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Virtue and duty

Academic moral discourse in seventeenth-century Sweden

Bo Lindberg

Abstract

Although virtue is not a key concept in natural law and Christian theology, these two doctrines are included in my analysis of the moral discourse at seventeenth-century Swedish universities, alongside, of course, Aristotelianism and Stoicism. There were differences and conflicts between these four 'languages', Stoicism being considered less useful for society, and natural law eventually replacing Aristotelianism as the dominant theory. But all of them could serve the education of the clergy and civil servants of the expanding Swedish Lutheran monarchy. My sources are mainly dissertations and orations, which were produced within the pedagogic context of university teaching; that means that they do not necessarily present the personal convictions of the authors. Stoicism is partly an exception, represented here by a chastened ex-academic.

Keywords: Aristotelian virtues, *Vita activa*, Justus Lipsius (1547-1606), patriotism, cosmopolitanism, Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694)

This chapter examines the moral discourse at Swedish universities in the seventeenth century.¹ That moral discourse consisted of various doctrines, or 'languages',² as I prefer to call them and there were five such languages. In three of them, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, and political humanism, the concept of virtue was fundamental together with a vocabulary originating in classical antiquity. The other two were Christianity and natural law. In

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¹ There were five of them within the Swedish realm: Uppsala, founded in 1477, revived in 1593, Dorpat (Tartu) in Estonia, founded in 1632, Åbo (Turku) founded 1640, and Lund, founded in 1668, Greifswald in Pomerania, founded already in 1456, ended up in Swedish territory in 1648.

² The term seems to have been introduced by J.G.A. Pocock, 'Concept of Language'.
them the word virtue was rarely used, and they do not quite belong under the heading of ‘teaching virtue’. Still, they are necessary parts of the subject of this chapter, the former because Christianity in its Lutheran version was the superior ideological framework of university teaching throughout the seventeenth century, and the other because it replaced Aristotelianism as the dominant theory of ethics and politics in the latter part of the century. From the perspective of modern moral philosophy, Christian ethics and natural law may be regarded as deontological theories when compared to the virtue ethics of the other three, but that distinction is of minor importance in the historical context that concerns us here and could not justify the exclusion of Christianity and natural law.

The moral discourse at the universities was subject to the ideological restrictions of the Swedish Lutheran monarchy. Students were to be inculcated with good values and convictions in order to be loyal and useful members of society and servants of the kingdom and the church. This is to say, the different languages were often used to corroborate the same values and principles. To some extent, the languages were about the same topics. In addition, they were often mixed; eclecticism was not only practised, it was a recommended scholarly attitude. Still, the languages are discernible. There are obvious theoretical and methodological differences between the five languages and some of them reflect social, political, moral, and even scientific tensions in the historical context.

Except for two important texts, the sources are academic genres: dissertations, orations, and lecture notes, all of them in Latin. They are marked by the pedagogic aim of academic studies. The formal outfit of the text is important. The Latin language was expected to be correct – and so it is, usually. Latin was a vehicle for thoughts for which there was not yet an established vocabulary in Swedish. On the other hand, Latin entailed a restriction in that the frame of reference and examples were those of classical antiquity. Swedish cases and circumstances were seldom dealt with, partly because of the Latin restriction, and partly because open discussion of Swedish political issues was more or less forbidden.

The dissertations vary in quality and quantity. They often have peritexts where the respondent thanks his benefactors and sponsors and is congratulated by his friends and colleagues. The genre fulfilled social functions besides the scholarly aim and did not necessarily present the personal opinion of the author; their sincerity is sometimes difficult to determine.3

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3 The dissertations quoted in this study are catalogued in J.H. Lidén, *Catalogus disputationum* (1778). For perspectives on the genre, Gindhart et al., *Frühneuzeitliche Disputationen*. 
Still the dissertations were substantial enough to provide material for scholarly controversy and academic odium; there were controversies and scandals, more so, however, in the fields of politics and natural philosophy than in ethics proper.

The following analysis will stay within the texts; I have not tried to trace the actual effects of the teaching of virtue. The sources indicate what was taught and sometimes why, but say very little about how the message was received by the students. The knowledge we have of student behaviour in the seventeenth century does not suggest that that moral teaching was particularly effective. Disturbances in the streets, fights between gown and town, and other disciplinary problems were frequent, expressing a culture of delinquency among the students. The teaching of political virtue was more successful, insofar as it included understanding the nature and aim of the state and the importance of loyalty.

The student population was not homogenous, and the majority of the students were destined for an ecclesiastic career in church, school, and university. An important minority were future civil servants, often of noble birth. To some extent, the teaching of virtue was modified after these categories in an effort to specialize studies. Political virtue was for the prospective servants of the state, and virtue as taught within the language of political humanism had a clear accent to that effect. Another category was the less known number of students who interrupted their studies. How they appropriated the different languages of morality is difficult to grasp in the sources used here and will mostly be left out in the following.

**Christian ethics**

The dominant ethical doctrine at the time, much more widespread and influential among the population than the philosophies of classical antiquity, was of course the Ten Commandments of the Bible as commented on in the catechism of Martin Luther. The Decalogue and the Bible do not in general talk of virtues, but the Christian tradition had recognized the so-called cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, courage, and temperance) and laid particular stress on the specific ‘theological virtues’ of faith, hope, and love.4

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4 About student discipline at German universities, see for instance Rasche, ‘Cornelius Relegatus und die Disziplinierung der deutschen Studenten’; for Sweden, Geschwind, Stökiga studenter.

5 Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, X (2001), col. 298. As appears from the contribution by Eyice in this volume, the Swedish reformers of the sixteenth century seldom used the Swedish
In general, virtue was not a favourite theological topic. Aristotelian moral philosophy, where virtue was the central concept, was regarded with scepticism by several Lutheran theologians because of its pagan origin. Laurentius Paulinus Gothus (1565-1646), who wrote a comprehensive and in several respects remarkable work in Swedish entitled *Ethica Christiana*, talked of ‘Aristotle’s Ethics and his other vain books’. Paulinus could not avoid Aristotelian concepts in his own work, including the word *dygder* (‘virtues’), but he avoided all references to Aristotle, drawing on the Bible and Luther. To Paulinus, and to several theologians, studies in ethics and politics at the universities were fundamentally vain unless their aim was to serve the church. This principle, which would have reduced the universities to theological seminaries, could not be upheld, but throughout the seventeenth century, and well into the eighteenth, there remained a Christian framework around the academic activities that affected the way one talked of moral philosophy. Professors lecturing on practical philosophy felt obliged to fence off the objection that moral philosophy is unnecessary since the revealed truth of the Bible contains all that is needed for salvation.

Similarly, it was appropriate in discussions related to the aristocratic virtue of magnanimity, to point out that it was not opposed to Christian humility. Likewise, liberality could be illustrated with the biblical example of the widow’s mite (Mark 12:41-44), which is remote from the Aristotelian context. In general, philosophical discourse presupposed Christian religion. The ultimate aim of virtue is the glory of God, as was often pointed out. That the final aim of human existence is salvation and eternal life was taken for granted. As we will see, Christian opinion also held back the tendencies towards moral relativism that followed the language of political humanism. Theories that cast doubt on the conviction that society and morality are ordained by God were rejected more or less energetically and their instigators were excluded from the corps of ‘sound philosophers’. Epicureans, sceptics, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza belonged to these outcasts.

word for virtue, i.e. *dygd*, when talking about hope, faith, and love.

6 Paulinus Gothus, *Praxis specialis ethicae christianae* (1628), p. 26. At the same time, Paulinus, inspired by ideas about the popular foundation of government proposed by the German theorist Johannes Althusius, defended mixed monarchy.


9 Bringius, *De magnanimitate et modestia* (1636), one of the corollaries.

10 Behm, *De liberalitate* (1644), thesis 19.

Aristotelian virtue

Aristotle provided the standard theory of virtue. During the seventeenth century, at least fifteen dissertations about ‘virtue in general’ were defended in Uppsala (one of them in Greek). Thrice as many dealt with the individual Aristotelian virtues or concepts closely related to them, such as friendship or happiness. This makes Aristotelian ethics one of the most cherished topics in the dissertation genre. It was easily divided into handy pieces to write a thesis about. This may to some extent explain its popularity, but it was certainly considered as an important part of the students’ moral education.

The dissertations may quote Aristotle himself occasionally, but usually the account of the theory is derived from some contemporary compendium. They describe the theory, but rarely discuss or criticize it, except for Christian amendments of the sort mentioned above, usually added without comment. When the contents are extracted from various dissertations and stripped of the scholastic methodology of definition, object, subject, and efficient, formal, and final causes – also derived from Aristotle – they offer no surprises.

Virtue is an acquired habitus, which is to say that there are no inborn moral principles, nor is morality dependent on one’s temperament. Instead, it is the result of habituation, i.e. one becomes virtuous by performing virtuous actions. Such actions are initiated by the will that makes the right choice between alternatives. It does so under the guidance of reason that prevents passions and desire from distracting the will from the right choices. Passions are not negative in themselves; however, they carry the seeds of virtue but must be checked by reason. In choosing how to act and behave, the individual should aim at the intermediate between two extremes. This famous theory of ‘the mean’ in Aristotelian ethics is barely mentioned in the general accounts of Aristotle’s theory but appears in the treatment of the particular virtues.

Of the individual virtues, four have a more extended function than the others, notably courage, temperance, justice, and wisdom, the so-called cardinal virtues. Temperance (temperantia) and courage (fortitudo) are particularly busy with the fundamental psychic phenomena of pleasure (voluptas) and fear (metus). Temperance (temperantia) regulates the desire

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12 For instance Magni, De definitione virtutis moralis (1615); Brunnerus, De virtute in genere (1664); Ausius, Dialexis ethice peri tes aretes genikes (1658).
13 I abstain from references for each moment.
14 Bringius, De imperio rationis (1646); Behm, De liberalitate (1644), thesis 11.
16 Ausius, De virtute morali in communi (1652), thesis 16; Fontelius, De natura virtutis in genere (1667), thesis 6; Liungh, De mansuetudine (1659).
for external pleasures, courage restrains from excesses in either direction when the human being confronts death or other risky experiences.\textsuperscript{17} Attached to these two virtues are two ‘half-virtues’ (semi-virtutes), continence (continentia) and endurance (tolerantia), which are mentioned by Aristotle but seem to have been regarded as particularly important in the virtue discourse we are dealing with here. They are not subject to the principle of the mean but they serve to accomplish the intermediate by restraining the emotions of lust and pain related to pleasure and fear.\textsuperscript{18}

Justice (iustitia) is the virtue that will regulate relations between people, finding what everyone is entitled to and what measures should be taken against particular human actions (so-called distributive and retributive justice, only touched upon in the dissertations). Being a personal virtue (Swedish, rättåradighet), it is nevertheless close to justice in the abstract sense of the idea of right; the treatment of the virtue thereby tends to become legal rather than moral.\textsuperscript{19}

Wisdom is important, and as an intellectual virtue it is distinct from the moral virtues. Intellectual virtue in its turn is twofold. On the one hand, it is concerned with theoretical science (speculativa cognitio), i.e. the study of unchangeable reality. It is a purely intellectual activity, practised by philosophers and, according to Aristotle, representative of the highest form of virtue. The dissertations pay little attention to it, however, and instead concentrate on that part of the virtue of wisdom that deals with human action.\textsuperscript{20} Theoretical study – speculatio – it is pointed out, is just for fun, whereas the practical virtues are cultivated for the sake of utility.\textsuperscript{21} Practical wisdom is called prudence, prudentia in Latin and phronesis in Greek. The task of practical wisdom is to determine the right intermediate in every moral action. As such it is used by all human agents, but under the label of prudence it is particularly associated with deliberation on political matters. Prudence, then, is first and foremost the virtue of those who govern.\textsuperscript{22}

The remaining moral virtues are liberality, magnificence, magnanimity, and modesty. Liberality and magnificence regulate the bestowing of favours on people and restrains passions for property and wealth. Magnanimity

\textsuperscript{17} Magni, De definitio virtutis moralis (1615), theses 14-15.
\textsuperscript{18} Magni, De virtutibus fortitudine et temperantia (1616), thesis 15; Brunnerus, De virtute in genere (1664), § 10; Liungh, De virtute morali in genere (1660), § 30.
\textsuperscript{19} H. Ausius, De justitia (1650), theses 5, 31; Ausius, De justitia et ejus effectu (1653), thesis 11.
\textsuperscript{20} Bringius, De natura virtutum in communi (1648), §§ 7-9.
\textsuperscript{21} Bringius, De imperio rationis (1646), thesis 1.
\textsuperscript{22} Magni, De virtutibus intellectualibus et appetitiva in genere (1614), theses 5, 9, 13; Gylle, De prudentia civili (1634).
and modesty modify the enjoyment of the immaterial objects of glory; the magnanimous man does not hanker after posts of honour and does not accept petty favours or easy assignments. Modesty (modestia, sometimes mansuetudo) restraints excess in punishment and revenge.\textsuperscript{23}

Apart from the usual catalogue of virtues, there is another group of half-virtues, the task of which is to facilitate social conversation: truthfulness (veracitas), affability (jucunditas), and gentleness (comitas).\textsuperscript{24} They are sometimes treated under the common label humanitas. These virtues are to be practised towards everyone. Different from them is friendship (amicitia), which is more affectionate and possible only with those you know. It also presupposes a degree of equality between those involved; perfect friendship is possible only between the good and men who are fully equal; affability alone is not sufficient.\textsuperscript{25}

Finally, there is heroic virtue (virtus heroica), which surpasses all the others but has no particular content. It is a special gift of God, belonging to extraordinary characters, usually warriors, kings, or prophets in the Bible, but also intellectual heroes, of which a dissertation from 1616 names, among others, Socrates, Aristotle, and – somewhat remarkably – Copernicus.\textsuperscript{26}

Aristotelian virtue, as presented in the dissertations, is social. It presupposes the Aristotelian conviction that man is a political animal and that the individual is a citizen. Moral philosophy is often called philosophia civilis, civil philosophy, and ethics cannot be isolated from politics. The political bias of ethics, well founded in Aristotelian theory itself, suited the state authorities who wanted to promote loyalty and patriotism. Aristotelian ethics was also marked by an aristocratic ethos; the emphasis on courage and political prudence bear witness to that and perhaps even more so the social ‘half-virtues’ and the explicitly aristocratic virtues of magnanimity and magnificence. The ethics of the Greek gentleman were transposed onto Swedish soil, although wrapped up in scholastic terminology and humanist etymology. There was no explicit reference to contemporary circumstances. Obviously, however, the virtue of magnanimity could serve as an ideal for a seventeenth-century nobleman, and was personified as he who accepts important commitments and has the strength to endure adversity while at the same time moving and speaking in a dignified manner and showing great spiritedness vis à vis the mighty and benevolence towards the humble.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Magni, De definitione virtutis moralis (1615), thesis 15; Liungh, De mansuetudine (1659).
\textsuperscript{24} Liungh, De virtute morali in genere (1660), § 30; Brunerus, De virtute in genere (1664), § 10.
\textsuperscript{25} Liungh, De amicitia (1659), § 2; Liungh, De amicitia (1666), thesis 14.
\textsuperscript{26} Magni, De virtutibus fortitudo et temperantia (1616), thesis 15; Jonae, De virtutum moralium eminencia, quam heroicam appellant (1628); Norcopensis, Character heroum (1685).
\textsuperscript{27} Bringius, De magnanimitate et modestia (1636).
The aristocratic flavour of Aristotelian ethics is obvious. The majority of the students were not aristocrats, however, and there is no preponderance of aristocratic youths among those who defended the dissertations quoted above. The aristocratic temper of Aristotelian ethics was modified by topics suit ing a broader audience by addressing the common condition of human beings. This becomes clear if one takes the genre of orations into consideration. The orations rarely deal with aristocratic virtues. Instead, they focus on self-control, moderation, humility, and low expectations. Continence and endurance, the ‘half-virtues’ that we saw emphasized in the Aristotelian system, are praised in orations; others titled constancy or patience have the same message.\(^{28}\) These texts are more or less about the same thing: one should not let oneself be depressed by adversities; on the other hand one should beware of exalted joy on occasions of success. An adjacent virtue is humility.\(^{29}\) From this perspective, calamities are not necessarily to be deplored since they give you the opportunity to be virtuous.\(^{30}\) Close to this topic is the conviction of the mutability of everything. Nothing is stable, not even nature; floods, earthquakes, and storms cause turmoil in nature, and in the human sphere, crumbling empires, war, and individual failures create the same insecurity.\(^{31}\) Facing all this imminent misery one can only endure, carry one’s cross, and trust in God, exclaims an orator who seemingly forgot that change according to this theory of mutability also opens the possibility of change for the better.\(^{32}\)

The mentality articulated in the orations is not aristocratic. Rather, it is a defensive attitude developed to support people of ordinary social rank in coping with the misfortunes of an insecure existence. Nor is it Aristotelian, even if the virtue of endurance was pointed out in peripatetic ethics too. Rather, the attitude behind the message of the orations is Stoic. I will come back to Stoicism, but first we will look into the ethical language that had a clear political tone and could appeal to aristocratic students, i.e. the language of political humanism.

\(^{28}\) Frisius, *Oratio de invicta virtute patientia* (1651); Petrejus, *Oratiuncula de constantia* (1652); Schepperus, *Oratio de tolerantia* (1638).
\(^{29}\) Palm, *Oratio encomium humilitatis continens* (1638); Portulinus, *Oratio de humilitate amplectanda* (1650); Utraelius, *Oratio de humilitate* (1641).
\(^{30}\) Bergling, *Oratio de calamitatibus generis humani* (1627); Gladerus, *Oratio de calamitatibus hujus temporis ferenda* (1633); Laechlin, *Oratio de cruce et calamitate* (1642).
\(^{31}\) Åkerman, *Oratio de inconstantia rerum terrarum* (1646); Transchöld, *Oratio de rerum inconstantia et mutationibus* (1679).
\(^{32}\) Torinus, *Oratio de constantia* (1664).
Political humanism

By political humanism I mean the endeavour to extract political experience and know-how from the study of ancient historians. In research, it is sometimes called Tacitism, after the most cherished of the Roman historians.\(^{33}\) Political humanism was hardly a coherent theory, but it harboured topics highly relevant to the formation of the early modern European states, such as reason of state, and the limits of morality in politics. Political humanism was also a method in that it was based on examples extracted from ancient texts; *ars excerpendi*, i.e. reading the texts, excerpting telling examples, and ordering them under useful headings, was a fundamental humanist technique that could be applied to politics.

The political humanists were numerous. They started in Italy where Machiavelli should be numbered among them, although this is seldom accepted because of his open recognition of the clash between political expediency and morality. Justus Lipsius was a more cautious political humanist, drawing on Tacitus above all and only becoming entangled in discussions of the role of dissimulation, fraud, and expediency in political practice. This is symptomatic of his elusive attitude, whereby he separated prudence from virtue. Both were important for government, he asserted, but virtue consisted in the purely moral qualities of piety and honesty (*pietas* and *probitas*), whereas prudence was the more practical faculty of understanding in choosing what to avoid and what to strive after.\(^{34}\) The distinction gave more space to the analysis of the strategies of power. It was important that Lipsius, like most political humanists, favoured monarchy and talked about the practical aspects of power, avoiding constitutional issues of fundamental laws and the division of power. The same holds good for two prominent political humanists in Uppsala, Johann Boecler (1611-1672) and Johann Scheffer (1621-1679), both coming from Strassburg in Germany. Boecler stayed only a few years, but Johann Scheffer became a leading professor in Uppsala, holding the prestigious chair of eloquence and politics between 1648 and 1679. Scheffer tutored several sons of the top nobility, conveying moral philosophy, rhetoric, and historical examples. He lectured on Aristotle and Cicero, the usual fundament of moral philosophy, but also

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\(^{34}\) Lipsius, *Politiorum seu civilis doctrina libri sex* (1599 [1589]), Book 1, chs. 2, 6, and Book 2, ch. 7.
on Livy, Caesar, Florus, and not least on Curtius, whose history of Alexander the Great was an important text in political humanism. Scheffer was a man of great erudition and his comments in the lectures sometimes went into philological detail, but as professor he subordinated research to the education of the elite under his tutelage, always pointing out the moral and political usefulness of ancient moral philosophy and history. Moral philosophy aims at teaching how to live, he argued; mere knowledge of various theories and topics does not make a philosopher. The ancients never taught moral philosophy just for the sake of knowing (*solius cognitionis causa*).35

Supervised by Scheffer, young noblemen practised the art of excerpting in dissertations. Basing the argument on Roman historians they dealt with matters of immediate interest for politics. Johan Gyllenstierna wrote about the prudence required in governing a newly conquered province, setting out from Tacitus’s description of the Roman pacification of Britain. (In fact, Gyllenstierna was to end his career as governor of the province of Skåne, newly conquered from Denmark.) Carl Ekehjelm defended a text on the fate of the Roman Empire, based on Sallustius, and Axel Fleming compiled a piece on declarations of war.36 More closely to the Tacitean strain in political humanism, Count Nils Brahe’s dissertation concerned ‘the popularity of the prince’. Starting out from a passage in the *Annals* of Tacitus on the skilfulness of Tiberius in manipulating public opinion, the author described the various strategies for checking unrest, using typically Tacitean phrases like ‘appearances of equality and freedom’, and ‘instruments and secrets of governing’. The example of Tiberius showed, according to the author, that the only aspect of freedom that is important in a monarchy is the security of life and possessions.37

Dissertations like these went into some depth on political practice. They were cautious, however, about the ethical aspects of their topics. The conflicts underlying the language of political humanism between political expediency and fundamental laws, between reason of state and natural law, utility and honesty, and between dissimulation and sincerity, were not driven to extremes. The challenges to morality inherent in the realism of political humanism were held back. In 1639, when the chancellor and the archbishop inspected the University of Uppsala, the study of Tacitus was criticized on the ground that he was too difficult and dealt with a

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36 Scheffer, *De necessaria et singulari prudentia principis* (1654); Scheffer, *Rota fortunae Romanae* (1668); Scheffer, *De clarigationibus bellicitis* (1677).
37 Scheffer, *De popularitate principis* (1652): ‘simulacra aequalitatis’; ‘simulacra libertatis’; ‘instrumenta et arcana imperandi’.
depraved period where there was no virtuous action. The inspectors – one of them was Archbishop Paulinus Gothus, who as outlined above was an enemy of secular moral theory in general – wanted a more edifying study of history, concentrating on ecclesiastical and Swedish history. 38 This was before the appearance of the German political humanists in Uppsala and the increasing emphasis on royal power in the teaching of politics in the middle of the century. 39 However, even during the following decades and the era of absolutism, the realistic and amoral implications of political humanism were castigated or at least played down. Justus Lipsius was criticized for his oversophisticated idea of ‘mixed prudence’ that allowed for different degrees of licit fraud in politics. Expediency and morality could not be separated. 40 In 1678, the theological faculty made complaints concerning a dissertation whose author seemed to accept the argument of Lipsius that a drop of fraud is acceptable if used for a good end; such may become a follower of Machiavelli but not a future university professor. 41

Machiavelli himself is seldom mentioned, and when it happens, the judgements are negative and short. He is the evil spirit behind the unsolvable conflict between morals and political utility, always present but not allowed to appear on the stage. Scheffer, commenting on Machiavelli’s argument that the prince shall feign to be pious for reasons of state utility, is a bit more articulate. Government becomes more stable when it is founded in piety. People see through hypocritical piety. No one can carry a mask for a long time. A state dressed in false clothes is not secure, and reason of state based on cunning devices is futile. 42 At most, Machiavelli can be quoted without negative comment. In a dissertation on government in times of peace, Machiavelli appears occasionally in a crowd of references without being castigated. None of these references pertain to controversial issues, however; the author declares himself to be aware of Machiavelli’s recommendation of feigned piety as a political instrument and that he has been criticized for it, but does not pass any judgment of his own. 43

38 Minutes from an examination in Uppsala 1639; on the study of Tacitus, pp. 351-52.
39 The slow transition from the ideal of a mixed monarchy to emphasis on royal power is analysed by Runeby, *Monarchia mixta*.
42 Scheffer, *Kununga ok Höfdina Styrelse: hoc est Regum principumque institutio [...] in sermonem Latinum vertit notisque necessariis illustravit Johannes Schefferus* (1669), pp. 36(a)-37(b): ‘Non est secura politia quae dolis se vertit, nec firma ratio status, quae technis nititur.’
43 Norcopensis, *Gubernacula imperii togati* (1681), pp. 7, 27, 37; on feigned piety, p. 16.
Behind such a neutral handling of Machiavelli one may perceive an attitude of sympathy, particularly in an author who, like the praeses of this very dissertation, Andreas Norcopensis, was to be the tutor of the crown prince of Sweden, the future Charles XII. Part of the complaint concerning Machiavelli and the statistae, i.e. the advocates of reason of state, may have been lip service to the overarching Christian ideology in a pedagogic context that demanded a morally edifying teaching. On the other hand, to accept Machiavellian political behaviour would have paved the way for the opinion that the state and the social order was devoid of moral and religious sanction. That was something that political humanists and Tacitists were not prepared to do, nor were their employers, i.e. the state authorities. That religion was the firmest bond that held society together was not only a widespread conviction among the elites of seventeenth-century society but also a social fact.

There remained the problem of how to explain the many examples of violated moral principles in the past and in present society. For the past, at least, political humanists could excuse them with the help of the concept of fate or providence. Evil deeds could be justified by the greater perspective they were part of. Thus, the evil deed committed by Romulus, who killed his brother Remus, could be excused by the ensuing founding of Rome; without Romulus, who was not willing to share power with his brother, the Roman Empire would not have come into existence. Romulus was a ‘vir fataler magnus’, a man fated to greatness, destined to formative deeds in history, to whom ordinary moral principles did not apply.

Stoicism

Ancient Stoicism was variegated, applicable in different contexts and social levels. Kings could be Stoic and so could beggars. It concerned the wisdom of the individual and taught how to cope with life by controlling the

44 That interpretation is confirmed by Andreas Hellerstedt who has studied the text of Norcopensis in the context of the instructions given to him for the teaching of Prince Charles, and found a more frank political realism that surpasses what was allowed for in the academic political discourse. Hellerstedt, ‘Praeses and praeeptor’, in Early Modern Academic Culture. Proceedings from a Symposium in the Royal Academy of Letters History and Antiquities in Stockholm, to appear in 2018.
45 Scheffer, Exercitationum politicarum in Titum Livium (1659), pp. 4, 6-9.
46 The literature on Stoicism is overwhelming. For an overview, see Inwood (ed.), Cambridge Companion to the Stoics.
passions that arise from desire and fear and cause the soul to be unstable, ill at ease, disturbed, and unhappy. This was achieved by reason, which keeps the passions out by judging everything that is not in our control as \textit{adiaphora}, i.e. indifferent things that are of no real importance to our well-being. Property, career, family and other things conventionally regarded as desirable were indifferent things, yes, even death was an \textit{adiaphoron} when critically inspected by reason. Reason was not only the thinking of the individual, it was the outflow of the universal reason (‘Logos’, often identified with God) that upheld and governed the world. The rational world order was predetermined by Fate. The virtuous Stoic realized, by the help of his reason, which participates in universal reason, that all that happens – personal triumphs and adversities as well as the rise and fall of empires or disasters in nature – is unavoidable and has to be endured as necessary moments in a cyclical process that constitutes the world order. Strengthened by this insight, the Stoic was secure, self-sufficient, and content with himself. Virtue consisted in this state of mind that in its turn generated virtuous actions.

Society and politics were of no primary concern to the Stoics of antiquity, but their rational aloofness to the world entailed a critical potential that resulted in seminal ideas of cosmopolitanism and the unity of mankind. Both these tendencies were abstract and of little political consequence, however. Stoic utopianism was individual and located in the soul, not in society.

Late Renaissance scholars reactivated Stoic thought more or less in a Christian setting. Justus Lipsius was the most influential of the Neostoics. His treatise \textit{On Constancy} (1584) became a favourite handbook in the art of living for the political elites in Europe, and he wrote extensive introductions to Stoic philosophy. To make Stoicism attractive, certain Stoic convictions had to be modified or avoided. The pantheistic notion of God as the all-penetrating Logos was unacceptable to Christian thought, as was the idea of predetermined fate. Likewise, the presumptuous self-sufficiency of Stoic virtue deviated from the Christian ideal of humility. Still, there were similarities. Predetermined fate was rather easily modified to divine providence, where the free will of God was granted. Stoic acceptance of fated necessity was not much different from Christian submission to the will of God. Likewise, Stoic neglect of mundane goods was compatible with Christian other-worldliness. The vanity of the world was a common attitude. Finally, Christian belief in life after death could be confirmed in some Stoic statements in antiquity. Compared to irreligious Epicureanism, Stoicism was a tolerable and manageable part of the ancient philosophical heritage.
In the academic discourse here under scrutiny, Stoicism was far from unknown. It was not part of the philosophical curriculum, as Aristotelian virtue was, but there were lecture series on Stoicism and dissertations with Stoicism on the title page. Lipsius was frequently quoted, of course, but his role as transmitter of Stoicism should not be exaggerated. The assumption of Gerhard Oestreich, that Neostoicism as communicated by Lipsius became the linchpin in a mentality of moral discipline for the ruling elites who forged the early modern state in Europe, is not confirmed in the sources of this study. Lipsius was a source of knowledge about Stoicism but hardly regarded as a Stoic and not particularly quoted in debates about Stoicism. Rather, he was a political humanist, approved of for his extensive advice on warfare and his support of monarchy, but, as we saw above, blamed for his idea of prudence mixed with drops of fraud. In fact, Stoic arguments were adduced against this aberration of Lipsius. Johannes Loccenius, another immigrant German professor, rejected the Lipsian idea of mixed prudence by appealing to Cicero and the Stoics. Fraud is vicious in itself, he argued, and cannot be excused with reference to reason of state; expediency must be consonant with justice and honesty and with natural law. Others mobilized the theory of natural law of Grotius to refute Lipsius, which in turn was derived from the ancient Stoics. It is noteworthy that Lipsius, the father of Neostoicism, was criticized by reference to the Stoics.

In other respects, Stoicism was less appreciated and quite often criticized, although not totally rejected. The pagan origin of the ancient Stoics and their philosophical shortcomings with regard to fate and predetermination were duly castigated; not only did Stoicism deny the free will of God, it also jeopardized human endeavour in politics. The rigour of Stoic virtue that demanded the total rejection of the passions and depreciation of all that ordinary people find worth desiring was not attractive. The claims that the wise Stoic is always happy and unable to lie or even to be ironic were absurd, as was the elevation of virtue to an absolute level that made all vice equally evil. In short, Stoicism was unrealistic. The Stoics idealize, Scheffer remarked in a lecture: ‘they describe most things not as they are

47 Lindberg, Stoicism och stat, pp. 211-75.
48 Oestreich, Geist und Gestalt des frühmodernen Staates.
49 Loccenius, “Animadversiones”, 1633, p. 278.
50 Skunk, De fortuna et ejus fato (1671), § 5; Skunk, De fato (1672), thesis 7; Arrhenius, De fortuna (1683), p. 29.
51 See, for instance, Norcopensis, De sapiente stoico (1678).
but how they should be, i.e. they put them in an idea’. By consequence, Stoic philosophy is unsuitable for the state, he concluded.

Here was the main problem with Stoicism, and its decisive disadvantage compared to Aristotelian ethics: it did not encourage the life of an active and loyal member of society. The authors of dissertations were firm on that. Man is a social and political animal, as Aristotle taught, and Stoic aloofness towards society is blameworthy, whether resulting in rural isolation or in abstaining from politics because of its corruption. Contempt for the world is a laudable attitude, but it must be moderate. Stoic firmness of principle is deleterious: the Stoic heroism of Roman republicanism is dismissed. Cato of Utica, the Stoic hero who committed suicide rather than surrendering to Caesar, deprived society of a useful member. Helvidius Priscus, who repeatedly defied the authority of the emperors and was finally executed, was ‘obstinate in his constancy and abusive in his courage’. One must accommodate to the situation, and the monarchic form of state does not allow for stubborn and empty harping on liberty.

Furthermore, Stoic cosmopolitanism was problematic. It undermined loyalty to the state and the fatherland. Justus Lipsius had deconstructed the love of fatherland as a sentimental invention of poetic imagination; furthermore, he argued, it was only the rich who loved their hometown or country, not the poor. Such ideas were definitely at odds with the patriotic commitment to one’s fatherland that permeated contemporary political discourse. Not surprisingly, they were attacked at the universities.

Still, however, cosmopolitanism was apparently such an established topic in the academic repertoire that accounts of it were possible at least as long as loyalty to the political fatherland was not explicitly challenged. A dissertation from 1682 deals with philanthropy, i.e. the general benevolence between all human beings, translated into Latin as humanitas. Another interesting text is the preface to an oration delivered in Dorpat in 1638 arguing that to the good man, any place is a fatherland. Wherever you go, there are human beings like yourself, having the same passions (!) and the same language (different languages are just dialects). To the wise man, all countries offer what is necessary. The oration does not question the political

53 Arrhenius, Tetraeklektikos sive De constantia libera (1680), § 40: ‘moderata illa Despicientia rerum mundanarum.’
54 Arrhenius, Helvidius Priscus seu civilis ministerii candidatus (1673), fol. B 4v, C.
55 Lipsius, De constantia libri duo (1675), Book 1, chapt. 10.
56 Scott, De Livonia (1639), fol. A iv v; Arrhenius, Patria et ejus amor (1670).
57 Norcopensis, De philanthropia (1682).
fatherland but makes the crucial distinction between the civic duties to the fatherland and the human duties one is obliged to observe when abroad.\textsuperscript{58}

If Stoicism was less appreciated and perhaps deliberately counteracted, it was highly relevant in seventeenth-century society from one important point of view. Stoic arguments were appreciated for inculcating the mentality of endurance and low expectations that we already encountered in the orations. Constancy, patience, and preparedness for private misfortunes and public disasters are ingredients in an attitude that was fundamental to the moral code taught at the universities. In the seventeenth century, that code was combined with Christian exhortations to trust in God and biblical examples of constancy.\textsuperscript{59} It was a harsh and gloomy message. No doubt, it was partly an ideological instrument to promote contentedness and obedience. On the other hand, such a mentality was adequate in premodern times when everyday life was more risky than nowadays and the remedies for medical, economic, and social hardship less potent than in the modern welfare state.

**Stoicism outside the university**

If Stoicism, unlike Aristotelianism, was not the moral philosophy adopted at the universities, it met with more of a response than Aristotelianism among individuals in elite circles outside academia. For example, Stoic texts were edited: the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus was printed twice and the leading aristocrat Magnus Gabriel De la Gardie had three of Seneca’s texts edited together with *On the Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius. Stoic topics were often articulated in sentences and maxims, sometimes in combination with pictures: Stoic sentences appear together with emblems and decorations in books and wall paintings.

These manifestations of Stoicism had no immediate pedagogic purpose. There is one text, however, that is dedicated to ‘former pupils’ of aristocratic origin and thus aims at teaching virtue, at the same time being a fairly personal account of a Stoic conviction. It is also explicitly Stoic in that it comments on a particular philosopher, namely Epictetus and his *Enchiridion*. The author, Johan Widekindi (c.1620–78), had a varied career serving the

\textsuperscript{58} Andreae, *Oratio in themate quod omne solum viro bono patria* (1638), praef. The context was cosmopolitan: the preface was written by the student’s teacher Lars Ludenius, a Danish subject, born in Germany and serving the Swedish king in the province of Estonia.

\textsuperscript{59} Glaederus, *Oratio de calamitatis hujus temporis ferenda* (1633); Hallmannus, *Declamatio brevis de hoc praeclaro dicto Patienter pati* (1635); Laechlin, *Oratio de cruce et calamitate* (1642).
principals of the kingdom in various scholarly functions – King Charles X
Gustavus is said to have called him ‘my philosopher’ – but he also took
part in the copper trade and married into a fortune. In 1675, however, he
made incautious remarks about the government in a tavern, which cost
him two months in jail. Apparently, the sojourn in jail led him to make
an annotated edition of Epictetus; apparently, imprisonment is a fertile
place for Stoic philosophizing. The volume appeared the year after in 1676,
written for ‘advanced’ students in Stoicism. It contains a dedication, an
introduction directed to students of Stoicism, some information about the life
of Epictetus, a preface to the edition, and Epictetus’s text in Latin translation,
with Widekindi’s scholia commenting on each chapter of the text.

Widekindi dedicates his opus to six prominent aristocrats, whose interest
in Stoic philosophy he claims to have observed when they were students
in Uppsala. His connection to these aristocrats seems somewhat laboured,
and he has not much to say about the use of Stoicism for the ruling elite
in particular. The political Stoicism ascribed to Lipsius is absent. Stoicism
teaches how to rule others, Widikindi notes, but above all, it teaches how to
rule oneself, and that ruling consists of enduring and accepting the adversi-
ties of life. The affinity of Stoicism to Christianity is emphasized: after the
revealed truth of Christianity, Stoic apatheia, i.e. the absence of the passions
of the soul, is the main road to a happy life. No specific Christian element,
however, is added to his account of Stoic philosophy, which is founded on
reason alone. He sets out from Epictetus’s fundamental distinction – worth
considering even today – between that which is in our power and that which
is not. What we can control is the judgment of our reason that discerns
what is likely to arouse passion; if we judge rightly, the tranquillity of
the soul will follow. Outside our control are the external things (externa opera),
economic resources and things that aim at our pleasure: all these depend
on Fortuna and are therefore unstable, caducous, and foreign (aliena). You
may lose wife, children, friends, or the grace of the prince; your happiness
depends on how you judge those external things. They should be loved,
but only as temporary goods, subject to fate. In that way, the tranquillity

60 On Widekindi, see Svenska män och kvinnor, VIII.
61 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676).
62 All in all 164 pages. Widekindi says nothing about what version of Epictetus he has used in
his translation. Epictetus’s text has 61 chapters in Widekindi’s edition, but only 51 in modern
editions.
63 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676), ded., p. 2.
64 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676), praeif., p. 1.
of the soul can be maintained. Not only losses of things but also change, including disasters and difficult conditions, should be met with compliance. Accepting change is yielding to God. One should not wish that to happen which one wants, but rather want that which really happens. Yield to God and yield to the times, is the message. If under pressure or attack, one should resist as long as there is hope, but acquiesce if one’s cause is hopeless. Not even freedom and fatherland are worth suffering meaningless death for. Why be obstinate? They may rise again another time.

The Stoic attitude is unassuming, obsequious and humble. At bottom, however, it means freedom. It elevates you above all contingencies, affects, wishes, and ambitions, liberates you from the prison of external things, and makes you a free man in your own right, the ruler, moderator, king, and doctor of yourself. Such contempt for the world is something early modern Stoicism had in common with Christianity; the temper of ancient Stoicism was somewhat different, however, laying more stress on the self-sufficiency and the ‘security’ of the perfect Stoic, which was illicit presumptuousness from the Christian point of view.

To those who regard Stoic contempt for the world as too austere and harmful to society, Widekindi responds by pointing out the difference between genuine, internal values and the shallowness and vanity of external goods that appeal to ordinary people. Power, luxury, and beauty are vain, and even erudition can direct desire towards things that are not in our power and thus noxious. In fact, the rich and mighty are not truly happy, nor are those with a beautiful wife or a handsome body. A pleasing face often hides a sad mind, the mask of pleasure disguises deprivation; a beautiful body shelters a perverse soul, and a good-looking woman is not truly beautiful, unless she is virtuous. In Widekindi’s argument, Stoic contempt for the world tends to end up in the philosophy of sour grapes.

Widekindi admits that a Stoic attitude usually does not foster conspicuous contributions to the glory of one’s country, but there are other ways to serve the fatherland, as many, in fact, as there are human crafts. Shoemakers provide the state with shoes, smiths deliver arms; it is enough if everyone

65 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676), pp. 8 et seq., 17, 44.
66 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676), pp. 29 et seqq., p. 32: ‘Cede Deo, cede tempori, velis fieri sicut fanunt. […] Periit libertas, corruit Patria; resurgere poterit alio tempore. Quid enim proficis, si obstas.’
68 Widekindi, Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium (1676), pp. 10 et seqq.
fulfils his task. \(^\text{69}\) Besides, prestigious crafts like warfare and rhetoric do not always contribute to the welfare of the state, as can be shown by examples from ancient Rome and Greece. To the philosopher, however, Widekindi assigns an important pedagogic function: he teaches the youth with precepts and examples; he educates the citizens, excites the soldiers to virtue, points out decadence and discord, and restores harmony. \(^\text{70}\) Widekindi seems to suggest a role for (Stoic) philosophers that heralds that of intellectuals in the modern era.

That may be an incidental novelty in Widekindi’s Neostoicism; otherwise it does not differ from contemporary versions of the Stoic message. The contempt for the world, the modest expectations of life, and the humility are to be found in other accounts of Stoicism, modified and constrained as they are by the Christian framework. In the eighteenth century, the Christian restriction was sometimes broken, as Stoic tranquillity by sole individuals was regarded possible without the belief in God and a transcendent existence. \(^\text{71}\) That attitude is absent in the seventeenth century. Still, Stoicism was an attractive complement to orthodox Christianity – be it Catholic or Protestant – providing concepts for a dignified existence in an insecure world. However, the language was not necessarily as submissive and lamenting as Widekindi’s wordings occasionally are. Stoic tranquility could consist in a less other-worldly demeanour, pointing out a commendable attitude to everyday life and fellow human beings. An example of that is found in an oration delivered to the memory of the Uppsala professor Petrus Lagerlöf in 1699. Among the harangues of praise of the deceased is the following:

He was content with a modest standard of living. Perspicacious, not suspicious. He could not deceive, nor be deceived. He was no one’s addict or servant, not even Fortune’s. But free. Erect. His own. The same in seriousness and joking. The same in prosperity and adversity. \(^\text{72}\)

\(^{69}\) Widekindi, *Epicteti stoici philosophi Enchiridium* (1676), p. 64: ‘satis autem est, si suum quisque opus impleat’.


\(^{71}\) On eighteenth-century Stoicism, see Gay, *Rise of Modern Paganism*.

Whether this description was correct or not is irrelevant; the genre is notoriously unreliable and full of borrowed vocabulary.\textsuperscript{73} The rhetorical phrases point out an ideal, describing a commendable attitude of a man, not of high rank but an academic in modest circumstances. It is not a modern ideal but partly recognizable as something that we today call integrity.

**Natural law**

During the second half of the seventeenth century, Aristotelian moral philosophy at the Swedish universities was gradually replaced by the doctrine of natural law. Virtue was not a key concept in natural law, and the philosophical foundations of the new doctrine were different.

It was not quite new, however. It had its origins in Stoicism and was an integral part of scholastic philosophy in the tradition stemming from Aquinas, and there are dissertations about natural law from the early 1600s.\textsuperscript{74} With Grotius and Pufendorf, natural law was modernized in its theoretical foundations and became an influential part of the university curriculum, first with Grotius, focusing on international law; then with Pufendorf, as a fully fledged alternative to Aristotelian ethics and politics. In contrast to political humanism which relied on historical examples, natural law was a philosophical theory, based on rational deduction that followed a method sometimes called ‘geometrical’. From fundamental moral principles, considered inherent in human nature, rules were deduced that contributed to peaceful social intercourse. Grotius saw such a fundamental principle in the maintenance of society (\textit{custodia societatis}), and Pufendorf called it sociableness (\textit{socialitas}). The rules deduced from these principles were not only true; according to Pufendorf they were also binding since given by God, the creator of human nature. Both of them referred to the ancient Stoics as originators of the idea of the social inclination in human nature, but the theory gained its decisive intellectual momentum through its method that resembled that of the ascending natural philosophy of the time. Cartesian philosophy and natural law were allies. Furthermore, natural law was universal and regarded applicable to human society in all countries

\textsuperscript{73} A Google search finds the combination of \textit{liber}, \textit{erectus}, and \textit{suus} in a Dutch dialogue (in Latin) on marriage from 1643 and in two funeral orations for professors in Lund 1832 and 1834; the latter two, probably borrowed from Normannus.

\textsuperscript{74} For instance, Magni, \textit{De lege aeterna et lege naturae} (1624).
and all times. The language of natural law was partly philosophical, partly juridical; it talked of rights, obligation, and duties, not virtues.

Natural law was quickly introduced at Swedish universities, and broke through to prominence when Samuel Pufendorf was recruited to the new university of Lund in 1668. He belonged to the faculty of law but regarded his discipline as a theory of moral philosophy, challenging Aristotelian ethics and politics. In 1673, he published his textbook of natural law, De officio hominis et civis (On the duty of man and citizen). Immediately, he started lecturing on it, and in the prooemium to the lecture series, he delivered a fundamental critique of conventional moral philosophy, i.e. that of Aristotle.75

Pufendorf’s argument in removing Aristotle was historical. Aristotelian ethics and politics were not apt for contemporary society. This was not a new insight; Renaissance scholars were more or less conscious of the differences between ancient societies and contemporary Europe. French jurists had been explicit about this with regard to Roman law. In moral philosophy, historical consciousness grew more slowly, and Aristotle’s authority remained almost unchallenged until the middle of the seventeenth century. During the course of the century, however, stimulated by the attacks on Aristotelian natural philosophy, the awareness grew that ancient ethics and politics were not quite adequate to contemporary society. Scheffer, for instance, in his lectures on Cicero in 1652, admitted that we do not live in Sparta or Rome; still he preferred the ancients to the moderns.76

Pufendorf, for his part, explicitly rejected Aristotle. He did so by pointing out that the Aristotelian ethics did not aim at instructing human beings in general but only the Greek citizen. Pufendorf set out to show that the Aristotelian virtues were adapted to the particular needs and circumstances of the Greek state. The importance of courage reflected the role Plato ascribed to the warriors in his ideal state, which influenced Aristotle. Temperance was necessary to prevent the military from terrorizing their fellow citizens. Liberality and magnificence reflected the Greek habit of letting the rich contribute voluntarily to public expenses. Modesty aimed at restraining citizens who held public office from being avaricious, and justice was a virtue only for the judges in the courts. Even the virtues that

75 The lectures have been published by Bo Lindberg in Pufendorf, Pufendorf Lectures. For the circumstances around the lectures, see pp. 14 et seq.
76 Scheffer, lectures on Cicero, De officiis, 1652 (ms. Rålamb 40:4-5, National Library), p. 30. In fact, Scheffer, sensible of change as he was, came to lecture on natural law as well in the 1660s, although never abandoning Aristotle.
facilitate social intercourse – Pufendorf called them courtesy, friendliness, and humanity – were specific to the Greeks, who were a remarkably witty and humorous nation.

Furthermore, and more serious than the other inadequacies of ancient moral philosophy, the Greek states were democracies. Aristotle was averse to monarchy and loved democracy and all the precepts in his *Politica* were adapted to that form of government.\textsuperscript{77}

Pufendorf’s arguments concerning some of the virtues may seem odd, but his critique of Aristotelian moral philosophy is an unusually clear example of seventeenth-century historical contextualization. Ancient knowledge was the product of a different society and no longer relevant. He did not argue, however, that natural law was the product of contemporary society – which would have been in accordance with his historical approach. Instead, it was universal, the ectype of human nature and applicable to all times and countries. Moreover, he did not denounce historical tradition. As just mentioned, the very idea of natural law was Stoic and the word duty (*officium*) recalled Cicero’s much read *De officiis*. There were duties towards God, towards oneself, and towards other human beings.

Pufendorf’s theory of natural law met with strong criticism from Lutheran theologians, who did not accept the separation of natural law from revealed theology. To them, natural law was epitomized in the Ten Commandments of the Bible and its ultimate end was located in the life hereafter. There was an obvious moment of secularization in Pufendorf’s theory, in line with the corresponding tendency in Cartesianism and natural philosophy in general at the time. Still, Pufendorf’s version of natural law had more in common with Lutheran Christianity than with Aristotelianism. It presupposed an obligating God, recognizable by reason, and it grouped the duties in a way that resembled that of the Decalogue, separating the duties to God from those to other people. Furthermore, Pufendorf admitted that revealed moral theology was also useful for social morality.\textsuperscript{78} Significantly, references to the Bible are much more frequent in Pufendorf’s lectures on natural law than in those of Scheffer on Aristotelian moral philosophy.\textsuperscript{79}

Thus, natural law in Pufendorf’s version was in better accordance with Christianity than the disputes around it suggest. It eliminated the

\textsuperscript{77} Pufendorf, *Pufendorf Lectures*, p. 76: ‘nam prout ille erat Graecus, ita amore flagrabat *Democratiarum*, atque omnia sua praecepta in Politica tradita in earundem usum conferebat, aversans maxime *monarchiam*.’

\textsuperscript{78} Pufendorf, *De officio hominis et civis* (1673), praef., p. 7.

\textsuperscript{79} Introduction to Pufendorf, *Pufendorf Lectures*, pp. 35 et seq.
skewedness that hampered Aristotelian moral philosophy in that it was heathen, and basically republican. At the same time it was in harmony with the rationalist philosophical style of the time. One could also say that it corresponded to a more structural concept of the state that established itself with the growth of bureaucracy. The early modern state was a mechanical apparatus rather than the personal property of the king.

Those who taught moral philosophy saw a particular pedagogic advantage in natural law. In 1701, in a conflict between jurists and philosophers in Uppsala about the right to teach natural law, the philosophers stressed the pedagogic efficiency of natural law. It was a clearer, quicker (and therefore cheaper) way to convey moral knowledge, since it made moral rules demonstrable and binding. Natural law had improved moral doctrine with astonishingly forceful demonstrations and found a better method to teach the students fear of God and the desire of a blameless life. Not least did natural law show what constitutes royal power; that could be drawn from other sources, but when it comes to explaining and proving ‘how it is and must be, so that nobody may say against it, i.e. to demonstrate’, then one has to stick to natural law.80

What happened to virtue?

The concept of virtue did not disappear from academic moral philosophy, but rather quickly, natural law became the fundament of the teaching of ethics and political theory, replacing not only Aristotle but also the ancient historians that had given practical examples of moral and political prudence.

Outside the universities, however, virtue became a fashionable word during the eighteenth century, as in other European countries. That happened in the sphere of public debate that developed during the so-called Age of Liberty that replaced royal absolutism in the 1720s. The debate was conducted in the Swedish vernacular and the Swedish words for virtue and virtuous were dygd and dygdig. A synonym, even more frequent and with a more collective meaning, was nyttig (useful).81 The meaning of these words was essentially patriotism. It was a broader concept than in the seventeenth century, and it stressed economic industry and commitment to the welfare of the fatherland more than military bravery and loyalty to the crown. It

80 Quoted from Lindberg, Naturrätten i Uppsala 1655-1720, pp. 86 et seq.
81 For the concept of virtue in this sense, with application to Swedish economic thought in the eighteenth century, see Runefelt, Dygden som välståndets grund.
was a virtue of citizens rather than of subjects that was in better accordance with Greek and Roman civic virtue than the type of virtue fostered during seventeenth-century royal rule. As we saw, Aristotelian virtue was preferred to Stoicism during the seventeenth century because it was more realistic and dealt with political life in the service of one's country. Aristotelian virtue was compatible with patriotism; that it was a republican patriotism rather than royal was left out of account (except by Pufendorf who pointed to it as a problem with Aristotle). The moulders of public opinion of the eighteenth century did not refer so often to Aristotle and did not dwell so much on his catalogue of virtues as the academics of the previous century. Nevertheless, the temper of eighteenth-century civic virtue was in better accordance with Aristotelian virtue, and with ancient virtue in general, than the climate of the previous century.

In spite of the intellectual changes following the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and the continued development of the early modern bureaucratic state, the moral codes and values in which public affairs were debated remained very much within the conceptual framework of ancient republicanism and an idea of cyclical historical change. Politics was practised according to ‘the logic of moral politics’, as has been suggested in recent research. 82 Basically, it was the art of maintaining the liberty of the state by virtuous action and restoring it when it was in danger. Political actors were expected to be honest, patriotic, and inclined to secure the public welfare, and political debates consisted of accusations of self-interest, envy, corruption, and treason. Such political discourse continued until the end of the early modern era, when the experience of deep-seated historical change paved the way to forward-looking ideologies in politics.

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82 This perspective is suggested by Bodensten, Politikens drivfjäder, pp 14-21 and passim.

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