

This interesting collection of eleven essays with a prologue describes itself as an ambitious attempt to capture the multiple facets of the work and personality of one of the key figures of the Spanish Enlightenment, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos. It brings together the work of specialists who all contributed to the series of events held at the Ateneo Jovellanos de Gijón during 2011 to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death. Following a prologue by Emilio de Diego which sets the parameters for the book and highlights Jovellanos' lifelong commitment to a modern Spain founded on reason and knowledge, the essays reflect his wide-ranging interests from law to literature, art to agrarian reform, politics to mining, to name but a few. Juan Velarde highlights the practical impetus of Jovellanos' writings on economic liberalism and his clear admiration for Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, one of a number of European influences that de Diego explores in the following essay. Isabel Ruiz de la Peña's essay on art emphasizes the modernity of his critical approach to Spanish architecture and his substantial knowledge in this area, demonstrated in commentaries often accompanied by his own drawings. Marta Frieria's essay on 'Jovellanos jurista' charts his lifelong dedication to the law, from his university studies in canon and roman law to his work as a magistrate, judge and finally as a minister. She highlights the influence of both Montesquieu and Beccaria in the development of his ideas and in his commitment both to penal reform and to the establishment of national law, founded on the history and customs of the nation, both of which found literary expression in his play *El delincuente honrado*.

Ignacio Fernández's essay on Jovellanos the politician is, at sixty-five pages, the most substantial contribution to the book and emphasizes the Asturian's personal, lifelong, patriotic commitment to the well-being and happiness of the inhabitants of those places he held dear, namely Gijón and Asturias, and to the nation of Spain that he helped to define and shape. According to Fernández, more of an intellectual than a day-to-day man of politics, he none the less carried out those roles entrusted to him with great skill and integrity and it may well be his dedication to these substantial commitments that kept him from ever writing a treatise on politics, leaving modern commentators the task of elucidating his political views from the many public and private documents he wrote during his lifetime. One aspect of particular interest in this essay, as the written Spanish Constitution enters its third century, is the changes in Jovellanos' thought about the concept of a Constitution, which for him 'combinaba estabilidad o respeto histórico y modernidad o avance' (138). His earlier descriptive views that identified it with the political regime currently in power undergo a change from the late 1790s onwards when he comes to see it as a fundamentally prescriptive concept, founded on key historical laws, institutions and rights of the sovereign and the citizenry. It was a perspective that put him at odds with the liberals who were to go on to draft

the Constitution of 1812, but one he shared and developed under the influence of Martínez Marina's *Ensayo histórico-crítico* and through his friendship with Lord Henry Holland and Dr John Allen, both of whom visited Spain in 1808–09.

One of Jovellanos' most well-known texts is his *Informe sobre la Ley Agraria*, and in his engaging essay Vicent Llombart situates and explores the text as a 'sueño dorado y razonable' (191) to which contemporary circumstances were not conducive. While highlighting the very real agrarian problems Spain faced at this time, the text also serves as a more general lesson on personal commitment and sacrifice, as shown by Jovellanos in times of crisis and at very real personal risk. Manuel de Abol-Brasón writes of the 'itinerario espiritual' (199) of the Jovellanos family from the late Middle Ages and of the Enlightened orthodoxy of Gaspar's Catholic faith. Ramón Alvargonzález, on the other hand, highlights Jovellanos' practical achievements in terms of his involvement in the construction of Asturian highways and support for the development of the town and port of Gijón. Inmaculada Urzainqui focuses on Jovellanos the 'literato', author of some sixty poems, the tragedy *Pelayo o La muerte de Munuza* and the sentimental drama *El delincuente honrado*, as well as a number of works of prose. She notes that his literary output was largely unknown during his lifetime, perhaps not least because it was, for Jovellanos, an intimate personal experience that he chose to share only with a few close acquaintances. It provides us today with an insight into his character as a sociable man, who valued his friends, loved nature and was committed to improving the lot of his fellow citizens. Joaquín Ocampo considers Jovellanos' engagement with the Asturian mining industry and explores the *Informes* he wrote following his commission by Royal Order in 1789 to elaborate a plan for its future development. In the final essay in the collection, Olegario Negrín explains Jovellanos' plans for curricular reforms, contained in several sources including his *Reglamento del Colegio de Calatrava* and his *Memoria sobre educación pública*. He highlights their active, practical focus, designed to create an education system that in turn promotes economic development and improves the well-being of the citizens.

There are a number of unfortunate editorial errors that should have been avoided, in particular the frequent random use of italics in the essay on art and the repetition of an entire paragraph on pp. 122–23. None the less this collection of essays is a worthy commemoration of the life of one of Spain's foremost Enlightenment thinkers and provides an informative and useful introduction to the many varied aspects of his work.

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