the most lively pleasures. But arrest the action of the imagination, and it is all gone as if I had been bewitched; I have before my eyes the objects to which I attributed my happiness; I pursue them, but I no longer see them.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>467</sup>Ibid., 54. Condillac agreed with Malebranche that women, particularly young girls, were more susceptible to flights of the imagination. He targeted romances and sentimental novels, the reading of which pushed the animal spirits to dig little by little into the brain, especially for young girls hardly engaged in education, forging chimeras and fantasies (57-8). Butini too contended that romance novels were “fruits of the imagination withered in the arms of *la volupté*.” Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 141.

<sup>468</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 20.

<sup>469</sup>Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, 59-60.

Describing a representative elite woman in the throes of luxury, Butini provided an instance of Condillac's theoretical explanation:

She passes half her life in bed, she divides the other half between balls, grand assemblies, gambling, the theatre, and concerts. Everyday has the *éclat* of grandiose *fêtes*...Is [this woman] happy? Without a doubt, she receives some delicious sensations for her senses and her *amour-propre*, but one should recall that turbulent [*bruyans*] pleasures become blunted [*s'émoussent*] by continuity...Today triumphant, tomorrow eclipsed, by turns in anguish and in laughter, she flutters in perpetual agitation, she lives in a stormy milieu.<sup>470</sup>

The imagination heightened the feeling of external sensations and brought a welter of stored sensations to bear on the body of this woman. Butini's hypothetical socialite was like all of those who wasted the vivacity of their sensations on *éclat* and pomp. Their imaginations became overheated, exhausted, and insensible to simple pleasures because they wanted to satisfy all their tastes simultaneously.<sup>471</sup>

Abbé Pluquet too equated overstimulated senses to dizziness and a persistent, but fruitless, chase for corporeal happiness.<sup>472</sup> The body became bereft of reason and subject to the imagination whose "unruly creations" were considered "errors of construction...not reflected in sensation."<sup>473</sup> In Pluquet's "Christian version of natural law theory," man was a unique creature, blending a corporeal organization physically-inferior to other animals with a superior faculty of reason that led humans to unite socially.<sup>474</sup> Pluquet defined luxury specifically as a disruption to natural, corporeal processes: luxury is "the usage of objects, which produce agreeable sensations,

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<sup>470</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 106-7.

<sup>471</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 78.

<sup>472</sup>Pluquet, *TPPL*, vol. I, 414.

<sup>473</sup>Daston, "Enlightenment Fears, Fears of Enlightenment," 118.

<sup>474</sup>"Christian version..." is from Clark, "Commerce, Sociability, and the Public Sphere: Morellet vs. Pluquet on Luxury," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22:2 (May 1998): 83-103, here 88. For the uniqueness of humans, see Pluquet, *De la sociabilité* (1767), 30-2.

that man has rendered necessary to his happiness even though by the laws of nature the usage of these objects and the agreeable sensations that they produce are neither necessary nor useful to life or health nor necessary to the happiness of man.”<sup>475</sup> The imagination inflamed by luxury snuffed out the “principle that thinks in man,” rendering individuals incapable of fixing attention, comparing ideas, judging, and ascending to higher truths.<sup>476</sup> Pluquet feared that the man of luxury would create a world out of residual sensations, recoiling into himself and constructing fantasies out of disconnected traces. He feared also that the imagination required a continual source of new sensations. The man of luxury lived only for the constant replenishing of agreeable sensations, enhanced by the frenetic activity of the imagination.<sup>477</sup>

Pluquet preserved the sociable virtues of *amitié* and *reconnaissance* and reinforced the primacy of the corporeal so crucial to *De la sociabilité* (1767), but the intervening twenty years demonstrated to him that the various economic and philosophical guises of materialism had only increased their hold on French society. From Mandeville, Montesquieu, Melon, Hume, and Jacques Necker to Forbonnais, Helvétius, Condillac, and d’Holbach, luxury was still not truly understood. Each of these thinkers, Pluquet contended, defined luxury to suit their vision of society. For Pluquet, luxury must be understood as part of man’s nature, and its degenerative properties known only through the body.<sup>478</sup>

By working through the sensory processes, luxury replaced rationality with imagination and constantly pulled men and women toward those objects that initially established the

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<sup>475</sup>Pluquet, *TPPL*, I, 79.

<sup>476</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 85-88, 195-205.

<sup>477</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 204, 427-429.

<sup>478</sup>For Pluquet’s claim about man’s nature, see *Ibid.*, I, 58-60, and for his history of contemporary luxury thought, see *Ibid.*, I, 10-57.

impressions. Like Pluquet, Boudier de Villemaire feared that the imagination usurped the role of leading cognitive faculty, deafening the cry of reason. The majority of people became “habituated to the vibrant action of [the imagination], they suffer impatiently the tranquil operation of reason, and finding more ease in seizing objects by their brilliant colors in which the imagination adorned them, rather than studying them deeply, they give to them a preference.”<sup>479</sup> The imagination thus worked involuntarily, exhausting the body to the point of either *la mollesse* or a state of shock and dizziness.

The repetition of impressions and the activity of the imagination formed habits, the last stage of luxury’s disorderly effects on the body, which induced fantasy, egoism, and anti-social behavior. As the *Idéologue* Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis wrote in his *Rapports du physique et du moral de l’homme* (1802), “organized bodies are able...to contract particular ways of being which are then perpetuated or reproduced even in the absence of the causes upon which they depend; that is to say, they are able to contract *habits*.”<sup>480</sup> Or, in a simpler explanation given by d’Holbach, habits are a “disposition in our organs caused by the frequency of the same

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<sup>479</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L’Andrométrie*, 42. See also 33-4 for the necessity of reason trumping the capricious and delusional imagination. The imagination importantly served as a store of sensory data, and without the interaction of the senses, imagination, memory, and reason all would succumb to luxury and desuetude (127-9). But, for Boudier de Villemaire, it is the ability of reason to compare and judge sensory objects that allows humans to realize the necessity of social interaction above a brutish state of nature. In his *Théorie du luxe*, establishing the indispensability of luxury, Butel-Dumont also argued that “Reason always governs men in things that fall under their senses. The organization [of the body], at least, does not permit them to be mistaken for too long...the sensations that they feel are promptly corrected. They excite in men appetites more or less imperious, according to whether the appetites interest more or less first their conservation, then the agreement of their existence” (II, 48-9).

<sup>480</sup>Quoted in Mariana Saad, “Machine et sensibilité: la question de l’organisation de l’homme chez La Mettrie et Cabanis,” in *Julien Offray de La Mettrie: Ansichten und Einsichten*, ed. Harmut Hecht, 141-152 (Berlin: BWV-Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2004), 147. See also the article by Cabanis’ contemporary J.-L. Alibert: “Du pouvoir de l’habitude dans l’état de santé de maladie,” *Mémoires de la Société Médicale d’Émulation*, vol 1 (1798), 396-416.



movement, which results in the ease of reproducing them.”<sup>481</sup> Habits were physiological states, circumscribing the behavior of individuals through internal motions.

Habits bound people to objects of luxury, created ideas that no longer corresponded to external sensory data, isolated individuals from each other, and ultimately splintered society. Many individuals did not develop physiologically-ingrained habits, though. Yet, they still experienced the physiological impulse to constantly pursue material pleasures because their fibers were too delicate and their sensibility was too quick to sustain durable impressions. Habits were not imprinted in these individuals, but the liveliness of their senses nevertheless rendered them subservient to the physical effects of luxury. Luxury, therefore, not only depleted courage and virtue, feminized men, obscured ranks, depopulated the countryside, and spread depraved *moeurs*, but it also degenerated the fundamental physiology of sentimentality and sociability that citizens or subjects were expected to feel for each other.

Prior to the 1750s, *la querelle du luxe* was primarily an offshoot of larger socio-economic questions. After midcentury, however, it became its own driving force, as a multiplicity of authors used luxury itself, and wrote in an array of formats, to take up questions of “happiness, artifice, nature, the place of women in society, social confusion, inequality, the arts and sciences, celibacy, depopulation, or breast feeding.”<sup>482</sup> Contributors to *la querelle du luxe* repeated these themes, often to honestly scrutinize the socio-economic order and often to merely obtain public recognition as authors. Even as contemporaries complained of the repetitive character of these texts, commentaries and reviews of them regularly appeared in the periodical press: *Mercur*

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<sup>481</sup>D’Holbach, *La morale universelle, ou les devoirs de l’homme fondé sur sa nature* (1776), chp. 12. See also O’Neal, *The Authority of Experience*, 115-7.

<sup>482</sup>Provost, *Le Luxe, les Lumières et la Révolution*, 15. Provost’s work reminds scholars that the many texts on luxury were not isolated and autonomous. Yet, even though the texts were all linked together, the authors wrote for a number of personal, philosophical, religious, and opportunistic reasons.

*France, Année littéraire, Journal des beaux-arts et des sciences, Journal encyclopédique*, and *Correspondance littéraire*. Academies across France sponsored essay competitions to address the destructive or productive aspects of luxury. “The characteristic of this chameleon concept,” according to Audrey Provost, “is to allow one to speak of everything, all that touches the harmony of the social and political body.”<sup>483</sup> Whether an author focused on depopulation, promoted Greco-Roman virtues, or decried the visible role of women in society, the health of the social body or body politic was located in the corporeal. The authority of natural philosophy and the dual language of sensibility held together *la querelle du luxe* and provided an organizing principle for the moral assessments of social interaction.

According to Sénac de Meilhan, the constant search for stimulation, either through physical objects or sensual pleasures, led to a society of individuals puffed up from *amour-propre* and lacking sentiment.<sup>484</sup> “The spirit of luxury and frivolity strips man of his first virtue,” Lottin implored; “it extinguishes in him the softest penchant, the first sentiment of well-born souls...goodness [*bonté*], sensibility [*sensibilité*]. The taste for pleasures, the habit of ease and opulence smothers or hardens the best of his nature.”<sup>485</sup> Human nature was contained in the body, which was a sensing, feeling object, capable of translating external sensations into knowledge upon which humans reflected, judged, and ultimately acted. The “delicacy” of sensibility could be understood as a physiological defect rendering one submissive to sensations or a positive attribute suggesting one’s ability to sympathize, reciprocate affection, and channel one’s desires toward the betterment of society. Physical sensibility and the ability to absorb

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<sup>483</sup>Ibid., 15.

<sup>484</sup>Sénac de Meilhan, *Considérations sur les richesses et le luxe*, 132-3 (chp. XV).

<sup>485</sup>Lottin, *Discours contre le luxe*, 30.

sensations formed a “continuous and simultaneous” process with moral sensibility and sentimentality.<sup>486</sup>

Although John Locke first illustrated the primacy of sensation in modern epistemology, and physiologists and physicians performed experiments to uncover the processes of sense operations, it was writers of fiction, moralists, and, I would add, critics of luxury and society who provided the groundwork for the social and moral valences contracted by "sentiment" and "sensibility."<sup>487</sup> To return to a quote from Boudier de Villemaire cited above, by spreading day by day, luxury "has managed to blunt all our senses...the excess to which we have carried feeling will soon reduce us to the point of feeling nothing at all."<sup>488</sup> Boudier de Villemaire's references to “blunt” (*émousser*) and “feeling” (*sentiment*) indicated the physiological *and* moral components of the language of sensationalism. The innate capacity to react to stimuli became both the mainspring and the connective tissue of physical and moral life.<sup>489</sup> The hardening of

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<sup>486</sup>Ann Jessie Van Sant, *Eighteenth-Century Sensibility and the Novel: The Senses in Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 14. Van Sant provided the following as a “working definition” of sensibility: “an organic sensitivity dependent on brain and nerves and underlying a) delicate moral and aesthetic perception; b) acuteness of feeling, both emotional and physical; and c) susceptibility to delicate passion arousal. Though belonging to all, greater degrees of delicacy of sensibility—often to a point of fragility—are characteristic of women and upper classes. Excessive delicacy or acuteness of feeling produces an impaired or diseased state... sensibility is associated with the body, sentiment with the mind. The first is based on physical sensitivity and the processes of sensation; the second refers to a refinement of thought...Both were important terms in the general shift of the foundation of moral life from reason and judgment to the affections.” (1, 4-5). For the multiple meanings and uses of “sensibility,” aside from the works cited above, see G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Mary McAlpin, *Female Sexuality and Cultural Degradation in Enlightenment France: Medicine and Literature* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012). And, for the related, polysemous term “sympathy” in the British context, see Catherine Packham, *Eighteenth-Century Vitalism: Bodies, Culture, Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>487</sup>More than anyone, George S. Rousseau has brought to light the role of novelists in connecting sensibility and sentimentality. *Nervous Acts: Essays on Literature and Sensibility* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

<sup>488</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 79.

<sup>489</sup>Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, 2.

one's heart or the stifling of nature were metaphorical expressions for the physical course of becoming insensible. Boudier de Villemaire, then, was not just concerned with "symbolic anarchy" distorting ranks, just as d'Holbach was not merely worried that the rich idler sought out vices and *volupté* to ease his boredom; both were equally concerned that the numbing of our senses and the vertigo induced by luxury would have a concomitant effect on our rational and moral faculties.<sup>490</sup> Boudier de Villemaire, Chicaneau de Neuville, and others linked the moral to the physical through the mediating activities of the senses.<sup>491</sup> The morality of sensibility—exhibited by sympathy, benevolence, pity, and sociability—combined with an epistemology grounded in sensationalist physiology to situate the ability to feel at the center of new visions of society. The deleterious physical effects of luxury struck those looking to reform society, to maintain the *esprit de communauté* so necessary to Saint Lambert, as a crucial obstacle to overcome.

Butini wrote positively of *l'homme sensé*, who avoids superfluity, respects his *état*, and prefers virtuous labor over urban debauchery. He wrote negatively of *l'homme insensé*, who struts around at the head of an army of servants and whose body luxury had deadened to sensibility and the plight of others. The pursuit of luxury and unending pleasures encouraged avidity, frivolity, and insensitivity, and competition for *éclat* and prestige created an increasing inequality. Luxury was a malady that closed the hearts of the wealthy to the pleasures of goodwill (*amitié*) and reduced the poor to a state below savages.<sup>492</sup> The inheritors of fertile land,

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<sup>490</sup>d'Holbach, *Système sociale* (1773), Part III, chp. VI, 69.

<sup>491</sup>In defense of luxury, Butel-Dumont vacillated in his argument that the "affections of the soul" (the "moral") could secure happiness more easily than "the impressions received by the senses" (the "physical"). *Théorie du luxe*, I, 76-80. Butel-Dumont's text deepens the notion that the body was at the center of the luxury debates, even for some who supported luxury.

<sup>492</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 83-5, 71-2.

Nicolas Baudeau envisioned, no longer felt patriotic sentiments to plant and harvest for the betterment of society; they only wanted to abandon fields for the sensual pleasures of the city.<sup>493</sup> Baudeau, Butini, and Pluquet all noted further that luxury disturbs the sentiment of conjugal fidelity and ruins families because men are too addicted to the variety of sensual pleasures and no longer feel tenderness toward their children or wives.

The children of *les hommes* and *les femmes insensés* did not fare much better than their parents. Young girls, in particular, were intoxicated by the constant hum of praise and flattery that evaporated as they aged. For Rouillé d'Orfeuil, "cursed luxury," vice, and debauchery numbed and blunted all the senses, dazed the bodies of adolescents, weakened the organs even before the soul developed, and turned contemporaries into enemies.<sup>494</sup> Luxury and "all the poisons of society" silenced the most important sense; they prevented people from listening to "the just and true censor that the Supreme Being deigned to put in us, which never misleads us."<sup>495</sup> No longer able to hear the interior sentiment that spoke of utility and the common good, those devoted to luxury stymied social cohesion.

Since man was uniquely organized to feel both physical and moral affections, he experienced the dual meaning of sensibility. Pluquet assured his readers that nature did not abandon man to his senses and the impressions left by physical objects because she endowed him with reason.<sup>496</sup> Nature also fused into humans a safeguard against excess; they were equipped with pleasurable sensations when they achieved the proper levels of nourishment and passion

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<sup>493</sup>Baudeau, "De Paris," in *Ephémérides du citoyen*, tome 1 (1765), 157.

<sup>494</sup>D'Orfeuil, *L'ami des français*, 687-9.

<sup>495</sup>Ibid., 640.

<sup>496</sup>Pluquet, *TPPL*, I, 8.

and painful sensations when they exceeded the necessary and useful.<sup>497</sup> Yet, the body was fallibly physical, and luxury could extinguish *amitié* and sociability:

[When] the exercise and practice of the social virtues no longer produce pleasurable sensations, in order to avoid boredom and apathy humans only have the impressions of external bodies on their senses...they struggle to prolong the duration of the physical needs, to reactivate them when they are satisfied or weakened by creating new sensations and looking for means to give to all that which strikes their senses a delicacy and activity capable of being felt.<sup>498</sup>

The physical attraction to pleasures of the senses, epitomized in the objects and activities of luxury, was unnecessary and unnatural in Pluquet's conception of nature, but it was nevertheless born from the *organisation* and sensory network of humans.

Moral sensibility remained buried in luxury addicts because they never achieved physical satiety. By elevating superfluous, agreeable sensations to the point of necessity, they recalibrated their bodies to constantly feel an insatiable hunger.<sup>499</sup> Pluquet and the other critics of luxury shared this view of *le doux commerce* gone terribly wrong. The desire to fill unnecessary needs— excessive nourishment, clothing, sumptuous apartments, glittery trinkets— forged habits that required incessant novelty: “there is no interval for the needs of a man of luxury: as each type of sensation lasts for only a short time, and since agreeable sensations are necessary to his happiness, he is in extreme and continual need of feeling new sensations.”<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>497</sup>Ibid., I, 411-13, 461-69.

<sup>498</sup>Ibid., I, 70-2. Pluquet espoused a form of dualism more complicated than that traditionally conceived as Cartesian, devoting much of *TPPL* to the effects of one's social and material environment, but he still differentiated between pleasures of the mind (social virtues, *amitié*) and pleasures of the senses or body (I, 77). Pluquet was circumspect in his description of mind/soul/body interaction. The soul was most likely the “thinking part” of humans, the central processing unit, so to speak, that registers impressions and turns them into ideas (I, 195-205): “Whatever the nature of the soul and in whatever manner it is connected to the body,” Pluquet stated, “it is certain that man feels sensations only through the senses that communicate to the seat of the sentiment the impressions from foreign bodies” (I, 462-3).

<sup>499</sup>Ibid., I, 90-4, 464.

<sup>500</sup>Ibid., I, 100-1; II, 223, 358.

These men subsist only on the physical sensibility of *organisation* and blunt the moral sensibility of the soul. The corporeal development of habits affected both the individual and those with whom he would have engaged in social commerce or sympathy. In addition, since by his *organisation* man imitates the actions of others—a natural principle of sociability *and* perfectibility according to Pluquet—the example of a frivolous, sensual person could influence the behavior of others.<sup>501</sup> “Is it not evident,” Pluquet demanded, “that if you efface these principles [divine natural law] from the mind of man, he becomes the toy of all the impressions [made] by objects on his organs; that he is dragged by all of the passions and desires raised in his heart...that he is no longer anything but a sensible automaton, and that he can become a monster of cruelty?”<sup>502</sup>

Although Butini, Sénac de Meilhan, Boudier de Villemaire, d’Holbach, Pluquet, and the others discussed in this chapter did not agree on the divine nature of sentimentality and sociability or the proper socio-political structure to incorporate individuals, they all pointed out the fundamentally negative effects that immoderate luxury had on the human body. The corporate, social hierarchy teetered unstably by the mid-eighteenth century and wide fissures opened up where boundaries separating *états* used to be. Whether one wanted to tear down, modify, or strengthen the social system of *états*, it was necessary to address the motion and contact of physical objects and human bodies in multifarious social spaces.<sup>503</sup> Those living under the tyrannical rule of luxury submitted to overheated imaginations, became slaves to their

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<sup>501</sup>Ibid., II, 63-66.

<sup>502</sup>Ibid., I, 326, 429-30.

<sup>503</sup>Critics of luxury diagnosed society with the inverse of what Condillac wrote about the proper functioning of cognitive development: “As soon as the memory is formed, and the habit of the imagination is in our power, the signs recollected by the former, and the ideas revived by the latter, begin to free the soul from its dependence in regard to the objects by which it was surrounded.” Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, 41.

passions, and felt either the constant need to experience pleasurable sensations or were rendered indolent by them. Society could be neither reformed nor remade if its members idled their time away in *la mollesse* or required constant sense stimuli because their fibers were either hardened or too delicate. At a time when an abundance of social, political, moral, and natural causes were called upon to unite individuals together in society, addicts of luxury recoiled into a state of material selfhood, neglecting any collective identity found in social interaction and unable to reflect clearly on their own existence.<sup>504</sup>

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By the time Pluquet and Sénac de Meilhan wrote their treatises critical of luxury, the surge of commercial culture had become relentless. The increasing visibility and tangibility of luxury goods, “populuxe” items, and consumers of all *états* illustrated to them the destructive tendencies of a society of unregulated commerce. Each individual approached the abrogation or expansion of the corporate system and series of *états* differently, but they all agreed that the general direction taken by their society was dangerous. Embracing luxury confounded ranks, led to depopulation, and raised the empire of women. Significantly, opponents of luxury pointed to changes in the human body as the essential space to observe the devastation intrinsic to a burgeoning commercial society. The body harbored the capacity for physical and moral sensibility; the latter often termed “sentiment” was, according to Henri Fouquet, the first consequential movement elicited by a physical sensation.<sup>505</sup> Whether or not moral sensibility constituted a divine impulse toward sociability or the interior sentiment or an inclination of human nature toward *amitié*, it was clearly inseparable from the corporeal *organisation*. People

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<sup>504</sup>For “material selfhood,” see Seigel, *The Idea of the Self*, 5-6.

<sup>505</sup>Fouquet, “Sensibilité, Sentiment,” in *Encyclopédie*, vol. 15 (1765), 38.



who abandoned themselves to luxury severed this connection. The habitual pursuit of superfluous, agreeable sensations would eat away at the *organisation*, sacrificing the constitution and vigor of organs and numbing physical and moral sensibility.<sup>506</sup>

Critics of luxury decried supporters of *doux commerce*, especially Mandeville, Melon, and Hume, who wrongly believed that men could be capable of great things by the mechanism of a “violently shaken temperament.”<sup>507</sup> Luxury made humans neither more sociable, loyal, dignified, reverent, nor inspired to reciprocally please each other. *Les mœurs* were neither softened nor polished, according to Lottin, and André-François Boureau-Deslandes claimed that luxury consisted of trifles (*bagatelles*), ostentation, and foolishness, the pursuit of which corrupted *mœurs*. In a witty turn of phrase, he defined luxury as “a series of *bagatelles* metamorphosed into things of consequence.”<sup>508</sup> Opponents of luxury consistently used language that connoted metamorphosis, artifice, and deception to describe eighteenth-century French society. Instead of calming the passions, luxury heightened them. The grand cities were a theatre, a stage, a spectacle on which subjects displayed themselves as costumed actors in front of an audience. Women in particular imagined eclipsing their rivals by their elegance and *éclat*, competing for the most successful form of dissimulation.<sup>509</sup> Luxury had made of society a masquerade, “where nobody wears outfits that conform to their character but that conform to

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<sup>506</sup>Pluquet, *TPPL*, II, 358.

<sup>507</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L'Andrométrie*, 109.

<sup>508</sup>Lottin, *Discours contre le luxe*, 30-1; Boureau-Deslandes, *Lettre sur le luxe* (1745), 33. Boureau-Deslandes separated luxury into that of the perfection of the arts and that of *mœurs*. I referenced the latter above. He also took on Melon's definition of luxury. In contrast to the rigorous moralists that Melon identified as obstinate opponents of luxury, Boureau-Deslandes described himself as a friend of the public good and excised certain passages from Melon's *Essai politique sur le commerce* to criticize.

<sup>509</sup>Butini, *Traité du luxe*, 35, 240.

their fantasies, and under which one is least likely to be recognized.”<sup>510</sup> Rousseau’s descriptions of *amour propre* and artifice found able promoters in Boudier de Villemaire and Butini. The new social spaces opened up by a fledgling society combined with luxury to create an endless loop: they unleashed the passions, provided an increasingly novel set of physical objects in which to decorate and disguise oneself, then habituated the body to both.

The luxury debates occurred at a time when new social practices and a vibrant material culture existed alongside, and contributed to, an anxiety over the foundations of society, which elicited a willingness to explore new options for the social order. In particular, opponents of luxury focused on the destabilizing effects that luxury and the growth of commerce would have on society, and they articulated their fears through sensationalist physiology. Critics of luxury utilized scientific concepts at the same time as physiologists and physicians rigorously applied their own physiological theories to society. If society was a solution to some of the pressing political and cultural problems of the period, and sociability and sensibility were the fundamental ways to reach a new understanding of society, then the ability to feel, to have a properly functioning sensory network, was indispensable for a durable society.<sup>511</sup> We see the corporeal critique of luxury and commitment to the importance of the human body in society in a most unlikely place: the political economy promoted by the Physiocrats.

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<sup>510</sup>Boudier de Villemaire, *L’ami des femmes* (1758), 81.

<sup>511</sup>This sentence is a modification of Yair Mintzker’s: “If *société* was a solution to some of the pressing political and intellectual problems of the period (as Baker argued), the question of sociability—of how to form or reach that realm—was the fundamental way of solving it (Gordon).” Mintzker, “‘A Word Newly Introduced into Language’: The Appearance and Spread of ‘Social’ in French Enlightenment Thought, 1745-1764,” *History of European Ideas* 34 (2008): 504.

## **Chapter 7**

### **“*Cet état d’étourdissement continuel*”: (Dis)Embodying Society in Physiocracy<sup>512</sup>**

Throughout the 1760s, the Physiocrats built a complicated system of political economy that incorporated a new vision of society and the reproduction of wealth, new concepts of workers and productivity, new roles for taxation, commerce, and luxury, as well as a complete overhaul of the responsibilities of government; all of it was undergirded by the physical laws of nature.<sup>513</sup> They challenged the financial institutions of France, including the court culture of Versailles, and were met with both loyal support and vehement criticism. My focus in this chapter will be the documents written by the fountainhead of Physiocracy, François Quesnay (1694-1774), and his most devoted pupil, the Marquis de Mirabeau (1715-89), whose *L’ami des hommes* helped to shape contemporary arguments against luxury and commerce. Quesnay and Mirabeau crafted the tenets of Physiocracy during the Seven Years’ War, which confirmed their fears that the entire French economic and colonial system was disorganized and “unnatural.”<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>512</sup>“This continual state of dizziness.” Quote from Marquis de Mirabeau and François Quesnay, *Traité de la monarchie* (1757-1759), ed. Gino Longhitano (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 30. The footnotes for this chapter are purposefully extensive at times. When possible, I try to provide multiple citations for physiocratic texts in order to show the repetition and insistence of their ideas.

<sup>513</sup>Because Physiocracy “covered a vast array of knowledge and conferred scientific status on that knowledge,” Philippe Steiner has supported Pierre Samuel Du Pont de Nemours’ 1768 contention that Physiocracy was indeed a “New Science.” Steiner, *La “Science Nouvelle” de l’Économie Politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 5-28.

<sup>514</sup>Pernille Røge, “A Natural Order of Empire: The Physiocratic Vision of Colonial France after the Seven Years’ War,” in *The Political Economy of Empire in the Early Modern World*, eds. Sophus A. Reinert and Pernille Røge, 32-52 (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and Røge, “The Question of Slavery in Physiocratic Political Economy,” in *Governare il mondo: l’economia come linguaggio della politica nell’Europa del Settecento*, ed. Maneula Albertone, 149-169 (Feltrinelli, 2009).

Together, their critique of commercial modernity produced an economic school of thought predicated on the need to avoid luxury and its degenerative, physical effects.

Chapter seven is divided into four sections. After a brief explanation of physiocratic political economy in the first section, I treat Mirabeau's pre-Quesnay work, which contained a robust vision of the body that continued throughout his relationship to Quesnay and the Physiocrats. In his bestseller *L'ami des hommes*, Mirabeau fitted a corporeal critique of luxury into a wide-ranging political economy and plan for society. Like the critics of luxury examined in chapter six, Mirabeau argued that the fundamental effects of cupidity could be found in the weakened body, which rendered his fellow subjects insensible to sociability. The third section takes up Quesnay and Mirabeau's first collaborative effort that came in the unpublished manuscript "Traité de la monarchie." It is at the origins of Physiocracy where we see Quesnay and Mirabeau working out their ideas; they were at their most critical of contemporary society. A critique of luxury and a desire to merge the "moral" with the "physical" helped bridge Mirabeau's conversion to Quesnay's political economy, making the transition to working with Quesnay virtually seamless in these aspects. Both shared a commitment to reading the negative effects of commerce in the human body, but here they extended their concern to the morality inherent in humans: an interior sentiment. An imperfect monarchy and a political culture of competition and greed bred individuals motivated only by physical satiation. The natural *organisation* suffered as a consequence, and the French would soon no longer be able to "feel" sociability.

Finally, the last section looks at a wider array of physiocratic texts. Further writings by Quesnay, Mirabeau, and newly-acquired acolytes reaffirmed the central role of the body in Physiocracy. The corporeal *organisation* was as inseparable from nature as the weather and

grounded the Physiocrats' conception of human nature, Quesnay's reading of the discipline of history, and physiocratic epistemology. If the French turned their bodies away from natural needs to the excessive and unessential, according to the Physiocrats, then society would inevitably deteriorate. While the *Tableau Économique* has often been the focus of historians and economists, in order to fully understand the Physiocrats we must read them within their broader cultural contexts.<sup>515</sup> Their works were in dialogue with Montesquieu, Condillac, and materialists like La Mettrie, who all addressed the social implications of human physiology.

Before Physiocracy, Quesnay practiced medicine full-time, and many historians have sought out the connections between his medical knowledge and political economy.<sup>516</sup> My argument hinges on the fact that there is more than a superficial layering of political economic principles over medical ones. Quesnay's understanding of the body and his theory of knowledge pervaded Physiocracy; although he and Mirabeau made strategic use of metaphors, their language expressed the physicality of corporeal knowledge. Furthermore, their concern for the

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<sup>515</sup>To this end, see the following works: Michael Kwass, *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation in Eighteenth-Century France: Liberté, Égalité, Fiscalité* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and "Consumption and the World of Ideas: Consumer Revolution and the Moral Economy of the Marquis de Mirabeau," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, vol. 37, no. 2 (Winter 2004), 187-213; Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Liana Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); and, the recent series of essays by Christine Théré and Loïc Charles in the journal *History of Political Economy*: "François Quesnay: A Rural Socrates in Versailles?" 39 (2007, supplement): 195-214; "The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay and the Making of Physiocracy," 40:1 (2008): 1-42; "From Versailles to Paris: The Creative Communities of the Physiocratic Movement," 43:1 (2011): 25-58; and "The Economist as Surveyor: Physiocracy in the Fields," 44 (2012, supplement): 71-89.

<sup>516</sup>Margaret Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 45-50; Loïc Charles, "The *Tableau économique* as Rational Recreation," *History of Political Economy* 36:3 (2004): 445-474, and his "The Visual History of the *Tableau Économique*," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 10: 4 (2003): 527-550; Peter Groenewegen, "From prominent physician to major economist: some reflections on Quesnay's switch to economics in the 1750s," in *Physicians and Political Economy: Six Studies of the work of doctor-economists*, ed. Peter Groenewegen, 93-115 (London and New York: Routledge, 2001); H. Spencer Banzhaf, "Productive Nature and the Net Product: Quesnay's Economies Animal and Political," *History of Political Economy* 32:3 (2000): 517-551; Paul P. Christensen, "Fire, Motion, and Productivity: The Proto-Energetics of Nature and Economy in François Quesnay," in *Natural Images in Economic Thought*, ed. Philip Mirowski, 249-288 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

role of the body in generating knowledge did not dissipate as the tide of Physiocracy slowly ebbed by the early 1770s.<sup>517</sup> Bodies experienced two-way traffic with the outside world; they projected desires and actions outwardly and in return were affected by other bodies and a mélange of sensory data. The threats of commerce, luxury, and court culture sapped France of its physical and economic strength by debasing the bodies of its inhabitants. To effect change through a comprehensive political economy, the Physiocrats sought to return the human body to its natural functions by reducing the corporeal pull toward luxury and the superfluous.

### *Physiocratic Political Economy*

Although the term “Physiocracy” was not created until 1767, the principles to which the Physiocrats subscribed were first articulated by Quesnay in his articles for the *Encyclopédie* in 1756-7 (“Fermiers” and “Grains” primarily).<sup>518</sup> In these articles, Quesnay put forward not only a set of ideas, but also a language with which to talk about them. Beginning with the name Physiocracy itself, meaning “rule of nature,” terms such as net product, *impôt unique*, sterility of trade/industry, exclusive productivity of agriculture, legal despotism, the “gift of nature,” *laissez-faire* (originally enunciated by Vincent de Gournay), and the *Tableau Économique* came to represent specific devices in the complex machinery of physiocratic political economy. The Physiocrats took seriously both terms in the category “political economy” by insisting “on the governmental dimensions of economic science.”<sup>519</sup> Ultimately, though, government and politics

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<sup>517</sup>See Charles, “The *Tableau économique* as Rational Recreation,” 452-4, for a brief explanation of Quesnay’s final work *Recherches philosophiques sur l’évidence des vérités géométriques* (1774).

<sup>518</sup>Before 1767, and after, supporters of Quesnay’s political economy were known as *économistes*. “Physiocracy” first appeared in Pierre-Samuel Du Pont de Nemours’ collection of Quesnay’s writings, *La Physiocratie ou constitution essentielle du gouvernement le plus avantageux au genre humain*.

<sup>519</sup>Arnault Skornicki, *L’économiste, la cour et la patrie: L’économie politique dans la France des Lumières* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), 150. See also, Steiner, *La “Science Nouvelle” de l’économie politique*, 17-9, 117-8. According to Ronald Meek, “Economics was for Quesnay, as it was later to be for Smith and Marx, an integral part of a more general system of sociology in which the structure and development of human society were conceived to

sprang from Quesnay's view of nature and his quest to clarify the true source of a nation's wealth and how it was (re)produced. For Quesnay, "Economic events are not mere accidents; there are general laws which link together and regulate the actions of men."<sup>520</sup>

The ability to measure, predict, and regulate the economy and actions of men rested upon an assumption about "nature": "In nature everything is intertwined, everything runs through circular courses which are interlaced with one another."<sup>521</sup> There is a natural order to the earth that directs all that which rests upon it: economics, politics, and social relations. The physical and the moral are inherently connected; while the latter is a product of the former, both constitute the immutable and indisputable natural law. As Quesnay wrote in the essay "Natural Right," "I am here taking physical law to mean the regular course of all physical events in the natural order which is self-evidently the most advantageous to the human race. I am here taking moral law to mean the rule of all human action in the moral order conforming to the physical order which is self-evidently the most advantageous to the human race."<sup>522</sup> The Physiocrats based their critique of eighteenth-century France on the disruption of the natural order and the artificiality of economic and social conditions displayed at Versailles.

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be essentially dependent upon the mode of subsistence." Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy: Essays and Translations* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962, see especially his five interpretive essays, 265-398), 376. See also, Silvana Tomaselli, "Political Economy: The Desire and Needs of Present and Future Generations," in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, eds. Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, 292-322 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>520</sup>Gianni Vaggi, *The Economics of François Quesnay* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 17.

<sup>521</sup>Quesnay, "Dialogue on the Work of Artisans," in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 204.

<sup>522</sup>Quesnay, "Natural Right," in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 53. See also *Despotisme de la Chine* in Auguste Oncken, ed. and intro., *Oeuvres économiques et philosophiques de F. Quesnay* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969 [originally published 1888]), 637. There is an English translation found in Lewis A. Maverick, *China, A Model for Europe* (San Antonio, TX: Paul Anderson, 1946). For the "physical-moral" dyad in the context of the "science of man," see Elizabeth A. Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and philosophical medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Sergio Moravia, "'Moral' – 'Physique': genesis and evolution of a 'rapport'," in *Enlightenment Studies in honour of Lester K. Born*, eds. Alfred J. Bingham and Virgil W. Topazio, 163-174 (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, 1979).

According to the Physiocrats, agriculture is the only sector that provides a financial surplus (output trumps input in both physical and value terms). As Du Pont de Nemours stated, in *De l'exportation et de l'importation des grains* (1764), "agriculture is the only human labor with which the Sky cooperates without ceasing and which is a perpetual creation. We strictly owe the net product to the soil, to Providence, and to the beneficences of the Creator, to his rain that beats down and changes it to gold."<sup>523</sup> The net product (*produit net*) is the primary source of a state's wealth because it is the only source a state should tax.<sup>524</sup> The net product derived from the rents owed landowners, but it was also considered a free gift of nature, not an extra cost, because nature renews and helps cultivate the earth through rain, sun, and the labor of animals.<sup>525</sup> Quesnay did not deny the profitability of manufacture and trade, but he argued that these sources of wealth were uncertain, ephemeral, and not part of the natural order. In his article "Grains" for the *Encyclopédie*, Quesnay lamented this emphasis in the French economy:

For a long time the production of luxuries has seduced the nation...we are engaged in an industry that is extraneous to us; and we have employed there a multitude of men at a time when the kingdom became depopulated and the countryside abandoned...agriculture, the most fruitful and noble part of our commerce, the source of our kingdom's revenue, has not been considered as the primary foundation of our wealth.<sup>526</sup>

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<sup>523</sup>Quoted in Banzhaf, "Productive Nature and the Net Product," 519. See also Mirabeau (and Quesnay), *Théorie de l'impôt* (1760), 50-1, 251-2.

<sup>524</sup>The net product is the difference between the revenue of a farmer and the costs of production (*prix fondamental*). For an interpretation of the single tax on land rent, see Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 392-5.

<sup>525</sup>Quesnay first suggested this in his article "Impôt" (1757) not published in the *Encyclopédie* but later published in Du Pont de Nemours' *Physiocratie* (1767). See also Banzhaf, "Productive Nature and the Net Product," 518, and Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of Enlightenment*, 114. According to Dan Edelstein, the Physiocrats' commitment to the "natural and essential order" provided the framework for Revolutionaries' articulation of "natural republicanism" and justification for the Terror. *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 14, 101-11.

<sup>526</sup>*The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*, trans. Stephen J. Gendzier (Ann Arbor: MPublishing, University of Michigan Library, 2009). <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0001.308> (accessed January 24, 2013). Originally published as "Grains [abridged]," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 7:812-831 (Paris, 1757). See also *Philosophie rurale* (chp. 8, "Rapports des Dépenses avec la Population"), parts of which are translated by Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 57-65.



How, then, to turn the “free gift of nature” into wealth? By what mechanisms can a state ensure the wealth and happiness of its inhabitants? The first act was to return agriculture to its rightful, natural position in the French economy. To facilitate this action, one of the fundamental tenets of Physiocracy was the liberalization of the grain trade: open markets, competition, and an abolition of taxes, tolls, tariffs, and duties. They demanded lifting all constraints on domestic and international trade in the hopes of achieving the *bon prix*. Moreover, the Physiocrats opposed all privileges doled out to elites, guilds, and other corporate entities and argued for a single tax placed on the net product. The *impôt unique*, proposed most thoroughly in Mirabeau and Quesnay’s *Théorie de l’impôt* (1760), would free farmers from a variety of prohibitive taxes—*corvée*, *capitation*, *taille*, *dixième*, *vingtième*, *gabelle*—which would then allow both farmers and landlords (*propriétaires*) to reinvest in agriculture. The key to physiocratic political economy was circulation, a pattern of consumption and expenditure illustrated most famously by the *Tableau Économique*. For France to become a financially successful country, the landlords must reinvest in the land and domestic manufacturing, rather than foreign luxury goods, and farmers should reinvest in the tools and equipment necessary for agricultural production. Prosperity would be secured through the constant circulation of money, rather than the hoarding of aristocrats or the mercantilist practices of the Crown. Elite property holders who spent their time in Paris would be more likely to return to their land if the tax system was overhauled and if France recommitted itself to agriculture.<sup>527</sup> Moreover, the Physiocrats advocated a concerted

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<sup>527</sup>John Shovlin argued that this political economic plan would appeal as much to the “middling” or “provincial” nobles as to those of Paris and Versailles. See his *The Political Economy of Virtue: Luxury, Patriotism, and the Origins of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 67-68. Jessica Riskin labels a similar group “reform-minded agricultural entrepreneurs” (*Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 110). It is worth noting too that Quesnay and Mirabeau—like Montesquieu and chevalier d’Arcq, though for different reasons—fundamentally opposed the nobility’s participation in commerce in the *noblesse commerçante* debate of the 1750s. See Longhitano’s introduction to *Traité de la monarchie*, “La monarchie française entre société d’ordres et marché: Mirabeau, Quesnay et le *Traité de la monarchie* (1757-1759),” vii-xvii, and Shovlin, “Political Economy and the

state effort to repair the infrastructure of France, which would make the transportation of goods more efficient, and to educate the people in the laws of natural order.<sup>528</sup>

All of these changes to increase the prosperity of France demanded a new vision of production, consumption, and the shape of society based on the laws of nature. Quesnay began with the physical needs of humans; the foundation of society was thus subsistence and the property to obtain it.<sup>529</sup> The Physiocrats did not subscribe to a traditional social contract theory, nor were they convinced by the stadial theory of human civilization. Instead, the social roles of individuals were guided by their economic roles, and the state's primary function was the protection of property in land. Because "property in land is the basis of all society [and] sovereignty is physically founded only on this," the Physiocrats elevated property over privilege in the social order.<sup>530</sup> In order to accomplish the goal of refounding society on a natural footing, Quesnay argued that the "advantages of agriculture depend, therefore, to a considerable extent on

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French Nobility, 1750-1789," in *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: Reassessments and New Approaches*, ed. Jay M. Smith, 111-40 (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).

<sup>528</sup>In Henry Clark's words, "since the people are not educated in such economic science, they cannot really know their interests." Clark, *Compass of Society: Commerce and Absolutism in Old-Regime France* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 171. However, according to Quesnay, "In such a nation [that understands these supreme laws] an unwise law would not be put forward, for the government and the people would immediately perceive its absurdity." Quesnay, "Natural Right," 54-5.

<sup>529</sup>It is for this reason that many have labeled the Physiocrats "materialists," though in the Marxist not metaphysical mold. Quesnay began "Natural Right" with the statement "The natural right of man can be loosely defined as *the right which man has to things suitable for his use*" (43), and he explained further that "The foundation of society is the subsistence of men and the wealth necessary to provide the authority required to defend them" (55). See also *Philosophie rurale* (Amsterdam: Les Libraires Associés, 1763), chp. 8, page 156: "All the moral and physical parts which strengthen society derive from subsistence and are subordinated to it. All the networks of political order are dependent on the means of subsistence."

<sup>530</sup>Mirabeau (and Quesnay), *Philosophie rurale*, 9. The full title of *Philosophie rurale* provides a nice example of the Physiocrats' agenda: *Philosophie rurale, ou Économie Générale et Politique de l'Agriculture, Réduite à l'ordre immuable des Loix physiques et morales, qui assurent la prospérité des Empires*.

the bringing together of separate pieces of land into big farms to be highly developed by rich farmers.”<sup>531</sup>

The new social order would reflect this change. Landowners and farmers constituted the “productive class” of subjects who owned and worked the land and thus generated the net product from which taxes were extracted. Those in trade, manufacture, and commerce constituted the “sterile class.” The Physiocrats did not mean to imply uselessness because the sterile class was ultimately responsible for the transportation and selling of goods whose fundamental value stemmed from agricultural products. The sterile class, though, was responsible for the (over)production of luxury items to which the court at Versailles and nobles in general were addicted. Commerce, trade, and manufacturing were necessary facets of the economy, but they produced fictitious or artificial wealth; they reshaped “the products of the soil, without adding anything to their value.”<sup>532</sup> The Physiocrats set their sights also on financiers, *rentiers*, *négociants*, and recently-ennobled venal officeholders whose parasitical practices exploited the French people, drained the Crown of resources, held potential national wealth in ransom as public debt, and adulterated the title of nobility. Quesnay was largely responsible for transferring the term “class” from natural history and taxonomy to political economy, and he prescribed a social theory based on economic class rather than social status.<sup>533</sup> He clearly sought

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<sup>531</sup>“Grains,” *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert*, trans. Stephen J. Gendzier.

<sup>532</sup>Vaggi, *The Economics of François Quesnay*, 53-4. See also the “Analysis of the Arithmetical Formula of the Tableau Economique of the Distribution of Annual Expenditure in an Agriculture Nation,” in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 150-67, and Mirabeau (and Quesnay), *Théorie de l’impôt*, 135-6. In *Despotisme de la Chine* (1767), Quesnay wrote: “Foreign commerce is perhaps more harmful than favorable to the prosperity of nations who deliver themselves up to it, disregarding merchants who make grand fortunes from this commerce largely at the expense of their fellow citizens. The merchandise for which they travel so far is hardly more than expensive frivolities that support a damaging luxury.” Quesnay, *Despotisme de la Chine*, in Oncken, *Oeuvres économiques et philosophiques de F. Quesnay*, 605 (211; see also 655-6 [295-6]).

<sup>533</sup>Skornicki, *L’économiste, la cour et la patrie*, 187.

to direct landowners' eyes to the necessity of agriculture, which for many contemporaries and later commentators simply reinforced inequality and the social hierarchy of orders.<sup>534</sup>

Finally, the Physiocrats gave a natural explanation for the role of the sovereign to protect landed property and ensure the proper circulation of goods. Physiocrats invested political power in a term coined by Quesnay, "legal despotism."<sup>535</sup> The sovereign's primary duty was to rid the country of all obstacles preventing the natural order from flourishing; his power was simultaneously absolute and necessarily minimal. As Quesnay stated in *Despotisme de la Chine* (1767), "The prince must not ignore that his authority is instituted in order to make the people know and observe the laws of the natural order, and that it is as much in his interest as that of the nation itself that the clear observation of these laws forms the indissoluble link of society."<sup>536</sup> The sovereign must not intervene in the natural order by taxing improperly, hindering trade, or distributing exemptions of any sort. The sovereign would also require an advisory committee made up of magistrates knowledgeable in the laws of natural order ("custodians of the fundamental laws of the realm") and eventually a public attuned to the intricacies of the natural

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<sup>534</sup>Simon-Nicolas-Henri Linguet (and abbé Mably) was particularly acerbic on this point: "A ruthless heart dictates your doctrine...You mock human tragedy, telling the human race that it is a pity that it is experiencing hard times, but that, based on evidence, this is their lot; it claims that God has essentially decided that the few will have everything, and the remainder nothing...[You] embrace the loved one simply to cut his throat." Quoted in Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 143.

<sup>535</sup>Quesnay's choice of China as an exemplar of legal despotism was particularly odd since Montesquieu had recently denounced "Oriental Despotism" in his *L'Esprit des lois* (1748). Three alternative labels had been put forward. In *L'ami des hommes*, Mirabeau made use of a perhaps more digestible term, *roi pasteur*, abbé Baudeau put forward the term *monarchie économique* in his *Première introduction à la philosophie économique; ou, Analyse des états policés* (1767), and Quesnay himself used *autorité tutélaire* in *Despotisme de la Chine* (1767). See Clark, *Compass of Society*, 153-91, for an analysis of the terms, and Pernille Røge for an argument that "legal despotism" emerged against the backdrop of colonial political economy: Røge, "'Legal Despotism' and Enlightened Reform in the Îles du Vent: The Colonial Governments of Chevalier de Mirabeau and Mercier de la Rivière, 1754-1764," in *Enlightened Reform in Southern Europe and its Atlantic Colonies, c. 1750-1830*, Gabriel Paquette, ed., 167-182 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>536</sup>Quesnay, *Despotisme de la Chine*, 646. For physiocratic political and economic influence on early America, see Manuela Albertone, *National Identity and the Agrarian Republic: The Transatlantic Commerce of Ideas between America and France (1750-1830)* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014).

order.<sup>537</sup> Social roles, the structure of the economy, and political authority were therefore all products of the natural order. Morality itself was commitment to the physical laws of nature, and a society could thrive only by observing the “physical laws of the perpetual reproduction of the goods necessary for the subsistence, for the preservation, and for the comfort of men.”<sup>538</sup> Below this superstructure lay a critique of society and an interpretation of human behavior apprehended through the human body. The Marquis de Mirabeau provided the most eloquent rendition in his well-known *L’ami des hommes*.

*Marquis de Mirabeau, L’ami des hommes (1756-1758)*<sup>539</sup>

The debate over luxury, which captivated French culture at mid-century, was not merely a parenthetical subject to the Marquis de Mirabeau. In fact, Mirabeau refuted the supposed virtues of commerce and luxury with the same passion and fecundity as Rousseau. In his 1763 text *Philosophie rurale*, written with Quesnay, Mirabeau noted: “One must not be surprised that in a work of this sort, luxury recurs often in our discussions.” Luxury recurred often because the trade in luxury goods connected a variety of themes: morality, the social order, the duties of

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<sup>537</sup>“Custodians...” comes from Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), 49. Beginning with Quesnay and Mirabeau, there was always a division between supporters of a more “muscular version” of legal despotism and supporters of a set of representative institutions (provincial assemblies) consisting of landowners, which would unite interest and loyalty in a new fiscal and political relationship. In fact, the need for provincial assemblies or estates, and the centrality of the nobility in them, was at the heart of Mirabeau’s pre-physiocratic work *Mémoire concernant l’utilité des Etats provinciaux* (1750, republished in *L’ami des hommes*, 1758). For provincial assemblies, see Vardi, *The Physiocrats*, chp. 5 (“muscular version” comes from page 149); T.J. Hochstrasser, “Physiocracy and the politics of laissez-faire,” in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Political Thought*, eds. Mark Goldie and Robert Wokler, 419-442 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 420-1, 434; Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 238-41; Stephen Miller, “Provincial Assemblies, Fiscal Reform, and the Language of Politics in the 1770s and 1780s,” *French Historical Studies*, vol. 35, n. 3 (Summer 2012): 441-75.

<sup>538</sup>Quesnay, *Despotisme de la Chine*, 642.

<sup>539</sup>I will provide parenthetical citations for *L’ami des hommes*. Although I used a two-volume edition, I will only cite from the first volume. Therefore, I will leave out the volume number, and the citations will be ordered by “Part” in Roman numerals, “chapter” in Roman numerals, and page number in Arabic numerals. Victor de Riquetti, marquis de Mirabeau, *L’Ami des hommes ou traité de la population*, 2 vols. (Darmstadt: Scientia Verlag Aalen, 1970; reprint of Avignon edition of 1756–8).

princes and kings, the wealth of a nation, commerce, material culture, and the human body. From his mid-century bestseller, *L'ami des hommes*, to his final work thirty years later, *Entretiens d'un jeune prince avec son gouverneur*, Mirabeau criticized the trade in and consumption of luxury goods. For him, the economic health of France was measured as much in bodies as profits. His critique centered on what he perceived to be the harmful corporeal effects stemming from an addiction to luxury goods—an addiction that was destructive to individual bodies and thus society writ large.

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*L'ami des hommes* brought Mirabeau instant fame and a moniker he kept for the rest of his life.<sup>540</sup> After midcentury, Mirabeau's commentary of the commercial nobility debate, the moral underpinnings of an agricultural society, and the pernicious effects of commerce and luxury were read more than any other text in the glutted field of political economy. His weighty tome went through twenty editions by 1760 and perhaps twice that by the end of the century. From 1750-1780, more individuals owned a copy of *L'ami des hommes* than Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*.<sup>541</sup> As mentioned in chapter six, Boudier de Villemaire titled his 1758 work *L'ami des femmes* to profit from Mirabeau's popularity, and Boutroux de Montcresson cited *L'ami des hommes* and the works of Rousseau more than any commentator on commerce and luxury in his *Le cultivateur à son fils, sur les inconvénients du luxe et les avantages de l'agriculture* (1770).<sup>542</sup> Both Mirabeau's arguments

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<sup>540</sup>Mirabeau used the initials "L.D.H" often in published and unpublished dialogues: Archives nationales (henceforth AN), M 778, n. 1<sup>4</sup>, "Dialogue entre l'intendant d'O. et L.D.H." and M 782, manuscript material for the published text *Les Économiques par. L.D.H.* (1769-71). He also wrote under "L.D.H" for his immense text *Lettres sur la législation, ou l'ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué* (1775) and *La science ou les droits et les devoirs de l'homme* (1774).

<sup>541</sup>Kwass, "Consumption and the World of Ideas," 188, and Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 2.

<sup>542</sup>Audrey Provost, *Le luxe, les Lumières, et la Révolution* (Paris: Champ Vallon, 2014), 55.

and his extensive corporeal language reached a wide audience and helped shape the corporeal critique of luxury generally, as we saw in chapter six, and particularly with Physiocracy.

Mirabeau's work was a nostalgic, yet anxious, nobleman's call for reform. *L'ami des hommes* was an unhoneed writer's rhetorical flourish and a fervent plea for the patriotic regeneration of France through a return to the land.<sup>543</sup> Mirabeau's argument was two-pronged. Agriculture provided the most reliable source of physical and moral wealth, but, in order to capitalize on the natural climatic and geographical advantages of France, the French needed more able-bodied workers. The land and the workers were the two pivots of society, and Mirabeau likened agriculture to "matter" and labor to "form" (I.VI.70-1; I.I.10). "The measure of subsistence is that of population," Mirabeau titled his second chapter.

Underneath Mirabeau's insistence on labor and agriculture ran a theory of human nature to which he returned often. Man, according to Mirabeau, was a particular kind of animal. Man was sociable rather than solitary, and, even though men inherently feel the advantage of numbering together, they simultaneously calculate personal gain.<sup>544</sup> Thus, Mirabeau positioned mankind as constantly pulled by sociability and cupidity. His contemporaries bent toward the latter, overtaken by avidity, pride, vice, opinion, *la mode*, and the pitfalls of consumption. To this mix, Mirabeau added an interpretation of the notion of commerce. Commerce was not

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<sup>543</sup>Mirabeau's impassioned style is well-known, and he apologized for it in his "Avertissement." As Kwass presented Mirabeau's view of consumption: "For the 'friend of man', the simplest act of over-consumption could constitute the most horrendous crime against humanity: owning too many carriage horses, for example, 'was tantamount to murder and homicide' because one nourished horses only at the expense of feeding men." ("Consumption and the World of Ideas," 193, also 208, n. 27). For other examples of his fevered, bombastic pitch, see Vardi, *The Physiocrats*, 48, 117-121; Jay M. Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 90-9; Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, chp. 4.

<sup>544</sup>Mirabeau builds from the position that man is a sociable animal in "The Friend of Women; or, Treatise on civilization" (1757-8) (AN, M 780, no. 32, folio 1).

simply the transportation and exchange of goods or activities of the market; for Mirabeau, it was akin to sociability: “Commerce is the useful and necessary connection of all sociable beings with each other. In this sense, the territory of commerce is moral as well as physical; all is commerce here below” (II.I.5). As soon as there were two men, Mirabeau insisted, there was the reciprocal commerce of services and utility. Both moral and physical goods were exchanged; physical goods consisted of “health, youth, strength, beauty, wealth, and honors (*dignités*),” and the more important moral goods consisted of “selflessness (*désintéressement*), honor, glory, generosity...probity, justice, fidelity...and all the sentiments that truly link society” (II.III.50). Through agriculture—the most admirable, profitable, and sociable of the arts (I.III.32-3)—the simplicity and selflessness of rustic mores (moral goods) would be restored and mankind would come to see the value of “commerce” and public utility. Mirabeau’s approval of agriculture, then, was as much cultural as economic. He wanted landowners to spend money on the land and subsistence, rather than on luxury goods and social performances, which would keep both families and the nation bound together and restore the noble aura of the Second Estate.<sup>545</sup>

Despite the often hopeful tones, *L’ami des hommes* forecasted doom because depopulation, the decline of agriculture, and the increase of luxury and consumption by a small number of subjects desiccated the physical roots of agriculture and the seeds of new citizens (I.II.12).<sup>546</sup> Mirabeau separated goods into the necessary, abundant, and superfluous, which corresponded to agriculture, commerce, and “treasures” respectively (I.I.7-8). France’s decline was precipitated by the inversion of this pyramid. Too many contemporaries prized the

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<sup>545</sup>In an unpublished manuscript, “Institutions des femmes” (written after the publication of *L’ami des hommes* but before 1768), Mirabeau casted domestic bonds as true society—the most welcoming and joyful place in which *les mœurs* and education were transmitted—against the bedlam characteristic of “society” (AN, M 780, n. 4, folio 7).

<sup>546</sup>See also, I.VII.119.



superfluous and sought riches in physical objects whose value was artificial, fashionable, and subject to whim. The king contributed to this decline by selling offices, handing out sinecures and pensions, and devaluing the traditional nobility by valuing rising financiers, *rentiers*, magistrates, and courtiers whose money bought them a spot in the Second Estate and an *entresol* in Versailles. According to Mirabeau, physical goods became the currency of exchange at the Bourbon court rather than moral goods (II.IV.53, 80). It was necessary for the king to set an example by returning to the traditional nobility its prestige and rewarding its merit, honor, and sacrifice. Emulation would spread from the king to the nobles and from the nobles to the laborers, which would restore sociability and suppress cupidity (II.IV.96; II.V.102). After all, “the power of the government is infinitely more extended in the moral than in the physical” (II.III.50), and “*les mœurs* have infinitely more influence on society than the laws” (II.III.56).<sup>547</sup>

Mirabeau’s vision of the social consequences of “mad spending” (*les dépenses folles*) and a *surplus de consommation* (I.VI.74-5) involved more than a critique of the prodigal habits of the eighteenth-century French elite; he addressed the larger question of the origins and maintenance of society. Mirabeau was extremely critical of what became known as “civilized society” or “civilization,” terms that were both used in the eighteenth century to celebrate the historical progress of European culture. Mirabeau, in fact, was the first to give “civilization” its modern, Western meaning in an unpublished work, but he used the term to denigrate the exact culture and narrative of progress celebrated by Voltaire, d’Alembert, and others.<sup>548</sup>

If I were to ask most people of what civilization consists, they would reply, the civilization of a people is a softening of its manners, an urbanity, politeness, and a

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<sup>547</sup>In *Théorie de l’impôt*, Mirabeau also wrote that *les mœurs* were the grandest treasure of a society (7, see also 169-70 for the need to regenerate virtues formerly pervasive).

<sup>548</sup>Mirabeau’s unpublished manuscript was titled, “The Friend of Women; or, Treatise on civilization” (1757-8). See Jean Starobinski, *Blessing in Disguise; or, the Morality of Evil*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 1-36.

spreading of knowledge so that the observation of decencies takes the place of laws of detail...Civilization has done nothing for society unless it gives it both the form and the content of virtue, and the corruption of humanity is born in the breast of societies softened by all the previously cited ingredients.<sup>549</sup>

Like the opponents of luxury treated in the previous chapter, Mirabeau argued that luxury blurred the social hierarchy and would eventually bankrupt the state as financiers, merchants, and courtiers competed for social notoriety by spending exorbitant funds on signs of distinction—symbolic, though not historical, markers of nobility—rather than reinvesting in the agricultural economy (II.IV.96).<sup>550</sup> Their *ardeur d’acquérir* (II.III.49) stemmed from cupidity and led them away from the moral goods of sociability. “The mirage of moneyed wealth had mesmerized the nation,” according to one historian, but Mirabeau’s language was even more pointed.<sup>551</sup> Luxury directly affected the body; it was a soporific—numbing the French to sleep—and an illusion, physically hypnotizing them (I.VII.110, 113, 119). Mirabeau positioned the corporeal between the very abstract dyad of cupidity/sociability. The attitudes and actions of his contemporaries debilitated their bodies, as they became obsessed with the material goods circulating through French society (*bagatelles, colifichets, parures*).

Mirabeau’s language registered his concern over the fate of the human body. References to the organic saturate his texts. In *L’ami des hommes*, Mirabeau invoked the fears of degeneration and the promise of regeneration of the body politic, metaphors that would become

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<sup>549</sup>AN, M 780, no. 32, folio 3, “Traité de la civilisation.” This sentiment is also expressed in Mirabeau’s “Commentary on Marquis d’Argenson’s *Considérations sur le gouvernement de France*” (AN, M 752, no. 6, folio 10). See Michael Sonenscher’s analysis and translation (with which I agree) in *Before the Deluge: Public Debt, Inequality, and the Intellectual Origins of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 219. See too “The Old Man’s Speech” in Diderot’s *Supplement to Bougainville’s Voyage* (1772): “We do not want to barter what you call our ignorance for your useless civilization...Do we deserve contempt, because we have not known how to develop superfluous wants?”

<sup>550</sup>Kwass, “Consumption and the World of Ideas,” and *Privilege and the Politics of Taxation*, 222-252. See also John Shovlin, “Political Economy and the French Nobility, 1750-1789,” 120-5.

<sup>551</sup>Smith, *Nobility Reimagined*, 98.

fundamental to revolutionaries' understandings of their actions at the end of the century.<sup>552</sup> He called upon the image of Paris as an engorged head drawing blood and life-giving fluids from the provinces (I.V.47-8), while constantly relating the importance of the circulation of physical goods, moral goods, and money (I.VIII.154; II.I.11; II.II.13-5): "From this disruption of circulation would necessarily come a state of suffocation and obstruction in the head, of languor in the limbs, which would lead to the numbness, weakness, and moral abuse that we cited above" (I.VII.113). Mirabeau described France as in a diseased condition (II.II.32) and diagnosed the various maladies which beset the French constitution, temperament (I.VII.121), disposition (II.VI.151), and organization (II.II.17, 32), all terms drawn from contemporary anatomy and physiology.<sup>553</sup> France needed multiple *palliatifs* (I.VII.113) but also general vivification (I.VIII.154; II.II.32).<sup>554</sup>

Mirabeau's use of metaphors to depict the organic nature of society and the state were not always consistent or necessarily coherent, but he constantly had recourse to this language. Mirabeau was fond of labeling the Prince the "soul" of society (I.VII.132) and the state (I.VIII.138); the Sovereign or government was the principle of life (II.III.38), and finances were the nerves of the state (I.VIII.155). He compared the state to a tree, connecting the soil, roots, sap, trunk, branches, and leaves to facets of society, the economy, and government that required appropriate cultivation (I.II.17; II.I.7-11; II.III.33). Properly circulating "blood" (*métaux/l'argent*) was the principle of universal nutrition (I.VIII.154), and it was the job of the

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<sup>552</sup>See Kwass, "Consumption and the World of Ideas;" Julia V. Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster: Dangerous Experiments in the Age of Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), chp. 5; Mona Ozouf, *L'homme régénéré: Essais sur la Révolution française* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1989).

<sup>553</sup>See "Conformation" in Didier-Pierre Chicaneau de Neuville, *Dictionnaire philosophique ou introduction à la connoissance de l'homme* (London: 1751), 65.

<sup>554</sup>See Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 147-151.

heart (sovereign/government/capital) to take in and redistribute alimentary fluid (*Justice*) to the extremities. Too many obstructions or disproportion would result in *l'engourdissement* or death (II.III.37-9). More importantly, Mirabeau often wrote of the need to “*animer les ressorts*” (II.II.15) or “*organis[er] les ressorts*” (I.VII.128), building from the mechanical understanding of the body; *les ressorts* were springs of life or that which generates life in a body.<sup>555</sup> This metaphorical coupling of the human body and the functions of government worked structurally, as organs, tissues, nerves, and fibers, and their political analogs, were physical springs poised for action in the body politic.

Mirabeau was engaged with medical and natural philosophical theories of the potential properties of the body and matter, the role of the passions in society, and the effects of sensory stimuli on bodies. He understood the weight of terms like *organisation* or *corps organisés*, which incorporated debates over the inherent movement or sensitivity of matter or the possibility that life itself was simply a product of a particular physiological organization.<sup>556</sup> For example, Mirabeau tacitly addressed the ideas of mid-century materialists.<sup>557</sup> Having established early on

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<sup>555</sup>See Erec R. Koch, *The Aesthetic Body: Passion, Sensibility, and Corporeality in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2008), and François Duchesneau, *La Physiologie des Lumières: Empirisme, Modèles, and Théories* (The Hague, Boston, and London: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 156-68.

<sup>556</sup>For physiology, see Charles T. Wolfe and Motoichi Terada, “The Animal Economy as Object and Program in Montpellier Vitalism,” *Science in Context* 21.4 (2008): 537-79, and Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et Développement du vitalisme en France, de la deuxième moitié du 18e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000). For heterodox thought and the blending of metaphysics with physiology, see Ann Thomson, *Bodies of Thought: Science, Religion, and the Soul in the Early Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Yves Charles Zarka, ed., *Matérialistes français du XVIIIe siècle: La Mettrie, Helvétius, d'Holbach* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006); Harmut Hecht, ed., *Julien Offray de La Mettrie: Ansichten und Einsichten* (Berlin: BWV, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2004); Kathleen Wellman, *La Mettrie: Medicine, Philosophy, and Enlightenment* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992). The three works of Jonathan Israel are of inestimable value but must be used cautiously as his overarching argument suffers from a number of setbacks (all published by Oxford University Press): *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (2001); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670-1752* (2006); *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790* (2011).

<sup>557</sup>Michael Sonenscher initially made the suggestion that Mirabeau referred to La Mettrie (*Before the Deluge*, 195).

that man was superior to animals because of his sociability and agricultural capacity, Mirabeau began the third chapter of part I by challenging some “madly presumptuous” men who recognize in humans only a superior body to animals (*une construction mieux organisée*) and who chafed at the thought of constraint on human passions. Mirabeau dismissed this “delirium” as hardly worth countering, but he built from this point to show that the material quest for happiness and pleasure was linked instinctively to, or overpowered by, the disquieting effects of hunger and inventive capacity to sate this need (I.III.24-5). The allusion was most likely to the work of Julien Offray de La Mettrie (1709-51), whose *Histoire naturelle de l’âme* (1745) and *L’Homme-machine* (1747) scandalously envisioned man as “only an animal or a construction made of springs [*ressorts*]...[and] consequently the soul is only a principle of motion or a tangible material part of the brain that we can, without fear of error, consider as a mainspring of the whole machine.”<sup>558</sup> La Mettrie also seems to be the likely target because Mirabeau used the phrases *âme intellectuelle* and *la machine* in the same passage (see also I.VIII.150, II.V.114). The latter clearly meant to recall La Mettrie’s *L’Homme machine*, and the former linked back to *Histoire naturelle de l’âme* in which La Mettrie appropriated the Scholastic division of the soul into the sensitive, vegetative, and rational/intellectual in order to ground all faculties of the body in matter.

While Mirabeau’s choice of words, analogies, metaphors, and reading material is important because it gives us insight into his own thought processes and his awareness of contemporary physiological language and theories of natural philosophy, it was not simply

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<sup>558</sup>La Mettrie, *Machine Man and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Ann Thomson (Cambridge: University Press, 1996), 31. La Mettrie republished an amended version of *Histoire naturelle de l’âme* under the title *Traité de l’âme* in 1750.

language that was at the heart of Mirabeau's analysis.<sup>559</sup> Mirabeau openly advocated the Stoic ideal of "living in conformance with nature," and he sought "to reawaken an old system of the mind...[by preaching] Stoicism" (II, 100).<sup>560</sup> In order for Mirabeau to sustain an argument for the centrality of the mind and a morality based on a natural or interior sentiment (II.III.50-1, II.IV.95-8), however, he chose to demonstrate the multiple ways in which the body, anchored in society and the world of sense data, could be the cause of such social, political, and moral distress.<sup>561</sup>

Mirabeau vehemently rejected the arguments of Hume and Melon, whom he had identified as the most forceful advocates of luxury and commerce. In so doing, he diagnosed French bodies with nervous disorders.<sup>562</sup> Melon's *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734) and a translation of Hume's *Political Discourses* (1754) both endorsed the trade in luxury goods as

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<sup>559</sup>For work on the interaction of the life sciences and political economy, see Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*; Schabas and Neil de Marchi, eds., *Oeconomies in the Age of Newton* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Catherine Packham, "The Physiology of Political Economy: Vitalism and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 63, No. 3 (July 2002): 465-481.

<sup>560</sup>Mark Hulliung has argued that "[n]o philosophical figure fares worse in the writings of the philosophes than the Stoic, no philosophy comes under attack more often than Stoicism. It was the strategy of the encyclopedists to expose the Stoic ideal as impossible, inhuman, and as less the vision of a wise man than the fool." Hulliung, *The Autocritique of Enlightenment: Rousseau and the Philosophes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 88.

<sup>561</sup>For epistemological constructions and moral applications of the *sentiment intérieur* and *sens intime*, two different faculties, see Jeffrey D. Burson, *The Rise and Fall of the Theological Enlightenment: Jean-Martin de Prades and Ideological Polarization in Eighteenth-Century France* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 65, argued that the "Marquis de Mirabeau's recourse to sentiment retained its seventeenth-century religious and aesthetic dimensions." In this vein, some of Mirabeau's turns of phrase, showing that one's character depends on sensibility: "Sentiment is like money; one can only enjoy it if one spends it;" "Sensibility opens the mind and the appetites of the soul." (AN, M 780, no. 4, "Institutions des femmes" folio 2, 3). Mirabeau also identified a god-given instinct to know "the good," and it was "civilization" that confused being "good" with being "civilized." "The Friend of Women; or, Treatise on civilization," (AN, M 780, no. 32, folio 5).

<sup>562</sup>Kwass has put forward a similar understanding of Mirabeau as a clinical diagnostician. Kwass, "Consumption and the World of Ideas," 195.

commercially, socially, and morally advantageous.<sup>563</sup> They were immensely influential in France, so much so that Mirabeau, respectfully, dared to “shake these trophies” (II.V.100). More importantly, Mirabeau identified a pervasive cultural ailment attached to a lifestyle of luxury, “the vapors and maladies of the nerves” (II.V.100). Maladies of the nerves were the result of simultaneous inaction and an “excessive manifestation” of sensibility in which the body was overwhelmed by sensory data (*éblouir, étourdir, accabler, frapper*).<sup>564</sup> Mirabeau’s assertion gained medical support in 1768 when the Swiss doctor Samuel-Auguste-André-David Tissot claimed that “maladies of the nerves are a lot more frequent and varied than they were sixty years ago.” For Tissot, this was due to an increase in reading (inactivity) and luxury, “harmful passions that destroy health and produce all sorts of nervous disorders.”<sup>565</sup> The negative effects of luxury were not only that bodies were “dazzled” to the point of illness, but that the French also felt compelled by the intensifying process of consumption and display to repeat their behavior (II.IV.85).

Mirabeau continued on to identify two “children” spawned by luxury: *la mollesse* and *le désordre* (II.V.102). By the latter, Mirabeau meant the mad spending discussed above (*la*

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<sup>563</sup>For the reception of Hume’s *Political Discourses* in France, see John Shovlin, “Hume’s Political Discourses and the French Luxury Debate,” in *David Hume’s Political Economy*, eds. Carl Wennerlind and Margaret Schabas, 203–222 (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>564</sup>Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10.

<sup>565</sup>S-A-A-D Tissot, *De la santé des gens de lettres* (Lausanne: Fran Grasset et Comp., 1768), 182–86. Tissot was only the most famous *médecin-philosophe* to connect nervous maladies to luxury and the insalubrious conditions of urban environments (primarily Paris). Vila locates the debate on vapors in medical discourse from 1756–1789 and finds it to be intimately bound to a critique of luxurious living. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology*, chp. 7. For an insightful analysis of one eighteenth-century *salonnière*’s daily concerns over her own body, including the vapors, see Suzanne Cornand, “Le corps exhibé: les propos sur la santé dans la correspondance de Mme. de Graffigny,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, v. 362 (1998): 93–107, and Robert Weston, *Medical Consulting by Letter in France, 1655–1789* (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2013). For the English context, see Roy Porter, “Consumption: Disease of the Consumer Society?” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, eds. John Brewer and Roy Porter, 58–81 (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

*dépense folle*), and with regard to the former Mirabeau extended the tradition voiced by Fénelon and Rousseau of considering bodies soft, flabby, limp, and effeminate when living luxuriously. *La mollesse* provided a larger conceptual underpinning for nervous maladies. Women were thought to be more susceptible to the vapors, and the cultural valuation of luxury combined with the increasing “education” of the youth around women (II.V.115) meant subtly that the French were becoming corporeally weak *and* effeminized.<sup>566</sup> Mirabeau responded to a question posed by Melon—“In what sense can one say that luxury softens [or weakens, *amollit*] a nation?”—by revealing his conception of the human body: the singular material part of us is the body, while the intellectual part is divided into the heart, the soul, and the mind (II.V.104).<sup>567</sup> These four parts make up a complete human, and luxury works through all four components of individuals in order to weaken a nation. For Mirabeau, then, luxury engendered *la mollesse* because it “enervates the body, debases the heart by hardening it, collapses the soul by carrying its ambition toward base objects, and weakens the mind through hope, fear, and avidity” (II.V.104). Mirabeau clearly valued the immaterial side of man more than the material, but he also found the degeneration of the body to be an immense obstacle to achieving happiness, virtue, and a reformed social order. Mirabeau claimed that “les hommes réfléchis” who sought the effects of luxury on “la masse physique” mistook what was clearly a “dérangement dans les mœurs” (II.V.106); yet, he spent more time discussing the body than the other components combined.

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<sup>566</sup>In the third part of *L’ami des hommes*, Mirabeau would remark that, in Liana Vardi’s words, “Mankind had been at its strongest, most vigorous, and most spiritual at the dawn of civilization,” so modern culture needed to “recover its potency by abandoning its feminine affectations.” Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 109 (see also pgs. 224-227 for other gendered elements in Physiocracy).

<sup>567</sup>He referred to these same four components in an hypothetical conversation with an hypothetical despot in “Traité de la monarchie,” 28. See also Mirabeau (and Quesnay), *Théorie de l’impôt*, 17. Melon posed this question in his chapter on luxury in *Essai politique sur le commerce*.



Like Rousseau, Mirabeau lauded the physique of ancient athletes, the forceful knights of the medieval era, and even the hard-working butchers, blacksmiths, tailors, and tapestry makers of his own day, but he ridiculed the overconsumption and luxurious living that turned the elite into "pygmies," "demi-hommes," or "dried-up, malnourished plants" (II.V.115).<sup>568</sup> In the past, men and women would pair luxury with exercise, sports, horse riding, and warfare, a more active, vigorous lifestyle overall. Exercise kept the body in shape and ensured proper circulation. By the mid-eighteenth century, Mirabeau observed that men eschewed sport to stretch out on lounge chairs and read pamphlets, more concerned with the propriety of their wigs than a respectable wager on the tennis court (II.V.115). No longer as robust and formidable as their ancestors, the French worked and lived in tighter spaces; their cramped rooms could not house the great sword of Balafre (II.V.114), and Mirabeau himself found that he would pale physically and morally in comparison to his imposing great-great-grandfather (I.VIII.146). Mirabeau privileged souls, hearts, and minds, but bodies, although "united in destination" with souls, were "estimable in proportion as they serve to elevate the soul and the heart of citizens, scornful if they corrupt them" (I.VIII.142).<sup>569</sup> The body could only corrupt the spirit when the ardor for military and patriotic glory had been extinguished (II.IV.85).

Women too were susceptible to lassitude and bodily harm. In the past, in Mirabeau's assessment, they had been much stronger and had displayed more maleness (*plus mâle*) in their dispositions. One contemporary woman in particular could be found supine "in an armchair six inches from the ground, her posture almost necessarily indecent, she appears to return to bed, her

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<sup>568</sup>This paragraph expands on Kwass, "Consumption and the World of Ideas," 195-7. Kwass labeled *L'ami des hommes* a "social pathology of consumption" (192) and found Mirabeau to believe he was making a "clinical diagnosis" (195).

<sup>569</sup>In his notes for a course on economics, Mirabeau (and Quesnay) wrote: "Education is only the initiation of the youth to the exercises of the mind and the body that will become necessary to him in the course of his life" (AN, M 784, 7<sup>3</sup>, folio 1).

shoulders draw together, her chest sinks in, her entire body sags" (II.V.116). When women did leave the house for a multitude of social engagements, they were so preoccupied with their fashionable appearance and comportment/posture (*taille*) that they suffered through a rigid diet in order to heighten (and highlight) their breasts by constricting their kidneys and waist (II.V.116). Their lifestyle spread to their children, whose growth was stunted and vigor suppressed. Bodies thus resembled dolls (*poupées*), languid and enfeebled.

Mirabeau adopted the principles of sensationalist physiology to explain the physical effects of luxury. He argued that the glitter of trinkets and the ubiquitous stimuli of refinement, such as music, perfumes, and elegant dining, attacked the senses simultaneously, rendering them soft and incapable of transmitting sensory information (II.V.118).<sup>570</sup> Young girls, for example, whose parents surrounded themselves in the social and material trappings of luxury, were forced out into society before their bodies had time to firm up. By age eleven, they could no longer bear their bodies, and the torrent of sensory data left them scatterbrained and incapable of concentrating on a single thought or image.<sup>571</sup> Married off at age fifteen or sixteen, young girls were virtually abandoned to the perpetual movement of society: their bodies emaciated, their eyes dizzy, their aristocratic "blood" degenerates into an asthmatic state. Luxury and

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<sup>570</sup>The capacity for sense data to overwhelm the mind and body was an integral argument for those who found the blind to be more capable of intellectual labor and concentration. See Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 52-67, and Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>571</sup>Mirabeau was not necessarily wrong to fear the introduction of children to "luxury," as seen in the prospectus for a journal that never developed, *Le Courrier de la Nouveauté, Feuille hebdomadaire à l'usage des Dames* (1758): "Dans le troisième [édition], on donnera avis des nouveaux bijoux, de leurs usages et commodités, des noms et demeures des Marchands and des Ouvriers, des Peintres et des Graveurs, *des bijoux pour les enfans et des petits meubles à leur usage*" (Bibliothèque nationale de France, LC14-1; italics mine).

overconsumption, according to Mirabeau, conditioned women's bodies to mishandle sensory material and thus reduced them to mental and physical torpor (II.V.116).<sup>572</sup>

Mirabeau also combined the principles of sensationalist philosophy with that of physiology to underscore the importance of visual stimuli and marks of distinction. Similar to Boudier de Villemare, Sénac de Meilhan, and Duclos, Mirabeau developed a corporeal critique of *représentation*. Louis XIV had inaugurated an age of *éclat* in which the exterior of bodies and buildings symbolized power (II.IV.80-1).<sup>573</sup> The impressions made by sensible signs were too prompt and too durable, and people mistook “precious furniture, magnificent clothes, sumptuous houses, [and] *les équipages*” for power rather than simply wealth (II.V.106). Mirabeau lamented that “man is moreover shocked [*frappé*] only by the senses.” His contemporaries no longer interiorized painful mourning; “public inspection only has interest in the exterior” of clothing and ceremonies (II.IV.89). Mirabeau believed that virtue, morality, and the decency of *moeurs* were “felt” according to the moral valence of the term *sentir* (II.IV.95). He nevertheless knew the power of the senses—the physical valence of *sentir*—and wanted rites, ceremonies, clothing, and behavior to properly reflect the venerable hierarchy. The result, in sum, was “that *le faste, la magnificence* even, exterior ornaments, and the dignity of *moeurs*, far from being an

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<sup>572</sup>It was not just young girls who suffered the effects of society. Lecherous elderly men and fathers made fools of themselves in front of young girls at dinners and dances, reducing the natural sentiment of respect and admiration for authority and rendering their own ability to discipline their children baseless (II.V.117). Mirabeau demanded a little restraint in order to regain authority and *les moeurs*, rather than “these beautiful axioms of tolerance that one finds today in the mouth of everyone: that it is necessary to live for oneself, neither hampered by others nor hampering others” (II.V.118). In “Institutions des femmes,” Mirabeau claimed that *les femmes du grand monde* had a particular obstacle to attaining domestic, rural tranquility: “Their husbands are dedicated to an idle and troubled way of life [in the city],” neglecting knowledge of their revenues and debts and deliriously spending money on fantasies that ruin their *patrimoines* (AN, M 780, n. 4, folio 11).

<sup>573</sup>See Mirabeau’s “Commentary on Marquis d’Argenson’s *Considérations sur le gouvernement de France*” (AN, M 752, no. 6, folio 10). Mirabeau found Louis XIV to have a “noble soul, just mind, and *coeur droit*,” perhaps attributing the negative qualities of government and culture at Versailles to his body. Louis monopolized political authority and presided over a shift in *moeurs*: He gave the court over to “the passions of *les grands*...politeness replaced loyalty, *le faste* banished economy, ministers flattered [Louis] rather than his subjects.”

inconvenience in a powerful monarchy, of draining or harming it, are proof that everything is in its place provided that the luster and brilliance of expenditure is distributed relatively and can be found exactly where it is supposed to be” (II.IV.99). Mirabeau demanded that the French collectively strip “signs” of the fabricated values that habit and public consent had given them in order to achieve a society in which visual sensory data expressed the true symbols of a virtuous socio-political order (II.V.106).

Mirabeau clearly yearned for a “feudal” past in contrast to the artificiality of balls, operas, extravagant dinner parties, and markets of unrestrained commerce and consumption characteristic of urban social environments. He disdained the confusion of mistaking the bewigged and silk-clothed son of his blacksmith or saddler for a seigneur; in Paris, “everyone has become a *Monsieur*” (I.VIII.152). Mirabeau’s goal of improving the inherent, sociable human passions, while channeling the negative passions of cupidity toward public utility, went through the bodies that populated society. Mirabeau saw indecent interaction all around him. Bodies reveled in *volupté* (II.III.55), participated in “the monstrous fêtes of Saturnalia” (II.IV.80), and were carried away by an acquisitive ardor (II.III.49). If this was “civilization,” Mirabeau preferred the antique simplicity of a bygone era. Mirabeau may have defined “luxury” in the most basic way—“le luxe est l’abus des richesses” (II.V.101)—but the register in which he intoned “abuse” was wide-ranging. Mirabeau hoped to prevent the rapacity awakened by luxury (II.V.122) from becoming an irreversible part of *les mœurs*, and he imagined that the bodies of his contemporaries, whose faculties were dazed and numbed but not yet extinguished (II.III.50-1), could be revived. The reciprocal commerce so necessary to unite the physical to the moral demanded properly functioning bodies not enslaved to the stimulation of their senses.

*“Notre molle urbanité”:  
Mirabeau and Quesnay’s “Traité de la monarchie”*<sup>574</sup>

“We must not lose heart,” Quesnay wrote to Mirabeau, “for the appalling crisis will come, and it will be necessary to have recourse to medical knowledge.”<sup>575</sup> In the unpublished “Traité de la monarchie,” Mirabeau returned to his perspective on the body from *L’ami des hommes*, bolstered by his new mentor. Mirabeau met the medical doctor at Versailles in the summer of 1757, where Quesnay served as royal physician to the Marquise de Pompadour.<sup>576</sup> Quesnay had read *L’ami des hommes* and invited Mirabeau to discuss political economy. The Marquis was familiar with Versailles, meeting often with various ministers and relaying correspondence from his brother, the Chevalier de Mirabeau and governor of Guadeloupe from 1754-55. By 1759, after a series of meetings with Quesnay, Mirabeau became convinced that Quesnay’s political economy was sounder than *L’ami des hommes*. He was recruited to disseminate Quesnay’s ideas and became the leading publicist in Quesnay’s “writing workshop.”<sup>577</sup>

Mirabeau and Quesnay’s observations at Versailles, combined with the Chevalier’s cry that Versailles itself was the obstacle to good colonial governance, provided the impetus for

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<sup>574</sup>“Our soft urbanity.” Marquis de Mirabeau and François Quesnay, *Traité de la monarchie* (1757-1759), ed. Gino Longhitano (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1999), 67. As in the previous section, I will provide page numbers in parentheses to reduce the number of footnotes.

<sup>575</sup>“Letter from Quesnay to Mirabeau,” (late 1758 or early 1759) in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 108. Meek seems to accept, to a degree, the overlap between Quesnay’s medical knowledge and political economy. He explained his translation of “productif, stérile, renaître, reproduction, etc.”: “Fairly literal translations which preserved so far as possible the important biological analogy seemed in order here” (40).

<sup>576</sup>After her death in 1764, Quesnay would continue on as *médecin du roi*, despite a number of uncharacteristic instances of political meddling. Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 45.

<sup>577</sup>See Christine Théré and Loïc Charles, “The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay and the Making of Physiocracy.”

Mirabeau and Quesnay's first collaboration.<sup>578</sup> Mirabeau began writing the "Traité" at the suggestion of Quesnay to serve as an introduction to *Mémoire sur les états provinciaux*, a republication of his previous 1750 work attached to the end of *L'ami des hommes*. Their collaboration allows us to read the "Traité" through the eyes of both Mirabeau and Quesnay (As Mirabeau's name appeared on the title page as author, I will more often refer to him).

Physiological language is scattered throughout the "Traité," and since we have the extensive editorial remarks of Quesnay, we can chart his satisfaction or dissatisfaction with Mirabeau's text. Quesnay rarely criticized Mirabeau's corporeal terminology.<sup>579</sup> The "Traité" evinces a distinct fear that corporeal deterioration will render the French numb to the natural feelings of sociability or deaf to the voice of the interior sentiment.

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Mirabeau and Quesnay exchanged multiple drafts from 1758-60, but the "Traité" ultimately went unpublished. Mirabeau had been "converted" by Quesnay, but Physiocracy itself was still in its infant stage. The two disagreed on the ultimate foundation and purpose of the text. Mirabeau intended it to be a theoretical and historical work on the monarchy that would highlight the necessary socio-political role played by the nobility and religion, whereas Quesnay hoped to ground the monarchical political system on the necessity of natural law.<sup>580</sup> Mirabeau conceived the structure of the "Traité" to follow the origin, progress, perfection, and abuse/decadence of the monarchy, reflecting his analysis of eighteenth-century French

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<sup>578</sup>Røge, "'Legal Despotism' and Enlightened Reform in the Îles du Vent," 174.

<sup>579</sup>It is the case that the "Introduction," placed at the end of the text by Longhitano (170-90), represented Mirabeau's attempt to integrate more themes suggested by Quesnay.

<sup>580</sup>For information on the "Traité," see Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 164-6; Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 210-15; Longhitano, "La monarchie française entre société d'ordres et marché," xxxvii-lxx; Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, chp. 5.

corruption but perhaps too his view of the cyclical nature of human civilization.<sup>581</sup> Mirabeau viewed the monarchy as composite in nature: “the institutions, *les corps*, and privileges were ‘different parts’ of a ‘whole’ which constituted *le corps* of the French monarchy.”<sup>582</sup>

The necessary cooperation of the sovereign and his subordinate powers led Mirabeau and Quesnay to define monarchy as an “organized state” or “organized body” (181, *état/corps organisé*), in which power resided in a single person but was exercised by a multitude. Mirabeau and Quesnay borrowed the sweeping, yet peculiar, term *organisation* and its derivations from physiology and natural philosophy. *Organisation* was both a mechanical means of describing the arrangement of the organs and a more active way of linking that arrangement to larger vital properties in humans and animals. *Organisation*, as noted above, conjoined anatomical completeness to the property of life; it was often used by “radical” thinkers to attribute life to the physical arrangement of parts (organs, solids, liquids, etc.), rather than a soul or unobserved vital principle. According to an editorial remark by Quesnay, “the monarchy is an organized body that continually changes its head, which renders this form of government very formidable” (181, n. 409).<sup>583</sup> The sovereign was equally the soul and the motor of “this vast body,” which “is born from the union of forces that compose it and from their facility to move together at the order of the sovereign” (17). In a political *corps organisé*, the monarch ruled singularly but gained its

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<sup>581</sup>Kwass, “Consumption and the World of Ideas,” 196-7. Quesnay disagreed with this structure of the “*Traité*” as well. Physiocracy, under Quesnay’s tutelage, would not consider a cyclical view of history or governments: “It is too generally believed that governments of empires can take only temporary forms, that everything here below is subject to continual vicissitudes, that empires have their beginning, their progress, their decadence, and their end. This view prevails so generally that the irregularity of governments is attributed to the natural order” (*Despotisme de la Chine*, 303, trans. by Lewis Maverick).

<sup>582</sup>Longhitano, “La monarchie française entre société d’ordres et marché,” xiii. See Mirabeau’s own words in the *Traité*, 110-11, 136-7.

<sup>583</sup>In the second, extended edition of his *Essai physique sur l’oéconomie animale* (1747), Quesnay only addressed *organisation* as a mechanical placement of parts subject to the laws of nature and its role in generation (t. 3, 140-2).

power and vivification from the appropriate coordination of parts. Quesnay and Mirabeau's description of an *état organisé* bore a resemblance to Didier-Pierre Chicaneau de Neuville's definition of *organisation*: "organization is connected to the operations of the mind, which depend on the nature and arrangement of the organs."<sup>584</sup> In both conceptions, the head (*tête, esprit, âme*) depended on the body, conceived either anatomically or politically. In Mirabeau's view, "the monarch is the soul and the nation is the body...the soul can act regularly only in conformance with the constitution and the organization of the body. If the soul wants to force the body to execute violent or excessive movements, it finds resistance or exhaustion in the organs and falls itself into languor and passivity" (40). The concept of *organisation* provided an heuristic and a vocabulary through which Mirabeau and Quesnay could produce a theory of monarchy based on medical knowledge.<sup>585</sup> A well-organized state, like a well-organized body, required physical communication via "the senses," which activated moral sensibility, allowing a shared corporeal behavior between sovereign and subjects.

For Mirabeau and Quesnay, the "perfect" monarchy must be "bien organisé" (74). The "true constitution" (169) of a state could only be healthy when the prince/monarch, nobles, laws, agriculture, *la police*, and *les mœurs* were in proper order and were properly respected. Consistent with Mirabeau's reactionary politics, one could achieve perfect organization in a

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<sup>584</sup>Neuville, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, 65. Neuville's actual definition of *organisation* was "voyez conformation" in which he defined together *conformation, complexion, constitution, organisation, and tempérament*.

<sup>585</sup>For the multiple valences in which *organisation* was understood, see Karl Figlio, "The Metaphor of Organization: An Historiographical Perspective on the Bio-Medical Sciences of the Early Nineteenth Century," *History of Science* 14 (1976): 17-53; Joseph Schiller, *La notion d'organisation dans l'histoire de la biologie* (Paris: Maloine S. A. éditeur, 1978); Rey, *Naissance et Développement du vitalisme en France*; Mariana Saad, "Machine et sensibilité: la question de l'organisation de l'homme chez La Mettrie et Cabanis," in *Julien Offray de La Mettrie: Ansichten und Einsichten*, Harmut Hecht, ed. 141-52; Thomson, *Bodies of Thought* (Although not indexed, "organization" and its derivatives pervade her monograph). Also, see Quesnay's "Évidence" in the *Encyclopédie*, vol. 6, pg. 147 (§ 3) for his argument about the limited powers of *organisation* regarding matter and the human body.



decaying monarchy “by reestablishing the old order, which would spread vigor, strength, health, and authority” (168). There must be no straining of the nerves of the political body or derangement of the organs (115). In the process of reimagining the monarchy, Mirabeau and Quesnay reanimated the theory of the king’s two bodies by defining the sovereign as the physical embodiment of moral law, the keeper of the natural order (15, 4-7), but virtually eliminated his sacrality; the head changed but the natural laws and social order remained the same.<sup>586</sup> Mirabeau also made use of the early-modern curiosity for monsters, labeling that which was against nature as monstrous.<sup>587</sup> He described a paternal society that enslaved its “children” (read: “subjects”) as disorderly, unnatural, deformed, and monstrous; it would be a body politic “composed of fantastic and hideous members” (25). Finally, Mirabeau provided his own version of the traditional body-politic metaphor: “The body politic has, like the human body, its dimensions and proportions. Up to a certain point of growth, the body is not a man but a child; similarly, a state too restricted is not a monarchy but a principality...A child has the same organs as a man, and subsists equally by the same connections between these organs, but it is not with the same force; the same can be said of the state” (74).<sup>588</sup> The human body, like the body politic and the

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<sup>586</sup>See above the Physiocrats’ conception of natural law and role of the sovereign. This is absolutely not to say that Mirabeau reduced the role of religion in society or the creative hand of God. Religious worship, respect for heritage and hierarchy, and virtue were interlocking parts. Religion, “politically speaking, is the most sure brake that contains the people” (“Traité de la monarchie,” 83).

<sup>587</sup>See Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), chp. 5; David Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), chp. 8; Jay M Smith, *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), esp. chp. 2.

<sup>588</sup>A. N., M 778, 1<sup>3</sup>. This passage was entered into the second draft of chapter three (“Perfection de la monarchie”) of “Traité de la monarchie” and moved from the third paragraph to the second paragraph following a brief introduction. I would suggest that Mirabeau (and Quesnay) needed this paragraph-long metaphor up front in order to transition the reader with a familiar trope and build off the body-politic analogy for the remainder of the chapter. The language and imagery used here recurs often in this section. In fact, “Traité de la monarchie” teems with references to machines, cogwheels, forces, impulsions, springs, members, dismemberment, etc.

state, experiences growth, but too much or too little could be detrimental. Not only did the monarchy need to be *bien organisée* but so did individual bodies. What did bodies look like, and how did they behave, when they were deranged, disordered, and disorganized?

As in *L'ami des hommes*, Mirabeau found the moral, rather than physical, aspect of humans to be the most important to happiness and to be consistent with a socio-political order functioning according to natural laws. Morality meant listening to one's interior sentiment—a gift from the divinity—respecting *les mœurs*, duties, and hierarchy, and obeying the monarch; this applied to the monarch as well, whose example filtered down the social order. In a decaying monarchy, these features break down: “physical beings are substituted for moral beings” (153).<sup>589</sup> When the ferment that pushes morality to action goes too far, obedience turns to slavery, and corrupt authority “numbs talents, extinguishes all activity, ruins subjects, brings sterility, and disrupts *les états*” (103). When monarchy turns into despotism, “slavery smothers and suffocates the moral being, leaving only the physical being” (103). Mirabeau's theoretical and historical analysis of monarchies was but a thin veil for his view of eighteenth-century France.<sup>590</sup> He spoke heatedly of slavery, but his target was not the plight of ancient helots or “medieval” serfs. He was far more concerned with his contemporaries' enslavement to their passions and their bodies: an enslavement only bolstered by the Bourbon kings.

The corruption of bodies began at court. The degenerate monarch had come to expect certain etiquette at court, the symbolic value of which was inverted (102). Rites and ceremonies of flattery replaced those of duty and virtuous obedience. Courtiers wheedled the king for

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<sup>589</sup>This idea is repeated in *Théorie de l'impôt*, 27.

<sup>590</sup>Fox-Genovese argued too that Mirabeau (and Quesnay) were clearly critical of eighteenth-century French political culture, calling the “*Traité*” an “incredible political indiscretion” that suggested the monarchy already displayed “the first two symptoms of tyranny [the divorce between the interests of the prince and his people and the favoring of those who merely possess wealth].” Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 171 and 177.

financial privileges, they expected to be rewarded with sinecures and pensions, and some convinced him that commerce alone was domestically and internationally advantageous.<sup>591</sup> If allowed to continue, collusion between the king and various administrative organs would lead to despotism, and the king would no longer be the embodiment of moral laws (111 n.234; 172 n.383).

In Bourbon France, the king's body was the center of rituals of the state, and courtiers' bodies became planes upon which the king could exercise control (or courtiers could subtly resist).<sup>592</sup> Whether through demeanor, dress, or dance, courtiers' bodies bore the imprint of the king's power. Mirabeau expected this form of behavior, to a degree, but he did not find it necessary for courtiers to make a habit of going around "bent" (*courbé*) to demonstrate their reverence (95). Since the monarch is not God and does not have the power to peer into men's souls, the exterior must represent the interior. This ability could only be found in "men of merit" or the most distinguished nobles (95), who were able to control themselves in solemn respect. The necessity of "empressions extérieurs" could be exploited like the semiotic chaos unleashed by luxury. *Organisation* deteriorates in a monarchy when its leader is surrounded by the vapid gestures of courtiers, "the most base *valets*, the most vile wandering minstrels, and the most superficial buffoons (*les plus plats bouffons*)," who supplant the men of great merit (94). Mirabeau despised the servile flatterers whose tortured bodies were incapable of noble propriety.

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<sup>591</sup>The fear of flattery and dissimulation is evident in the first pages, and throughout, of Mirabeau and Quesnay's *Théorie de l'impôt* (1760; e.g. *Entretien* VI), which was written in the form of conversations between a sage and an aging king unaware of the fiscal and moral corruption of his kingdom.

<sup>592</sup>The works of Norbert Elias provide the groundwork for the study of bodies, behavior, and power at the court of Bourbon kings: *The Court Society* (1982) and *Power and Civility: The Civilizing Process* (1983), trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon Books). For support and criticism of Elias' conclusions, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), and Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

They used their bodies to absorb corporeal expectations and project the discipline and obsequiousness of the court. Mirabeau's particular disdain for courtiers is captured well in the biting satire of Baron d'Holbach:

It is by these heroic efforts [of subjugating nature], these combats, these victories that a clever courtier distinguishes himself and reaches this point of insensibility that leads to *crédit*, to the honors, and to the grandeur that are the objects of envy of his fellow courtiers and the objects of public admiration...From the tender age of childhood, he must learn to command his physiognomy for fear that it will betray the secret movements of his heart or reveal an involuntary bitterness to which an affront could give birth.<sup>593</sup>

For Mirabeau, it was not the body that conveyed social status, and when such profound dissimulation could be rewarded, physical bodies and bodies politic were disorganized.

Mirabeau continued the declamations he began in *L'ami des hommes* against luxury, over-consumption, commerce, cupidity, and other harmful aspects of "civilization" in the "Traité de la monarchie" (61, 136, 140-150). Advisors, financiers, and *les commerçants* peddled commerce and luxury—Mirabeau's primary culprit of disorder—to the king as the principle of wealth, while they simultaneously floated loans to the crown. Fantasies, vanity, and *le faste* possessed an empire over needs when the king confuses appearance for reality and, for example, allows cufflinks to become an affair of state (143). Expressions of true honor and "ancient gravity" are sacrificed to the pleasures his administrators (*sénateurs modernes*) derive from seeing their "clients" and their "gussied-up" (*pomponnées*) wives "display the fashions of the day" (136). This behavior mixed the physical and the moral, and it deranged the body to the point that "all [these] accidents...have altered the human constitution" (7). The "Traité de la

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<sup>593</sup>Baron d'Holbach, *Essai sur l'art de ramper à l'usage des courtisans* (Paris: Éditions Allia, 2010, orig. pub. posthumously in Baron Grimm et Denis Diderot, *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique, adressée à un souverain d'Allemagne*, 1790 or 1813), 14, 17. Although Mirabeau recommended sport and exercise to strengthen both body and mind in *L'ami des hommes*, he must have found Pierre Rameau's *The Dancing Master* (1725)—a remedy "for enhancing one's bodily position and consequently one's social position"—to be a disgraceful instance of the physical body triumphing over morality. See Susan Leigh Foster, "Dancing the Body Politic: Manner and Mimesis in Eighteenth-Century Ballet," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body*, 168.

monarchie,” then, reveals a parallel between commercial economies and “civilized bodies” that would nourish Physiocracy. Commercial economies were unnatural because their focus on the trade in and consumption of luxury goods generated artificial wealth, fabricated social privileges, and splintered society. “Civilized bodies” were unnatural because their “networks of frail desires and false pleasures...have enervated and nearly annihilated [their] sensations by dividing them” (7). Mirabeau analogized the kinds of bodies produced by “civilized society” to a “bird nourished from the nest in a cage, chirping at every instant of a new air, from which the last erases the trace of the one which preceded it, and who never acquired the luster of its true plumage or the sweetness of the song of which it was endowed by nature or the force to raise itself in the air” (7). Civilized bodies were either drained of sensitivity or physiologically habituated to anti-social behavior.

Mirabeau argued, then, that the ostentation and dazzle of luxury products, and the lethargic lifestyle to which they led, overstimulated and blunted the network of senses on which social interaction was based. A body too affected by the overpowering sensations of luxury items formed tastes and passions, which subjugated reason and the interior sentiment, and could only be assuaged by the perpetuation of those same sensations. As Quesnay explained in his article “Évidence” for the *Encyclopédie*, “when the mechanism of the senses and the memory cause some affective sensations, too lively and too dominant, these sensations form tastes, passions, and habits, which subjugate reason; we aspire then only to a happiness which satisfies those dominating tastes and pressing passions.”<sup>594</sup> Habits are physiological states, and, in the

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<sup>594</sup>François Quesnay, “Évidence” (vol. 6, pg. 150) accessed from <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/> Compare this with Malebranche: “Since the imagination consists only in the soul’s power to form images of objects by imprinting them, so to speak, in the fibers of its brain, the greater and more distinct the traces of the animal spirits, which are the strokes of these images, the more strongly and distinctly the soul will imagine these objects.” Nicolas Malebranche, *The Search after Truth*, trans. and ed. Thomas M. Lennon and Paul J. Olschamp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 89. See Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 68-78, for

words of abbé Etienne Bonnot de Condillac, “habit is only the ability to repeat what one did, and this ability is acquired by the reiteration of acts.”<sup>595</sup> Once a habit is formed, it can be reawakened simply by the memory of the actions, desires, thoughts, or feelings. The impression of traces from the sensory organs to the brain either ruined the body by the punishing vivacity of multiplicity or the constant repetition of sensory data that formed habits. The body responded physiologically to its environment, and dissolute habits became physiologically embodied in Mirabeau’s contemporaries.

To Mirabeau and Quesnay, the most detrimental consequence of insatiable physical appetites was the adulteration, or at worst extinction, of natural sociability and the interior sentiment (*le sentiment intérieur*, 30).<sup>596</sup> Society is based on commerce and a “fellow-feeling;” it is the grandest expression of morality and precedes political *organisation*. “The father, son, brother, spouse, friend, parent, citizen, compatriot, mankind as a whole, are the physical objects of a cult of action commanded and received by the great moral being. Among these duties, some are more present or more marked, but they all are indispensable; and *voilà*, [the duties] which engages us, links us, submits us to society...these truths, which rumble in the bottom of the heart of even those who would verbally deny them” (81). Bodies as physical objects either help or hinder the soul and morality, as Mirabeau wrote in *L’ami des hommes*; they become enmeshed in

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a thorough analysis of Quesnay’s epistemology that combined sensationalism with a rational faculty all guaranteed by god (*Essai physique sur l’oeconomie animale*, III, 1747).

<sup>595</sup>Condillac, *Traité des sensations* (1754; book I, chp. 2, § 13), excerpted in Condillac, *Traité des animaux*, présenté et annoté par M. Malherbe (Paris: J. Vrin, 2004), 246. For habit-formation according to Cartesian principles, see Koch, *The Aesthetic Body*, 71-6.

<sup>596</sup>Mirabeau also used phrases such as *écouter notre coeur* and “instinct” to reflect his understanding of an interior sentiment that binds humans together, recognizes “justice,” and is a natural gift from God. In a characteristically ambiguous statement, Mirabeau wrote: “I am not saying that privileged souls are made in order to sense; they have the best of all guides, because the true sentiment will never mislead them, but those only who have the time to think” (29).

a “sympathetic web of feeling” in which bodies communicate passions.<sup>597</sup> The body is, in a sense, a vessel or carrier of an interior sentiment that connects humans. It requires upkeep, sustenance, and exercise but should not be allowed to follow unrestrained desires. When it does, the body acts as a shield or husk, insulating the interior sentiment from communication with others.

The interior sentiment was intimately attached to the body, even if conceived in an abstract manner and even if Mirabeau did not have a robust metaphysical or epistemological apparatus to structure his ideas. What Mirabeau and Quesnay witnessed around them, nevertheless, indicated that the necessary physical dimensions of *amour de soi* no longer sufficed, and that their contemporaries preferred *amour propre* (terms that pulsed with relevance as Rousseau had recently used both to ground his *Discourse on Inequality*). They sought sociability only as a means of display, self-fashioning, and sating desire rather than as a foundation for human cooperation and happiness.<sup>598</sup> This behavior had become physiologically ingrained in their bodies. Bodies were no longer “shocked” because luxury had intoxicated them (136). The passions, “formerly combated by a return to sentiment, order, and arrangement,” were only excited by a taste for *le faste*, ostentation, and excess (151). Mirabeau’s rhetoric crescendoed in the following outburst:

It is this continual state of dizziness, which substitutes actions for thoughts, the sensations of [animal] instinct for the sentiments of the soul and the heart, which [replaced serious

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<sup>597</sup>Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 119.

<sup>598</sup>Rousseau voiced most clearly the critical distinction between *amour propre* and *amour de soi* in his *Discours sur l’origine et fondemens de l’inégalité parmi les hommes* (1755). According to Pierre Bayle, it is pride (*amour-propre*), “that passion inseparable from our nature that makes us greedy. For this accursed passion, causing us to find pleasure in all that flatters our vanity, in all that distinguishes us from other men, in all that can procure for us the fulfillment of our desires, leads us ardently to desire to possess wealth because we hope to find all these advantages in the possession of riches. As a result of the manner in which men are made, and through I know not what mechanical constitution of their nature, they rejoice in thinking they possess wealth.” Bayle, *Various Thoughts on the Occasion of a Comet*, trans. Robert C. Bartlett (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 210-211.

ideas] with momentary illusions and opinions of the day...all of which are revealed as lies by the interior sentiment as soon as one is alone...I would not be able to believe that there existed a man who had never felt any of these sentiments [of love, tenderness, trust, esteem], and if there were, unless he was an imbecile from birth, I would be obliged to pronounce upon him a curse to cut him out of society (30-1).<sup>599</sup>

According to Mirabeau, justice is “inherent in our substance” and can be both known and sensed (61, 64). The interior sentiment, love of country and compatriot, and respect for the authority of the past was “imprinted in the heart of man by the finger of his Creator and whose ineffaceable traces we revere today” (60).<sup>600</sup> Like the traces forcefully carved out by habitual anti-social or degenerate behavior, the ineffaceable traces of the interior sentiment were strengthened by continued application. Unfortunately, for Mirabeau, “man is always ready to fall back under the empire of the senses” (64). In the “*Traité de la monarchie*,” Mirabeau continued his approach from *L’ami des hommes*, guided now by the hand of Quesnay. Society was both the source of corporeal ills and the goal toward which human life points; man was not only naturally sociable, he was also naturally sensible. The body, too easily corrupted, acted as a boundary between the reciprocal commerce of interior sentiments. Mirabeau and Quesnay condemned their own society, pronouncing it too attracted and addicted to physical sensations. The bodies of their contemporaries needed to be stripped of their attachment to material embellishments.

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<sup>599</sup>In a different political context, Benjamin Constant would use a similar analogy in decrying “[t]his modern condition of vertigo.” K. Steven Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 139.

<sup>600</sup>See also Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué* “Première Lettre de M. B. à M.” (1769), 2-3. Du Pont de Nemours would similarly claim that natural law, buoyed by the Creator, “is so basic that we find traces of it lodged in our minds.” Quoted in Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 136.



*Physiocracy, or (Dis)embodying Society*

Although Mirabeau and Quesnay never completed the “*Traité de la monarchie*,” Physiocracy soon flourished with the publication of Quesnay’s *Questions intéressantes sur la population* (included in Mirabeau’s *L’ami des hommes*), three versions of the *Tableau Économique*, *Théorie de l’impôt* (1760), and *Philosophie rurale* (1763).<sup>601</sup> By the mid-1760s, Quesnay had acquired a vast network of colleagues, both ardent supporters and vaguely-interested individuals, and in 1767 Du Pont de Nemours collected Quesnay’s central economic works in *La Physiocratie, ou constitution essentielle du gouvernement le plus avantageux au genre humain* (Quesnay remained anonymous in most printed writings to protect his privileged status at court).<sup>602</sup> Quesnay’s last anonymous collaboration came with Pierre-Paul Le Mercier de la Rivière in 1767, *L’ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques*, which promoted the new socio-political shape of France if it followed natural laws. As the relationship between Quesnay, Mirabeau, and the other Physiocrats intensified, the responsibility for certain texts became unclear.<sup>603</sup> Even though their writings became more technical, the body was still privileged as a

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<sup>601</sup>Mirabeau was neither Quesnay’s only pupil nor was he Quesnay’s first co-author. Charles-George Le Roy, Pierre-Michel Hennin, and Etienne-Claude Marivetz all worked with Quesnay before Mirabeau, the latter co-authoring the *Questions intéressantes*. See Théré and Charles, “The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay,” for the distribution of duties assigned to Quesnay’s colleagues. For example, it was Charles de Butré who prepared the calculations for *Philosophie rurale*. See also Théré and Charles, “From Versailles to Paris: The Creative Communities of the Physiocratic Movement,” for the “composition” of the physiocratic movement.

<sup>602</sup>Jacqueline Hecht made a point to state that this text was published in 1767 rather than 1767-8 as is wrongly indicated on the first published volume. Hecht, “La vie de François Quesnay,” in *François Quesnay et la Physiocratie*, 2 vols., Jacqueline Hecht, ed. vol. 1, 211-294 (Paris: Institut national d’études démographiques, 1958), 271.

<sup>603</sup>Christine Théré and Loïc Charles have said that in *Philosophie rurale* Quesnay and Mirabeau’s “contributions are so deeply merged that it is very difficult to be sure who imagined such and such sentence. Even when we can establish that a particular sentence was ‘written’ by Mirabeau on the first draft, more thorough research may show that he had simply borrowed and rephrased Quesnay’s words.” Théré and Charles, “The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay,” 30.

critical foundation for a new social order and hindrance to the corporate social order.<sup>604</sup> The physiocratic understanding of human nature and natural law prized the corporeal aspects of subsistence and desires, while publicizing an interpretation of the body and society that challenged Montesquieu's view of the role of climate and geography in shaping socio-political institutions and materialist conceptions of *organisation*. Finally, the epistemological procedures that undergirded the process of conversion to Physiocracy—*évidence*—rested on assumptions about the human body. Although Quesnay highlighted the faculty of reason, his epistemology relied on the link between the material body and the environment. To the Physiocrats, the prevailing addiction to luxury stymied not only the feelings of sociability but also the epistemological process of understanding the laws of nature and Physiocracy itself.

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At the base of Mirabeau and Quesnay's political economy stood a concern for luxury's effects on the human body. This critique was made possible by an elemental assumption about humans that Quesnay advanced. Humans are as much a part of nature as the earth and the trees, but if they desire to be happy, as nature intended, then they must not disrupt the influence of nature.<sup>605</sup> Moving from a critique of to a prescription for society, Quesnay planted his stake on the physicality of human bodies and needs. Rather than the imagined desires of luxury that had been ingrained in the bodies of their contemporaries, it was the "quest for corporeal satisfaction" through "quasi-biological drives [that] connected human beings to fundamental realities."<sup>606</sup> It is

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<sup>604</sup>As Physiocracy matured and expanded, the vociferous denunciations of commerce and luxury gave way to more thoughtful incorporation and definition. See Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 105-9.

<sup>605</sup>For "happiness," see "Traité de la monarchie," 168.

<sup>606</sup>Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 111. We can see Quesnay's insistence on the primacy of subsistence in his comments to Mirabeau in drafts of the "Traité de la monarchie," 53 n.86, 55.

for this reason that Du Pont de Nemours placed Quesnay's article "Natural Right" first in his compilation *Physiocratie*; it fit theoretically, not chronologically, in their political economy. And, according to Guillaume-François Le Trosne in *De l'ordre social* (1777), "[i]t was by studying the constitution of man, his needs, and the means that he has for achieving them...that [Quesnay] seized upon the first strand of this science, and, by a series of deductions and a perfectly-linked chain of reasoning, was the first to establish its foundations on the physical laws of nature."<sup>607</sup>

The basis of the physiocratic social order was subsistence, which was the first, instinctive, physical appetite, paired with human labor to satisfy physical needs. The physical components and drives of humans combined with their "mental capacity" and morality to form the natural law. Natural right, or the "natural principle of all the duties of man," pre-exists humans but is instilled in everyone by a "feeling" and "recognized through the light of reason."<sup>608</sup> When physical bodies strive for more than satiation, when they are corporeally compelled toward superfluity, then their bodies are no longer in conformance with nature. "Transgressions of natural laws are the most widespread and usual causes of the physical evils that afflict men," Quesnay wrote; "even the wealthy...bring upon themselves through their ambition, their passions, and even their pleasures, many evils for which they can blame only their own irregular acts."<sup>609</sup> For the Physiocrats, then, the exercise of one's natural right would

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<sup>607</sup>Le Trosne, *De l'ordre social* (1777), 447. Le Trosne's text can also be found in Eugène Daire, ed., *Physiocrates*, 2 vols. (Paris: Librairie de Guillaumin, 1846).

<sup>608</sup>Quesnay, "Natural Right," 44-5, 51.

<sup>609</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

reach an apex when humans enter into a society that observes the natural law and allows them to make use of their bodily and mental faculties to labor on their property and attain subsistence.<sup>610</sup>

In *Philosophie rurale* (1763), Mirabeau and Quesnay introduced another dimension to human behavior beyond the instinctual drives for subsistence, preservation, and reproduction of the species: desire. “Man has more wide-ranging views about happiness [than beasts],” Mirabeau declared, “and appetites only distract him from his dominant inclination, which is to desire the pleasure of a full and continual happiness without necessarily being able to disentangle the object of his desire from the goal of his enjoyment.”<sup>611</sup> It is in the often grey area between the latter that politics ought to affect human behavior. Desire can too easily poison the physical and moral in humans, as it is the “most active and flexible spring of action,” and therefore it is necessary for the sovereign to conjoin need (subsistence) and desire (happiness).<sup>612</sup> “The whole magic of well-ordered society,” Mirabeau clearly stated, “is that each man works for others, while believing that he is working for himself.”<sup>613</sup> Bodies are compelled by an interior drive for happiness (pleasure) and aversion to pain; they must be brought into harmony in order for society to function smoothly according to natural laws.<sup>614</sup>

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<sup>610</sup>Ibid., 47, 50-2. Quesnay made a similar point about the exercise of free will, to be discussed below.

<sup>611</sup>Mirabeau, *Philosophie rurale*, 158. In the “Traité de la monarchie,” Mirabeau wrote that fear, hope, and desire were the three primary passions felt by humans from which derived an infinite variety of others (36). Moreover, Mirabeau wrote that the passions “are useful, they are necessary; the law that it is necessary to impose on them is not a law of terror because this would extinguish the passions; it must be a law of reason and conviction” (97). It was the duty of political leaders to properly sharpen and channel the passions in the right direction.

<sup>612</sup>Ibid., 158.

<sup>613</sup>From *Philosophie rurale*, but quoted in Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 70. See also Steiner, *La “Science nouvelle” de l’économie politique*, 59, 94-5.

<sup>614</sup>According to the Physiocrat abbé Nicolas Baudeau, “Man is born to seek his preservation and his well-being. His heart is avid and even insatiable for the enjoyments which form his felicity; he flees and detests pain. The Author of nature has placed in all our souls this universal spring, primary motivation of human actions: it was necessary to the perpetuation, to the multiplication, to the happiness of the species. It is through it that the reasonable and free man may know the principles of the moral and political order, the natural Law and the social Laws, evidently derived

The Physiocrats' examination of the physical characteristics of society meant that they competed with two alternative notions of the body and society. First, in 1748, Montesquieu published the monumental *De l'esprit des lois* (1748), one feature of which matched his three forms of government and corresponding laws to particular geographies and climates. Montesquieu baldly stated that "[m]an, as a physical being, is governed by invariable laws like other bodies."<sup>615</sup> When bodies inhabit different climates, Montesquieu surmised, the passions and the physiology of those bodies changed and thus so should the laws. Mirabeau and Quesnay did not think in terms of coupling laws with a particular climate or a particular body because the "rule of nature" was uniform; climate may affect the ability to obtain sustenance, but it did not affect the initial physical law. Moreover, as Mirabeau noted, "The science of good government applies to all climates. The different climates can give to nations different inclinations, different physical qualities, and diverse characters; but the different governments influence much more powerfully conduct and *les mœurs*."<sup>616</sup> Climate therefore had no empire over *les mœurs*, and, to further demonstrate the power of the sovereign, Mirabeau subsumed under the category *conduite* and *mœurs* "liberty, the faculties, education, habits, passions, [and] the mutual commerce of men."<sup>617</sup> The job of the sovereign to lead by example and not hinder the operation

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from the physical order, instituted by the Supreme Being." Quoted in Shovlin, *The Political Economy of Virtue*, 112.

<sup>615</sup>Baron de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5. Montesquieu discussed the relationship between the laws and climate in Part 3, Books 14-18. For an examination of Montesquieu's "theory of climate," see John C. O'Neal, *Changing Minds: The Shifting Perceptions of Culture in Eighteenth-Century France* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2002), chp. 4, and, for a contemporary agreement with Montesquieu, see the work of the Parisian doctor Louis La Caze, *L'Idée de l'homme physique et morale* (1755), chp. 8, article 8.

<sup>616</sup>Mirabeau and Quesnay, "Traité de la monarchie," 54 (see Quesnay's agreeable remark, 176, n. 395, and *Despotism de la Chine*, 578). See above Mirabeau's comments about the powerful role of government in *L'ami des hommes*. For other Physiocrats' engagement with Montesquieu, see Paul Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 145-6.

<sup>617</sup>*Ibid.*, 55.

of the laws of nature, combined with the interior sentiment so crucial to *L'ami des hommes* and “*Traité de la monarchie*,” meant that the marginal effects of climate on physical bodies were secondary to that exercised by the sovereign.

The Physiocrats also disagreed with materialists, like La Mettrie, Diderot, and d’Holbach, who championed both the determinative role and malleability of the body, and those like Helvétius and Rousseau who found humans to be malleable and thus perfectible. Physiocrats did not argue that individuals were predestined by their constitution. Neither did they engage in the hypothetical possibility of perfectibility, avoiding the kind of corporeal intervention discussed by the *médecin-philosophe* Charles Vandermonde in *Essai sur la manière de perfectionner l’espèce humaine* (1756).

The Physiocrats lived and wrote at a time in which debates over the kind and number of substances in the world were shifting to questions over the multitudinous properties of the body (e.g. irritability and sensibility), as shown in chapter two. The Physiocrats expounded a clear relationship between the physical and the moral, but it was not the psycho-physiology so necessary to monist-materialists. Since only matter existed in the world—there were no immaterial substances, a divinity, or a soul—materialists tried to explain all intellectual, social, physical, and moral aspects of life through the aggregation and organization of matter. In *L’homme machine* (1747), La Mettrie argued that “the soul is merely a vain term of which we have no idea and which a good mind should use only to refer to that part of us which thinks. Given the slightest principle of movement, animate bodies will have everything they need to move, feel, think, repent, and in a word, behave in the physical sphere and in the moral sphere which depends on it.”<sup>618</sup> In contesting the future revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat’s medical

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<sup>618</sup>La Mettrie, *Machine Man*, 26. La Mettrie argued here for the inherent activity of matter, a minority position debated often during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

treatise *De l'homme* (1775), Diderot asserted that “if he had looked more closely, he would have seen that the action of the soul on the body is the action of one part of the body on another, and the action of the body on the soul is the same thing.”<sup>619</sup> Mental states thus depended on physical states, and mental faculties such as thought, reflection, memory, imagination, judgment, and will were material processes. There was no innate moral force or set of principles waiting to be discovered. The mind and body interact physiologically, and they are galvanized to action by sensory reception. In contrast to Mirabeau and Quesnay, materialists relied on neither an “interior sentiment,” a transcendental notion of good and evil, nor a natural law of morality.<sup>620</sup>

One did not necessarily have to subscribe to an entire system of materialism to conceive of the mind as a “plastic entity responding to the senses.”<sup>621</sup> Condillac and Charles Bonnet were not full-blown materialists, but they found the body to be the avenue through which humans could be perfected or molded to meet certain socio-political or spiritual needs.<sup>622</sup> By exploring the interaction of human bodies with the physical world of sensory data, and by demonstrating the reciprocal interaction of mind and body in cognitive functions, Condillac’s and Bonnet’s versions of the “animated statue” contributed to the debate over man’s perfectibility so widespread by the mid-eighteenth century. The human body was either malleable, as Condillac and Bonnet illustrated, or nearly impossible to overcome, as La Mettrie and Diderot argued.

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<sup>619</sup>Diderot, *Éléments de physiologie*, in *Oeuvres Philosophiques*, tome I, ed. Laurent Versini, 1255-1317 (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1999), 1283.

<sup>620</sup>In fact, La Mettrie abandoned the idea of natural law, exemplified in feelings of remorse, between writing *L'homme machine* and *Anti-Sénèque*.

<sup>621</sup>Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster*, 70.

<sup>622</sup>Bonnet drew connections between the transcendental soul, cognitive functions, and the power of the soul to shape a hierarchy of beings. See Douthwaite, *The Wild Girl, Natural Man, and the Monster*, 80-2; Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 120-5; Gary Hatfield, “Remaking the Science of Mind: Psychology as Natural Science,” in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, eds. Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, 184-231 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 206-8.

Physiocrats clearly wanted to improve mankind through an examination of the human body. They sought to “comprehend” natural functions, but they did not seek to “intervene” in nature.<sup>623</sup> Their intervention in nature’s operations was a non-intervention. As Mirabeau wrote in a 1767 letter to Rousseau,

You believe that we seek to pursue the improvement [*perfectibilité*] of the human mind and to extend its limits. But far from wanting this, we want solely to bring it back to what is simple, to the primary notions of nature and instinct. All our laws can be reduced to conforming to the laws of nature with respect to the arrangements surrounding our labor and to the self-evident character of the right of property as it applied to the enjoyment of its fruits.<sup>624</sup>

The physiocratic perspective on the body, nature, and the physical/moral dyad resembled that of Condillac, Bonnet, and their materialist contemporaries, but it did so as a mirror image. Nature was the animating principle for all these thinkers. For the Physiocrats, though, nature unified bodies, linking together bodies, society, economics, and politics. For the others (excluding Bonnet), however, nature created unique, individual bodies whose desires, passions, and moral and cognitive capabilities were particular to each physiological organization.<sup>625</sup> They viewed humans as material parts of nature, potentially only better “organized” than animals, but they did not envision humans, as did Mirabeau, as part of the “essences of things...[or the] grand whole...[,] endowed with an intelligence through which [man] can discover...the routes and rules

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<sup>623</sup>“Comprehend” and “intervene” are Douthwaite’s words, though she was not speaking of the Physiocrats. Ibid., 6.

<sup>624</sup>Quoted in Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 204. Moreover, Mirabeau argued that “Humans customarily have in all of their actions only *l’évidence physique* which defines them and governs them despotically...*l’évidence physique*, in a word, governs all of us in every instant of our lives.” Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*, Douzième lettre: “L’évidence” (1769), 879-80 (and “Première Lettre,” 7).

<sup>625</sup>La Mettrie, for example, determined that “‘A trifle, a tiny fibre, something that the most subtle anatomical study cannot discover,’ would have made of Erasmus and Fontenelle two idiots.” La Mettrie, *Machine Man*, 10. See also Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 50-5, and, for a succinct summary of the physiological and social issues at stake in Helvétius’ and Diderot’s divergent readings of the body, see Thomson, *Bodies of Thought*, 219-23, 231-2, 237-38, and Stephen Gaukroger, *The Collapse of Mechanism and the Rise of Sensibility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 417-419.



that fix his conduct.”<sup>626</sup> Mirabeau’s “magic of a well-ordered society” was a corporeal sleight-of-hand. In Mirabeau and Quesnay’s conception, it was not through the body that mankind could be perfected; the body had to be overcome.<sup>627</sup> Instead of embracing the total embodiment of humans, Mirabeau and Quesnay sought to disembody humans, to reduce the influence of the body by letting the laws of nature manage individual behavior and social interaction.

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Physiocracy allowed its supporters to discuss human bodies on physical (physiological) and moral grounds, and Mirabeau and Quesnay showed that social, political, and economic disorders manifested in the human body. The body was the site from which they could read the maladies that beset society. Aligning the body with its natural functions was the first step in implementing their new system of political economy. The innate physical need for subsistence and minimal pleasure had to be sated, and the interior feelings of social commerce and sentiment had to be allowed to vitalize bodies. The “sentiment” of justice, so necessary to a political community, also linked the physical to the moral. For Mirabeau, justice was a “universal convention between men...[and] an irresistible and invincible sentiment.” Consistent with his

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<sup>626</sup>Mirabeau, “Éducation Économique des filles, Par M.B., November 1767,” in *Éphémérides du citoyen*, tome III (1768), 144-5. A version of this text can be found in manuscript form at A.N. M 780, no. 5<sup>3</sup>, alongside manuscripts of similar subject matter: “Traité sur l’éducation du sexe” (5<sup>1</sup>), “Traité sur l’éducation des filles” (5<sup>2</sup>), and “Sur l’éducation du sexe” (5<sup>4</sup>). In “Natural Right,” Quesnay noted another way that he and the Physiocrats differed from thinkers like La Mettrie: “The natural order which is most advantageous to men is perhaps not the most advantageous to the other animals; but included in man’s unlimited right is that of making his lot the best possible. This superiority appertains to his intelligence; it is part of natural right, since man inherits it from the Author of nature, who has determined it in this way through the laws which he has instituted in the order of the formation of the universe” (54, n.1).

<sup>627</sup>Philippe Steiner astutely observed that, according to the Physiocrats, “it was not a question of combating the passions by other passions but rather of placing the passions within the ordered frame of reason.” Steiner, *La “Science nouvelle” de l’économie politique*, 57. Liana Vardi’s view of Quesnay is similar: “For the Doctor, however, human weakness [self-interest, passions] endangered the natural order, and only reason could restrain disordered inclinations...Quesnay rarely addressed self-interest (of any sort), preferring to base his system on reason’s highest capacities, but *Homo economicus* lurked in the shadows.” Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 133.

four-part division of humans, the sentiment of justice imbued hearts, minds, and souls, binding people to the natural law, but it ultimately hinged on the growth of our organs to develop these precepts. Nevertheless, in Mirabeau's representation of humans, the "divine flame" ignited the sentiment of justice and simmered within us despite the "corruption and weakness" of our bodies.<sup>628</sup>

In Physiocracy, the "physical" consisted as much in the body as it did the world of goods and finances, and the central role of the sovereign was to cultivate morality according to the laws of nature. There is no doubt that the inner "moral" world took precedence in physiocratic thought, especially in Mirabeau's writings. Still, to achieve moral uniformity and thus social stability, Mirabeau and Quesnay ruminated on the role of the body as a hindrance to natural law. Quesnay and Mirabeau attempted to marginalize the body by constructing an epistemological passage to Physiocracy, while simultaneously focusing a large amount of attention on physiological processes (physical and mental). Quesnay's sensationalist epistemology, as outlined in the pre-physiocratic works *Essai physique sur l'oeconomie animale* and the *Encyclopédie* article "Évidence," dealt thoroughly with the body and the ways in which external stimuli became knowledge.<sup>629</sup> His understanding of the body continued to serve as an epistemological linchpin fastening the tenets of Physiocracy to the rational faculties contained

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<sup>628</sup>Mirabeau (and Quesnay), *Théorie de l'impôt*, 17.

<sup>629</sup>I will not discuss Quesnay's *Essai physique* because there are numerous other works that do a superb job, but also because Quesnay published "Évidence" at the exact same time his focus shifted from medicine to political economy. If he had something important to change from the *Essai physique*, it would have shown up here. For analyses of the *Essai physique*, see Akiteru Kubota, "Quesnay, disciple de Malebranche," in *François Quesnay et la Physiocratie*, vol. 1, 169-196; Paul P. Christensen, "Fire, Motion, and Productivity: The Proto-Energetics of Nature and Economy in François Quesnay"; Steiner, *La "Science nouvelle" de l'économie politique*; Groenewegen, "From prominent physician to major economist"; Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 38-40, 68-78.

within bodies and the loftier aspirations of free will.<sup>630</sup> Quesnay's conception of *évidence* and free will subordinated, but did not extinguish, corporeal operations, and his criticism of the methodology of history reveals further the essential place of the body in Physiocracy. Thus, for the Physiocrats, corporeal addictions to the physical environment stymied the epistemological process of achieving the rational clarity of *évidence*.

Although the notion of *évidence* pervaded Physiocratic thought, Quesnay first articulated the meaning of it in his entry "Évidence" for the *Encyclopédie* (1756). The first twenty-five paragraphs dealt intently with proving that the origin of our knowledge comes from the senses, paragraphs twenty-five through forty-three outlined the multiple ways we can be in error, and the remainder of the entry considered human morality, the relationship between humans and animals, and a distinctive understanding of free will.<sup>631</sup> Over a century ago, Georges Weulersse observed that "there is hardly a word that Physiocrats used with greater affectation than the substantive evidence, the adjective evident, and the adverb evidently...It is evidence that reconciles the individual to the general interest and allies it with justice; and it is evidence that orders man's submission to and cooperation with the natural order."<sup>632</sup>

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<sup>630</sup>Quesnay was committed to calculations but not abstract mathematics that had no basis in sensory material. Quesnay stated in "Évidence" and in the following quote from "Natural Right" (55) that reason was a corporeal function: "What we are concerned with here is reason which is exercised, extended, and perfected by means of the study of natural laws. For reason alone does not raise man above the beasts; it is in its essence only a faculty or aptitude by means of which man can acquire the knowledge which is necessary for him, and by means of which he is able, with the aid of this knowledge, to procure for himself the physical and moral benefits essential to the nature of his being."

<sup>631</sup>Steiner, *La "Science nouvelle" de l'économie politique*, 35-6.

<sup>632</sup>Quoted in Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 52. See also Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 111, and Meek, *The Economics of Physiocracy*, 40, for translation of the term.

According to Quesnay, *évidence* “signifies a certitude so clear and so manifest by itself that the mind cannot refuse it.”<sup>633</sup> *Évidence* was not a transcendental or spiritual faculty; it was deeply connected to the body and sensory data: “The certitude of our natural knowledge consists only in the *évidence* of real truths,” which are those truths that “consist in the exact and clear connections that real objects have with the sensations they produce” (§37). Quesnay used the terms mind (*esprit*) and soul (*âme*) virtually interchangeably in “Évidence” and “Aspect de la psychologie,” an unpublished outline extending metaphysical and physiological discussions from the *Essai physique* and “Évidence.” Quesnay characterized the soul as “a substance that has the property of sensing; the property of sensing is the foundational principle of all the affections and faculties of the soul.” And, in a note to the word “perceptions,” Quesnay wrote that “perceptions are born from sensations; they are all the ideas that can be indicated or called to the soul by the sensations.”<sup>634</sup> Regarding cognitive faculties, then, Quesnay found mental states to depend on physical states.

The process of achieving *évidence* clearly relied on a physical relationship between material objects, human bodies, and modes of thought such as attention and discernment, but the process and desired goal was a “certainty in the mind rather than a demonstrable proof.”<sup>635</sup> In Liana Vardi’s insightful reading of Quesnay’s epistemology and the “psychological conversion”

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<sup>633</sup>Quesnay, “Évidence” (vol. 6, pg. 146) accessed from <http://encyclopedia.uchicago.edu/> For a perspective similar to mine regarding Quesnay’s epistemology, see Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 85-92.

<sup>634</sup>Quesnay, “Aspect de la psychologie,” in Christine Théré, Loïc Charles, and Jean-Claude Perrot, eds., *François Quesnay: Oeuvres Économiques Complètes et Autres Textes*, 2 vols. (Paris: L’Institut National d’Études Démographiques, 2005), vol. 1, 93.

<sup>635</sup>Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 53. *Évidence* demanded a connection between sensory data (“experience”) and mental operations, which is why Quesnay eschewed abstract mathematics and metaphysics. In a fascinating reading of the *Tableau Économique*, Loïc Charles has argued that it served as a “medium of communication,” or an “economic picture,” capable of “being perceived and at least partly understood without recourse to reasoning.” Charles, “The *Tableau économique* as Rational Recreation,” 470, 454, 465.

involved in becoming a Physiocrat, it was necessary for prospective converts to “let the evidence penetrate their minds,” and “[o]nce they had done so, its truths would become self-evident and cohere into the same set of relations that Quesnay had so clearly perceived.” She characterized Quesnay’s achievement as a “vision” obtained through “flashes of insight” and disseminated by “cognitive training.”<sup>636</sup> Quesnay appealed to the self-evident character of natural law, as stated above, in “Natural Right” to sustain the foundation of Physiocracy, but the process of becoming a Physiocrat through the attainment of *évidence* did not earn as many adherents as Quesnay hoped.<sup>637</sup>

Countering critics of their techniques, Mirabeau argued that “our metaphysics does not indulge in scholastic exercises, which extend beyond the light of human reason; it is limited to the certitude of the existence of our ideas when we have a corresponding sensation and the certitude of the direction of causes and effects.”<sup>638</sup> *Évidence* then necessitated grounding in the corporeal, material world. Mirabeau maintained that the Physiocrats did not “create” *évidence*, but that through a clear

series of inductions...our Science conducts human reason to admit as *évident* that not a single person on earth could exist without knowing that one’s interest is fundamentally connected to those of others, that this point of union is the cultivation of the earth, and that the essential, necessary, and sufficient condition of success and progress of agriculture is liberty [of commerce], the immunity of rights and duties toward all: *La Propriété, La Liberté, La Sûreté*.<sup>639</sup>

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<sup>636</sup>Ibid., 4, 78, 123.

<sup>637</sup>*Évidence* would continue to be an integral part of Quesnay’s epistemology through his last publication *Recherches philosophiques sur l’évidence des vérités géométriques* (1773), “where he assures that his principle object is *l’évidence*, which must characterize the certitude of our knowledge.” Hecht, “La Vie de François Quesnay,” 278.

<sup>638</sup>Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*, Douzième lettre: “L’évidence” (1769), 828. In much of this “letter,” Mirabeau repackaged the tenets of Physiocracy.

<sup>639</sup>Ibid., 877-8. *Évidence*, moreover, was the “truly efficacious means of assuring the observation of the social order, the respect of rights, the performance of duties, and of halting the terrible scourge of disunion, instituted and perpetuated by counsel and the absurd code of cupidity” (814-5).

True to Weulersse's claim, *évidence* connected all aspects of Physiocracy. More than that, *évidence* necessitated a healthy, functioning sensory network to provide the mind/soul with sound connections between sensory data and that which the data represented. The ability to reason upon the assortment of material contained in the memory required the vigorous operation of all faculties, and, in a fit of rhetorical flourish, Mirabeau claimed that the clarity of *évidence* joining the moral to the physical could rule in a country of the blind. Mirabeau returned to his original *bête noire*, cupidity, in order to demonstrate how misplaced liberty forged in his contemporaries "thousands of diverse, opposed, and contradictory passions;" their lives of abundance separated the stimulation of the organs from the rational functions and precluded the "uninterrupted study" necessary to discern *évidence*.<sup>640</sup> Although the rational faculties were intimately bound to the organs of the body and were physiological operations, Mirabeau and Quesnay still subtly spoke of achieving *évidence* as a solely mental process; in this form of intellectual labor, the body was a necessary but not sufficient condition.<sup>641</sup>

In "Évidence," Quesnay put forward a sensationalist epistemology that he followed through the sensory networks and into the channels of the brain. As a result, morality, which Physiocrats linked to an adherence to the physical laws of nature, also stemmed necessarily from the proper ordering of bodies and intelligence. Poor physiological organization was the first source of error, but there were numerous other ways that sensory data could be obscured or confused. One example can be found in Quesnay's interpretation of historical epistemology,

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<sup>640</sup>Ibid., 815, 825, 819.

<sup>641</sup>Mirabeau spoke of *évidence* as a super or supra organ: "If I was blind, my other senses would be the organs of *évidence*. When *évidence* strays from me, I attempt to lengthen my organs in order to attain it, e.g. I make glasses and speakers [*porte-voix*]. Finally, where I am without the help of my organs, *évidence* governs me still by the means of my faculties. My memory recalls the memories of several successive *évidences* and constructs the experience of them. My intelligence conceives the *évidence* that my senses are unable to reach." Mirabeau goes on to name sentiment, imagination, and reason as they are affected by and participate in *évidence*. Ibid., 823-4.

which links physiocratic self-references of having found “scientific” knowledge through *évidence* to the body or to overcoming the body. Quesnay scorned the historians of his day who focused on the “senseless, tumultuous, violent, and disorderly actions of nations,” and who were neither observers, nor philosophers, nor politicians. Their superficial concentration on the spectacular neglected the “most fundamental objects of history”—subsistence, population, behavior, and composition of government—and generally lacked intellectual depth.<sup>642</sup> Quesnay developed a critique of the content of history, but he also developed a critique of historical method from his understanding of memory and his insistence on the scientific certainty of Physiocracy. The procedures of accumulating historical knowledge relied on memory and the sensory operations of retrieving that data, which ran counter to Physiocratic *évidence*.

Quesnay’s critique of history did not arise solely from his “uncovering” of the laws of nature or from Diderot and d’Alembert’s “tree of knowledge.”<sup>643</sup> His assessment was shaped instead by his corporeal critique of memory set out earlier in his article “Évidence.”<sup>644</sup> Memory was central to Quesnay’s epistemology because it preserved sensory data, and it worked

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<sup>642</sup>Note from Quesnay to Mirabeau in “Traité de la monarchie,” 175, n. 392. Quesnay’s insistence on subsistence here reinforces the notion that he was constantly prodding Mirabeau toward his new vision of political economy.

<sup>643</sup>Paul Cheney has recently argued that the Physiocrats’ perspective on history derived from the *Encyclopédie*’s “Système figuré des connaissances humaines” (1751) in which human understanding (“mental faculties”) was separated into three categories—Memory, Reason, and Imagination. The discipline of history fell under the category of “memory,” and, in contrast to the “profound and transhistorical” truths of *la science nouvelle*, history was “disordered, subject to error, and altogether unscientific.” Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 142-4. Like many aspects of physiocratic political economy, theory did not always translate to practice, especially as the number of physiocratic publications increased. See *Ibid.*, 148-62. For an examination of the “tree of knowledge,” which highlights the incongruities of Diderot and d’Alembert’s model, see David Adams, “The *Système figuré des connaissances humaines* and the Structure of Knowledge in the *Encyclopédie*,” in *Ordering the World in the Eighteenth Century*, eds. Diana Donald and Frank O’Gorman, 190-215 (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), and Robert Darnton, “Philosopher Trim the Tree of Knowledge: The Epistemological Strategy of the *Encyclopédie*,” in his *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, 191-215 (New York: Vintage Books, 1985).

<sup>644</sup>Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 127, also argued that Quesnay did not follow the *Encyclopédie*’s “tree of knowledge” regarding the placement of grammar and logic.

alongside the senses to recognize the differences between new, old, and false sensations. A body with faulty or no memory would be subjected constantly to sensory stimulation and would be incapable of either ratiocination or reflectivity.<sup>645</sup> Without “the certitude of the fidelity of the memory,” our knowledge, judgment, attention, and *évidence* could be incomplete or based on false relationships between sensory objects stored in the brain.<sup>646</sup> Essentially, the memory was the corporeal depot from which the soul/mind could draw reliable information in order to complete the applications of association, discernment, judgment, and contemplation. Attention and concentration—and by extension free will—were the hallmarks of human cognition. The physical process of memory, like the body noted above, was a necessary but not sufficient condition to ascend to the highest intellectual level of *évidence*. The problem with history and historians, for Quesnay, was their continued submission to the corporeality of knowledge. Du Pont de Nemours suggested as much in *De l’origine et des progrès d’une nouvelle science* (1768): “The habit [historians] developed in their childhood to use exclusively their memory has snuffed out the power to make use of their judgment.”<sup>647</sup> Similar to Mirabeau’s argument in the

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<sup>645</sup>For the difference between “reflectivity” and “reflexivity” in conceptions of the “self,” see Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12-13. For a general assessment of the mental production of errors, see Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations*, chp. 2.

<sup>646</sup>Quesnay, “Évidence,” §40 (see §22 also). Unlike Locke, who famously claimed in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690; Book I, chp. I, §2) to avoid the kind of physiological analysis of sensations and ideas put forward by Descartes before and Condillac after, Quesnay used his medical training and knowledge of the body to advance his views of the physiological operations responsible for thought. On Locke’s conception of the mind/brain, see François Duchesneau, “Locke and the Physical Consideration of the Mind,” in *The Philosophical Canon in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries: Essays in Honor of John W. Yolton*, eds. G. A. J. Rogers and Sylvana Tomaselli, 9-32 (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996).

<sup>647</sup>Quoted in Cheney, *Revolutionary Commerce*, 146. Mirabeau too claimed that his contemporaries’ desire for “a good education in a smattering of all the sciences [led to the] poor application of our mind,” which meant they only exercised their memory and “never truly conceived or combined ideas.” Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*, Douzième lettre: “L’évidence” (1769), 821. See Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 200-1, for more information on the publication history of the *Lettres*, which began as contributions to the physiocratic journal *Éphémérides du citoyen* in 1767.



“Traité de la monarchie,” the physiological formation of habits determined behavior and restricted intellectual abilities. Contemporary historians added to the harmful reliance on the corporeal, and Physiocrats demonstrated further the primary place of the body in their political economy by challenging the activities of historians.

Quesnay ended “Évidence” with a discussion of free will in which he introduced the ideas of “*la liberté animale* (determined by current sensations) and *la liberté d’intelligence* (founded on the knowledge of the laws of the natural order),” which corresponded respectively to short-term (“the immediately agreeable”) and long-term (“advantageous for the future”) decision making.<sup>648</sup> The guiding principle of free will required a body capable of reason, of properly culling together sensations to achieve *évidence*, and of contemplating one’s individual advantages, which, when done correctly, would reveal the inextricable, natural connection of human interests.<sup>649</sup> Tumultuous passions, perverse wills, naturally-disorganized bodies, and bodies physiologically-addicted to the material goods of society all followed *la liberté animale*. This was the ultimate dystopia into which Mirabeau, Quesnay, and the Physiocrats feared their society was plunging. For Quesnay, the will must control the passions; however, this was not simply a case of corporeal restraint or mastering the passions. Quesnay developed a grander metaphysical picture:

Man is not a simple being; he is composed of a body and a soul, but this perishable union does not exist alone. These two substances do not act on each other. It is the action of God that vivifies all animated bodies and produces continually all active, sensitive, and intellectual forms. Man receives his sensations through the organs of the body, but the sensations themselves and his reason are the immediate effect of the action of God on the soul. It is thus in the action of the soul that consists the essential form of the reasonable

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<sup>648</sup>Steiner, *La “Science nouvelle” de l’économie politique*, 36. Steiner made these two versions of the will the center-piece of his analysis of Quesnay and economic behavior.

<sup>649</sup>In Liana Vardi words, “Reason and free will allow human beings to *plan* and make decisions regarding their long-term survival, and this is how Quesnay approaches economic rationality. Reason is able to control passions aroused by poorly processed sensations.” Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 71.

animal. The organization of the body is the conditional or instrumental cause of the sensations, and the sensations are the motives or determinant causes of reason and the decisive will.<sup>650</sup>

Man's ability to know good from evil and to develop a robust understanding of the natural order from which to act was guaranteed by his union with the supreme being. "Faith teaches us that the supreme wisdom is itself the light that illuminates all men coming into this world," and this union "raised man to a higher degree of knowledge, which distinguishes him from animals, making him aware of moral rights and wrongs through which he is able to direct himself with reason and equity in the exercise of his liberty."<sup>651</sup> Quesnay did not follow La Mettrie and argue that humans were simply better organized animals. In his approach to epistemology and morality, animals were capable of the same rational and moral functions as humans because these actions were tied to sensations and the body; animals were able to concentrate, be attentive, love, hate, etc. The difference, for Quesnay, was the solely human attribute of free will, which consisted in cogitating about, rather than immediately consenting to, the flurry of sensations. To want was simply to agree or disagree to a sensation, and confusion arose when people mistook the agreeable sensations for future advantages. Immorality was a

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<sup>650</sup>Quesnay, "Évidence," §56 (see also §52 and the last three paragraphs of the entry). This is likely influenced by Malebranche's Occasionalism. Historians have commented on the relationship between Quesnay and Malebranche. I submit here only that the quote from Malebranche's *Traité de morale* used by Mirabeau and Quesnay at the beginning of *Philosophie rurale* was intended not simply to demonstrate the shared understanding of "order," but to also indicate the suspicions that Quesnay, Mirabeau, and Malebranche shared regarding the role of the body in the production of knowledge and the social interaction of humans. All three feared the corrosive effects of "society," or *le monde* in Malebranche's case, on the human body. See the following for information on Malebranche and Quesnay and the ways in which aspects of Malebranche's philosophy and theology (might have) made its way into Physiocracy through Quesnay. Hecht, "La Vie de François Quesnay," 215 (Théré, Charles, and Perrot, pg. 1336); Akiteru Kubota, "Quesnay, disciple de Malebranche;" Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 83-5; Catherine Larrère, "Malebranche Revisited"; Paul P. Christensen, "Fire, Motion, and Productivity: The Proto-Energetics of Nature and Economy in François Quesnay"; Steiner, *La "Science Nouvelle" de l'économie politique*, 21-3, 37-45, 90, 98-9; Banzhaf, "Productive Nature and the Net Product"; Peter Groenewegen, "From prominent physician to major economist"; Schabas, *The Natural Origins of Economics*, 45-50; Sonenscher, *Before the Deluge*, 217-22; Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 69, 74-8. For Malebranche, Anthony J. La Vopa's manuscript essay, "Malebranche: The Christian Philosopher and the *bel esprit*," is especially profound and explores Malebranche's epistemological criticism of *le monde*.

<sup>651</sup>Quesnay, "Évidence," §56.

product of unregulated or disorderly sensations, and the soul was incapable of single-handedly controlling the vivacious and unruly sensations without “supernatural aid.” For Quesnay, *la liberté animale* was a false liberty; it was a “conflict between affective sensations [and ‘instructive’ sensations] that limits the attention of the soul to illicit passions...[and] must be distinguished from the moral liberty, or intelligence, which is not obsessed with disorderly affections but recalls to everyone their duties to God, to himself, to others.”<sup>652</sup> Ultimately, we are free only when we achieve union with the divine intelligence, live according to the natural law, and avoid corporeal *dérèglements* that shatter the combination of physical and moral laws in the natural order.

Quesnay’s epistemology was no simple mind/body dichotomy. Reason for Quesnay was as much a corporeal activity as memory, both relying on sensory data for activation, but the higher cognitive functions and the quest for union with the divine required intellectual labor that was seemingly beyond the body. To attain *évidence*, and thus entry into Physiocracy, a necessary connection between external sensory data (experience) and internal ideas needed to be established; one must *then* concentrate one’s mind on the data.<sup>653</sup> Since the mind/soul is connected to God, this epistemological procedure obscured the physicality of bodies while simultaneously relying on them for sensory data.

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<sup>652</sup>This information comes from Quesnay, “Évidence,” (§54-6; quote from §56). See also Quesnay, “Natural Right,” 48-9, n.1.

<sup>653</sup>Loïc Charles has described Quesnay’s methodological intention of the *Tableau Économique* in the following way: “According to Quesnay, the zigzag left an imprint on the mind (*imagination*) of the reader that facilitated his understanding (*intelligence*) of the theory. Moreover, the action of the image bypassed conscious reasoning; it was obtained before the reader *applied his mind actively* to the understanding of the economic theory embodied in the *tableau* and its explanation.” The visual stimulation of the *Tableau* was to precede, but did not preclude, the application of the mind. Charles, “The *Tableau Économique* as Rational Recreation,” 466.

Followers of Quesnay expressed ill-defined positions regarding *évidence*. In *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (1767), Pierre-Paul Le Mercier de la Rivière relied on the assurance of *évidence* to convince his fellow Frenchmen of physiocratic truths, but “dispersed here and there are reminders that the mind may not reign supreme.”<sup>654</sup> According to Vardi, paraphrasing Le Mercier de la Rivière, “once we have accepted that evidence is true, we *feel* uplifted and shaken (*transports et secousses*) out of ourselves. We have reached, as he puts it, a ‘sublime understanding of justice and injustice,’ which conforms to the immutable, essential order or, put more simply, to universal reason.”<sup>655</sup> The body, in a sense, received a new vivifying principle after achieving *évidence*; it has been activated in a new, immaterial way transcending the corporeal state. This sentiment of mutual association was already inherent in Mirabeau’s work from *L’ami des hommes* and “Traité de la monarchie” to *Lettres sur la législation*. The body, in all cases, housed a radiating principle that could only spread by limiting other corporeal effects.<sup>656</sup>

By 1780, Mirabeau’s training was fully complete. Whether he had only finally been “converted” by Quesnay’s epistemology or he hoped to slow the splintering of Physiocracy, Mirabeau shifted his emphasis to the role of reason even when examining “magnanimity.” “I know that men of feeling [*hommes sensible*],” Mirabeau proclaimed, “will tell me that true sentiments come from the heart, but, if no other organ is involved, I will call this an emotion.

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<sup>654</sup>Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 139.

<sup>655</sup>*Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>656</sup>See *L’ami* and “Traité” above, and Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*, “Première Lettre de M. B. à M.” (1769).

Feelings cannot last unless they engage the mind.”<sup>657</sup> Mirabeau’s move to prize reason over the imagination and emotion, though, still placed the body in an uneasy position. One had to either quiet the body in order to listen to the interior sentiment or overcome and correct the body through rational processes.

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In his memoir, comte d’Angiviller portrayed Quesnay as a “disembodied brain” capable of rising above the “whirlwind of intrigue” that daily characterized court society at Versailles.<sup>658</sup> Like his ability to silence the noise at Versailles, Quesnay created an epistemology ensconced in the material world of sensations but which strove toward a virtually immaterial goal. He sought to harness the powers of the mind, while balancing the tensions of bodies eager “to fall back under the empire of the senses.”<sup>659</sup> Although he denied the existence of innate ideas, he placed inside each human an intangible, though imprinted, link to the divine: “In the tranquil exercise of liberty, the soul almost always acts without examination and deliberation because it is instructed of the rules that it must follow without hesitation.”<sup>660</sup> Quesnay perhaps not only found in Mirabeau a fellow supporter of the centrality of agriculture and a useful publicist, but also a contemporary who recognized that justice is “inherent in our substance” and that the Creator “imprinted in the heart of man” a set of divine creeds.<sup>661</sup>

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<sup>657</sup>Quoted in Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, 140. See also Mirabeau, *Lettres sur la législation, ou l’ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*, “Première Lettre de M. B. à M.” (1769), 13-16, for the role of reason in parsing sensory data for reality.

<sup>658</sup>Ibid., 49, 45. See also Théré and Charles, “The Writing Workshop of François Quesnay,” 6, 9-10.

<sup>659</sup>Mirabeau and Quesnay, “Traité de la monarchie,” 64.

<sup>660</sup>Quesnay, “Évidence,” §56.

<sup>661</sup>Mirabeau and Quesnay, “Traité de la monarchie,” 61, 60. All of this is, of course, speculation because Quesnay’s true religious feelings are not entirely clear. The line between “nature” and “God,” and “God” and “reason,” is often blurred, and Quesnay certainly preferred the moniker “Author of nature” to indicate the more important aspect of

Mirabeau and Quesnay built Physiocracy on a physiological foundation from which they attacked luxury, commerce, and the entire socio-political order. Both demonstrated contempt for the body's addiction to material goods and susceptibility to irrepressible habits. The king, his ministers, and a retinue of courtiers bolstered the artificiality of society through a dedication to commerce and luxury. As Physiocracy took shape, the body became a fundamental site in which nature worked to demand subsistence and security. To prove the unassailability of their principles, Mirabeau and Quesnay challenged other theorists of society and the body. They dismissed Montesquieu's premise that bodies were affected by environments and therefore needed particular forms of government and laws, and they criticized the unsound epistemology of history, which was based on the mental operation memory. In opposition to materialists and supporters of the perfectibility of mankind, the Physiocrats argued that the physical characteristics of the body needed to be suppressed in order to make room for the sentimental, spiritual, sociable, or "natural" foundations of human behavior.<sup>662</sup> Just as the task of the sovereign was to ensure the proper flow of the natural order, individuals needed to avoid the corporeal obstructions that would interfere with the intellectual labor necessary to understand Physiocracy or the communication with the divinely-inspired, natural order.

Although Mirabeau abandoned the dichotomy of cupidity/sociability, around which he structured *L'ami des hommes*, for Quesnay's analysis of the material conditions of life—subsistence, labor, property, security, and the natural order—the core of his dyad persisted in

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God. There is no disputing the fact that Quesnay relied on a transcendental or supernatural morality. For the complexity of Quesnay's metaphysical views, see Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy*, 69, 75-6, 83-92.

<sup>662</sup>See Vardi, *The Physiocrats and the World of the Enlightenment*, chps. 6-7, for Du Pont de Nemours' commitment to sensationalism and "sentimental contagion" (4).

Physiocracy.<sup>663</sup> According to Le Mercier de la Rivière, “The manner by which man is organised proves that he is destined by nature to live in society.”<sup>664</sup> This statement is pregnant with meaning for the Physiocrats. We have seen the conceptual role played by *organisation* and its derivatives, and we know that one understanding of the body in physiocratic terms extended to the base level of bodies needing subsistence and sharing the duties to obtain it. Poised between the fountainhead and his oldest disciple, Le Mercier de la Rivière would go on to highlight the emotional bonds of society, so central to Mirabeau, and the development of human intelligence so important to Quesnay. He continued: “It is evident...that man, being capable of compassion, pity, friendship, benevolence, glory, emulation, and of a multitude of affections that can be experienced only in society, was destined by nature to live in society.”<sup>665</sup> Le Mercier de la Rivière identified a range of social affections, binding fellow citizens together in a relationship that could triumph over the purely physical and delight the soul. This was the utopia, or rather the natural order, that the Physiocrats envisioned. In order to excite sentiments of human bonding and encourage their contemporaries to exercise their free will, the Physiocrats demanded that their society be re-embodied.

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<sup>663</sup>Mirabeau returned to cupidity in the *Avertissement* (iii-iv) to *Lettres sur la législation, ou l'ordre légal, dépravé, rétabli et perpétué*.

<sup>664</sup>Quote from *L'ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* (1767) found in Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes*, 250.

<sup>665</sup>*Ibid.*, 250.

## Conclusion

The social and economic processes set in motion during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries converged around the mid-eighteenth century to produce a new focus on society as the realm of human interdependence and interaction. The notion that society consisted of individuals, which amended or overturned the hierarchy of *corps* and *états*, combined with the spread of commerce and luxury to create an increasing anxiety that the traditional, corporate social order no longer truly represented French society. Opponents and proponents of commerce and luxury, alongside supporters of what would soon become the *Ancien Régime*, looked to stabilize society by grounding it in mankind's corporeal nature. Sensationalist physiology and attention to the materiality of bodies provided the tools to reconceptualize social commerce. The Enlightenment may still be considered the "Age of Reason," but responses to the prospect of abolishing the corporate order and privileges, fears of the degenerative impact of luxury, and efforts to revitalize French political economy demonstrate that the physical body occupied an equally important plank in social reform.

I have traced three overlapping themes, building first an argument that the traditional corporate order was based on a set of corporeal principles. The social order appeared unstable, as the independence of social beings from religious and political strictures challenged the philosophical underpinnings of eighteenth-century French society. In addition, the growth of commerce and luxury put into practice the theoretical visions of a new society. Each was expected to replace the corporate vision of the body with another, as commerce created a new set of conditions for social interaction. The 1776 crisis revealed corporate claims about human



nature and the corporeal, about how individual, physical bodies fit into a system of hierarchical *corps*. Wide-ranging, body-politic metaphors, which incorporated individuals and their *états* as organs into an animated *corps*, contested and upheld the conventional order. Writers such as Rousseau, Turgot, and the Physiocrats sought new ways to understand the links between individuals in society and thus the foundation for a new political and economic order. The human body, though, was not simply used metaphorically; society itself came to be seen as a product of the corporeal properties. Thinkers who imagined new bases for society focused on the corporeal, particularly the dual language of moral and physical sensibility. Contemporaries representative of different socio-political points of view (e.g. Diderot, Meister, Garat, Pluquet) all found in the human body the means of forging a unified society. A new form of the social imagination emerged by the 1780s. The growing recognition by reformers of public health and the urban environment that the body could be harmed by visible and invisible agents exemplifies the numerous avenues through which the French thought about the health of society through the health of individual bodies. In multiple ways and through multiple sources, the corporeal became as important to ideas of the social order as the corporate system of privileges and the application of “reason” to reform it.

Critics of increasing commerce, the spread of luxury, and the rise of consumerism charged not only that the social order would collapse if *états* no longer guided behavior, but also that the human body, which undergirded the order of *états* and *corps*, would be forever changed. French writers reignited *la querelle du luxe* at midcentury, and critics enunciated a corporeal critique of luxury. Making use of sensationalist physiology, they argued that addiction to luxury items and the correlative incessant, yet misguided, pursuit of pleasure would disrupt the entire sensory network. Their contemporaries would be physiologically dazzled by luxury goods,

blinded to their natural *états*, and would eventually become numb to the sensibility necessary for social interaction. A corporeal critique of luxury could be found as the bedrock for Physiocracy, the most robust and comprehensive political economy of the eighteenth century. Quesnay, Mirabeau, and their acolytes framed both their critique of a society mobilized by commerce and luxury and their constructive procedure to achieve *évidence* around the physical body. Although the Physiocrats did not seek to prop up the traditional corporate order, they nevertheless argued that the deleterious effects of an unstable society could be best located in the human body.

The French Revolution would not dissipate the primacy of the corporeal in competing visions of society. I have not sought to explain the *causes* of the French Revolution, but the threads that I have woven certainly help to understand the *shape* of the Revolution. The social, political, and economic fluctuations in France before, during, and after the revolutionary period have been a perennial example of the historian's task of identifying continuity versus change. It is clear that debates over commerce, luxury, and the necessary guiding hand of the corporate order persisted. The importance of commerce, especially with the colonies, in defining French society and political liberty galvanized individuals who lived from 1789-1815. In fact, Benjamin Constant took *esprit de commerce* to be a pillar of modernity already in 1806, in opposition to the *esprit de conquête* exhibited by Napoleon, for which any new political system must account.<sup>666</sup> It is clear too that the principles of sensibility, sentimentality, and the passions became essential to understanding human behavior and thus reordering society. Revolutionaries brought to fruition many of the theoretical plans for social and political intercourse promulgated

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<sup>666</sup>1806 represents the initial drafting of "Principes de politique applicables à tous les gouvernements." See the introduction by Biancamaria Fontana, *Constant: Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 33. In many ways, Constant's work marks a culmination of this dissertation, as he not only dealt with the socio-political ramifications of commercial society, but he also sought to forge a society out of the eighteenth-century elements of sympathy, empathy, and moral sensibility. As K. Steven Vincent has written: "The implication is that sociability is important for emotional health." Vincent, *Benjamin Constant and the Birth of French Liberalism* (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 157.

during the previous fifty years. In the process, they used the body as a fundamental point of departure. The dual meaning of *corps* in the corporate order, the debates over appropriate attire in the new Republic, the widespread use of *organisation* in the socio-political vocabulary of the 1790s, and the political application of sensationalism by Revolutionaries—especially the *Idéologues* and the *Société médicale d'émulation*—solidified the trends developed from midcentury. While Physiocrats, critics of luxury, and writers such as Diderot, abbé Pluquet, and Meister could only envision new forms of social interaction through the corporeal, Revolutionaries became the builders of a new society armed with a plethora of corporeal ideas.

The decapitation of Louis XVI transformed the entire socio-political structure and replaced one set of symbols and metaphors with another. Not only did Revolutionaries physically sever the head of the king's "two bodies," but they also metaphorically severed the head from the body of the body politic (the monarchy as the sacred symbol of the body politic). Revolutionaries then instituted a new metaphor that political power lay not in the head but in the body itself; the will of the citizenry directed the body and served as its source of movement and cognition.<sup>667</sup> Before 21 January 1793, however, the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* gave political expression to the new authority of the nation and preserved the individual from harm: "The source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation. No body [*corps*], no individual can exercise authority that does not proceed from it in plain terms."<sup>668</sup> The traditional

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<sup>667</sup>See Antoine de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), and Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>668</sup>Laura Mason and Tracy Rizzo, eds., *The French Revolution: A Document Collection* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 103 (Article III). Although Article III used the term "nation," there is a questionable difference between *la nation* and *société*. As we have seen, society was discursively invented prior to the Revolution, but it was with the Revolution that society come to be transformed into a self-reflexive institution capable of internal, rather than "extra-social," change. Revolutionaries had to create society before they could give it shape, whether through the conception of *la nation* or another. See Brian C. J. Singer, *Society, Theory, and the French Revolution: Studies in the Revolutionary Imaginary* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986).

corporate order that constrained individual *corps* within a hierarchical system of *corps* and *états* no longer had authority. The early stages of the French Revolution not only inverted the core metaphor of the body politic, but it also reshaped the relationship between individual bodies in society and between individual bodies and the body politic.

With the diffusion of political sacrality from the king to the people, "the social came more closely into focus, and the bodies of individuals were even more intensely invested with significance."<sup>669</sup> Society was now emancipated from a divine hierarchy, tradition, and the will of the king, but individuals nevertheless embodied the new social order. In a discussion of sartorial politics during the French Revolution, Lynn Hunt noted that

each individual body now carried within itself all the social and political meanings of the new political order, and these meanings proved very difficult to discern. With sovereignty diffused from the king's body out into the multiple bodies of the nation, the old codes of readability broke down and new ones had to be elaborated...The body assumed such significance in the French Revolution because the long-term shift from a sacred to a secular framework of legitimacy made the workings of the social both more visible and more problematic.<sup>670</sup>

Clothing the body became a political act, and new, egalitarian symbols came to replace the system of *représentation* so central to the *Ancien Régime*. The wars over the cockade and the red liberty cap were just two political manifestations of debates over external adornment, fashion, and luxury during the Revolution. After the Thermidorian Reaction, *les incroyables* and *les merveilleuses* eschewed the social and sartorial rigors of virtue. Against classical republican demands for political virtue expressed through frugality and sober living, reactionaries looked to reactivate sociability and the economy based not on republican principles but on commerce,

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<sup>669</sup>Lynn Hunt, "Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France," in *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, eds., Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, 224-49 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 232.

<sup>670</sup>*Ibid.*, 231.

fashion, and self-interest. Moreover, items that began the eighteenth century as luxury goods became by the Revolution “populuxe.”<sup>671</sup> Rhetoric denouncing the superfluous often did not match reality, and bodies undergirded a new system of socio-political meaning that differed only in intent from the traditional corporate order.

Article III of the *Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen* was not the only article that directly or indirectly addressed the corporeal relationship between individuals and society.

Article VI stated:

Law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have the right to take part personally, or by their representatives, in its formation. It must be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens, being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all public dignities, places, and employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.<sup>672</sup>

Underneath the seemingly meritocratic vision of “virtues and talents” lay the foundation for exclusion. “Talents” preserved the idea that there were distinctions between individuals; some were innately more qualified to rule because they were gifted by nature a better-organized body.<sup>673</sup> Revolutionaries challenged the privileges of the nobility, clergy, and trade corporations, but in the place of privilege many articulated a corporeal superiority based on nature. For example, the Committee of General Security (October 1793) prohibited revolutionary women’s associations because of their unstable bodies: “There is another sense in which women’s associations seem dangerous...women are disposed by their [corporeal] organization to an over-

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<sup>671</sup>Colin Jones and Rebecca Spang, “Sans-culottes, *sans café, sans tabac*: Shifting Realms of Luxury and Necessity in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850*, eds., Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, 37-62 (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999). *La querelle du luxe* did not cease with the Revolution either. See Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 139-146.

<sup>672</sup>Mason and Rizzo, eds., *The French Revolution: A Document Collection*, 103.

<sup>673</sup>John Carson, “Differentiating a Republican Citizenry: Talents, Human Science, and Enlightenment Theories of Governance,” *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 17, Science and Civil Society (2002), 74-103.

excitation which would be deadly in public affairs and that interests of state would soon be sacrificed to everything which ardor in passions can generate in the way of error and disorder.”<sup>674</sup> Individual *organisations* were imbued with the authority of nature, and, for some revolutionaries, the physical body became a natural barrier to democracy. The term *organisation* diffused seamlessly across the border of metaphor and ontology.<sup>675</sup> Distinctions of *organisation* directed new visions of society and politics during both the First Republic and the Directory

Pierre-Louis Roederer survived the various stages of the Revolution through the Terror and determined that a stable French social and political identity could be had through an understanding of the human body. For Roederer, social *organisation* was the foundation for political *organisation*. To this stage of history, he argued, politics has neglected two crucial ingredients: the “moral and physiological study of man.” The “spring” of social *organisation* could be found in “the physical, intellectual and moral faculties,” and “it is necessary to know man himself, that is to say the qualities that can ensure the action of the social machine.”<sup>676</sup> Like Garat, Meister, Pluquet, Diderot, the Physiocrats, and others, Roederer argued that the moral and

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<sup>674</sup>Quoted in Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 144.

<sup>675</sup>By the Revolution, *organisation* had clearly passed into general use, as observed in the work *Principles of Government simplified and reduced to seven natural units, conditions for a good Constitution* that combined “constitution” and *organisation*: “What we call the constitution of the human body is the totality, the intimate union of all the parts; they say that a man is ‘well-constituted’ when he enjoys a healthy, vigorous organization, without deformity...It must be the same for a political body.” Quoted in de Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770-1800*, 104. See also Jean-Baptiste Salaville, *De l'organisation d'un état monarchique, ou considerations sur les vices de la monarchie française et nécessité de lui donner une constitution* (1789). Antoine Barnave also used *organisation* frequently in his discussions of politics, often in conjunction with other polysemous terms, like *constitution* and *corps (social)*, and physiological terms, such as *ressorts*, *mouvement*, and *tempérament*. See the following pages in *Réflexions politiques*, in *Œuvres de Barnave*, v. 2 (Paris: Challamel et Compagnie, 1843), 26, 84, 102, 167, 184, 201, 225, and 332. He contested the growth of republicanism during the Revolution by putting forward the idea of *une monarchie organisée*, one that resembled American Federalism. The latter can be found in Barnave’s papers, Archives nationales, W<sub>15</sub>, n<sup>o</sup> 1<sup>er</sup>, folio pages 80-81, 101-105. See also Paul Cheney’s analysis of Barnave’s work in *Revolutionary Commerce: Globalization and the French Monarchy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), chp. 7.

<sup>676</sup>P.-L. Roederer, *Cours d'organisation sociale*, in *Oeuvres du Comte P.-L. Roederer*, ed. A.-M. Roederer, 8<sup>th</sup> tome (Paris: Typographie de firmin didot frères, imprimeurs de l'institut, 1859), 131.

the physical were inextricably linked. To understand social *organisation*, through an analysis of the “moral elements” or “moral qualities of man,” “we will have to look for the origin of the human passions. We will see how the passions all proceed from a similar principle, a principle of physical sensibility in all moments and in all well-organized [*bien organisés*] men.”<sup>677</sup> Roederer sought a comprehensive view of social *organisation* that began with the corporeal and could explain everything from domestic relationships and human interaction to political governance.

Similarly, the creation of the Class of Moral and Political Sciences, particularly the works of the *Idéologues* and the Parisian *Société médicale d’émulation*, demonstrated a commitment to creating a new society based on medicine and physiology—the “science of man.” In his “Discours sur les rapports de la médecine avec les sciences physiques et morales,” J.-L. Alibert, the permanent secretary for the *Société* from 1796-1802, put forward a prospectus for medicine similar to d’Alembert’s mighty *Discours préliminaire de l’Encyclopédie*.<sup>678</sup> Alibert outlined not only a history of medicine, but he expressed repeatedly the interconnectivity of the physical and the moral that made medicine of crucial importance to nearly every “science” and field of study. Doctors of the late eighteenth century were the successors to Locke and Condillac, he argued, and they possessed the “universal key to the human mind” in sensationalism.<sup>679</sup> The sensory dyad of moral/physical meant that society had to be based on the corporeal principles of sympathy and sociability, the former a natural impulse directing the latter. Alibert praised the

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<sup>677</sup>Ibid., 135.

<sup>678</sup>Elizabeth Williams, *The Physical and the Moral: Anthropology, Physiology, and Philosophical Medicine in France, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 90-93.

<sup>679</sup>J.-L. Alibert, “Discours sur les rapports de la médecine avec les sciences physiques et morales,” *Mémoires de la Société d’Émulation*, vol. 2 (1798), i-cxii, here lxxv.

eighteenth-century physician and *médecin-philosophe* Pierre Roussel for recognizing that sympathy was to animated beings what gravity was to inanimate matter. According to Alibert, society must necessarily function according to the ability of each individual to “feel” sociability through sympathy.<sup>680</sup> It was the role of politics to then channel individual happiness toward public happiness, and Alibert found the role of doctors to be indispensable in the creation of a new political order: “The reciprocal dependences of these two sciences [politics and medicine] is so much admitted and noted that nobody would doubt that a treatise on the organic constitution of man would make an excellent introduction to the difficult study of the social body; this treatise would give to politics a degree of certitude that it surely needs.”<sup>681</sup>

Revolutionaries created a political culture that put into effect Alibert’s notion that politics and knowledge of the human body should be merged. Civic festivals, theatrical performances, political symbolism, “semiotic initiatives” before and after the Terror, and the quest to regenerate both individuals and *la nation* hinged on sensationalist ideas.<sup>682</sup> By 1789, the sensationalist epistemology summarized by Rouillé d’Orfeuil was commonplace: “The different ways of thinking...seeing...and feeling that we adopt, depend on the impressions that the exterior objects that surround us, and have surrounded us, make, and have made, on us.”<sup>683</sup> Revolutionaries

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<sup>680</sup>Ibid., lxxxiii. Alibert continued on to suggest that sympathy was a natural faculty of all animate matter and could potentially be used as a system of classification.

<sup>681</sup>Ibid., xciv.

<sup>682</sup>See the following notable works. “Semiotic initiatives” comes from Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 181. For regeneration, see Mona Ozouf, *L’Homme régénéré: essai sur la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), and Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall, *The Abbé Grégoire and the French Revolution: The Making of Modern Universalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2005), chp. 3. And, on the theatre and festivals, see, respectively, Cecilia Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution* (Burlington and Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2013), and Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988, orig. pub. 1976).

<sup>683</sup>Augustin Rouillé d’Orfeuil, *L’Ami des Français* (1771), 636.



recognized that *le peuple* could be led astray when visual stimuli did not correspond with socio-political truth (as in the case of *misreprésentation*). They took care to ensure that visual representations of political principles, such as the Festival of the Supreme Being, promulgated a particular political philosophy based on the idea that humans can be and are guided by impressions, reiterated sensory data, and inherent sensibility. As the Abbé Grégoire wrote in his *Rapport sur les sceaux de la République* (1796):

When rebuilding a government anew, everything must be republicanized. The legislator who failed to recognize the importance of the language of signs would be remiss; he should not omit any opportunity to impress the senses, to awaken republican ideas. This way the soul is penetrated by ever reproduced objects; and this composition, this set of principles, facts and emblems that ceaselessly retraces before the eyes of the citizen his rights and duties, shapes the republican mold that gives him his national character and the bearing of a free man.<sup>684</sup>

Revolutionary political culture was didactic at its core, and the sentimentality of theatrical performances combined the moral and physical qualities of sensibility, allowing “the beliefs of the private and the natural [to be] joined with the political and patriotic.”<sup>685</sup> Regeneration of the decaying French *corps politique* came through the senses of individual *corps*, and the human body served as the focal point of revolutionary political culture.

During the tumult of the 1790s, revolutionaries often substituted physiological principles for political principles in their attempts to redefine the social order, basing their views on different perspectives that had developed and hardened over the course of the eighteenth century. Once the revolutionaries dismantled the corporate order (1789-91), the task of rebuilding remained. We can read the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen de 1789*, Roederer's *Cour d'organisation sociale*, and Alibert's “Discours” as a continuation of the

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<sup>684</sup>Quoted in Landes, *Visualizing the Nation*, 28.

<sup>685</sup>Feilla, *The Sentimental Theater of the French Revolution*, 91. Feilla wants to distinguish between ideas of “sensibility” and “sentimentality” in her work, finding in the latter a set of “aesthetic conventions and practices.”

themes developed from midcentury. They all emphasized new corporeal foundations for society. The *Declaration* destroyed the political system of corporate privileges, and, through *Loi Le Chapelier* (June 1791), revolutionaries abolished trade corporations, thus stripping away some corporeal limitations inherent in the social order. Previous members of the Third Estate were no longer bodies to labor, and previous members of the Second Estate were no longer bodies defined through *représentation*. Roederer and Alibert revealed the natural foundations of the social order through the human body. Individual *corps* were released momentarily into a world where they could define themselves by their sympathy and sensibility. The ability to feel would replace the restraints of the corporate order, even if the idea in Article VI persisted that “talents” and “well-organized” bodies were not equally distributed.

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Eighteenth-century responses to socio-economic changes remind us of both the distance between our centuries and nearness. Prior to the nineteenth century, when disciplinary boundaries would come to separate the economic, political, biological, and sociological sciences, observers critical of incipient market capitalism and its social vicissitudes argued that the negative effects of competition, commerce, and consumerism could be found in the human body. They put forward a corporeal critique of what Thorstein Veblen would later call “conspicuous consumption” (1899) by marshaling contemporary medical and physiological theories.<sup>686</sup> The individuals and groups analyzed here did not seek the organic unity of Romantics, post-Revolution conservatives, and proto-biologists; instead, individual bodies captured the social imagination. The capacity of each human body to “feel” became the critical framework to

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<sup>686</sup>Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1899), chp. 4.

understand not only morality and sociability but also the intertwining of society and the economy.<sup>687</sup>

Yet, we are still asking similar questions about the nature of human relationships and the defining features of society. The eighteenth century bequeathed to us a nascent understanding of empathy and the recognition that human passions and emotions are natural and diverse. The approach of eighteenth-century writers to social and economic developments merged modern academic fields that are now being encouraged to realign. The human body is back at the center of questions about individuals' psychological and physiological responses to social interaction. Cognitive psychologists, neurologists, anthropologists, and evolutionary biologists, among others, are mapping the corporeal reactions to social intercourse over time. Exploration of the physical need for social bonds, as demanded by thinkers like Diderot and abbé Pluquet, forms the basis of sizable, international research programs. To give a twenty-first century voice to an eighteenth-century problem, two authors recently wrote: "It should not be surprising, then, that the sensory experience of social connection, deeply woven into who we are, helps regulate our physiological and emotional equilibrium. The social environment affects the neural and hormonal signals that govern our behavior, and our behavior, in turn, creates changes in the social environment that affect our neural and hormonal processes."<sup>688</sup> For historians who cannot resist a modest amount of moralizing, surely the idea that empathy and sociability are necessary, physiologically-embedded features of humanity is a salutary legacy of the Enlightenment.

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<sup>687</sup>For nineteenth-century connections between the life sciences, affectivity, emotion, and social theory, see Tiina Arppe, *Affectivity and the Social Bond: Transcendence, Economy and Violence in French Social Theory* (Surrey, UK and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2014), and Claude Blanckaert, *La nature de la société. Organicisme et sciences sociales au XIXe siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2004).

<sup>688</sup>John T. Cacioppo and William Patrick, *Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 11. Cacioppo and Patrick expressed their goals as unraveling "how our brain and body are intertwined with our social responses [and trying] to understand the links between our physiological responses and our social and even spiritual strivings" (8-9).

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