LABOURING HORIZONS: PASSIONS AND INTERESTS IN JOVELLANOS’ LEY AGRARIA

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Introduction
Francisco Goya’s Capricho número 43 was painted between 1797 and 1799. The painting depicts a tormented Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos laying his head on a desk that reads: “the dream of reason produces monsters.” This portrait has often been used as a symbol for the Spanish Enlightenment, or lack thereof, as it is often said that eighteenth-century Spain's half-hearted approach to the rationalist efforts in Europe were at the root of its failure to outgrow the powers of the ancien régime and the eventual fall to Napoleon. Yet this interpretation implies neglecting Goya’s own history. As his deafness developed towards the 1790s, he became more aware of the limitations this incurred —and would incur in the future— and this pushed him towards epistemological concerns, as many of his paintings became roadmaps of explorations into the evasive terrain of the senses, individual perception and the outside world.¹ Goya’s use of Jovellanos’ figure can therefore be understood as a comment on Jovellanos himself; haunted as he was at the end of his life by watching his own dream of reason and experience —those values that shaped the Enlightenment which he so obstinately believed in— face the fierce opposition of the Church and Carlos IV.

There is more to a story than its ending. Jovellano’s lifelong belief in reason belongs to a broader effort of the Spanish Enlightenment, one that was concerned with reshaping man’s understanding of his relation to the world through the means of philosophy and political economy. These currencies enabled one to trade a life of sleepwalking, bound by fear and superstition, for a life conscious of the virtues of the earthly experience.

Albert O. Hirschman’s The Passions and The Interests: Arguments in Favour of Capitalism before its Triumph explores several currents of Early Modern political thought that believed this exchange was possible, as it lays out how the conversion of passions into interests in Early Modern political thought was seen as a form of channelling Hobbesian antisocial passions into peaceful and profitable social ends. Hirschman’s main argument is generally understood to be the Montesquieu-Steuart vision that saw the pursuit of

¹ See Tzevan Todorov’s insightful work on Goya’s thought as reflected in some of his lesser-known paintings of this period.
interest as harmless and even as a liberating force from despotism. For all its flaws and its neglect of other magnetic historiographical interpretations on the Early Modern seeds of capitalism in political thought—like those of J. G. A. Pocock or Istvan Hont—Hirschman’s thesis lays out the common intellectual focus on both the malleability of the passions and the concept and use of the term interest in the French and Scottish Enlightenments. Recent works, such as Arthur Westjein’s Commercial Republicanism in the Dutch Golden Age, with its insights into the plasticity of the idea of interests in Pieter de la Court’s thought should serve to encourage us to navigate the Early Modern world in search of variations of this theme. Jovellanos’ contribution to the debate—arguably representative of the Spanish enlightenment—has largely been ignored, since his Ley agraria has been understood as a Smithian defence of self-interest, and no effort has been made so far to assess what exactly Jovellanos meant when he used the term interests. Jovellanos’ notion of interests is rich and layered, closer to Hirschman’s interpretation of the original meaning of the term in the sixteenth century than it is to the Montesquieu-Stuart vision, as Hirschman presented the former as: “interest (…) comprised the totality of human aspirations, but denoted an element of reflection and calculation with respect to the manner in which these aspirations were pursued” (Hirschman 32).

The Ley agraria ties this predictability to a camporal sociability, and in this way Jovellanos’ conception of interests differs strongly from those of the Enlightenment thinkers covered by Hirschman, who believed commerce and its interests could join forces to guide capitalism to port. The docility of the labourer is presented as an alternative to the gentleness of those who engage in commerce, and the social harmony that results is presented as a kind of peace, as progress is to be found in the emulation of Roman equanimity. Beyond this distinct take on interests, Jovellanos’ contribution to the Hirschman thesis is particularly interesting since it tackles a set of passions, honour and sloth, which remained unexplored in Hirschman’s succinct analysis. In this way, Jovellanos’s Ley agraria provides a contribution of the Spanish Enlightenment to a historical debate that Hirschman saw as a dialogue between the French and the Scottish Enlightenments.

This outcome of our interpretation of Jovellanos’ work through the Hirschman lenses of passions and interests clashes with much that has been written about the Spanish philosopher and political economist. Jovellanos’ economic, philosophical and political ideas are often tangled together to construct overarching conclusions about Jovellanos, either depicting him as a scapegoat for the failures of the Enlightenment in Spain, or portraying him as a revolutionary who was never sufficiently appreciated during his lifetime. This second view is certainly idealistic, but the first view, posited by historians as varied as Karl Marx, Francisco Sanchez-Blanco and Jonathan Israel stems from a fallacy that sees Jovellanos’ religious beliefs stunting his
philosophical imagination in the same way that the Catholic institutions stood in the path of reformist elements in Eighteenth century Spain.

Silverio Sanchez Corredora’s compilation of historiographical perspectives on Jovellanos reveals that alongside this interpretation of the Spanish Enlightenment, there are two others that can be summarised as follows. One narrative acknowledges the Enlightenment as a set of ideas which lead to social and institutional change. This narrative accepts the existence of a group of intellectuals who exchanged enlightened ideas, a set of ilustrados who deserve credit for their ideas but ultimately failed to produce social change, and therefore did not constitute a Spanish Enlightenment. Finally, a third narrative defends the vision of a moderate Enlightenment which was acquiescent and even accepting of the intellectual dominance of religious thought but endeavoured to challenge its institutional dominance.

Building on Herr’s interpretation, this article will portray Jovellanos’ Enlightenment as one that tackled the problems that were common in Europe such as superstition and widespread ignorance. This article will begin by arguing that Jovellanos’ faith in political economy has its roots in the influence of the first reformer of the Spanish Enlightenment, Father Feijoo. By exploring their links this article will present the Eighteenth century appreciation of the value of experience as a challenge to the Church and its doctrinaire teachings. This challenge manifested itself in the Spanish Enlightenment through political economy and a rewriting of history that aimed to paint new horizons for Spain. We will analyse how Jovellanos’ Ley agraria reconciled past and present, rejected the impious elements that had pervaded the Church and the careless aspects of the Spanish nobility, who failed to defend the interests of its nation. Jovellanos’ alternative hailed the importance of the individual understanding that his earthly existence could

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2 This interpretation is oddly recurrent. See, for example, Revolución en España, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Barcelona: 1970) (78), Francisco Sánchez-Blanco’s work El Absolutismo y las Luces en el Reinado de Carlos III. (Madrid: 2002) (79) and Jonathan Israel’s Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790. (Oxford: 2013) (382)

3 For the most influential study in this vein of thought, see Jean Sarrailh’s L’Espagne Éclairée de la Seconde Moitié du XVIIIe Siècle. (Paris:1954)

4 Some of the exponents of this kind of thinking are Pedro Ruiz Torres’s Reformismo e Ilustracion, V ol V (Madrid: 2007) and Manuel Fernández Álvarez, in his Jovellano, El Patriota. (Madrid: 2008)
bring him happiness and stimulate national prosperity. To illustrate these Eighteenth century values, Jovellanos relied heavily on Roman motifs, particularly on the docility associated with camporal tranquillity and a familial way of life, anticipating Nineteenth century Romantics.

A particularly central Roman motif which is latent throughout the text, and emerges towards the end of the *Ley agraria* is a form of patriotism which in times of peace consisted in a humble life and labouring one’s fields. Jovellanos drew on this logic to develop his ideas around the motivation for the labourer. If the labourer understood that by peacefully cultivating one’s garden he was leaving his mark on earth and contributing to his patria, just as Aeneas and other great men had done before, he would feel fulfilled in knowing that he contributed to national prosperity and peace. As such, Jovellanos saw in the creation of an independent, peaceful labourer the possibility of creating a peaceful nation. Jovellanos’ ideal republic, much like Plato’s, suffered from the belief that the kind of peace a nation required to achieve national happiness was the same kind of peace that an individual required to achieve his own happiness.

**Feijoo, Jovellanos and the Spanish Enlightenment**

Jovellanos belongs to a stream of reformist, Catholic Enlightenment thought in Eighteenth century Spain which originated with the thought of Father Feijoo. In an intellectual context shaped by the University of Salamanca, which focused on debating how “angels handled their discussions, whether the heavens were made up of bell’s metal” (Cadalso 51), Father Feijoo (1676 – 1764) amplified and developed the ideas of the novatores, who introduced the ideas of Erasmus and civic humanism into Spain in the Seventeenth century (Ruiz Torres 211-2), by providing a variety of commentaries in defence of rationalism in simple language. In this way, Feijoo can be considered the first Spanish thinker who introduced the impulse to understand man as he really is into Spain through his seemingly innocuous defence of the value of learning from everyday experience; a view which Hirschman believes was introduced in France and Scotland through debates on Machiavelli’s realism (Hirschman 13-14). Jovellanos is likely to have encountered Feijoo’s work in 1761, and the common themes in their thought constitute a thread between the early and the late Spanish Enlightenment. A deep Catholic faith, their acerbic rejection of superstition, and a tendency to echo civic humanist ideals are three shared cornerstones of their political thought (Sánchez Agesta 90).

Jonathan Israel has claimed that Feijoo viewed the Spanish Enlightenment as a “battle ground” (Israel 390) where Christian

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5 For an evaluation of Feijoo’s influence on Jovellanos’ thought, as well as for Jovellanos’ initial interest in Feijoo see María Elvira Muñiz’s study: "Proyección del pensamiento de Feijoo en Jovellanos," *Boletín Jovellanista IV*, (Gijon: 2003) (43).
moderation, based on Locke’s political thought, opposed the French materialists. While Feijoo was no doubt an admirer of Locke and Bacon’s experientialism there is no sense of a “battle ground” being fought between moderation and radicalism in Feijoo’s writings. Feijoo believed Europe was spellbound by the new-fangled tendency to follow the siren calls of fluctuating fashions: “the true philosopher shouldn’t be biased towards this century or the other. Foreign nations are too extreme in their following of today’s beliefs, while in Spain most follow the old” (Feijoo vol. I p.571). Feijoo’s views contribute to the debate between the virtues of old and new values, or in other terms, to the European querelle des anciens et modernes. In another text Feijoo argued along similar lines: “being a free citizen of the republic of letters, neither a slave to Aristotle nor an ally of his enemies, I will always prefer individual authorities and I will listen only to the voices of experience and reason” (vol. II p.327). An admirer of Locke and Descartes, Feijoo believed the querelle, along with Spain’s social issues, could be solved by learning from every day experience and the history of this type of experience (Sánchez Agesta 76).

This understanding of history was frequently the fabric which political economy used to weave and patch together its estimates and predictions about the future, and this opened the realm of the transferability of insights through time, as it did for Hume in his text Of the Populousness of Ancient Nations. In the Spanish context, Feijoo’s and Jovellanos plans for an agrarian reform heavily draw on Roman political and social insights. Both thinkers refer to the teachings of the Roman economist Columela on the simple joy of working the land (Martínez Guillen p. 721), and Jovellanos draws extensively on Columela’s moralistic interpretation of the simple life to justify his reforms, as we will see. Richard Herr has suggested that by the middle of the Eighteenth century, many Spaniards had accepted political economy as the “unchallenged arbiter of social relations and justice that it was to become in the nineteenth century” (Herr The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain 55). Building on Feijoo’s appreciation of everyday experience, Jovellanos would employ this newly accepted form of social arbitration to displace the institutional authority of the Church in favour the state.

Jovellanos’ skilful use of Roman examples often served to emphasise the resiliency of the invisible hand of religious determinism and progress; both Feijoo and Jovellanos believed this very hand would plant the seeds for civilisation and peace, dispelling chance by creating its own laws and patterns based on understanding man as he really is. This is best encapsulated by Jovellanos’ distinction between the urbanity that results from a good education, and the real edification of the individual, which arises in his instruction of the useful tasks known through experience, “Hombres inútiles y livianos devorarán su sustancia. La urbanidad es un bello barniz de la instrucción y su mejor ornamento; pero sin la instrucción es nada, es solo apariencia. La urbanidad dora la estatua, la educación la forma (…) Por eso
decía el gran canciller de Verulamio que el hombre vale lo que sabe.”  

(Jovellanos, *Escríitos Pedagógicos* vol XIII: 348-9). Jovellanos quoted Francis Bacon to point out that man’s worth was not to be determined by honour or piety, but by the pursuit of his interests as determined by the lessons acquired through *savoir faire*.

**Past and Future: The Puzzle of Spanish History and Political Economy as the “Philosopher's Stone” in Eighteenth Century Spain**

The principle of *man as he really is*—and its assumptions about man's predictability—became absorbed by historical narratives and the logic of political economy. A widespread Eighteenth century form of historical prognosis in political thought, following the interpretations of Reinhardt Koselleck and J.G.A Pocock, argued civilisation and commerce were replacing the drags of poverty and ignorance. This prognosis was eyed suspiciously by many in Spain. The public in the second half of the century was ambivalent towards civilisation at best.

The nation’s economy appeared dragged down by inaction to nationals and foreigners alike (Paquette 68). Montesquieu argued that Spain was haunted by the same curse King Midas suffered in his pursuit of gold, since the nation’s economy suffered from an overreliance of gold and silver from the Americas (Montesquieu 395). However, the historical narrative of civilisation tied in conveniently well with some of the events which were taking place in Spain. While the Spanish had blamed fate and on foreign influences for the sense of decay associated with the state over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the Eighteenth century the notion of Spanish decay was anchored to the legacy of Habsburg rule by Jovellanos and fellow reformers (Mackay 112). As José de Cadalso argued in his *Cartas Marruecas*, “I see Spain since the end of 1500 as a great house which was once magnificent and sturdy, but which with time has started to crumble and fall on its citizens below” (Cadalso 127). The arrival of the Bourbon dynasty at the beginning of the century marked the beginning of a new enterprise, they argued; not only did it link Spain to the intellectual influence of the land of the *philosophes*, but also provided a fresh start for a narrative which could sever Spain from its ruinous past (Hillgarth 178).

At the same time, this overreaching optimism about the prospect of a better future was further inflated by the belief in the possibilities of political economy, a second form of prognosis. The appreciation of experience allowed reformers to plant the seeds for new horizons of thought and expectations through specific reforms. Political economy had been

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6 For an important if brief assessment of intellectual and social attitudes to civilisation in Spain see José Escobar Arronis’ piece on changing public reactions to the term in his *Más sobre los orígenes de civilizar y civilización en la España del siglo XVIII* (Mexico: 1984).
described by a contemporary of Jovellanos, Lorenzo Normante y Carcavilla, as “a philosopher’s stone with which all nations can become happy” (Normante y Carcavilla 45). As Hirschman argued, the sense that the world was improving contributed to the acceptance of passions (Hirschman 47), or in the Spanish case, to the framing of national problems in the context of certain passions. The reformers in government, Floridablanca, Campomanes and Jovellanos believed the main problem in Spain to be the widespread lethargy, particularly among its labourers, who still constituted most of the population (Ruiz Torres 83). Unlike Montesquieu’s climatological theories of labour or Mandeville’s defence of laboriousness as money-driven, the Spanish reformers saw the rotten roots of laziness in a lack of appreciation for earthly life, which resulted from religious superstition. Jovellanos would have to juggle his Christian faith with a criticism of the social effects of the Church, as he believed its popular religion induced a sense of sheepishness into the people. However, lassitude was also commonplace among the high ranks of society, as one of the social axioms the political economists aimed to debunk was the nobility’s perceived entitlement to live without ever working, based on the entrenched value of honour, which the reformers saw as devoid of social recognition and desert (Sanchez Blanco 28, Padgen 157), or in other words, outside of the arbitration of political economy. The nobility’s lack of concern with the cultivation of the land was a further source of concern, as it perpetuated poverty and low levels of consumption. While Montesquieu defended wealth as an emancipating force from monarchical whims for the average man, most Spanish reformers thought the population was yet to be liberated from the arbitrariness and avarice of its “kings” and the stagnant nature of the Spanish national wealth (Hirschman 72). To Jovellanos and Campomanes they were little more than “useless hands” (Israel 381).

After all, the passions derived from the nobility’s honour were quixotic, more intent on tilting at windmills than willing to build them, more interested in preserving the pride of a name than in making a name for themselves. Their pride, dependent on the past rather than on the present, was in fact closer to the indefinite desire for approval proper of amour propre, that sense of worth that Rousseau would later condemn, and was opposed to the amour de soi, which as Hirschman argued, aimed at the satisfaction of one’s real needs and was closer to the model the reformers were trying to instate (Hirschman 109). There was therefore little room to direct the nobility’s passions towards socially productive ends, since pride was their main passion and its preservation their main interest. Clavijo y Fajardo was particularly harsh in his condemnation of the nobles, comparing their behaviour to that of a modern Diogenes (Clavijo 81). There was no space for meritocracy to develop, as José de Cadalso argued: “the principle of hereditary nobility is based on the fact that eight hundred years before I was born someone with wealth died with the same name as mine, and I may as well be useless at everything” (Cadalso 76). Furthermore, much like in
Naples at the start of the century, the nobility was more focused on consuming than they were on investing (Robertson 326).

It is important to remember that Herr and Torres have both emphasised that reformers like Jovellanos were Catholic themselves, but differentiated their faith in religion from what they referred to as “popular religion” – which they understood to be based on rituals and superstition rather than on an educated awareness of the teachings of the Bible. These were blamed for people’s expectations or lack thereof, their notions of temporality and their work ethic. Campomanes tried to emphasise earthly pursuits in day to day life as a means to purge fear and superstition and in order to do this, Campomanes attempted to eliminate ubiquitous references to death, present in sermons or in the cemeteries located in centre of many villages (López Egido 234). Yet the Church’s influence also emanated from their control on education - since the parish priest would educate children in rural areas (Sarasúa 353). Hirschman argued that the understanding of man as he really is was derived from the belief that religious precepts could not be trusted with restraining the destructive passions of men, but most Spaniards were happy to place their trust on these precepts (Hirschman 15). As such Jovellanos and Campomanes would refer to the land that belonged to the Church as resting on “dead hands” (López Egido 234).

Political economy could counter both the useless and dead hands by changing the way the labourer approached the fruit of his labour. Herr has argued that “nothing excited the reformers as much as the development of the land. Along with the attitudes displayed towards religion, this was a singular trait of the Spanish enlightenment” (Herr The Eighteenth Century Revolution 46). Agricultural production and the provincial lifestyle followed the Church’s bells. Agriculture affected people’s plans and prospects, as the timing of weddings, the planning of children, and at times life itself rested on the predictability of its cycles (Llombart & Ocampo Suarez-Valdés 122). But, in the eyes of the reformers, the state was in a position where it could change the rhythm of the labourer’s everyday life and provide an alternative calendar.

Beyond reaching the level of subsistence for his family, the labourer had little interest in developing the land, as he had no prospect of ever owning it, argued Jovellanos. Campomanes and Jovellanos thought this undermined the possibility of the land belonging to their useful hands which would have a greater interest in developing it. This would improve the agricultural production and thereby help the nation prosper (Herr 1989: 7). In contrast to other authors who fail to appreciate this distinction, it is valuable that both these authors take it into account, see Richard Herr’s aforementioned work, as well as his Rural Change and Royal Finances in Spain at the End of the Old Regime (Berkeley 1989) show an excellent degree of awareness around this issue. Another example is Pedro Ruiz Torres’ aforementioned seminal work.
44). By denying them the experience of ownership and material wealth, labourers were denied from truly experiencing life on this earth; they were kept from experiencing the passions and interests that the flourishing “capitalist” system was selling.

A reform that aimed to tackle the population’s lethargy would therefore have to cut across the very social core of communities, villages and towns – at the very understanding of the community, and would have to try to orient people’s attention towards the wellbeing of the community that rose as an entity over the Eighteenth century: the state. Without a cemented appreciation for a unitary state, the belief in the enlarged responsibility of the individual in the Eighteenth century still had to be felt in Spain. In 1766, a bread shortage led to a nation-wide violent popular revolt known as the Revolt of Esquilache, which was particularly aggressive in Madrid, and over the last three decades of the Eighteenth century the relationship between Church and state became increasingly tense. A movement appeared- rapidly referred to as Jansenist by Carlos III- and was said to be formed by senior members of the clergy and government bureaucrats that aimed to return the church to its pious and simple early ideas and to entrust more authority to the state. Jovellanos was considered a member of such a movement and praised it in his diaries (Jovellanos Diario III, vol. III 707), but whether this was really a coherent and coordinated project or a tag used by the Inquisition to attack influential members remains a mystery to this day.

The context of the Ley agraria and Enlightenment Economic Thought

As a result of these agricultural problems, Jovellanos was asked by the Real Sociedad Económica de Madrid to write a report outlining the basis for an agrarian law that could reinvigorate the national economy. Jovellanos’ Ley agraria was to become one of the great economic texts of the Spanish Enlightenment, and its suggestions were gradually implemented in the decades following his death. Between 1805 and 1816 it circulated around Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Italy, and must have been particularly pertinent towards the feudal problems the last two states faced. In fact, the report was widely praised by the Edinburgh Review in 1809, which was believed to be headed by James Mill (Llombart & Ocampo Suarez-Valdés 136). Little is known about the origins of these publications, but their circulation is likely due to his correspondence with fellow European intellectuals. Jovellanos’ audience would have constituted influential political economists who held notable influence at court. Jovellanos wrote the work in a contemplative period of his life, when he was banished to Asturias after the arrival of Carlos IV and while he read much classical literature. As such, it is easy to mistake his idealism and his Roman camporal motifs for physiocracy. While the literature acknowledges a diffusion of physiocratic ideas in the Spanish Enlightenment, Astigarraga has argued that some of the physiocratic ideas that permeated into Spain
were developed and interpreted by the Italians and the Swiss, whose work became known in Spain more widely than French physiocratic thought per se (Astigarraga 564). Indeed, if we contrast Jovellanos’ or Campomanes’ work with that of contemporary political economists in Naples, we find rather striking similarities in their understanding of economic problems: “Galanti (…) drew attention to the oppression of the peasantry, and (…) the illiterate condition to which they were condemned by government and their social superiors” (Robertson 383). Therefore it is more appropriate to speak of the influence of the European exchanges of agrarian ideas and their effects on Spanish Eighteenth century economic thought - following Guerci’s interpretation (Guerci 57) - rather than physiocracy itself.

Nor should Jovellanos’ use of Roman motifs be taken as a sign that he feared the steamrolling effects of civilisation like Rousseau, who he condemned as delusional (Del Río 115). Generally Jovellanos’ work has not been seen in such philosophical terms; instead it has been closely associated with Smith’s economic work, as some see the main thesis of the Ley agraria as a simple and stark defence of self-interest as a means to national prosperity. One must also take into account Jovellanos’ complex defence of self-interest, his praise of agriculture as a reliable basis for the national economy, and of the necessity of government intervention to guide economic reform. Once we take these into account, Jovellanos’ ideas appear more eclectic than the purely economic view presumes.

A particularly distinctive element in the text is one that Herr refers to as the “independent labourer”, which he describes as the central figure of the ideal imagined by the Spanish reformers (Herr 46). In the Ley agraria, this figure and his peaceful existence are presented as an alternative to a society ridden by superstition, but also to one blinded by luxury. Behind this target, Jovellanos was caught between ancient echoes to restore a rustic grandezza to the nation and contemporary siren calls to provide national happiness for the people. Ultimately, the Ley agraria is an imperfect attempt to show how the labourer can cultivate his own horizons of thought.

**The Ley agraria and Hirschman’s dynamics of the interests**

Jovellanos was well versed in the classics; he recorded in his diary how he read Gibbon’s *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Plutarch’s *Life of Cicero*, Suetonius’s *The Twelfth Caesars* and works by Tacitus (it is unclear which) while writing the Ley agraria (Jovellanos *Diario I* vol. IV 559-593). The influences of these works on the Ley agraria have been grossly overlooked, but they are an essential part of the Ley agraria’s notions of passions and interests.

Jovellanos begins by outlining his theory of property. Influenced by Locke, Jovellanos avoids one of the pitfalls that fellow Catholic thinkers struggled with, namely, establishing the fixed moral value of work. As Mackay has argued, the Catholic faith had traditionally juggled both the notion of God as a graceful craftsman of the universe and man’s fatal fall
from grace as primary examples of labour and toil (Mackay 20-22). Jovellanos ties man’s self-interest with the will of God: “este principio, que la Sociedad procurará desenvolver en el progreso del presente Informe, está primeramente consignado en las leyes eternas de la naturaleza, y señaladamente en la primera que dictó al hombre su omnipotente y misericordioso Creador cuando, por decirlo así, le entregó el dominio de la tierra. Colocándole en ella y condenándole a vivir del producto de su trabajo, al mismo tiempo que le dio el derecho a enseñorearla, le impuso la pensión de cultivarla y le inspiró toda la actividad y amor a la vida que eran necesarios para librar en su trabajo la seguridad de su subsistencia. A este sagrado interés debe el hombre su conservación, y el mundo su cultura” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 702-703). Punishment and reward are thereby reconciled under God’s “sacred interest”. Jovellanos then explains how God’s “sacred interest” trickled into the formation of societies: “el mismo principio se halla consignado en las leyes primitivas del derecho social; porque cuando aquella multiplicación forzó a los hombres a unirse en sociedad y a dividir entre sí el dominio de la tierra, legitimó y perfeccionó necesariamente su interés, señalando una esfera determinada al de cada individuo y llamando hacia ella toda su actividad” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 703).

The realm of experience is thereby reconciled with that of faith, as self-interest and property provide the individual with subsistence and a purpose in life. The defence of the common good, which arose out of a fear of the individual’s potential, undermined the principle of self-interest, and laws were created under the belief that individuals were easily rattled by their emotions (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 704). Following Hirschman’s view that Early Modern thinkers learnt to use antisocial passions for the benefit of society, Jovellanos suggests that lawmakers aim to orient people’s actions towards the public good instead: “Con esta mira no se redujeron a proteger la propiedad de la tierra y del trabajo, sino que se propusieron a excitar y dirigir con leyes y reglamentos el interés de sus agentes. En esta dirección no se propusieron por objeto la utilidad particular sino el bien común; y desde entonces, las leyes empezaron a pugnar con el interés personal” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 704). Jovellanos is rather unclear in his references to the common good. John Polt has attributed this to the Spaniard’s attempt to reconcile physiocratic influences with his liberal views (Polt 20).

Jovellanos offers an alternative system to the common good, one based on self-interest which can regulate the passions more efficiently than the law: “dedicado a promover su interés, oye más bien el dictamen de su razón que el de sus pasiones; que en esta materia el objeto de sus deseos es siempre análogo al objeto de las leyes; que cuando obra contra este objeto, obra contra su verdadero y sólido interés; y que si alguna vez se aleja de él, las mismas pasiones que le extravián lo refrenan, presentándole en las consecuencias de su mala dirección el castigo de sus ilusiones: un castigo
The idea of countervailing passions was explored both by Hirschman (Hirschman 31) and Andrew Skinner, who claimed it was a popular assumption of Eighteenth century thought, particularly that “men have natural wants that gradually extend in a self-sustaining spiral” (Skinner 232). Jovellanos goes further, as he argues that interests can also help society even if they are contrary to each other, echoing yet another dynamic explored by Hirschman (Hirschman 51): “Tampoco se echó de ver que aquella continua lucha de intereses que agita a los hombres entre sí, establece naturalmente un equilibrio que jamás podrían alcanzar las leyes. No sólo el hombre justo y honrado respeta el interés de su prójimo, sino que lo respeta también el injusto y codicioso. No lo respetará ciertamente por un principio de justicia, pero lo respetará por una razón de utilidad y conveniencia. El temor de que se hagan usurpaciones sobre el propio interés es la salvaguardia del ajeno, y en este sentido se puede decir que en el orden social el interés particular de los individuos recibe mayor seguridad de la opinión que de las leyes” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 705).

The effect of the safeguard is to emphasise the predictability of the universally understood language of interests which is at the core of political economy. In Jovellanos’ concept of interests we begin to see the predictability, the constancy – and even the possibility for calculation – opened by the reformer’s attention to the virtues of experience, which Hirschman argued was so appealing in the Early Modern period and its centuries of turmoil.

**Rural interests, the labourer’s legacy and a tranquil society**

Hirschman speculated that one of the possible reasons for understanding interests in economic terms arose in Seventeenth century France, where power was so concentrated that “economic interests constituted the only portion of an ordinary person’s total aspirations in which important ups and downs could be visualised” (Hirschman 39). The ordinary Spaniard person did not have access to those aspirations. In fact, Jovellanos argues that power and wealth are so stagnant in Spain that they simply hold back the development of such interests. Jovellanos argues strongly in favour of restricting the length of the entails, in order to allow the land to circulate and provide as many as possible with a chance at land ownership, to experience life in their natural sphere and to appreciate one’s earthly existence. To illustrate this, Jovellanos turns to Rome, as he claims that Roman law protected private property religiously in Spain (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 713). Jovellanos sees property as the manifestation of self-interest – but a very peculiar kind of self-interest: “El aprecio de la propiedad es siempre la medida de su cuidado. El hombre la ama como una prenda de su subsistencia, porque vive de ella; como un objeto de su ambición, porque manda en ella; como un seguro de su duración, y si puede...
decirse así, como un anuncio de su inmortalidad, porque libra sobre ella la suerte de su descendencia” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 717).

The predictability of the interests associated with property and one’s ability to choose one’s legacy becomes the main motivation of the labourer, without a view to the afterlife. And these interests themselves lead to soothing passions, as Hirschman argued, the element of predictability introduces a sense of prudence “whatever passion by which it is basically motivated” (Hirschman 40). Property becomes one’s legacy on earth, something to preserve and a guarantee for his interests. A few lines later, Jovellanos argues that the influence of property on interests also extends itself to work: “Ni esta influencia se circunscribe a la propiedad de la tierra, sino que se extiende también a la del trabajo. El colono de una suerte cercada, subrogado en los derechos del propietario, siente también su estímulo. Seguro de que sólo su voz es respetada en aquel recinto, lo riega continuamente con su sudor, y la esperanza continua del premio alivia su trabajo” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 721).

The temporal circularity involved in the logic of the individual’s expectation is symptomatic of Koselleck’s prognosis– the idea that one socioeconomic mechanism – in this case work - can determine how time and the future are understood. Work and property create a set of interests for the labourer and the owner who are enticed by the predictability of the reward that results from their toil. As Jovellanos argues: “Entonces es cuando el interés del colono, excitado continuamente por la presencia de su objeto, e ilustrado por la continua observación de los efectos de su industria, crece a un mismo tiempo en actividad y conocimientos, y es conducido al más útil trabajo” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 721).

**Camporality and Doux Commerce**

Jovellanos finds within the predictability created by interests the possibility of seeing successful patterns that allow the labourer to learn what is best, thereby spurring both his knowledge and his activity through experience. As we saw in Jovellanos’ reference to the idea that man is worth what he knows, the sense of education and edification based on the teachings of experience is an important part of Jovellanos’ view of interests, since it means these can continue to expand the more one knows. While these observations had been made by other Enlightenment thinkers, at this point Jovellanos differs from most of the authors covered by Hirschman, as he links the development of interests with a strong sense of rural values. Breaking with the tradition that sees interests as developing with commerce and luxury, Jovellanos imagines a familial way of life: “una inmensa población rústica derramada sobre los campos, no sólo promete al Estado un pueblo laborioso y rico, sino también sencillo y virtuoso. El colono situado sobre su suerte, y libre del choque de pasiones que agitan a los hombres reunidos en pueblos, está más distante de aquel fermento de corrupción que el lujo infunde siempre en ellos con más o menos actividad.
Reconcentrado con su familia en la esfera de su trabajo, si por una parte puede seguir sin distracción el único objeto de su interés, por otra se sentirá más vivamente conducido a él por los sentimientos de amor y ternura, que son tan naturales al hombre en la sociedad doméstica” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 721).

Montesquieu’s notion of *doux commerce* as softening the individual, as outlined by Hirschman, is in fact attributed by Jovellanos to the effects of the rural lifestyle. In this way, the effects of the *doux commerce* are in fact attributed to the bucolic condition of the aforementioned idealised citizen of the Spanish Enlightenment: the simple rustic labourer, a theme which Jovellanos will develop toward the end of the piece: “Entonces no sólo se podrá esperar de los labradores la aplicación, la frugalidad y la abundancia, hija de entrambas, sino que reinarán también en sus familias el amor conyugal, paterno, filial y fraternal; reinarán la concordia, la caridad y la hospitalidad, y nuestros colonos poseerán aquellas virtudes sociales y domésticas, que constituyen la felicidad de las familias, y la verdadera gloria de los Estados” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 721). Docile passions that arise from the understanding of one’s interests are the most conducive to one’s happiness and societal harmony.

To develop this point, Jovellanos cites the Roman thinker Marcus Terentius Varro’s thoughts on how the theatres and circuses of the city are a corrupting force over men (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X 722). The pursuit of *otium* drives one away from *negotium*, and for Jovellanos this has moral implications: “¿Pudiera el gobierno hallar un medio más sencillo, más eficaz, más compatible con la libertad natural, para atraer a sus tierras y labranzas esta muchedumbre de propietarios de mediana fortuna, que amontonados en la Corte y en las grandes capitales, perecen en ellas a manos de la corrupción y el lujo? Esta turba de hombres miserables e ilusos, que huyendo de la felicidad que los llama en sus campos, van a buscarla donde no existe, y a fuerza de competir en ostentación con las familias opulentas, labran en pocos años su confusión, su ruina y la de sus inocentes familias” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 722). The pursuit of wealth for its own sake is not in one’s interest since it will undermine his legacy on earth.

It is striking then that Jovellanos does not offer a facile condemnation of wealth and luxury. Instead, Jovellanos argues that commerce can promote agriculture, and he does so by arguing that the conquest of Asia changed the face of Italy’s cultivations, as it expanded and could barely keep up with “luculos” of that day and age, referring to Lucius Lucullus (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 728). In this example Jovellanos seems to have forgotten his earlier condemnation of the social effects of luxury in cities, only to focus on its economic effects. This is perhaps a consequence of Jovellanos’ largely descriptive understanding of his Roman motifs, and marks Jovellanos’ overreliance on its simple ideals to defend the new model of society. One could argue that Jovellanos is caught between
the pursuit of the economic good of the nation and individual happiness, but he somewhat reconciles these views by defending the possibilities of the self-reinforcing mechanism of wealth only in a state like the Roman one he imagined, formed by nobles and peasants. Even if we accept this was Jovellanos’ target, we must understand the obstacles these plans faced.

The problem with the useless hands of the nobility and the Church

In Jovellanos’ view, the religious and civil entails stalling the arrival of the new world determined by political economy and the needs of the state: an open exchange of goods and a generalised rise in material wealth. Indeed, entail is presented as the most urgent and pernicious problem to agriculture (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 740). Jovellanos is moderate in his solution, as he defends the need for accumulation of property and rejects the immediate redistribution of land as he claims that while inequality derives from accumulation of wealth, it is nonetheless a necessary evil, “viene a ser para todos igualmente premio de la industria y castigo de la pereza.” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 741). At a societal level, inequality creates a necessary and reciprocal dependence between the classes, it unites them through the sturdy links of mutual interests and “ella es la que las une con los fuertes vínculos del mutuo interés; ella la que llama las menos al lugar de las más ricas y consideradas; ella en fin la que despierta e incita el interés personal, avivando su acción tanto más poderosamente cuanto la igualdad de derechos favorece en todos la esperanza de conseguirla” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X 741). In this way, inequality is seen as the engine of social emulation, and as an incentive to develop one’s self interest and undermine sloth. Like his Neapolitan counterpart Palmieri, Jovellanos believed inequality in the distribution of property was not the main cause for concern; the target was instead to create incentives for the peasantry to overcome their idleness (Robertson 384).

Entails deprive individuals of the experience of ownership and earthly material comfort while they promote sloth. Jovellanos illustrates the evils of entails in reference to the agrarian laws in Rome, which aimed to deter accumulation and approach equality (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X 740). The concentration of cattle and other farm animals in just a few hands became so extreme that it led to the death of Solon and to the first time Rome tainted the city with its citizen’s blood, which leads Jovellanos to believe that in the progress of humanity towards its perfection one can expect greater equality to arise (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 740-741). Jovellanos’ use of Rome to bridge the past and the future combines the understanding of man as he really is, regardless of his historical context, with the authority conveyed by the example of Rome as the source of legitimation for his claim.

In this way, Jovellanos concludes that the state should at least aim to reduce the accumulation of property in the hands of the few, since the
Corredera, "Passions and Interests in Jovellanos' Ley agraria"

inertia it creates undermines the wealth of the state and its capacity to care for its population. The sense that entails prevent one from determining his fate on earth is clear when Jovellanos states: “Sus reflexiones tendrán por objeto aquellas que sacan continuamente la propiedad territorial del comercio y circulación del Estado; que la encadenan a la perpetua posesión de ciertos cuerpos y familias; que excluyen para siempre a todos los demás individuos del derecho de aspirar a ella, y que uniendo el derecho indefinido de aumentarla a la prohibición absoluta de disminuirla, facilitan una acumulación indefinida y abren un abismo espantoso que puede tragar con el tiempo toda la riqueza territorial del Estado” (Jovellanos, *Escrítos Económicos* vol. X: 741). The result of this accumulation is the appreciation of property, which leads to speculation of the land at the expense of its cultivation (Jovellanos, *Escrítos Económicos* vol. X: 743). Labourers neglect the land since they never expect to own it and therefore they have no interest in preserving it. Only those who aim to aggrandise their fortune will buy it since no other reason can motivate someone to buy something which as Jovellanos states: “cuesta mucho y rinde poco” (Jovellanos, *Escrítos Económicos* vol. X 743). Land is therefore only accessible to the same opulent families and bodies, and it prevents the labourer from applying what he knows and leaving his mark on earth.

Following the Jansenist logic, Jovellanos provides a historical explanation for the problem with entails both civil and religious and traces their origins to the Church’s influence in Castille over the sixteenth century. Jovellanos claims it used —and still uses— its opulence to fund new convents, schools and hospitals, which in fact do more harm than good: “Esta misma opulencia abrió en Castilla otras puertas anchísimas a la amortización en las nuevas fundaciones de conventos, colegios, hospitales, cofradías, patronatos, capellanías, memorias y aniversarios, que son los desahogos de la riqueza agonizante, siempre generosa, ora la muevan los estímulos de la piedad, ora los consejos de la superstición, ora en fin los remordimientos de la avaricia. ¿Qué es pues lo que quedaría en Castilla de la propiedad territorial para empleo de la riqueza industriosa? ¿Ni cómo se pudo convertir en beneficio y fomento de la agricultura una riqueza que corría por tantos canales a sepultar la propiedad en manos perezosas?” (Jovellanos, *Escrítos Económicos* vol. X: 745).

Jovellanos contrasts the example of Rome with contemporary laws: “Sin embargo, ¿cuánto dista de estos principios nuestra presente legislación? Ni los griegos, ni los romanos, ni alguno de los antiguos legisladores extendieron la facultad de testar fuera de una sucesión, porque semejante extensión no hubiera perfeccionado sino destruido el derecho de propiedad, puesto que tanto vale conceder a un ciudadano el derecho de disponer para siempre de su propiedad, como quitarlo a toda la serie de propietarios que entrañen después en ella” (Jovellanos, *Escrítos Económicos* vol. X: 753)

Jovellanos’ key difference is between those entails that are transmittable through merit and a family right which only extends to a number of
generations and those that are handed out on a whim, without an expiry date. The earthly merits of the living are more important than the wills of the dead. Jovellanos goes on to contrast the regulated use of entails in the governments of Augustus, who prolonged the estates of families “no para prolongar sino para dividir las sucesiones, no para fijarlas en una serie de personas sino para extenderlas por toda una familia, no para llevarlas a la posteridad sino para comunicarlas a una generación limitada y existente” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 754). Jovellanos proposes to circumscribe inheritance to one generation only, “porque cuantas más avenidas cierre a las clases estériles, más tendrá abiertas a las profesiones útiles, y porque la nobleza que no tenga otro origen que la riqueza no es la que puede hacer falta” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 758). Jovellanos also defends the possibility of the state granting nobility titles on the basis of merit, and if this leads to the loss of certain nobles, it will be of no loss to the state.

Jovellanos’ use of temporal cycles in incentivising the economy and in inducing hope in labourers and small landowners is aimed straight at the heart of the stagnant Spanish social and political hierarchy, which is spearheaded by the Church and the nobles. In the face of the lazy passions, their lethargy and their agonising effects on the population, we are introduced to the need to empower the labourers with a concern with earthly affairs and one’s legacy, or in other words, interests.

The solution: Edifying the labourer in his interest

At this point, Jovellanos begins to emphasise how the labourer should be both stimulated and educated in his interest: “La agricultura, señor, clama con mucha justicia por esta providencia, porque nunca será más activo el interés de los colonos que cuando los colonos sean copropietarios, y cuando el sentimiento de que trabajan para sí y sus hijos los anime a mejorar su suerte y perfeccionar su cultivo. Esta reunión de dos intereses y dos capitales en un mismo objeto, formará el mayor de todos los estímulos que se pueden ofrecer a la agricultura” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 760). The predictability of capital and the sense of purpose in working for one’s future thereby increase one’s interest in earthly life.

There is a strong emphasis on the capacity for a national moral renaissance in this discussion of the labourer’s interests and projections. Public prosperity depends on agriculture because the population, the primary source of national wealth, rely on agriculture more than they do on any other lucrative industry (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 788). Jovellanos then states: “si la política, volviendo a levantar sus miras a aquel alto y sublime objeto que se propuso en los más sabios y florescentes gobiernos de la antigüedad, quisiere reconocer que la dicha de los imperios, así como la de los individuos, se funda principalmente en las cualidades del cuerpo y del espíritu, esto es, en el valor y en la virtud de los ciudadanos, también en este sentido será cierto que la agricultura, madre de la inocencia
and the honest work, and as Columella said, parent and heir of wisdom, will be the first support of the strength and splendor of the nations” (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 788). Innocence, honesty and wisdom will all be enhanced when its citizens have an interest to pursue, spurred by a martial patriotism towards their state. Jovellanos argues that agriculture is the basis for industry and commerce. The belief that the same values of peace and honesty found in the citizens should be reflected in the state resembles the Platonic ideal of the state as the citizen writ large. Without the peace and stability of agriculture, industry and commerce will always be weak, dependent on revolutions, wars and treaties with other nations which will all result in the eventual collapse of Holland and Geneva just as they once brought down Tyre and Carthage (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 790).

Citing Columela, Jovellanos remarks that one can only expect moral order where there is knowledge of agriculture, and that the distinction between intellectual knowledge and agricultural wisdom is modern and new-fangled, since education, edification and interests are deeply intertwined. Jovellanos then poses the question: how then can we bring education closer to the labourer’s interest? (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 798). “¿No será más de esperar que su mismo interés, y acaso su vanidad, los conduzca a (...) aplicar en ellas los conocimientos debidos a su estudio (...)?” (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 798). If the state can spur their interest and their gullible passions, this will lead them to work and prosper. In an original twist of the assumptions surrounding the docile nature of the labourer which Jovellanos referred to earlier in the text, Jovellanos argues “Se supone al labrador esclavo de las preocupaciones que recibió tradicionalmente, y sin duda lo es, porque no puede ceder a otra enseñanza que a la que se le entra por los ojos. ¿Pero no es por lo mismo más dócil a esta especie de combinaciones que anima y hace más fuerte el interés? Hasta esta docilidad se le niega por el orgullo de los sabios; pero reflexionese por un instante la gran suma de conocimientos que ha reunido la agricultura en la porción más estúpida de sus agentes, y se verá cuánto debe en todas partes el cultivo a la docilidad de los labradores” (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 798). In this way, Montesquieu’s *doux commerce* and Hume’s defence of the stabilising effects of commerce can, in Jovellanos' eyes, be found in a simple, peaceful agricultural way of life. The consistency and predictability of the labourer’s docility precisely encourages him to embrace his own perfectibility. The question now becomes about just who will benefit from this docility? Does Jovellanos’ emphasis lie on the formation of a state or on individual happiness?

Jovellanos’ desire to instil a peaceful nature in the individual extends to the nation, as he aims his attacks particularly against mercantilist policies which have brought about conflict and wasted public money (Jovellanos, *Escritos Económicos* vol. X: 816): “Por qué no se emplearán las tropas en tiempos pacíficos en la construcción de caminos y canales, como ya se ha
hecho alguna vez? Los soldados de Alejandro, de Silla y de César, esto es, de los mayores enemigos del género humano, se ocupaban en la paz de estos útiles trabajos, ¿no podremos esperar que el ejército de un rey justo, lleno de virtudes pacíficas y amante de los pueblos, se ocupe en labrar su felicidad, y consagre a ella aquellos momentos de ocio, que dados a la disipación y al vicio, corrompen el verdadero valor y arruinan a un mismo tiempo las costumbres y la fuerza pública?” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 818).

This constitutes perhaps Jovellanos’ greatest criticism of antiquity and Rome in the Ley agraria, which he uses to sever the link with the barbarous past and the enemies of humanity. But the more important point is that Jovellanos definitely reveals how he views the labourers as troops for peace, which can help a nation attain grandezza precisely by achieving individual and national happiness. However, the labourer’s individual happiness and peace are clearly the means to the end; Jovellanos’ attempt to link the state to the individual by making them both strive for peace follows the logic of the raison d’état. The labourer is motivated to leave a peaceful legacy on earth, but is nonetheless spurred in his attempts to help his state by the same patriotic passions that led Caesar to commit atrocities against humanity. The final lines of the Ley agraria are taken from Caesar’s enemy, Cicero, and his own work, De Lege Agraria: “¿Pues qué hay más popular que la paz? Por ella me parece que se alegran no sólo aquellos a los que la naturaleza les dio sentido, sino también quienes tienen ganados y campos” (Jovellanos, Escritos Económicos vol. X: 824).

Peace and popularity: both values highlight the importance of the serenity of the populus for the state’s economy and national happiness.

While Smith believed a system derived from self-interest would lead to a division of labour that would atrophy the mind of workers, Jovellanos saw in a system based on a promotion of interests one that would lead to an awareness of one’s purpose and a tranquil existence, avoiding the ghosts of a life of alienation that Marx would later conceptualise, but also reducing the motivations of the self to no more than those of a male member of Plato’s guardian class, reducing women to a domestic asset. Peace is useful insofar as it is useful to society, but the peace Jovellanos was aiming for was one that Europe had left behind long ago, and could only be delivered by an enlightened despotism. Jovellanos’ attempt to turn docility and martial patriotism into the interests of the individual is no doubt part of the Enlightenment project of Fenelon and Ferguson, one which aimed to prevent the jealousy of trade from conquering the heart of the state and avarice from colonising the soul of the individual.

Conclusion

The methodological tendency, firmly anchored in much of the Enlightenment literature, of making men into national symbols is a target of this study because, as Polt has suggested it has led critics to ignore the
nuances in Jovellanos’ work (Polt 5). In the case of the Ley agraria, the work’s philosophical layers have generally been ignored at the expense of either polishing or stoning the monument that Jovellanos has become.

Jovellanos’s Ley agraria can be faulted for being overly optimistic and falling for the fallacy of composition, the belief that the sum of private virtues such as peace can lead to public ones, which Hirschman identified in most Eighteenth century thinkers (Hirschman 119). Jovellanos’ optimism belongs to the end of the Eighteenth century, when the Montesquieu-Stuart vision that saw the pursuit of interest as harmless was beginning to crumble. Jovellanos walks the line between earlier Eighteenth century thinkers who hailed interests and the nineteenth century Romantics who feared their effects in societies that relied on industry and commerce. While Marx would later criticise the bourgeois trade-off between education and inequality, Jovellanos’ emphasis on education at the expense of equality aimed to solve a different problem, that of popular delusion. Jovellanos certainly believed the individual would attain happiness by throwing away the rags of superstition, and in this sense, succeeded in presenting a model of a society that did not require such a gullible people. His constellation of ideas on peace, docility and utility belong to the Enlightenment thought that aimed to conjure a kind of societal harmony by reaching back to classical motifs.

In the same way, the origins of the socially harmful passions in the Ley agraria are not as different from Hirschman’s as they seem, after all avarice and greed can be seen as the roots of the clergy and the noble’s sloth, and the family resemblance of these terms is worth our attention. After all, Istvan Hont, in a thinly veiled en passant critique of Hirschman’s work stated “Smith’s story, like Hobbes’, was not about the passions and the interests but about interests and pride” (Hont 120). What is clear is that Jovellanos’ understanding of interests presents a distinct Spanish contribution to the debate that Hirschman saw as a dialogue between the French and Scottish Enlightenments. Jovellanos’ employment of the language of interest and his defence of the population’s edification can also be seen as an attack on feudalist social structures and bears a striking resemblance to the Neapolitan and Scottish debates identified by John Robertson.

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8 The issue of honour in the context of the late Enlightenment political thought deserves more attention. William M. Reddy has pointed out that much Nineteenth century political thought spoke of honour as a dated value, and preferred the use of the term self-interested, influenced as it was by Marxist thought. This valorisation may or may not have spilled into Enlightenment studies. However, considering the conceptual proximity of honour to values such as pride —a concept of great importance in some texts of Enlightenment political thought— it is certainly a passion worthy of study.
There is a persistent note of hope in most of Jovellanos’ Eighteenth century writings, and this can often be interpreted as bland *costumbrismo*. Jovellanos’ work is full of pithy statements that orbit around two key elements: Catholicism and practicality, which can appear unreflective but in fact reconcile faith with experience, often inconsistently. It is extremely common to end articles and books on Jovellanos by making poetic remarks on Goya’s portrayals of the author, as symbolic of the Spanish Enlightenment – or lack thereof – of the nation’s *chiaroscuro*, its dreams and its terrors. One ought instead to pay more attention to a piece of rustic – and much less impressive – art that Jovellanos himself ordered to be engraved on top of the entrance to the Royal Asturian Institute of Nautical Affairs and Minerology, where one could read the stark words which Jovellanos hoped would be its motto: “*Quid verum, quid utile*”. This can help us dodge the magnetism of stereotypes about the Spanish Enlightenment which are often perpetuated by poetic and ambiguous statements. This article has shown that the Spanish Enlightenment that Jovellanos contributed towards was not quixotic in nature, that their desire to better the nature of the individual by showing him what he could do with and in this earth is part of the unitary thought of the Enlightenment, that its national nuances are better understood as standing close to Herder’s views of the German Enlightenment – constructively critical of the changes that were taking place in Europe but reaching back to its traditions in hoping to reconcile its past and its present. In the case of Jovellanos, he used the Enlightenment language of interests and experience to address Spain’s national concerns. Jose de Cadalso captured this view of the Enlightenment from Spain when he praised the scientific discoveries of the Eighteenth century only to ask “what is the use of this Enlightenment, this fake gold that shines over Europe and blinds the gullible? I firmly believe it serves only to confuse the respective order established for the good of each nation” (Cadalso 47). For Cadalso and Jovellanos, those who were unable to direct their own lives and made gullible by superstition and fear had to be educated in their interests for the Enlightenment to fulfil its promise. In effect, the *Ley agraria* defends what was perhaps the most important and complex value of the Enlightenment: the nation’s edification.

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