

## ESSAY

**August Wilhelm Hupel. On the Values of Virginity among Estonians and Latvians**

## ARTICLES

**Mati Laur, Merili Metsvahi. The Country Girl in the Light of the Enlightenment. Additions to August Wilhelm Hupel's Article**

The Põltsamaa parish pastor August Wilhelm Hupel (1737–1819) published the article “Ueber den Werth der Jungfrauschaft unter Ehsten und Letten” (On the Values of Virginity among Estonians and Latvians) in 1791 in the periodical *Nordische Miscellaneen*, for which he himself was the publisher. Hupel's views on marriage and sexuality do not go beyond their Lutheran framework, which recognised monogamous marriage between man and woman as the only institution for channelling mankind's natural sexuality. Yet Hupel is certainly not one of those conservatives who even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century permitted sexuality in marriage only with the aim of conceiving children. Thus he does not consider sex life within marriage during pregnancy or with an impotent spouse to be “whoring”. Among other things, he also speaks of mutual assistance (*Hülffleistung*) between spouses in the mutual satisfaction of each other's sex drive.

On the basis of court trial records and other materials, it is known that a very broad gulf prevailed between the lifestyles of peasants and ecclesiastical sexual morals. Hupel, who as a pastor had to follow strict ecclesiastical regulations, often found himself in a situation where the members of his congregation wanted one thing while the regulations prescribed something else. Cases were common where peasant serfs fled and the wives they left behind started living together with other men. Hupel pursued the simplification of the divorce process, along with the possibility of holding church weddings to consecrate new cohabitations that had been entered into. Hupel was also against the forced marriage of couples that had split up during their engagement, which church authorities justified by the claim that such couples had allegedly begun an active sex life.

The direct impulse for Hupel's article, which he refers to in his text, was the article “Ueber die Begriffe verschiedener Völker von dem Werthe

der Jungfrauschaft” (On How Different Peoples Understand the Value of Virginity) by the University of Göttingen philosophy professor Christoph Meiners (1747–1810) published in 1787 in the *Göttingenisches Historisches Magazin*. This article borne by the spirit of the Enlightenment criticises the fetishism of virginity that prevailed in different parts of the world, setting it off against a whole series of contradictory examples of peoples that allegedly openly abhorred and hated virginity. If we compare Meiners's and Hupel's texts, we see that Hupel does not present Estonians and Latvians as an addition to the peoples enumerated by Meiners. Instead, he supplements Meiners by proposing a third possibility alongside the appreciation of virginity and holding it in contempt. In the case of that third possibility, in Hupel's words, any kind of notion of virginity is altogether absent. As an empathic person living within the local culture, Hupel tries to understand the Estonian peasant members of his congregation. For this reason, the vast majority of Hupel's comprehensive descriptions are presented in a neutral tone that does not judge.

What can the researchers of today find out from Hupel's descriptions? Hupel pays a great deal of attention to premarital sexual freedom while at the same time leaving open the possibility for different interpretations. The sexual side of the customs associated with *ehalkäimine* (a custom where young single peasant men and women spent summer nights together, which has been compared to the 18<sup>th</sup> century New England custom of *bundling*) has been described very differently in later literature. Hupel did not participate in the discussion on the theme of “test nights” (*Probenächte*) that was in progress at that time in German cultural areas, nor did he use the notion of the test night, trial marriage or *ehalkäimine*. It must nevertheless be admitted that Hupel's way of questioning people and his correspondence with his correspondents did not differ very much from the empirical methods that folklorists and ethnographers started using a century later. The work that Hupel did appeared to have been the best that could possibly be done by an individual in his position. He could not go along with the peasants when it was time for *ehalkäimine*, but his empathic attitude towards the peasantry and his enlightened aspiration to understand their emotional life and ways of thinking enabled him to contribute strikingly to the discussion in the scientific landscape of that time.

### Mait Kōiv. The Anatomy of ‘Political Animal’, or the Reason why Democracy Emerged in Ancient Greece

This article considers the social, political and ideological premises for the emergence of democracy in Ancient Greece. Therewith, it discusses the socio-political realities which led Aristotle to his famous definition of man as a political animal (*politikon zōon*), articulating the attitudes of the Greeks. In the end, it addresses the question of when did the type of society emerge which eventually produced democracy and the understanding of the political nature of human beings.

When viewing the Greek city-states – the poleis – on the background of the early state societies of the world, including the city-states, the Greek polities appear exceptionally democratic. Although full democracies in Greece developed at a relatively late period – in the Classical era (5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) – and even then only a part of the poleis were governed democratically, it must still be accepted, first, that in a democratic polis exemplified by Classical Athens the degree of the involvement of citizens in the affairs of government exceeds everything we know about whichever states until the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and second, that even the aristocratically governed Greek city-states allowed more rights to the common people than did most of the other state societies in the world.

Democratic tendencies can scarcely be seen during the Bronze Age (second millennium BC), when the Aegean civilization resembled more the Near Eastern states than the polis world of the following periods. Development towards democracy became possible after the 12<sup>th</sup> century BC collapse of the Mycenaean statehood, allowing the proliferation of small and relatively egalitarian communities which evolved into poleis from the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards. The very small size of most of the poleis favoured the direct participation of the polity members in the arrangement of common affairs, while on the other hand the confined territory set limits for the accumulation of property, at least as long as the majority of the community members succeeded in maintaining their lands and personal rights. This was secured by the military tactics adopted in the Greek world during the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, relying on the heavily armed infantry men recruited from both the aristocratic elite and the smallholders wealthy enough to supply the necessary armour and the weapons. This made smallholders crucially important for

the communities’ defence, and thus granted their social and political position. It precluded massive economic exploitation of the smallholders by the aristocracy. The dependant labour force – the slaves – was acquired from outside the community and was accessible for both the elite and non-elite citizens.

As a result, the aristocratic elite was unable to make its leading position incontestable. The leaders emerged from among the aristocracy, but had to publicly demonstrate and prove their qualities, while the commoners gathering in the assemblies secured the right to make the ultimate decisions in community affairs. As the elite men were constantly compelled to assert their position, a highly competitive mentality emerged, which essentially shaped the nature of Greek civilisation. On the political level, the competition was manifest in the feuds between aristocratic factions fighting for primacy in their poleis. This tended to produce monarchies – called tyrannies (*tyrannides*) by the Greeks – when some of the noble leaders succeeded in monopolising power. However, the relatively even distribution of property did not allow tyrants to accumulate sufficient means for entrenching their power without violating the accepted rights of the others. This provoked strong opposition, which caused the usually short duration of rule by a single individual. Monarchy thus failed in Greece, and the originally neutral term tyranny (*tyrannis*) designating the concentration of power in the hands of a single ruler came to signify an odious rule. Internal stability had to be achieved through a compromise involving all men of military importance, thus both the aristocratic elite and the smallholders. This was attained through communal legislation, while on the level of mentality it produced an ideology of moderation – restraining personal ambition for the benefits of communal welfare.

It seems quite understandable that these social and political conditions, and the ideology valuing compromise on a broad social basis, did eventually produce democratic statehood where full political power was in the hands of the citizens’ assembly. On the other hand, it seems equally natural that such political practice and ideology produced the understanding of the fundamentally political nature of human beings as formulated by Aristotle. Democracy and the Aristotelian definition of humanity appear as alternative products of the long established socio-political realities and attitudes of the Greeks.

The period of time when this type of society

emerged in Greece is disputable. However, although different opinions are expressed on this point, it seems incontestable that both the clearly articulated communal attitude and the wide use of slave labour, thus the political ideology and a crucial element of the economic basis of Greek civilisation, are documented in our earliest literary sources dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC at the latest. The social and ideological framework which later produced democracy was probably well established in the Archaic period (8<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), which favours the suggestion that it already began to take shape in the small egalitarian communities evolving in Greece after the 12<sup>th</sup> century collapse destroying the hierarchical monarchies of the previous Bronze Age.

**Felix Gornischeff. The Role of Baltic Germans in the Foreign Service of the Russian Empire and in European Politics during the Rule of Alexander I**

This article examines the role of Baltic German diplomats in the foreign policy of the Russian Empire at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, focusing on the years 1806–1815. It attempts to find answers to the question of why Baltic Germans were so highly valued in the Russian Empire's diplomatic service and served the Russian Czar Alexander I in the important capitals of Europe during this complicated period. The first half of the article provides an overview of the social background of the Baltic Germans, and also takes a cursory look at the structure of the Russian Empire's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The latter half of the article considers political events of the above-mentioned years, focusing on two diplomats: Count Gustav Ernst von Stackelberg (1766–1850), who served as ambassador in Berlin and Vienna, and Count Christoph Heinrich von Lieven (1774–1839), who represented the czar in Berlin and London. The primary focus of events is on Russian-Prussian relations.

**Jaak Valge. The Road to the First Referendum**

The first referendum in Estonia was held in 1923 on the question of teaching religion in primary schools. It is also noteworthy because it was the first referendum on values initiated by the people in Europe after the Great War. Ideological opposition between conservative and radical leftist values was at the centre of the referendum. Thus the question was not only whether religion could be taught as an optional subject in Estonian pri-

mary schools. The result was also an indicator of whether Marxism and left-wing radicalism had started losing their post-World War positions in the world view of the majority of citizens.

Estonia's parliament had decided that religious instruction could not be a part of the primary school curriculum, not even as an optional subject. According to the initiative of the Christian People's Party, for which the signatures of citizens were collected, the question that was to be put to the referendum was whether religious instruction is voluntary for pupils and teachers. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia passed in 1920, a referendum could be called if 25 000 citizens demanded it, and if the decision of the majority of parliament differed from the decision passed by the referendum, parliament had to be dissolved.

This article examines the political process in parliament that led to the referendum, focusing on the question of what the breaking points of the issue were and whether it would have been possible to block the demand for the referendum that had been signed by 89 000 citizens: namely, the Marxist parties tried to avoid the referendum, using all manner of formal justifications to this end. The parliamentary proceedings concerning the demand made by way of civic initiative demonstrated the entire arsenal of legal tactics that the *Riigikogu* (Estonian parliament) could use to obstruct the passing of draft legislation that was not according to its liking.

The centre-left Labour Party proved to be the deciding faction in putting the question to a referendum. Thus the entire process still proceeded relatively smoothly to its final result – especially considering the parliament's lack of experience in this aspect.

The question put to the people received 328 369 votes in favour and 130 476 against in the referendum. An election was declared to elect a new *Riigikogu*. It is difficult to imagine what the ensuing political developments would have been if the *Riigikogu* had blocked the referendum, but they could have turned out to be very negative.

DOCUMENT AND COMMENTARY

**Tatjana Kuzovkina. The Archives of Juri Lotman and Zara Mints: a Snapshot.**

The content of the archives of Juri Lotman and Zara Mints deposited at the University of Tartu