

THE “IMPERIAL IDEA” AND CIVILISING MISSIONS¹

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the imperial idea and civilising missions in the Habsburg Monarchy, mainly of the nineteenth century, are refracted through the prism of the legacy of enlightened absolutism. The article tries to dispel mythologies about its demise around 1800, and about those who could subscribe to its programme throughout the nineteenth century. It questions templates of national history writing which too unanimously connect the Enlightenment to the origins of the various national revivals of the early nineteenth century, and discusses concrete examples of enlightened absolutism's civilising impulses, among them law, Roman imperial patriotism, and the Catholic religion.

KEYWORDS: Enlightened Absolutism, civilising mission, national revival, natural law, the imperial idea, Catholic Church



Even a rapid estimate shows that it is not only obvious that German culture is declining but that there is sufficient reason for that. In the end, no one can spend more than he has: that is true of an individual, it is true of a people. If one spends oneself for power, for power politics, for economics, world trade, parliamentarianism, and military interests — if one spends in the direction the quantum of understanding, seriousness, will, and self-overcoming which one represents, then it will be lacking for the other direction. Culture and the state — one should not deceive one-self about this — are antagonists: *Kultur-Staat* is merely a modern idea. One lives off the other, one thrives at the expense of the other. All great ages of culture are ages of political decline: what is great culturally has always been unpolitical, even anti-political. Goethe's heart opened at the phenomenon of Napoleon — it closed at the 'Wars of Liberation.' Friedrich Nietzsche, *Götzen-Dämmerung* No. 4, *Was den Deutschen abgeht*, "Kritische Gesamtausgabe" VI/ 3 (1889), p. 100.

We are beginning in England to see the necessity of widening our contracted view of politics. Politics have been long enough among us the



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mere tool of wealth and trade. Macaulay's method of estimating well-being by the growth of population, and the number of new streets built in great towns, begins to seem insufficient. Even personal liberty and free speech begin to seem, not indeed less valuable, but less all-sufficient, results, than they seemed to the eighteenth century. When a man has been made as free as possible to do what he pleases, it is important also, we begin to think, that he should know what it is best to do. We hanker after the *Culturstaat*.

John Robert Seeley, *Milton's Political Opinions*, in: idem, *Lectures and Essays*, 1870, p. 104.

The polynational state will gradually achieve one multilingual nationality much more easily by means of freedom and justice than by means of a system of strict denationalisation based on enforced language politics.

Ludwig Gumplowicz, *Das Recht der Nationalitäten und Sprachen in Österreich*, Innsbruck 1879, p. 294.

The title of Joseph Redlich's classic *Staats- und Reichsproblem*² prompts a puckish reading. The problem, one is inclined to argue, was that the Habsburg Monarchy was neither: Neither "Reich" nor state. Was it then more of a *Culturstaat*? This was the stuff of both aspirations and aspersions. Friedrich Tezner in his booklet on the Austrian imperial title of 1804 accused his favourite foe, the Hungarian Ferenc Deák, of disparaging it as a "mit Rauschgold verzierte taube Nuss" (tinselled nutshell).³ Deák insinuated that the title did not denote a constitutional reality; it was a mere prop, a figurehead. Bohuš Rieger's late nineteenth-century articles on the history of centralisation and on Bohemia's status within the Holy Roman Empire, the edifice of the Monarchy and the German Confederacy (*Deutscher Bund*) point in a similar direction.⁴ Clearly, among the nineteenth-century devices for the self-assertion of legitimacy, the significance of "history" and, for that matter, constitutional history, is difficult to overestimate. One can think of the eminent legal scholar Georg Jellinek's astonished aperçu upon his foray to Hungary, about encountering "ein Volk von Staatsrechtlern", discussing these matters

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2 J. Redlich, *Das österreichische Staats- und Reichsproblem: geschichtliche Darstellung der inneren Politik der habsburgischen Monarchie von 1848 bis zum Untergang des Reichs*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1920-1926, cf. the excellent study of A. Ng, *Nationalism and Political Liberty: Redlich, Namier, and the Crisis of Empire*, Clarendon 2004.

3 F. Tezner, *Der österreichische Kaisertitel, das ungarische Staatsrecht und die ungarische Publicistik*, Wien 1899, p. 5.

4 B. Rieger, *Dílo centralismu 18. století* in Idem, *Drobné spisy*, ed. by K. Kládec, 2 vols., Praha 1914-1915, I, pp. 1-68; B. Baxa, *Jednání o připojení země koruny české k německému Bundu*, "Časopis Musea Království českého", 80 (1906), pp. 322-366, 497-510, P. Horváth, *Meghatározó tudós elmék és eredmények a hazai jogi tudományosság fejlődésében*, "Századok" 140/3 (2006), pp. 567-589.

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in coach cabins, on the streets, and in the coffee houses.⁵ History was important as it provided an arsenal of claims and counter-claims about when and how legitimate rule, as well as relationships of dependency and suzerainty in the Monarchy, were legally enshrined. This was a field littered with casualties of historiographical skirmishes. But history was only one of the sides in the triangle of chief nineteenth-century sources of legitimacy. The second source was “nature”: Natural rights, natural law and the inalienable, intrinsic titles of individuals, peoples, denominations. It would be no exaggeration to observe that nature’s significance in invocations, also by liberals – who would be its most likely invocers – seems to have declined in proportion with the rise of “history”. Arguments from constitutional law were better suited to developing “modern” rights out of venerable, legally enshrined prerogatives, and chimed in harmoniously with the different Landes patriotism. The third and exceedingly important source was culture.⁶ In our context, bound up with the imperial idea and with the problem of civilising missions, we have to ask: What capacity did culture have to instil and inculcate pan-monarchical allegiance and, a theme related to but not reducible on the first issue, even a Staatsnation? Of course there was the field of pageantry, the imperial jubilee procession in 1908,⁷ and lavishly depicted kaleidoscopes of popular loyalty irrespective of language and confession, and also imperial bric-a-brac like devotional articles whose distribution span among the bourgeoisie and peasantry of the Monarchy is still insufficiently explored,⁸ the historicist palaces built in the Reichsstil, complete with parapets, pilasters and spoils gleaned from pseudo-archetypal styles

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5 G. Jellinek in a feuilleton for "Neue Freie Presse" (1905), as quoted in J. Bahlcke, *Hungaria eliberata? Zum Zusammenstoß von altständischer Libertät und monarchischer Autorität in Ungarn an der Wende vom 17. zum 18. Jahrhundert*, in: P. Maťa, T. Winkelbauer (ed.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1620-1740: Leistungen und Grenzen des Absolutismusparadigmas*, Stuttgart 2006, pp. 301-316, here, 305.

6 For this tripartite framework see: M. Janowski, *Justifying Political Power: The Habsburg Monarchy and Beyond*, in: A. Miller, A. J. Rieber (eds.), *Imperial Rule*, Budapest 2004, pp. 69-82 and Idem, *Kecskék és tokhalak: A közép-kelet-európai liberalizmus sajátosságai a francia forradalom és az első világháború között*, "Aetas" 1-2 (1999), pp. 108-121.

7 E. Grošegger, *Kaiser-Huldigungs-Festzug: Wien 1908*, Vienna 1992.

8 E.g. J. Mikulec, *Lidový (naivní) monarchismus v barokních Čechách a jeho zdroje*, in: *Barokní Praha – Barokní Čechie 1620-1740. Sborník příspěvků z vědecké konference o fenoménu baroka v Čechách, Anežský klášter a Clam-Gallasův palác, 24.-27.září 2001*, edd. O. Fejtová, V. Ledvinka a V. Vlnas. Praha 2004, pp. 363-375.

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of the Monarchy,⁹ and also the stylistic agglutinations of Habsburg dynastic elements in the monarchical patriotic cults of the lands of the Monarchy and their appropriation for regional political purposes.¹⁰ The boom of constitutionalism in popular culture of 1848, with “constitutional” top hats, ties, pretzels and polkas, was a passing fashion, but an overlooked one which allows us to pinpoint the astoundingly widespread presence of a constitutional imperial idea in the paeans of Emperor Ferdinand as emancipator and legislator.¹¹

Then there are the itineraries of the compassionate princeps ambulans travelling through his rejoicing realms, disseminating modernity as well as the blessings of prosperity and edification like a balmy snowmelt breeze, brushing aside all obstacles to universal justice¹² To date we lack sufficient knowledge about whether this was a specifically “Josephinian” “scenario of power”, to allude to the title of Richard Wortman’s seminal study, and of how it interacted with the imperial constitutionalism of 1848. These dynamics, e.g. the cultural frameworks of coronations and jubilees – those which materialised as well as those that did not – are interesting and they are deservedly receiving more attention in recent years.

But apart from these serene and also often sincere effusions of dynastic patriotism, culture was an apple of discord. Firstly, culture was a regenerative resource and capital of prestige, knowledge and aesthetic pleasure, which tended to elude accredited institutions of its dissemination, which commended respect and piqued imitation, settled in within private spheres, salons, bourgeois reading societies, subscription circles of

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 9 H. Lorenz, *Der habsburgische Reichsstil – Mythos und Wirklichkeit*, in: *Künstlerischer Austausch, Akten des XXVIII. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte, Berlin 1992*, Berlin 1993, pp. 163-175.

10 See e.g. L. Cole, D. Unowsky (eds.), *The Limits of Loyalty. Imperial Symbolism, Popular Allegiances and State Patriotism in Late Habsburg Monarchy*, New York, Oxford 2007.

11 J. Polišenský: *Revoluce a kontrarevoluce v Rakousku 1848*, Praha 1972., pp. 132-133.

12 E. Breier, *Das Buch vom Kaiser Josef: Geschichte Kaiser Josef des Zweiten und seiner Zeit, dem Volke erzählt*, 2 vols., Wien 1865; V. M. Kramerius, V. R. Kramerius, *Kníha Josefova [Sepšaná od jistého spatrujícího osmnácté století. Dilem již stalé věci a dilem prorockví. Na způsob Bibli, 1785.]* [Národní klenotnice 21], repr. Praha 1941; Janowski, *Justifying Political Power – Die Reise Allerhöchst Seiner Majestät des Kaisers nach Dalmatien, [ist] seit Jahrhunderten der erste frohe Ausblick in der Geschichte dieses Landes, das nun wieder einmal das sorgende Vaterauge eines angebeteten Herrschers in seiner Mitte sah*, "Jahrbücher der Literatur", 12 (1820), Anzeigenblatt, p. 1.

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journals, family music etc.¹³ Within the Monarchy of the early nineteenth century, all these tendencies became conspicuous. Despite the limitations imposed by censorship, a vibrant cultural life already sprouted in the various lands of the Monarchy in the decades before 1848¹⁴. We may observe two main problems: Firstly, the nineteenth century brought a longstanding constant ambiguity of “culture”, being invested with a cultivating trajectory extending to all mankind and, increasingly, imparted with a more concrete “national” meaning. In the Habsburg Monarchy this predictably entailed specific problems precisely where the imperial idea was concerned. Secondly, the nineteenth century witnessed something I am inclined to call, for want of a better term, “culturalisation”, the pre-eminence of culture as a social-political panacea, explanatory device and as an evaluative vector with a preordained destiny of accelerating progress. The Monarchy and its historical record were thus submitted to scrutiny, simultaneously elevated on a pedestal and subjected to severe criticism: Past rule and rulers were measured as success or failure by parameters of cultural efflorescence. But what culture was at stake? And what different evaluations of culture’s history in the Monarchy, concomitant, conflicting and indeed superimposing and distorting each other in a consecutive sequence, surfaced throughout the nineteenth century?

A useful prism to come to terms with these questions and indeed with what the Monarchy was deemed capable of is provided by enlightened absolutism and its legacy which has, I believe, been too little acknowledged in its repercussions from the perspective of culture. The metaphor of the prism is particularly helpful here, as what unfolds is a story of redirecting and cross-fading enlightened preoccupations onto new domains and areas after disenchantment with Joseph’s roughshod ride over inherited traditions and customs. As we will see, these new or reconquered domains have been retrospectively described as straightforwardly “national”, a distorting account which managed to factor the Josephinian impulse out and give pan-monarchical forms of allegiance short shrift. Thus enlightened

13 G. Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, ed. by O. Rammstedt [1908], [Gesamtausgabe 11], Frankfurt am Main 1992; A. Nassehi, *Exclusion Individuality or Individualization by Inclusion*, "Soziale Systeme", 8 (2002), pp. 124-135; A. Meissner, *Rococo-Bilder: nach den Aufzeichnungen meines Großvaters*, Gumbinnen 1871.

14 O. Urban, *Die tschechische Gesellschaft* [Anton Gindely-Reihe zur Geschichte der Donaumonarchie und Mitteleuropas II], Wien 1994, 2. Vols., exhaustive and detailed studies may be found in E. Bruckmüller, U. Döcker, H. Stekl, P. Urbanitsch (eds.), *Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie*, Wien, Köln 1990, the inaugural collection of a rich ten-volume series.

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absolutism's legacy and its historical appraisal in terms of culture also offer valuable insights regarding the late-nineteenth century skirmishes over the proprietorship of the respective "national revivals".

Enlightened absolutism was predicated on a eudemonistic ethos of public felicity, welfare and equality before the law. This is significant for our purposes, but even more crucial is its role as pace-setter of developmental strategies. It introduced a pervasive employment of the Monarchy's "delay" and of the proper instruments of alleviating this deplorable and recalcitrant backwardness in the Habsburg territories. This catching up with delay remained a constant theme during the nineteenth century, and the patrimony and historical memory of enlightened absolutism became to an extent the victim of its device. Given the general stir it caused, enlightened absolutism invited diametrically opposed assessments of its impact and longevity from the very beginning.

During the 1780s, there was already disenchantment with this facet of the Josephinian programme. This was induced by several sources: On the one hand, its grandiloquent promises in the realm of education were found unconvincing. Several Enlighteners, among the most incisive, e.g. Prague historian František Pelcl and civil servant József Podmaniczky, then in Fiume, found the reduction of university education to the barest utilitarian basic training for civil servants extremely disappointing¹⁵. But this did not steer all Enlighteners into hostility towards the Josephinian project. On the other hand, some protagonists of the Enlightenment were – if I am permitted the pun – incensed by the selling off and destruction of invaluable gems of culture like the tools of liturgy, sacral paraphernalia, and books, as well as the curiosities of Rudolph II's famous collection under Joseph. Again Enlighteners with an unmitigated anticlerical disposition found little to worry about in this. So the balance and the reactions were uneven. Another contentious matter, bound up with the issue of "civilising missions" but not in an inevitably positive correlation, was language. In schooling policy, Maria Theresia and Joseph clung to a parallel system of training in the vernacular as base for learning German at primary schools, whereas the language of higher education was mostly German since Joseph's reforms (which made it the sole language of in secondary education), at the

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¹⁵ F. Pelcl, *Paměti*, ed. by F. Borováy, Praha 1931, pp. 43, 67, 82; Josef Podmaniczky to János Fekete de Galántha, Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest, family bequest Fekete, No. 52, 18 March 1785.

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universities (with some exceptions for courses taught in Latin, and many still in Hungary) and also several, usually overlooked, vernacular courses – in pastoral theology.¹⁶ This is difficult to square with the image of ruthless Germanisation. On the other hand, the fact that the clergy was entrusted with primary schooling and much of the secondary-level education in the Gymnasien aroused little sympathy among latter-day liberals after, roughly, the 1860s (another way to dehisce and exclude the Josephinian legacy from the historical record by disparaging the clergy’s cultural activities), while, again very telling for our purposes of critically examining “conflicts of tradition”,¹⁷ Bohemian reformists of the Vormärz mostly held clerical education with a strong Josephinian tinge in high esteem.

I have already mentioned the dichotomy between culture as a striving for the universal and its concrete realisation and manifestation. By many protagonists of cultivation the “nation” and not the overarching state was conceived as the privileged transmitter to realize “humanity” in every individual. Adherents of the Gesamtstaat took issue with this kind of argument as ramshackle particularism, jeopardizing individual liberty through rule of law in a large, unitary state. Indeed, the dualism between mankind and nation, and the educative ambit the “national” laid claim to, was present in a complex structure in the Habsburg Monarchy: Several simultaneous civilising missions were interlaced in an anfractuous maze. So the antagonism cannot be described in terms of a group of actors, imperial discourse controllers, spreading all-embracing, universally accepted cultural norms to their latter-day avatars at the peripheries. Indeed the state’s civilising mission contended for pre-eminence with the nascent nations along these very lines. The Culturstaat lies at the crossroads of both impulses. It is also at this point that we realize how one of enlightened absolutism’s key conceptual elements became inflected to serve different ends, the issue of

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16 F. Cínek, *K národnímu probuzení moravského dorostu kněžského*, Olomouc 1934, pp. 48, 117, 135, 170-171, on the clergy’s education in Czech, courses in pastoral theology under Joseph, renewed in 1810 by Francis I, J. Samsour, *Dějiny alumnátu brněnského*, Brno 1907, pp. 54-55, E. Hermann, E. Artner, *A hittudományi kar története 1635-1935* [A királyi magyar Pázmány Péter-tudományegyetem Története I], Budapest 1938, pp. 274, 348.

17 J. C. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition: Essays in Indian Ritual, Kingship, and Society*, Chicago 1985, pp. 10-25, “[...] sich gleichsam a posteriori eine Vergangenheit zu geben, aus der man stammen möchte, im Gegensatz zu der, aus der man stammt.”, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, in: *Sämtliche Werke: Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden*, ed. by Giorgio Colli, Mazzino Montinari, 2nd ed., Berlin, New York 1988, pp. 243-334, 270, see Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by D. Breazale, Cambridge 1991, p. 76.

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delay and cultural backwardness. It has often been maintained that the *Gesamtstaat*, the unitary state rudimentarily realised but still unrepentantly imagined by some, was already regarded as retrograde and “reactionary” around 1800, and until the middle of the century. This, it seems to me, is a stereotype – albeit, again, a highly illuminating one. We have to ask: “retrograde” in what sense? And it is also here that the late nineteenth-century accounts of the intellectual tectonics around 1800 should interest us. National historiographies of the late nineteenth century tell us that there was a model of the unitary state with some deviations but essentially stable across historical caesuras. Two arguments are hidden beneath this layer of imputed continuity: On the one hand, the emphasis on Joseph II’s indebtedness to the previous design underpinned by the Counter-Reformation (I will return to this briefly below). On the other hand, the claim that the Franciscan state from the 1790s onwards harked back to a pre-Theresian, essentially Baroque imperial idea with the accompanying alliance of throne and altar, continuing Joseph’s impetus without its enlightened figurehead. Predictably this was a point designed to prove that *Aufklärung* was no more than a prevarication or decoy here, and that it had to safely reside and develop within the nation. Taken together, this image of an undeterred, concentrated onslaught made the resilience and vigour of the indomitable national spirit all the more admirable.¹⁸ Such, in crude brushstrokes, were the contours of the image drawn in the late nineteenth century. But a closer perusal of the relevant literature of the decades after 1800 reveals a variety of attitudes from contemporaries. It seems that to those who began to elaborate a new concept of the nation, the *Gesamtstaat* seemed to turn its back on modernity because it looked back to the eighteenth century, adhering, as it were, to an outdated version of cosmopolitanism shorn of its enlightened garnish. Simultaneously, there were those, notoriously disregarded by national historiography, who positively identified with this very enlightened patrimony they still saw

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18 Austrian Germanophile liberals and *German* liberals, hired by the Austrian state after the 1850s to serve in its bureaucratic ranks, tend to display different attitudes on this continuity problem, inextricably tied to the respective styles of enquiry they became acquainted with. Germans like Albert Schäffle, a Swabian Protestant who became professor of national economy in Vienna, sees the continuous thrust of unification afoot well into the 1840s while Austrian liberals would bemoan its absence, see: W. Künne, *Geschichte der philosophischen Bolzano-Rezeption*, in: H. Rumpler (ed.), *Bernard Bolzano und die Politik: Staat, Nation und Religion als Herausforderung für die Philosophie im Kontext von Spätaufklärung, Frühnationalismus und Restauration* [“Studien zu Politik und Verwaltung”, 61], Wien 2000, p. 317.

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embodied in the state.¹⁹ To them, a syndicate of liberally minded bureaucrats, committed to Joseph's agenda, was a far more promising engine of reform than the refurbished country patriotism with the old Estates incapable of budging an inch when its privileges were at stake. In Bohemia, this was the elder generation of Bolzano's adherents²⁰. It was among these authors that German as a "Monarchiesprache", as Ignaz Cornova from Prague put it,²¹ remained praiseworthy precisely as a vehicle of culture. The rival narrative, shifting the gravitational centre of patriotism to the "nation", produced a different account: Insuper cosmopolitanism sealed the Monarchy off from European developments, deprived citizens of the blessings of foreign learning, and stifled the cultivation of the vernacular, thereby gravely neglecting the education of the broader parts of the populace. In short, the state had relinquished its reputation as *Culturstaat*. Germanophile liberals like Leopold von Hasner, Anton Springer and Ludwig August Frankl shared this conviction but with a different gist. They deplored that only a few sparse shafts of sunlight from German learning fell into the gloomy cistern of the Habsburg lands²², yearned for a proper full-blown return to the Josephinian venture the state had, in their eyes, abjured, although it was needed to prise open the carapaces of cultural insularity which constricted

19 As A. M. Drabek, *Patriotismus und nationale Identität in Böhmen und Mähren*, in: O. Dann, M. Hroch, J. Koll (eds.), *Patriotismus und Nationsbildung am Ende des Heiligen Römischen Reichs*, Köln 2004, pp. 151-170, amplifies, the concept of the nation as evinced by the writings of e.g. the historian Ignaz Cornova (1740-1822) might be fruitfully compared to the pre-revolutionary notion studied for France by E. Fehrenbach, *Nation*, in: *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, ed. by R. Reichardt, Heft 7, München 1986, pp. 75-107, 76-80.

20 See e.g. F. Makulan, *O stycích faráře M. J. Jychry s Janem a Bernardem Bolzanem*, "Časopis pro moderní filologii a literatury", 6 (1918), pp. 123-128. 214-219; Idem, *Bernard Bolzano a naše obrození*, "Česká Rv. Praha", 15 (1922), pp. 322-326

21 F. Kutnar, *Život a dílo Ignace Cornovy*, "Český Časopis Historický", 36 (1930), pp. 327-350 and 491-519.

22 L. von Hasner, *Denkwürdigkeiten: Autobiographisches und Aphorismen*, Stuttgart 1892, p. 32. Hanslick, also brought up in Prague in the Vormärz, deplores the poor state of instruction in ancient Greek, and concludes with an interesting twist: "Von dem eigentlichen Wesen des Griechentums, vom hellenischen Geist und seiner in unsere Klassiker hinüberleuchtenden ästhetischen Kraft erführen wir nichts.", E. Hanslick, *Aus meinem Leben*, Berlin 1894, I. Buch, 17 (emphasis added).

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and cramped some nationalities of the Monarchy²³. At this point an attitude of cultural superiority could easily be transmuted into a mission to bequeath the blessings of civilisation on less happy compatriots, an incipient tension which would fully unfold in 1848 (again, it is necessary to emphasize. The fact that some agents in the field of cultural politics called upon the state to realise this agenda should not be confused with a prior governmental commitment invoked by some of its self-styled transmitters). It is in these quarters, self-consciously vesting themselves in the garb of an enlightened mission abandoned by the state, that the wishful misconstrual of Joseph's Germanising agenda begins.

One of the main devices to come to terms with enlightened absolutism's stress on delay in emplotments of culture was a conceptual device which could be dubbed "protochronism". In a nutshell, this required demonstration that the accomplishments now hailed as cutting edge in a European comparison had already been achieved centuries ago by a given "people" or "nation" but forfeited and lost due to external repression or internal hostility and apostasy. Three discursive ligatures emerge here: The portrayal of the Josephinian a-national renegade becomes salient, the articulation of ideas of former statehood (the theme of "the nationalities forfeited of their previous own states" as Gumpłowicz had it²⁴) whose exchange for the blessings of imperial rule was a losing bargain, and, closely tied to the former, the glory of the dynasties preceding the Habsburgs. In some cases, the Habsburg dynasty, whose higher glory the intellectual pattern of delay first served, could now be attacked as a paralyzing force.

An excellent example is the monument erected to Přemysl ("the ploughman") by the Nostitz family in 1841 at Královské pole, a revealing contender to the statue of Joseph aerating the clod at Slavíkovice, tacitly dispelling the myth of his solitary benevolence and exemplary rule²⁵. Havlíček

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23 A similar image is painted in the case of Japan's forcible opening to international commerce in 1854, with an emphasis of positive civilisational effects - "eine [der] ersten Stätte der indo-germanischen Cultur im fernen Osten" - by an author with a previous East Prussian experience to describe the Meiji Period, see: J. Stalph, *Zur Wiederentdeckung der deutschsprachigen Meiji-Zeitschrift Von West nach Ost*, in: *Japanstudien 7. Reformen im politökonomischen System Japans*, München 1996, pp. 429-430

24 "ihres eigenen früheren Staates verlustig gegangene[r] Nationalitäten." Gumpłowicz, *Das Recht der Nationalitäten und Sprachen in Österreich*, p. 293.

25 Burian, *V. Z historie čtyř pomníků Josefa II. – Orače u Slavíkovice*, "Vlastivědný věstník moravský" 12 (1957); Ch. D' Elvert, *Joseph II. huldigt dem Ackerbaue*, "Notizen-Blatt der historich-statistischen Section der kais. konigl. mährisch-schlesischen Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde", 1896.

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Borovský couches it in the terms that it was not the Czechs' responsibility that these glorious achievements of the fourteenth century, of Hussites and Bohemian Brethren, had been temporarily covered under dust and profligate but dismal Baroque "barbarism" (hence also the spiritualisation of the nation, an inalienable and inviolate "spirit" indestructible over time, an explanatory device massively imparted with specific historical arguments and considerations²⁶). Enlightened absolutism, young Bohemian liberals of either mother tongue agreed, could never make up for this ignominious devastation and humiliation in the 17th century. The question whether it could serve as a scaffold for a future reorganisation drove a wedge between Czech- and German-speaking reformists. It is revealing to note that this perspective on culture, the disparaging dismissal of the Baroque settlement after White Mountain, chimed in nicely with the German liberal-anticlerical derogation of ultramontanism and, generally, Roman ("wälsch") despotism.²⁷ But this liberalism of Havlíček Borovský (drawing, as one should emphasize, on different idioms of the Enlightenment from the concomitant late enlightened outlook of Cornova, a galvanizing constellation for the study of the eighteenth century's rival legacies) did not culminate in a repudiation of German-speaking Bohemians. And indeed, Moritz Hartmann and Alfred Meißner drew on precisely the same imageries²⁸. From an avowedly Josephinist and etatist standpoint, this was a ludicrous picking over the bones of a lacklustre past, revived by a meretricious and languishing aristocracy, as Isidor Heller, one of Hartmann's former close associates, wrote in an 1852 brochure "mouldy" "Hussit Masquerades", "artificially preserved traditions" perpetuated by noble parochialism: "Old

26 Another angle of the longevity of aesthetical predilections introduced by enlightened absolutism is the hesitance to embrace romantic notions, to spiritualise the "nation", to dispense of the *genius* of the fatherland remodelled by authors like Mikulaš A. Voigt, Mihály Csokonai Vitéz and György Bessenyei, to replace the enlightened allegory with the romantic symbol, see E. Bojtár, *Hazát és népet álmodánk: A felvilágosodás és a romantika a közép- és kelet-európai irodalmakban*, Budapest 2008, pp. 51, 147.

27 V. Vlnas, *Der ‚böhmische Barock‘ und sein Bild in der historischen Tradition*, in: R. Riepertinger, et al, *Bayern – Böhmen. Bavorsko – Čechy. Katalog zur Bayerischen Landesausstellung 2007. Zweisell, 25. Mai bis 14. Oktober 2007*. Augsburg 2007, pp. 45-55.

28 S. Höhne, *Öffentlichkeit und nationaler Diskurs im Vormärz: Sprache und Kultur als Signifikanten nationaler Desintegration* and V. Maidl, *Landespatriotismus, Nationalitätenwechsler und sprachlich-nationale Divergenz*, both in: S. Höhne, A. Ohme (eds.), *Prozesse kultureller Integration und Desintegration: Deutsche, Tschechen, Böhmen im 19. Jahrhundert*, München 2005, pp. 1-30 and 31-51, see also A. Meißner's *Žižka* quoted by Josef Pekař in his important pamphlet of 1897 *Die Böhmen als Apostel der Barbarisierung*, Prag 1897, p. 3, a riposte to Theodor Mommsen's truculent article in the "Neue Freie Presse", 17 October 1897.

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Austria developed the masquerade of nationalities in its interior life, to alienate one from the other [...] new Austria throws down all impeding barriers and reunites those separated through artificially preserved traditions into a unitary society, common action for common weal”.²⁹ This is already the clarion call of Neoabsolutism. Remember that Franz Joseph’s accession in 1848 was celebrated in Prague by reverting to an ostensible museum piece, *La Clemenza di Tito*, an apotropaic *speculum principis* to banish the demons of the immediate revolutionary past, mingle absolutism and remorse, but also an augury of a return to enlightened despotism to other contemporary observers.³⁰

As it is highly relevant for the contested nexus of culture and state-integration, allow me to briefly return to the vertebrate structure of the national-liberal readings of the Enlightenment’s place in the respective cultural renaissances: Why, then, would the late nineteenth-century account seeing the Monarchy during the reign of Francis I as turning back to a pre-Maria Theresian style of rule and of shaping culture so revealing? Immediately preceding 1900, national historiography re-styled the intellectual trailblazers of new forms of patriotism active a century earlier, making the predecessors of nationhood and their work a premonition of independence, thereby retroactively devising a coherent tradition of an idea handed down over the decades. This national reappraisal looking back from the turn of nineteenth century to the previous *fin de siècle*, the years around 1800, was both consequential and distorting, because it eclipsed the loyalties and preoccupations of these enlightened men of letters. The key plot was as follows: As I have briefly intimated above, enlightened absolutism was thus taken to be marked by a stark continuity with the ruthless Counter-reformation of the seventeenth century (its apogee being, in the Czech narrative, the “Renewed Constitution (*Verneuerte Landesordnung/Obnovené zřízení zemské*)” of 1627, in the Hungarian narrative the Leopoldinian “*Einrichtungswerk*” pioneered by Kollonich which failed

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29 I. Heller, *Sendschreiben eines Oesterreichers an die deutsche Nation*, Leipzig 1852, p. 17.

30 Cf. L. Finscher, *La clemenza di Tito*, in: C. Dahlhaus (ed.), *Pipers Enzyklopädie des Musiktheaters*. Vol. IV. München 1991, p. 334 f.

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to materialize³¹). “Enlightenment” was per definitionem incompatible with absolutist rule; therefore, it could in no way be “Josephinian”. One of the more oblique strategies for grappling with this problem was the autochthonisation of enlightened absolutism: It is no coincidence that Kamil Krofta alludes to Charles IV as an enlightened absolutist “who almost made us *one* people”. This would do to efface the Josephinian blot on the escutcheon of many of the dignified pioneers of cultural renaissance one wished to enlist as predecessors. The element was of course bound up with a broader sweeping argument about the proprietorship of the national revival in its late nineteenth-century historicisation. As the church, ramshackle and reactionary, also seemed to have little in store, as latter-day nationalists of the nineteenth century would have it (a manifest exception is provided by those who tried to re-describe Josephinian reform Catholicism), an account which was, as I have said above, at loggerheads with early nineteenth-century attitudes, another impulse had to be singled out: A prominent imagery including the cross-fertilisation of autochthonous anti-absolutist culture with foreign influences had to be concocted. This could possibly mean that “small peoples” – a patent anachronism for the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century – were supposed to have cooperated to deflect the Habsburg menace and “Germanisation”. The other option was to single out and emphasize Western European “influences”³². Here, the problem of German culture’s impact was particularly thorny, as the impression of circumnavigating the monarchical Scylla of “Germanisation” only to end up in Charybdis’ belly had to be avoided. It is not surprising that there was exasperation and dismay about the breadth of “German” cultural impact, but at the same time it had a lot to recommend it: With the rise of Kulturprotestantismus its Protestant credentials became all the more

31 E. Hassenpflug-Elzholz, *Böhmen und die böhmischen Stände in der Zeit des beginnenden Zentralismus. Eine Strukturanalyse der böhmischen Adelsnation um die Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, München 1982, pp. 14-17; J. J. Varga, *Berendezési tervvezetek Magyarországon a török kiűzésének időszakában: Az „Einrichtungswerk”*, “Századok” 125 (1991), pp. 449-488, and the perceptive essay by Antal Szántay on Angelo Gabriele’s *progetto* which superseded Kollonich’s “Einrichtungswerk” in terms of anti-Estates radicalism as still available in the imperial library’s repositories at the time of Joseph II, *Bibliothekare und Historiker – vom Regierungsprojekt Angelo Gabriele bis Joseph II.*, in: G. Ammerer, H. Haas (ed.), *Ambivalenzen der Aufklärung: Festschrift für Ernst Wangermann*, Wien, München 1997, pp. 75-92.

32 On the obsolescence of “Einflußforschung” see: J. Holthusen, *Die Neueinschätzung der dalmatisch-ragusanischen Literatur und des Illyrismus in der heutigen kroatischen Literaturwissenschaft*, in: *Ergebnisse und Pläne der Südosteuropa-Forschung*, Munich 1972, pp. 155-160.

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impeccable, endearing it to Czech protagonists of the continuity between Hussitism, the revival, and the national flourishing of 1900 (again the protochronist device was employed here).³³ It is at this point, highly significant for our general purpose, that a new hero emerges whose relevance in infusing the various revivals with a national bent was singularly exaggerated: Johann Gottfried Herder.³⁴ He was to serve as an intermediary and conceptual arbitrator of “protonationalism” and “protoromanticism”, thereby conveniently bestowing two of the qualities that “imperial” culture – late enlightened and classicist – could be conveniently juxtaposed to.³⁵ This historiographical twist severed the bonds with the Josephinian variety of late Enlightenment and occluded other propitious and manifest transfers and inspirations “around 1800”.

Another key issue bound up with this construction of a viscerally anti-absolutist Enlightenment and national revival was the role allotted to the nobility as agents in the renaissance of national culture. After it was singularly extolled by Josef Hanuš in his monumental history³⁶ and by the Hungarian jubilee volumes of the National Museum and the National Academy³⁷, it received less lavish praise in the times of the Marxist narrative in full swing (although it could somehow be salvaged as a surrogate of the non-existing bourgeoisie according to the historical-dialectical sequence). In many of these accounts, none of the nobles in question seems to have

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 33 M. Havelka (ed.), *Spor o smysl českých dějin 1895–1938*, Praha 1997; R. G. Plaschka, *Von Palacký zu Pekař: Geschichtswissenschaft und Nationalbewußtsein bei den Tschechen*, Graz 1955, pp. 38–44.

34 Z. V. David, *Hegelova srážka s katolickým osvícenstvím v Čechách a zrod novodobého národního uvědomění*, "Filosofický časopis", 54 (2006), pp. 809–833; Idem, *Johann Gottfried Herder and the Czech National Awakening: A Reassessment* [Carl Beck Papers in Slavic Studies, University of Pittsburgh Center for Russian and East European Studies], Pittsburgh 2007; H. Sundhaußen, *Der Einfluß der Herderschen Ideen auf die Nationsbildung bei den Völkern der Habsburgermonarchie*, München 1973, is not always accurate in the details he adduces.

35 Interestingly and importantly, different narratives of culture in history were employed here: Most crucially, to those who had Enlighteners succumb to Germanisation and see a stark contrast between Enlighteners and partisans of the revival – the latter part of the assessment has something to recommend it – as well as to those who found it necessary to add a more straightforwardly national gist to Enlighteners’ thought, thereby designing the plot of a smooth transition, a foreign influence had to be pinpointed to account for a change in the intellectual outlook and, consequentially, the political agenda.

36 J. Hanuš, *Národní museum a naše obrození*, in: *Kulturní a národní obrození šlechty české v XVIII. a první půli XIX. století. Jeho význam pro založení a počátky musea*, Praha 1921, and volume II, 1923; B. Rieger, *O poměru českých stavů k reformám poddanským za Marie Terezie* in: Idem, *Drobné spisy*, I, Praha 1914, pp. 99–178. .

37 Z. Pál Pach, A. Vörös: *A Magyar Tudományos Akadémia másfél évszázada 1825–1875*, Budapest 1975, p. 122.

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harboured broader loyalties to the overarching monarchical state. The emphasis on the nobles' alleged "inner exile" after 1790 or, at latest 1809, dovetails and subsists smoothly with their alienation from the absolutist state painted in the gloomiest colours. More nuances must be afforded here to explain what was going on and what was at stake in their cultural activities: Indeed, noble cultural activism in the early nineteenth century became one of the key groundswells of national renaissances. I would suggest that patriotic Enlighteners disaffected with how Joseph's politics developed (and as I said above this disenchantment neither applies to all Enlightenmenters *toto coelo* nor were those disaffected the only ones who could legitimately lay claim to the title "patriot", although some of them would try to do so³⁸) mostly disapproved of both the old *natio* of the less reformist nobility and newer concepts of the nation which encapsulated claims to popular sovereignty. Under these conditions, the cultural activism they keenly exhorted the nobility to practice seemed a safe avenue to travel. As an additional benefit, blame for the inefficiency of the Estates – not deemed reformable by many Enlightenmenters, notwithstanding their close professional and affective association with the nobility – could conveniently be heaped on the state, e.g. on a continuous commitment of the Viennese central government to a policy which further curtailed and stifled the constitutions of the various *Länder*.

Before I finish with some concluding remarks, I would like to mention three more coagulations of the imperial idea with civilising impulses also frequently overlooked in the historiography of the Habsburg lands: Law, the imperial idea of "Roman patriotism", and the question of the Catholic religion. Let me first turn to the issue of law: Surely the enhancement of legal security and the adequacy of legal provisions was a cornerstone of culture throughout the nineteenth century ("Rechtskultur"³⁹). I have already alluded to the significance of legal claims and counter-claims with historical ammunition in the introduction of my paper. Here again the imperial impulse becomes conspicuous, but we need to carefully distinguish between the practice and the cultivation/codification of law (once more, the

38 Previous printed statements of those who had in the meantime abjured their admiration for Joseph II now became grist to the mill of their detractors.

39 T. Giaro (ed.), *Modernisierung durch Transfer im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert. Rechtskulturen des modernen Osteuropa, Bd. I. Studien zur europäischen Rechtsgeschichte*. Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für europäische Rechtsgeschichte (205) Frankfurt a.M. 2006; I. Kajtár, *Az osztrák jog magyarországi recepciójának kérdéséhez: Jogexport – adaptáció – jog identitás*, "Studia Iuridica", 118 (1989), pp. 107–121.

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participation in the devising and implementation of imperial legal regimes became a contentious issue in times of dawning Empires and after their demise with symptoms of phantom pain also afflicting the historians⁴⁰). It can safely be claimed that the impulse of the Empire with an enlightened absolutist tinge was tied to natural law. The question, from the point of view of an overarching theory of civilising missions and a typology of their effects, would be whether this is a generally observable trait which applies to several “Empires” in their “civic” self-authentication, and if so, what recurrent drawbacks and vicissitudes resulted from this predisposition.

Legal unification looms large as a key cachet of enlightened absolutism’s impetus. Nevertheless, certain variations occur which should caution us against too clear-cut assumptions⁴¹ – also regarding the issue whether legal unification meant Germanisation, not so much in the sphere of the language of legal proceedings, but rather through the introduction of codified norms emanating from Germanic common law.⁴²

It is commonly known that the inherited rights of select groups of the *societas civilis* were generally given short shrift by “absolutist” regimes. But these rights often persisted in a more or less mitigated form after the apogee of enlightened absolutism, either because the assault failed in the face of obstruction, or, equally important, because the assault was later credited with having been more abrasive than it actually was – again a trope of compensatory tradition-bargaining briefly hinted above, which is still so consequential in shaping our intuitive ideas about enlightened absolutism. This is intriguing, but even more intriguing is the fact that notwithstanding this revival or enshrinement of rights, they were – with the paramount exception of Hungary of course where problems of “nesting” civilising missions and the legal tradition permitted to flourish came to be felt e.g.

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 40 J. Čelakovský, *O účasti právníkův a stavů ze zemí českých na kodifikaci občanského práva rakouského*, Praha 1911; O. Peterka, *Das Zeitalter des aufgeklärten Absolutismus als rechtsgeschichtliche Epoche Böhmens*. “Bulletin of the International Committee of Historical Sciences”, 35 (1937), pp. 135-147.

41 For instance the urban rights of Moravian and Bohemian cities in obligation law were declared binding until the publication of the General civil code, see Hofdekret, 7. June 1784, *Juristische Gesetzessammlung (Sammlung von Gesetzen und Verfassungen im Justizfache)*, Nr. 302, on this series see G. Kocher, *Die Rechtsreformen Josephs II.* in: H. Reinalter (ed.), *Josephinismus als aufgeklärter Absolutismus*, Wien 2006, pp. 125-162, 142.

42 See the introduction of “Germanic” Parentelenrecht through the Codex Horten, embedded in the old *Sachsenspiegel Intestatrecht* already in place in Lower and Upper Austria and in Styria (*Codex Austriacus*, III, 952) and *Die Umarbeitungen des Codex Theresianus: Herausgegeben und mit Anmerkungen versehen von Dr. Philipp Harras Ritter von Harrasowsky, I. Band, Entwurf Horten’s*, Wien 1886, p. 26.

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at the legal academy of Zagreb⁴³ – scarcely ever taught, and nor was their study officially encouraged.⁴⁴ This led to a noteworthy discrepancy between the officially promulgated settlement and the persisting Reservatrechte. But this is only one facet. Concomitantly, the realigning of boundaries added new domains of validity to the previous purview of law within the Monarchy. Both from the perspective of civilising missions and cultural upbringing, it is illuminating to study what law was introduced and how its introduction was safeguarded on these occasions, but also which language of negotiation and trial was adopted. This is a particularly fertile aspect as it cautions us not to straightforwardly correlate civilising impetus and linguistic unification. Also for the student of the nexus between epistemic communities and concrete political predilection among imperial bureaucracies it is very revealing to see which segments of the civil service opted for what solution in these cases (an issue bound up with the frequently aired suspicions about the central governmental offices' reluctance to employ natives from the respective region to run its subsidiary authorities).⁴⁵

Another question is the neo-Roman imagery of Empire and indeed, with its classicist trappings, Enlightenment, making the former a vehicle of the latter, as a recrudescence of antiquity ending the Barbarian hegemony. Late invocations, like the eloquent passage of Josef Alexander Helfert, the indomitable busybody and political publicist nodal in the Neoabsolutist Monarchy's cultural affairs, inserted in his 1853 leaflet *Über Nationalgeschichte und den gegenwärtigen Stand ihrer Pflege in Österreich* [On the National History and the Current Situation of its Cultivation in Austria], couch Austria's "mission" in terms of a "pluriverse" of adjacent but distinct and culturally autonomous entities which then merits the application of the formula "civis romanus sum": This is designed to soothe the aspirations and distress of 1848, as Helfert discusses when semantically purging

43 D. Čepulo, *Razvoj pravne znanosti u Hrvatskoj 1776-1914*, in: M. Ježić, (ed.), *Hrvatska i Europa, kultura, znanost i umjetnost, sv. 4: moderna kultura od Preporoda do Moderne (19. st.)*. Zagreb 2010, pp. 831-836.

44 O. Peterka, *Rechtsgeschichte der böhmischen Länder in ihren Grundzügen dargestellt*, 2. Vols., Reichenberg 1928-33, the Estates hired Joseph Veith in 1791 to give accompanying lectures to the official curriculum, acquainting students with the history of the Bohemian constitution, J. Volf, *Přednášky o českém státním právu na Pražské universitě 1782 až 1824, Sborník věd právních a státních* 21, 1921, pp. 159-165; V. Urfus, *Profesor českého státního práva Josef Veith a osvícenský patriotismus v Čechách na přelomu 18. století*, "Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis" 10 (1969), pp. 31-46.

45 Camillo Taddeo Besozzi, president of the Lombard court of appeal, *Necrologio del Barone Taddeo Camillo Besozzi*, Milano 1854 (1768-1854), pp. 7, 12.

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the vexatious term “national” – as in “Nationalgeschichte”, national history. With a fine sense for conceptual hierarchies – according to Helfert’s pattern, the residents of the state interact as “citizens”, the dwellers of the Land as “inhabitants”, and those of a township or municipality as “neighbours” – he observes: “National [...] We do not thereby understand the narrow slogan which, in the agitated days of recent and deplorable memory, made citizens of one state, the inhabitants of one region, the neighbours of one city look on each other with suspicion and hostility because of differences of language: for us this concept has the comprehensive meaning shown by the people of Rome in Antiquity, whose awe-inspiring motto ‘Civis romanus sum!’ was embraced by the Pelasgian Greek, the Iberian Spaniard, the polyglot Asian no less than by the Latin Italian”.⁴⁶ Then Helfert goes on to make a probably surprising remark, usually not quoted when his brochure on *Nationalgeschichte* is referred to, a Bonapartist declaration: “For us”, Helfert argues, Roman patriotism “[has] the very higher quality we have recently witnessed in the splendour and fall of the ‘great Nation’ whose glory the German Alsatian, the Celtic Breton, and the Italian Corsican partook in with the same pride as the native Parisian”.⁴⁷ Helfert’s position can be very well surmised from two allusions: The Latin “Italian” who subscribes to the overarching idea of Romanitas as proudly as citizens from the most obscure province may be intended to stand as a paragon for the German-speaking liberal nationalists of the Habsburg Monarchy whose pan-German enthusiasm forcibly cooled off after 1848. Secondly, the German-speaking Alsatian who willingly followed Napoleon’s call shows the brittleness and artificiality, the incongruence of cultural affiliations and national allegiance. This is the Neoabsolutist and neoconservative reading of the Monarchy’s Roman reputation, cautiously reformist but retaining cultural diversity as long as it does not manifestly threaten the state’s cohesive design. But let me briefly adduce two more examples, this time by sons of the Enlightenment – which Helfert, whose father worked hard to curtail Josephinian Church law in his position as canonist and supervisor of the diocese aluminate’s examinations, was not.

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46 J. A. von Helfert, *Über Nationalgeschichte und den gegenwärtigen Stand ihrer Pflege in Österreich*, Prag 1853, p.1. J. A. v. Helfert, close collaborator of Leo Thun in the ministry of education during the 1850s, whose astonishing outpouring ranges from a history of Maria Carolina of Naples to advices for the cultural upbringing of newly acquired Bosnia and what he took to be a “Europeanized” brand of Islam there, deserves a separate study.

47 J.A. von Helfert, *Ibid.*

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Scene change: In the winter of 1800, young Carl F. Kübeck reads Homer on the bench of a cockle stove in Prague, indulging in historical comparison at the time the Allies' fortunes of war against Napoleon faltered: "I also read him again, but not in Praeneste but close to a big cockle stove, in a tiny, tiny, parlour, in the region of the Hyperboreans, at a time when Russians, Kalmyks, Circassians, Cosacs, in short: the old Scythians and Sarmatians, shrouded in ice and snow, retreat from the West where they intrepidly sought to fight the renascent epoch of the Greeks and Romans with arrow and lance, bullets and bombs, with weapons of the old and new age. I read him at the side of a fifty-year-old Slavic lady [...]"⁴⁸ Kübeck's little tale encapsulates a fascination with the "resurgence of Greek and Roman times" and a Bonapartist commitment which would dovetail nicely with his ideas about technocratic competence coupled with reformist absolutism as the key to the Monarchy's restoration and regeneration. The Empire of antiquity with its cultural gems and political establishment seems to resonate in many respects with Kübeck's Josephinian interests and cultural taste.

But we need to be cautious here not to cut out a cardboard character of a reified enlightened tradition. Joseph von Sonnenfels had a much more Montesquieuan sense of the confrontation between barbarism and Roman legality. In a wonderful passage which evinces the *antiromanitas*, the deep distrust of Roman law imparted by the natural law tradition Sonnenfels subscribed to, his paean to Joseph II as future legislator appeals to German valour, virtue and rustic liberty in an image of Cheruskian panache: "The legions of Varrus were a expiatory sacrifice, slaughtered by Hermann the Teuton and his warriors for the desecration of the laws of the fatherland. Their more pliable grandsons genuflected before the already ignominious fasces [Ruthenbindeln, fasces lictoris] and hence the yoke of Roman law became a heavy burden on their necks. The shadow of Varrus rejoiced about this great revenge. But I see him coming, the second Hermann, who will liberate Germany [Germanien] from this humiliating vassalage and will make it happy through native laws and immortal through his own glory".⁴⁹ As we have seen above, Sonnenfels' less than tacit preference for consuetudinal law of sturdy "German" origins was no isolated opinion in the

48 M. von Kübeck (ed.), *Tagebücher des Carl Friedrich Freiherrn Kübeck von Kùbau*, Wien 1909-10, 3 Vols, I/1, 51, alluding to Horatius: "Trojani belli scriptorem ... Praeneste relegi."

49 J. von Sonnenfels, *Über die Liebe des Vaterlandes*, Wien 1771, pp. 72-73.

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process of the unification of law within the Monarchy when it became an important pattern of a specific legal culture. Interestingly this theme of antiromanitas resonated strongly with liberals of different mother tongues in the “Cisleithanian” Vormärz which enabled them to retain German cultural sympathies but vest them in terms of an innocuous admiration of natural law whose perfection in the Habsburg Monarchy they saw as an advantage vis-à-vis the situation in the German lands.⁵⁰

Another key issue in the nineteenth-century charting of Kulturräume that we should recognise and contextualise is the question of the foundational moments and dissemination of Christianity; Christianisation and its establishment as the primordial cradle of culture. The question of Christianity’s spread and its agents, the region’s initial belonging to the Eastern or Western ecumenical sphere – think of the protracted argument about Bohemia’s Christianisation and about the Great Moravian Empire since the late Enlightenment, involving among others also Dobner and Dobrovský – was still crucial in terms of the cultural and political pattern devised by Austroslavism.⁵¹ The Josephinian angle appears difficult to locate here. Surely, the idea of Austria as a “Catholic superpower”,⁵² evidently, it seemed, would be at loggerheads with assertions of Germanic supremacy and pan-Germanic designs, simply because of the manifest Protestant menace to unity. True, the proportion of Francis Joseph’s subjects who professed the Catholic faith was impressive. Nonetheless, Catholic and Germanic were not entirely aloof from each other, as the Neoabsolutist regime’s playing on both registers in the Hungarian case would evince.⁵³ But the subservience of the Church could also develop in a direction of mutual dependency which connected Church and state, witness the imperial piety. “Integrative” this piety was, and surely Francis Joseph’s credentials as tolerant emperor are impeccable. But thereby hangs a larger tale. In 1848, Archduchess Sophie, whose saccharine expectorations are frequent in her diaries, recalls with

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50 See e.g. the collection of excerpts in Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Wien, SB FA 26, Familienarchiv Pratobevera, Karton 6, 44R-67V.

51 V. Jagič, *Entstehungsgeschichte der kirchenslavischen Sprache: Neue, berichtigte und erweiterte Ausgabe*, Berlin 1913, pp. 137-144; J. Macůrek: *České a uherské dějepisectví v počátcích českého a maďarského národního obrození: K otázce prvých zájmů J. Dobrovského o Uhry a Maďary*, in: *Josef Dobrovský 1753-1953: Sborník studií k dvoustému výročí narození*, Prag 1953, pp. 473-506.

52 G. Mayr, *Österreich als katholische Großmacht: Ein Traum zwischen Revolution und liberaler Ära*, Wien 1989, narrower than the title suggests, the study deals mainly with the Tyrol.

53 Ch. Berger Waldenegg, *Das Projekt der ‘Kolonisierung’ Ungarns in der Epoche des Neoabsolutismus*, “Südost-Forschungen”(2002/03 recte 2004), 61/62, pp. 91-139; O. Sashegyi: *Ungarns politische Verwaltung in der Ära Bach, 1849-1860*, Graz, 1979.

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indignation that Adolf Fischhof – a Jew, Sophie noted – paraded at the top of the Corpus Christi procession right after the sanctum monstrance.⁵⁴ In 1850, Sophie sighed with relief, the Emperor fittingly led the devotees, which he was to do until the very year of his death, 1916, moved not only her but Prince Liechtenstein and Eszterhazy to tears. What does this tell us for our purposes of imperial integration? Witness a complementary story: In 1914 a disciplinary investigation was ordered against several members of the city council of Radnice/Radnitz, who had failed to participate in the official mass to celebrate the Emperor's birthday. One of the councillors retorted that, as a Jew, he never went to Mass. This, however, was found a weak tergiversation. His faith, the superior authority declared, was of course a personal matter but he was compelled to take part in the service because of the demands of his official duty.⁵⁵ That Catholic religion was a stimulating cultural force beyond the usual disparagements and pillories which equated Protestantism and progress had been a constant theme of enlightened Catholics of the Vormärz. What was possible for the Monarchy to achieve by virtue of its credentials as Catholic power under Neoabsolutism was more a matter of dispute than it had been before 1848: In hindsight one could not be sure whether the regime had really been as staunchly repressive and reactionary as some of its enemies now claimed.⁵⁶ What seems to have survived of the "Josephinian" state tutelage over the Church long after it was apparently rescinded with the Concordat of 1855 was a relationship of mutual dependency, which could make the Catholic Church an authority only in the sense that it served as an agency of state loyalty. It would be very auspicious to follow these lines and to chart the understanding of the Catholic Church's promotion of liturgy in the vernaculars as a main element of monarchical benevolence and protection of cultural diversity (by means of the ruler's patronage over the Church) in the second half of the nineteenth century: I will return to this theme on another occasion.

54 F. Reinöhl, *Aus dem Tagebuch der Erzherzogin Sophie*, "Historische Blätter", IV (1931) pp. 109-136, 130.

55 J. O. Novotný, *Vzkříšení samostatnosti československé: Kronika let 1914-1918*, I, Praha 1923, p. 465.

56 K. Ammerl, *Sebastian Brunner und seine publizistische Stellungnahme in der Wiener Kirchenzeitung zur Frage der Neuregelung des Verhältnisses von Kirche und Staat, Kirche und Schule und zur sozialen Frage in den Jahren 1848 bis 1855*, unpublished PhD thesis, Vienna, 1934, gives a workmanlike treatment of these issues abstracted from the journal of the anti-Josephinian Sebastian Brunner.

THE IMPERIAL IDEA AND CIVILISING MISSIONS

In concluding, I wish to briefly address the issue of Enlightened absolutism's profiteers. The profiteers of enlightened absolutism cast a long shadow: They, frequently the "Germans" – "Germanness" within the realms of the Habsburg Monarchy did by no means denote a self-consciously coherent group identity based upon substantial commonalities (from Protestants of Upper Hungary to Tyrolians) during the Vormärz, and although networks sprawled, this remained true until the end of the Monarchy – were often seen as agents of subterfuge, as treacherous interlopers climbing out of the Trojan horse of assimilation. This was a particularly salient theme of reproach and vituperation in the case of bourgeois Jews in Hungary, quick to become acquainted with German culture and its ideals and equally prone to Magyarization also before 1914.⁵⁷ This imagery of turning the mantle led to the depiction of the profiteers of enlightened absolutism as an insidious and infiltrating vanguard, difficult to monitor in its shape and extension, realizing, as it were, the Germanizing civilising mission which failed from above from inside. This current capitalized on the earlier image of the a-national Josephinian renegade, a betrayer of the nation who might also adhere to another confession than the Catholic one (in Hungary the situation was more complicated, as the patent of toleration did not meet with unanimous acclaim here among those Protestants who were envisaged as benefiting from it, qualms about hitherto enshrined Protestant school autonomy, language of the liturgy a. s. f. abounded). Generally, one might say that the motive of the hypocritical patriot was at the same time particularly troublesome and strongly tied to enlightened absolutism's "mistaken" and "superseded" civilising impulse: A civilising mission should – pre-emptively so – aim at interiorized or internalised cultivation rather than assume the shape of imposed and engrafted education. The Hungarian polarity of polgárosítás and polgarárosodás, active and passive embourgeoisement, Verbürgerlichung, semantically registers this dualism. Perfidiously, enlightened absolutism's beneficiary feigned exterior signs but remained intrinsically alien, this could turn out to be a useful pretext for exclusionism.

Finally, the two motives of the interlaced civilising missions and of historical delay were combined in yet another ascription: The repetition

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 57 G. Gyáni, J. Katz, *Végzetes szakadás. Az ortodoxia kiválása a zsidó hitközségekből Magyarországon és Németországban*, Budapest 1990, p. 303; J. Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon. Politikai: eszméletörténet*, Budapest 2001, pp. 495–509.

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of “Josephinian” coercive centralizing measures, riding roughshod over inherited constitutional arrangements and establishments. This theme of the repetition of Joseph’s intrusive measures is a hidden *ostinato* which I have so far encountered in sources from remonstrations against the introduction of Hungarian in patrimonial justice in today’s Slavonia to the Serbian Orthodox clerical synod of Buda. It has been famously summarized by Josef Eötvös in his *Der Einfluß der herrschenden Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts auf den Staat* [*The Dominant Ideas of the Nineteenth Century and the State*].⁵⁸ Eötvös was clearly acquainted with the entire far-flung political debate we have briefly dissected about which agency of justice and cultural flourishing was to be preferred as most auspicious and adequate. His critical rehabilitation of the “nation” hinges on its function as protector of the individual against the all-encompassing and encroaching state. By the same token, Eötvös elegantly connects this observation with the inner history of the Empire since the eighteenth century and explains the widespread appeal of the “nation” precisely by impeaching the lofty but unfulfilled proclamations of enlightened absolutist rule of law: “If we look back calmly on what has happened since the late eighteenth century, the ardour with which one has waged war against everything particular and specific in the name of uniformity, the perseverance with which the liberty of the individual (initially in the interest of absolute monarchy, now in the interest of popular sovereignty) was subjected to the power of the state in each and every respect, we will be baffled neither by the consciousness of national peculiarity this process provoked, nor by the fact that the yearning for individual liberty took this direction and no other. It is only because the liberty of the individual was violated the most precisely regarding this particular aspect – the membership of a people – that the consciousness of this quality was aroused, and that the impotence the individual feels vis-à-vis the power of the state forced everybody to satisfy their desire for free development in the very domain of interests where they do not stand alone in the conflict with the omnipotent state.”⁵⁹

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58 J. von Eötvös, *Der Einfluß der herrschenden Ideen des 19. Jahrhunderts auf den Staat*, 2 vols., Leipzig 1854, I, p. 52: “Everywhere the struggle for the equality of national rights before it is achieved; everywhere the thirst for power as soon as one has to bemoan suppression no longer.”

59 Eötvös, *Einfluß*, II, 52.

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SUMMARY

This article tries to reappraise the relationship between the imperial idea and civilising missions by taking the Habsburg Monarchy as point of departure: In doing so it focuses on the underpinning, reputation, and consequences of the cultural politics induced by enlightened absolutism, and tries to give a nuanced picture of its successes and failures, but also of the (occasionally inaccurate) credentials it acquired. The history of the legacy and cultural memory of enlightened absolutism provides us with much revealing material on the tacit or overt presence of civilising missions. But these missions were neither tied as straightforwardly to a Germanizing impulse as nationalist historiographies have claimed, nor did they vanish after the rule of the last of the accredited “enlightened despots”, Leopold II. The themes discussed in the article are read against the backdrop of the pervasive realignment of national histories which took place from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards and made the Enlightenment an outright precursor of the respective national revivals. Sympathies for the enlightened absolutist impetus among the alleged forerunners of independent national culture or even statehood were, however, much more complex and varied than posterity would allow for. By the same token, the memories of and engagement with enlightened absolutism during the Vormärz period were less easily sortable along the lines of “nationality” interpolated later (as the historians of the revivals often had it: a positive memory on the part of “German” speakers and a negative one among those who spoke other mother tongues). Apart from this revisionist agenda, the article briefly engages with several fields of civilising impulses during and after the heyday of enlightened rule, among them law and legal unification, the promotion of an overarching, non-national “Roman” patriotism in the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Catholic Church.