

7. Humanism vs. Cynicism: Cosmopolitan Culture and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century Denmark

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Intellectuals have a hard time being narrow-minded nationalists. This is partly because they read a lot of authors who are not from their own country, and about a lot of places that are not their own country. A few might be able to convince themselves that their own authors and their own territory are far superior to anything else, but that is not likely to happen if they have any larger sense of taste, and especially not if they come from a smallish country. There are just too many competitors, especially from the larger countries.

In other words, intellectuals are likely to be cosmopolitans, at least in some senses of the word.³⁷⁵ And that is what I am going to explore here: two types of cosmopolitanism. In my study of the Danish intellectuals Ludvig Holberg, Otto Thott, and Bolle Willum Luxdorph, I have come to think of them as humanist cosmopolitans. That is, they exhibit some of the characteristics of a certain kind of classically educated cosmopolitan that goes back at least as far as, and was exemplified by, Erasmus of Rotterdam. The other kind of cosmopolitan also has a long pedigree, going back to Diogenes of Sinope, and I am going to call it cynical cosmopolitanism. Let me quickly point out that the ancient tradition of cynicism had little of the modern connotation of selfish manipulativeness, and in the following I will explain exactly what it was. Meanwhile, let me suggest that the physician and Prime Minister Johann Friedrich Struensee was an example of cynical cosmopolitanism. Others have observed that Struensee was impolitic, insensitive, and arrogant. If they have ventured reasons why he might be so other than personality quirks, they have attributed these characteristics to his acceptance of many of the principles of Voltairean Enlightenment. Few, if any, have brought out his debt to the cynical tradition. I do not, of course, claim that cynicism was the major ideological influence on his way of thinking, but I suggest that it was an important factor that must be taken into consideration in any overall assessment of his ideas and influence.

My two types of cosmopolitanism have distinctly different relationships with nationalism and politics. My humanist cosmopolitans were also nationalists, although inevitably of the moderate and limited sort.³⁷⁶ They were furthermore successful as political actors, one of them Rector of the University and two of them rising to high positions in the Danish government. The cynical cosmopolitan was more of an anti-nationalist, at home in French and German culture and not even bothering to learn Danish –although I grant this could mask a German cultural nationalism. What is more, he was only briefly, though mercurially, successful in politics, and came to a catastrophic end.

1. Erasmian Humanist Cosmopolitanism

What I am calling humanist cosmopolitanism was a product of education at the Latin School or by Latin tutors, consisting of the study of classical grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, and thus a potential development for many of the educated people of the day.³⁷⁷ It was part of the ideology of the *res publica literaria* or *République des lettres* which “embraces the whole world and is composed of all nationalities, all social classes, all ages, and both sexes... All languages ancient and modern are spoken,” to quote an author from 1699.³⁷⁸

Humanist cosmopolitanism was an outlook of the lighter literati, not of the committed erudites, antiquarians, metaphysicians, or other deep intellectuals. It also contrasted with the potential parochialism, provincialism, nationalism, and xenophobia of the less educated, for whom anything foreign would be a threat. Intellectuals could, of course, also talk themselves into provincialism and xenophobia, so I suppose a humanist extreme nationalism was possible, but I cannot offer good examples of it.

What I can offer is three cases of Danish intellectuals who seem to have developed a Danish version of the cosmopolitanism that was also emerging in the Swiss Republics of the eighteenth century.³⁷⁹ They were also from a small country, knew their Latin classics, traveled and sometimes lived in other countries, read several modern languages, and wrote in Latin or modern languages other than their own for a wide-flung readership. They, too, balanced their cosmopolitanism with a moderate nationalism.

Ludvig Holberg (1684-1754) needs little introduction but I will indicate the salient elements of his life that qualify him for the label “humanist cosmopolitan”. Born in Bergen, he studied at the Latin school there and took degrees in theology and philosophy from the University of Copenhagen. He traveled to the Netherlands, spent two and a half years at Oxford, and lived in Saxony for a time. His first published work was a rewriting of Pufendorf’s European history, to which he added a geography supplement. He spent the years 1712 to 1716 abroad, mostly in Paris and Rome, and upon his return to Copenhagen, he brought out another Pufendorf adaptation, namely of the shorter natural-law work. His university career began as professor of metaphysics in 1717, but in the years 1720-1730 he was professor of Latin oratory and became steeped in Latin literature. He began his literary career with a comic epic, *Peder Paars*, published in 1719-20, and that was followed by twenty-five plays written in the 1720’s, often following French and German models. In 1730 Holberg became professor of history, and in addition to writing a history of Denmark which rejected Molesworth’s criticisms he wrote a church history and a history of the Jews.³⁸⁰ He wrote a utopian novel in Latin, *Niels Klim’s Journey Underground*, that was translated into Danish, French, German, Dutch, and English.

In short, Holberg had the kind of education and international experience we might expect of an Erasmian humanist. I will now explore one small slice of his writings for more evidence of what I am calling humanist cosmopolitanism. Throughout the years 1748-1754 Holberg wrote and published letters on moral-philosophical topics in Danish, eventually collected in several large volumes and selectively published in French. I will explore two of them here.

In 1753 Holberg brought out *Remarques sur quelques positions, qui se trouvent dans L’Esprit des lois* (Copenhagen, 1753), based on some of his Danish letters.³⁸¹ One of Holberg’s main purposes here is to defend the Danish monarchy against its Molesworthian critics, but he is subtle about it. The first letter ranges over a great deal of Greek and Roman history to prove that the character of leaders was what counted, not the constitution of the government. It only gets to the Danish king – “Nos Rois icy”- in the last sentence (270), when it points out that a people may be as happy, and less disturbed, under an arbitrary government as in a free republic. In a later letter, discussing England itself, he argues

that it is the king, not the constitution, that keeps that country thriving and at peace (276).

Elements of an Erasmian cosmopolitanism emerge from the wide range of materials that Holberg ransacks for his case. His wide learning even helps him avoid the pitfalls of Eurocentrism. In critique of Montesquieu's emphasis on the importance of climate, Holberg defends the virtue and republicanism of various Asian and African countries (285). We only think they are lesser civilizations because most historians are Europeans and favor their own countries, he observes (285). Like any man of letters who seeks to vindicate the importance of his craft, Holberg takes scholarship and politics together to make the cosmopolitan point that no country has a monopoly on erudition, politeness, valor, and love of liberty (273).

The year before, Holberg published *Conjectures sur les Causes de la Grandeur des Romains* in Leipzig.³⁸² This was in obvious dialogue with Montesquieu's book of similar title from 1734, and Molesworth remains in the back of Holberg's mind. Holberg recognized that good laws, fertile land, and favourable climate helped the Romans, but he pointed out that other peoples enjoyed those factors, too. No, it was enthusiasm and ambition for glory that drove the Romans to greatness. This is remarkable because Holberg was putting a positive spin or valence on enthusiasm at a time when, as he knew, enthusiasm had a bad name among the literati.³⁸³

Among competing hypotheses, Holberg recognized that Rome's willingness to give its defeated enemies citizenship was important; it meant that bloody battles did not diminish the population but rather increased it (187). But they were not constant in this policy, Holberg pointed out, and its abolition eventually led to the Italic or social war (179; see also 206, 230).

The only case comparable to Roman growth and empire was that of the Arabs and Islam, and that proves his point, Holberg argued. Everyone in Europe agrees that the Arabs rose to empire on blind enthusiasm and fanaticism (182). Mohammed merely followed some of the same strategies to inspire enthusiasm and fanaticism as Romulus had (183).

Holberg kept the two cases apart by a distinction between blind and furious enthusiasm and reasonable and well judged enthusiasm (197). The latter seems to include cases in which the Romans compromised and even suffered humiliation in order to survive, where blind enthusiasts would have sacrificed themselves.

Holberg rejects eight other reasons for Rome's greatness that Rollin, "whose History of Rome is regarded as a classic for all those who cannot go to the sources" (198), had proposed. They are 1) its first constitution, 2) veneration for the sacred, 3) love of liberty, 4) love of the *patria*, 5) desire to rule, 6) respect for justice, 7) exercise of clemency, and 8) discord and rivalry between the patricians and the plebeians (198ff.). The last does not make sense, he observes: it nearly brought down the city through civil strife (203, 204).

As for the first factor, "un des plus célèbres écrivains de nos jours" (204) – Montesquieu⁸⁸⁴ – had pointed out that a single prince will have periods of ambition and of rest, whereas the rotating magistracy of a republic will be always on the move. But many other Greek and Italian republics had such changing magistracies and yet none of them reached so far. The subtext of this argument may be a defense of the Danish monarchy against preferences for republican institutions.

The second factor, which Holberg interprets as religious superstition, cannot be the deciding factor, he writes, because all of the other republics were equally superstitious (204). The love of liberty cannot explain Roman success either, since the Greeks took love of liberty more seriously than anyone else, and it often led to their ruin (205). The same goes for love of country (205). Yes, they had a great love for ruling, but the question is why, so the fact to be explained cannot be the answer (205). As for the respect for justice and clemency, Holberg thinks that the Romans would have used injustice and severity if they had thought it would get them an empire (205). The only remaining explanation is the Romans' enthusiasm.

Several of Holberg's explanations make the most sense if understood as the wishful thinking of an intellectual and a moderate cosmopolitan. Rome won its empire "more by virtue than by force, more by provoking admiration than fear, more by clemency than by rigor" (209). Like Erasmus, his love for pagan culture did not make him a pagan or an

atheist. Holberg was a great admirer of Pierre Bayle, but not of Bayle's sympathy for atheists: the Roman example shows that "any religion, no matter how superstitious, is worth more than incredulity or atheism" (210).

The fall of the empire began with the rise of luxury and injustice, and enthusiasm waned along with virtue, in Holberg's account. "Je laisse passer pour un chef d'oeuvre l'hypothese de l'illustre Président Montesquieu [*sic*]", Holberg conceded (233), but even he did not see that the true force behind the rise of Rome was enthusiasm. In a short "Discours sur l'entousiasme" appended to his book, Holberg admitted that he had used the terms "enthusiasm" and "fanaticism" interchangeably, as was the custom, but that really they were different things (235). The first is an ardor, and comes from the Greek for prophetic; the second is from the Latin for fury, and represents the extravagance of false prophets and impostors. The first is incompatible with tricks and dissimulation, and the latter is always self-interested (235-6). Enthusiasm, in turn, can be blind or reasoned. Millenarians and other religious enthusiasts are often of the first sort, and should be left alone for their enthusiasm to evaporate (236-7). The Romans had a reasonable enthusiasm that enabled them to rise to power (237). Holberg concluded the dissertation with comparisons to the Assassins of the mountains of Persia, the Jews, and the Incas of Peru, indicating extensive reading and a wide notion of relevant human experience.

Throughout his critique, Holberg follows the polite forms in claiming that he admires Montesquieu's genius and his work as a whole, and that he is only drawing attention to particular errors of fact. However, if Montesquieu's theories about the role of the principles behind the different forms of government and of the influence of climate upon politics are rejected, what of importance is left?

A summary of Holberg's Erasmian cosmopolitanism would include the points that he read widely in at least the basic European languages, Greek, Latin, French, and German. He wrote and published in Latin, French, and German for wider audiences. He clearly wished to vindicate the Danish constitution against its critics without insisting that other nations should follow it or that others are inferior.

This attitude helped Holberg to success, both as a man of letters and



Engraving from 1781 of Count Otto Thott (1703-1785) by Georg Christian Schule.

as a scholar. He was named rector of University of Copenhagen in 1745 and was its bursar from 1736 to 1751, and was raised to the rank of Baron in 1747 in return for leaving his estate to Sorø Academy.

Our next Erasmusian humanist cosmopolitan is Otto Thott (1703-1785). A member of one of the leading noble families in Denmark, he went on the Grand Tour from 1723 to 1727, studying in Halle, Jena, Strasbourg, Paris, and Oxford. At Halle he attended lectures by Heineccius, Thomasius, and Wolff.³⁸⁵ He visited the libraries in Paris with Ludvig Holberg, who described him as the “son of the privy councilor of that name, and himself not less distinguished by his upright character and solid attainments”.³⁸⁶ While in Paris he met the astronomer Jacques Cassini, the author Fontenelle, and the historian Bernard de Montfaucon. Thott proceeded to the Netherlands, where he met the Humanist Petrus Burmannus and the jurist Cornelis van Bynkershoek, and to England to study at Oxford.³⁸⁷ Back in Copenhagen, Thott joined the central administration in 1728 as a member of the Danish Chancellery.

In 1758 he became one of five members of the Privy Council, making him one of the most powerful figures in Denmark.

Thott also had a parallel life, just as cosmopolitan. He was a major art patron and manuscript and book collector. The 2,166 paintings at his castle at Gavnø included original paintings by Rembrandt and Rubens. At one point he commissioned paintings of 32 famous men, which included a cosmopolitan selection from Columbus to Colbert and Mazarin, from Nostradamus to Zwingli and Pascal, and from Spinoza to Milton and Locke. From his own lifetime were Addison and Pope. He also had a collection of portraits of 26 famous French ladies, and another portrait series of royal and noble houses from Denmark, France, England, and the German states.³⁸⁸

The manuscripts and books were Thott's real passion. Before he died he gave 4,154 manuscripts and 6,159 books printed before 1530 to the Royal Library. After his death, the remaining 131,000 books were auctioned off, many of them purchased by the Royal Library. The books and manuscripts were in all the major European languages, especially Latin, French, German, and English. They covered philosophy, theology, history, and many other topics. In addition to orthodox theology, they included a strong selection of clandestine manuscripts from the irreligious tradition. Jonathan Israel has wondered why such an important figure in the Danish government had such a large collection of Spinozana.³⁸⁹ The answer is probably that he had a large collection of Spinozana because he had a large collection of everything.

The only surviving text by Thott himself confirms his wide-ranging education and reading. While a member of the Danish Chancellery he wrote a dissertation about the problems the country faced.³⁹⁰ The manuscript is dated December 31 1735 but he did not have it printed, although we may speculate that he may have drawn on it from 1746 to 1759 while he headed the newly reformed Economics and Commerce Department (*Økonomi- og Kommercekollegium*). The text is divided into three chapters: Agriculture, Manufactures, and Commerce. The wealth of a country is based on agriculture, he wrote. Agriculture is the foundation of manufacture, and commerce is the axle that keeps the wheels of agriculture and manufacture running. The manuscript is more empirical than theoretical, rich in comparative examples drawn from the Netherlands, England, Poland, and Germany. Thott was writing in the

tradition of early German Cameralism, as represented by his teachers Thomasius and Wolff. Some of his examples were reworkings of a Swedish text, Anders Bachmansson Nordencrantz's *Arcana Oeconomica et Commercii* (1730), but the order of the text resembles *Project der Oeconomie in Form einer Wissenschaft* (1716) by Christoffer Heinrich Amthor. Amthor was Historiographer Royal of Denmark-Norway at Rosenborg Castle until he died in 1721, and was the first to introduce Cameralism to Copenhagen.³⁹¹ Thott's essay demonstrates that he was intellectually rooted in what counted as the latest developments of modern Enlightened thought.

Our third example of a humanist cosmopolitan is Bolle Willum Luxdorph (1716-1788). He did not have the opportunity to travel like our previous cosmopolitans; instead he entered government service after studying at the University of Copenhagen. However, he had the true man of letters' extensive acquaintance with the world. He knew many Latin authors by heart and was familiar with several modern languages. He published in ten volumes *En ny samling af smukke danske vers* (A New Collection of Beautiful Danish Verse, 1742) as well as his own poetry, in both Danish and Latin. His *Carmina* (1775) established him as the last major Danish author to write in Latin. A contemporary, writing in French, described him as "Luxdorph grand Poëte & Critique Latin" and mentioned that he and other Danes in his circles "possèdent aussi de belles collections de livres".³⁹² This is borne out by the fact that he left some 15,000 books³⁹³ and put together a very important collection of most of the pamphlets that were published in the years 1770-1775, known as "Luxdorph's Collection of Free-Press Writings".³⁹⁴ In 1772 he brought out an edition of Holberg's *Peder Paars*. A Wolffian in philosophy, he was also President of the Royal Academy and showed special interest in Icelandic studies. He was cosmopolitan enough to write a Latin *Poema* on the crossing of the Danish Straits by Carl Gustav in 1658, which earned him a prize from the Swedish Academy of Sciences in 1754. His *Diary*³⁹⁵ has been described as throwing more light on Danish matters of his time than any other single source.³⁹⁶

Luxdorph had a successful career in government. From 1753 to 1771 he was *maître des requêtes* in the Danish Chancellery, from 1771 chief of its first department, and from 1773 its first secretary. He advanced from State Councilor in 1752 to Conference Councilor in 1766 to Privy Councilor in 1777. This means that he held major positions before,

during, and after the rise and fall of Struensee as Prime Minister. He co-signed with Struensee many of the decrees that led people to hate the latter, but he also served on the Inquisition Commission that judged the Prime Minister guilty of *lèse majesté* and condemned him to death. This is the record of a survivor who could tell which way the political wind was blowing and adapt to it.

In other words, Luxdorph, like Holberg and Thott, was a cosmopolitan bibliophile and man of letters, educated in and using several languages throughout a literary and government career. He was proud of his own country and language, but comfortable in others.

A more extensive review of the education and careers of men of letters near the top of the Danish administration would show that many conformed to the pattern that has emerged. It is worth stressing that for significant periods of time these men actually wielded the reins of power. In the case of Frederik V, the combination of absolutism and alcoholism meant that much of the politics of the realm from 1747 to 1766 was in the hands of humanist cosmopolitans such as Johan Hartvig Ernst Bernstorff, Adam Gottlob Moltke, and others.³⁹⁷

These men were all literati, highly educated and refined intellectuals. Their identity as Danes was surely different from the identity of farmers, soldiers, tradesmen, and the rest of those who did not have a Latin education. They were at home in the world of foreign travel and books in foreign languages, and they clearly thought of themselves as citizens of the *res publica literaria*.

The paradigm for such careers is Erasmus, for Erasmian humanists could be intellectually inquisitive without coming up with radical or dangerous ideas. They could prefer peace, the establishment, moderation, and mediation, and spare sympathy for the persecuted without themselves becoming radicals. Whether or not they knew the pamphlet, they would have agreed with much of the sentiments in Lord Halifax's *The Character of a Trimmer* (1699).³⁹⁸ They were "Trimmers", careerists, moderates, conservatives of a sort, and politically astute. Their mentality was above all that of the humanist cosmopolitan intellectual. As a group, they contrast interestingly with the following sort of cosmopolitan intellectual.

2. Cynical cosmopolitanism

The second form of cosmopolitanism to be explored is what I call “cynical cosmopolitanism”. Disregarding the hackneyed meaning of cynical as selfish and manipulative, I mean to invoke the tradition that goes back to Antisthenes and his student Diogenes of Sinope and the cynics of ancient Greece and Rome. These were cosmopolitans, too, by Diogenes’s own neologism, but also strict moralists. Diogenes lived in a barrel, eschewed property and comfort, and criticized his contemporaries for their materialism and selfishness. He spoke as he pleased (*parrhesia*) and claimed independence (*autarkeia*) precisely because he had cultivated self-denial (*askesis*), limiting his needs to the barest minimum. He was known for the slogan “deface the coinage!”, a metaphor for rejection of conventional social customs and institutions. He rejected established political powers, telling Alexander the Great to quit blocking his sunlight.³⁹⁹

Diogenes’s cosmopolitanism was an anti-political, anti-patriotic, anti-nationalist, anti-parochial and individualist cosmopolitanism. It was perhaps proto-anarchist, because he did not respect any of the powers that be. He was irresponsible, but on high moral grounds: he did not trust anyone who claimed to know how to run other people’s lives.

The cynics were known to the eighteenth century primarily through texts of Diogenes Laertius, Epictetus, Dio Chrysostom, Plutarch, and their Renaissance mediators. Montaigne’s friend Etienne de la Boétie adopted cynic methods of teaching such as invective, irony, word-play, and paradoxes to provoke thought and to castigate the lazy more than to teach an unambiguous lesson.⁴⁰⁰ The libertines of the seventeenth century explored with glee the cynics’ multi-faceted critiques of religion, sexual norms, and established conventions.⁴⁰¹ As libertinism evolved from the erudite and private indulgence of the seventeenth century into the more public life-style provocations of the eighteenth-century, cynicism continued to play a role. It is no accident that Struensee was accused of libertinism for his rejection of traditional sexual norms. To the extent that he recognized his own place in the libertine tradition, it would go hand in hand with cynicism.

I should point out that “humanists” and “cynics” are not exclusive even as general categories. One of the chief sources of knowledge about cyn-

icism in the early-modern period was Erasmus's *Apophthegmata*, which contained some 350 cynical sayings.⁴⁰² However, it is clear that most Erasmian humanists developed in quite different ways from the subset of cynical humanists.

Born in 1737 in Halle, Johann Friedrich Struensee was educated at August Hermann Francke's Latin School and entered the university at Halle at age 14. He completed his medical studies in 1757 with a thesis titled "De incongrui corporis motus insalubritate" ("Of Harm Caused by Unhealthy Movement of the Body"). He became city physician of Altona at the age of 20. His friends in medical-intellectual circles in Altona and nearby Hamburg included the Jewish doctor and clandestine Spinozist Hartog Gerson.⁴⁰³ It is worth noting that the medical education on top of the Latin education –something our Erasmian humanists did not have– may have pushed Struensee in materialist and radical directions that also fit well with cynicism.

In the years 1760-1764, Struensee and several like-minded friends wrote for or co-founded four periodicals in the tradition of humorous and moral weeklies. All were short-lived and two were suppressed by the authorities.⁴⁰⁴ This is surely one of the reasons why one of the first things he did when he became Prime Minister in Denmark in 1770 was to enact a decree for freedom of the press. It was a declaration of cynic *parrhesia*.

The range of Struensee's interests may be gauged from the articles he wrote for those journals.⁴⁰⁵ Some were on medical themes, from suckling infants to fevers to smallpox inoculation and venereal disease, and generally represented the latest rationalist "Enlightened" approach. (Later, his successful inoculation of the Danish Crown prince was one of the factors which helped him win the hearts of the King and Queen.)⁴⁰⁶ But he also wrote about metempsychosis and a short continuation of Swift's *Gulliver*. His last article consisted of reflections on the respect an author ought to have for the public.

However, the main reason for characterizing Struensee as a self-conscious cynic is that he wrote two articles about them.⁴⁰⁷ This suggests that his attention to cynicism was more than a passing fancy and that he had appropriated it in some depth. To someone who has absorbed the cynical attitude, as to a postmodernist today, the humor and amuse-

ment of the cynical anecdotes would be part of a lifestyle. They would be part and parcel of a playfulness and perspective that would fill the place of philosophy in more serious lifestyles and define their way of life.

The first of his articles on the cynics was in his *Monthly for Use and Pleasure* of 1763.⁴⁰⁸ Titled "Reports on Diogenes", it consisted largely of paraphrases and quotes from Diogenes Laertius and other sources. This included scandalous sayings such as that "women and the education of children ought to be held in common" (64). Nine years later one of the charges against Struensee was holding the Queen in common with the King.

Much of the article was anti-clerical. In defense of Diogenes and the cynics Struensee wrote that "The force with which the first monks castigated their flesh... is no more extraordinary than that with which Diogenes and his followers did so..." (58). Presumably, he would have endorsed the claim he quotes from Diogenes, that "when I think of philosophy and the art of medicine, man seems to me the cleverest of animals,... but when I cast my eyes on astrology and prophecy, I find no greater fools" (65). He quotes Diogenes again: "The luck of the robber Harpalus... nearly forced me to believe that either there are no gods or that they do not concern themselves with our affairs" (66). The latter—a denial of Providence—was considered a form of atheism by thinkers such as Pierre Bayle, even if it allows for the bare existence of gods.

The political message was also clear: Diogenes's "biting wit reformed Corinth" (60), and that is surely what Struensee thought he could imitate. Diogenes's claim to naturalism and cosmopolitanism is reflected in one quotation: "A well-ruled Republic would be the exact likeness of that old city, the world" (64). To his countrymen who banished him, he answered, "I condemn you to stay in your houses"; they would remain small-minded and never get to know the larger world: "You shall stay in Sinope, and I am going to Athens" (66). This is cynical cosmopolitanism.

Diogenes also "concluded rightly that superstition and unlimited absolutism are the most wretched" forces on earth (66). It is easy to see why the more established and humorless authorities in Altona and Hamburg would not find this very amusing. Stefan Winkle considered this

article Struensee's "indirect vindication" of his life and style, published less than ten years before his fall.⁴⁰⁹

The second article was a longer treatment, "In Praise of Dogs and the Greek Album".⁴¹⁰ "Cynic" means dog, and the ancient cynics prided themselves on adopting the life-style of dogs and comparing themselves to them. Coming shortly after the article that was explicitly on Diogenes the cynic, it falls into place as a treatment of cynicism. The epigraph was "Les hommes ne sont pas si parfaits que les chiens" (233), and the text went on to assert that the loyalty and socialibility of dogs proves that they have souls (234). This was, of course, a provocation to common religious sentiments according to which humans are superior to animals and the only ones who have souls. It led to a confrontation with Hamburg's Pastor Goeze, who also fought with Lessing in this period, and to censorship.

Protestants could accept anti-Catholic cracks such as that "dogs are gentler than the Holy Father and the Inquisition" (234) and that monks do not follow their vows of chastity (235). But talk about hate in the human heart –and even "Christian hate" (243) – in comparison to the loyalty and love of a dog would be offensive to all Christians (236-7). Struensee goes on to cite Rousseau on the equality of classes (Stände) but says that only dogs can tell the honorable people from the loafers (239).

Finally, the last part of the article is an explicit comparison of a well-known quack medical remedy, *Album Graecum* (Greek White) to dog feces. Fully in the scatological tradition of the ancient cynics, this sort of vulgar attack on the establishment would count as the humorous "defacing of the coinage" for which Diogenes was famous. Dog feces are better medicine than what doctors have and contain more wisdom than many prolific writers. Proud noblemen, venal judges, rich landowners, and Panglossian professors come out worse than the excrement of dogs in this tirade. The latter has the same effect as the white powder sold as medicine (252). One can see why even progressive intellectuals could consider this unworthy of publication. But it was just the sort of provocation that a cynical cosmopolitan could think was both amusing and deserved by the establishment.

Did Struensee transmit these ideas to his companions in Copenhagen, such as the King, the Queen, or his ally Enevold Brandt? We do not



Count J.F. Struensee together with Queen Caroline Mathilde and a dog. The text: *Nu vender Lykken sig Grev Struense for dig. D. 17. januar 1772* (Now fortune turns for you Count Struensee. January 17, 1772). The date marks the arrest of Struensee. Broadside with woodcut.

know for they left no paper trail to their minds. Struensee is a special case among political actors in that we have evidence of his ideas from these early writings which help us map out the mind behind his later behavior.

Struensee's cynicism also came out in his style of ruling. The cynics were moral elitists, ever challenging the status quo, political leaders, and ordinary people for their corruption. Struensee was no democrat who actively sought to encourage political participation. Rather, he was consummately unpolitical, like the ancient cynics. He made enemies by speaking too openly of his contempt for others and relied almost exclusively on dictatorial power, issuing no fewer than 1800 decrees during his short period (1770-1772) in office.⁴¹¹ He abolished wasteful holidays, ended monopolies and other economic favoritism, cut back on military and religious privileges. Many of these may have been salutary reforms, but they were carried out with singular insensitivity to real people and their problems. If one can imagine Diogenes of Sinope ever coming to power, this might have been the way he would have ruled.

Struensee spoke fluently the court languages of German – his native tongue – and French, but he never bothered to learn Danish. Naturally, this was perceived as an affront by Danish nationalists, and even by moderately nationalist humanist cosmopolitans.⁴¹²

Struensee's philosophical sympathies were with thinkers such as Spinoza, Hume, and Voltaire.⁴¹³ Each of these can be assimilated to cynical cosmopolitanism in one way or another, especially in their common goal of “defacing the coinage” and rejecting established political and religious hierarchies. They identified more with the cosmopolitan “republic of letters” than with national identities, but in a very different and more radical way than the Erasmian humanist cosmopolitans. The cynical cosmopolitans also thought they were writing for the world, but defacing many of the established currencies. I have suggested elsewhere that his association with Spinoza in some people's minds was part of the atmosphere that made the coup against Struensee possible.⁴¹⁴

Struensee also stands apart from the Erasmian humanists we have explored in the fact that he was of German and not Danish birth, living as a kind of exile in Denmark. He was an outsider where our human-

ist cosmopolitans were insiders. But that assimilates him to Diogenes, too, who lived most of his life in exile from Sinope. Struensee, on the other hand, cared about power and prestige enough to become a Danish count, where Diogenes would have rejected such things with contempt.

Struensee's behavior in the pursuit of moral ideals may remind us of the English philosopher Michael Oakeshott's stark assertion that "The pursuit of moral ideals has proved itself (as might be expected) an untrustworthy form of morality..."⁴¹⁵ There are several reasons for this. One is that the "self-conscious pursuit of ideals" dismisses the "morality of habit of behaviour... as primitive and obsolete",⁴¹⁶ which allows the ideal-mongers to ignore the concerns of those who live by the older morality. Then, "Too often the excessive pursuit of one ideal leads to the exclusion of others, perhaps all others; in our eagerness to realize justice we come to forget charity, and a passion for righteousness has made many a man hard and merciless."⁴¹⁷ Furthermore, "every moral ideal is potentially an obsession; the pursuit of moral ideals is an idolatry".⁴¹⁸

Oakeshott did not make these comments with specific reference to cynical moralism, but these and other aspects of his analysis seem tailor-made for an evaluation of Struensee's practices and his fall. His abrupt dismissal of many government employees seems to have been carried out with the same indifference to their personal lives as the modern-day cynical cosmopolitan's outsourcing of 5,000 jobs seems to be. His abolition of numerous holidays was the sort of moralism that was not likely to appeal to the common man or woman.

Conclusion: humanist vs. cynical cosmopolitanism

Granting that ideal types such as the humanist cosmopolitanism and cynical cosmopolitanism that I have outlined cannot capture everything about a writer and thinker, and may lead to oversimplifications, I still believe that there is something to be gained by comparing the two. I think one conclusion that emerges from our examples is that humanist cosmopolitanism is more likely to be successful as a career and reform strategy, precisely because it does not demand too much. It relies on long-term psychological and ideological change, to be promoted by writing and action from within the establishment. Its weakness, of

course, is that it may be too slow in adapting to social, economic, and political change. Cynical cosmopolitanism has the opposite virtues and vices. It wants to tear down the establishment and reconstruct everything at once. The good thing is that all sorts of problems are addressed. The bad thing is that they are not addressed well.

As we have seen, humanist cosmopolitanism leaves room for a moderate nationalism. Cynical cosmopolitanism makes a fetish of cosmopolitan rejection of all national feeling. I return to one of Michael Oakeshott's posthumous books for the point that, even though he preferred the politics of skepticism, he recognized that a healthy politics needs some of each of skepticism and faith.⁴¹⁹ Perhaps we can conclude here that our examples in eighteenth-century Denmark suggest that we need some of both of cosmopolitanism and moderate nationalism, and some of both of humanism and cynicism.