threatened by the *History of Mankind* to put it on the Index seems to confirm that Iselin's book was indeed more incendiary than some Iselin scholars, like Ulrich Im Hof, have been willing to concede. However, a careful study of Iselin's work effectively rules out any such interpretation. Iselin's emphasis in the *History of Mankind* was clearly on change and not on violence. The aim of the book was to give guidance to such radical reforms, not to call for the change of politics by means of force.

It was this emphasis on the necessity for (and possibility of) change which contemporary readers saw as one of the distinguishing features of Iselin's *History of Mankind*. What it offered was the "perspective" of a future state, located beyond the present crisis. In his review, published in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek,* Mendelssohn wrote: "Rarely have we seen so many noble ideas, so many pleasing perspectives and so many learned annotations in a book of such a small size." What Fontenelle had achieved for the understanding of the cosmos, Iselin had achieved for the understanding of the "revolution of peoples". Iselin's book, he claimed, showed "the important truth [...] that every development of [man's] capacities lead to the improvement of the human condition and that every restriction prompted a deterioration of the latter."[134] The *History of Mankind,* if Mendelssohn is to be believed, was what reform thinkers had been waiting for a long time to arrive: a science of legislation which was historical *and* philosophical at the same time. A science of legislation, moreover, which presented mankind with the image of a different future from that predicted by Rousseau.

heureux, que lorsque quelque voisin puissant voudra bien leur faire la grace de les conquerir." The same letter is quoted by another major figure of the Helvetik, Heinrich Zschokke; see *Die klassischen Stellen der Schweiz und ihre Hauptorte,* Karlsruhe und Leipzig 1842, p. 212.

134 *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek,* 4 (1767), p. 233-234: "Wir haben selten in einem Werke von so kleinem Umfange so viel lehrreiche Anmerkungen angetroffen. Philosophie und Kenntniss der Geschichte zeigen sich hier in ihrem Triumphe." See also p. 238 "Er gewinnt uns nach und nach den Beyfall für die wichtige Wahrheit ab, dass jede Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten eine Verbesserung, so wie jede Einschränkung derselben eine Verschlimmerung des menschlichen Zustandes sey."

Conclusion

This study of Iselin's *History of Mankind* and Rousseau's second *Discourse* against the background of eighteenth-century Swiss republican reform discourse raises a number of important questions. First of all, it raises questions about Rousseau himself and the position he is said to occupy within both the Swiss and European Enlightenment. For too long, Rousseau has been portrayed as a typical Swiss republican. This view clearly needs revising. Rousseau was neither typically Swiss, nor was he in any way a typical republican. Strictly speaking, Rousseau's hometown Geneva was not even a member of the Swiss Federation but an associate member. It was a commercial city republic with virtually no hinterland. This meant that many of the issues that were central to the reform discourse of places like Berne, Basel or Zurich, like the encouragement of agriculture, the establishing of a new economic balance between the city and the subject territory, the dispute over commercial versus military aristocracy, or the role of foreign regiments were of relatively minor importance to Genevan reformers. Unlike Berne, moreover, Geneva did not have a strong military culture, nor were its magistrates proprietors of large estates where they spent their summer months, but often financiers who made their fortunes from their investments in French annuities. It was this dependence on the fate of the French public debt and the speculative frenzy which gripped even the lower echelons of society that was invariably noticed and discussed by foreign visitors, much more than Geneva's republicanism. We can see this from a remark made in 1788 by the Göttingen professor of history, Christoph Meiners: "No other city of this size has speculated more in French funds and has profited so greatly as Geneva; also no other [city] runs such high a risk of being ruined by an eventual French bankruptcy. It is literally true that the well-being of Geneva is inseparably linked to the well-being of France or, more exactly,

to the credit of the French court."[1] To the majority of Swiss commentators, Geneva had fully succumbed to French corruption; its original spirit of liberty had been replaced with a spirit of commerce and strife. As Charles Bonnet lamented in 1789, Geneva now resembled less a proud republic but a "small rowing boat attached to the large ship" of France.[2] Berne, Basel and Zurich, too, had become deeply entangled within in the European system of public finance. However, not only did their investment strategies differ; what set them apart, most Swiss reformers believed, was that in contrast to Geneva, the republics of Berne, Basel and Zurich still had the resources to turn this development around and, through the development of an efficient agriculture and a strong local market, render them less vulnerable to the effects that the repeatedly announced collapse of the English and French debt was likely to have on Europe's small creditor nations.

Just as Geneva cannot simply be equated with the Swiss Federation, so Rousseau cannot be seen as a prototype of eighteenth-century Swiss republicanism. Swiss reform republicans, we have seen, welcomed his highly critical understanding of modern commercial society and of the inequalities it produced. Yet, when it came to thinking about the future position of small republics within modern Europe and, more specifically, about the moral texture that was needed for a republican society to be able to cope with the dislocating effects of commerce, they found it exceedingly difficult to recognise Rousseau as one of their own. This came to apply even to Rousseau's Zurich admirers. Even people like Füssli and Wegelin who prided themselves for their unconditional support remained critical of certain key

1 Christoph Meiners, *Briefe über die Schweiz*, (second, enlarged edition) Tübingen 1791, volume 4, p. 77-78. "So wie keine andere Stadt von der gleichen Grösse die Speculationen mit den Französischen Fonds so weit getrieben, und keine so viel dadurch gewonnen hat, als Genf; so ist auch keine andere in so grosser Gefahr, durch einen Französischen Bankerott zu Grunde gerichtet zu werden. Es ist im buchstäblichen Sinn wahr, dass die Wohlfahrt von Genf mit der Wohlfahrt von Frankreich, oder vielmehr mit dem Credit des französische Hofes unzertrennlich verbunden ist."

2 Charles Bonnet to Johannes Müller (22 December 1789) cited in *Bonstettiana. Briefkorrespondenzen Karl Viktor von Bonstettens und seines Freundeskreises. Sechster Band 1787-1793*, edited by Doris and Peter Walser-Wilhelm, Bern 1997, p. 216: "[N]ous sommes la petite Chaloupe attaché au grand Vaisseau".

aspects of Rousseau's theory, in particular his views on Christianity and civil religion. The majority of Swiss reform republicans were much more open in their criticism of Rousseau's position. Not only had Rousseau misunderstood the principles of Swiss Protestantism; by denying that man was naturally sociable, he had attacked the very basis of traditional republican communitarianism. From their perspective, Rousseau looked less like a typical republican but more like a democratic follower of that arch-sceptic, Thomas Hobbes. The attempt to unmask Rousseau as a serious sceptic whose theory was based on the premise of human unsociability was at the heart of Iselin's anti-Rousseauian strategy. Iselin's strategy was broadly successful, especially in Berne where his intervention prompted several members of the *Patriotic Society* to change their position with regard to Rousseau. Hence, for many Swiss reform thinkers (and not just the Bernese) it was Iselin who had to be seen as the saviour of republicanism, not Rousseau.

This has a direct bearing on our understanding of Iselin's *History of Mankind*. The *History of Mankind* cannot simply be reduced to a depoliticised, purely moral rendering of Rousseau's own history of society in the second *Discourse*. Instead, both works should be seen as representing two different positions *within* eighteenth-century republican reform discourse (with Rousseau's position lying at the very margins). Although there were some doubts about Iselin's commitment to republicanism, this view was not shared by the majority of his readers. It should also be noted that virtually all those who accused Iselin of optimism were not Swiss but German and were writing from a largely non-republican perspective. Attentive readers, both within and outside Switzerland, on the other hand recognised that the *History of Mankind* contained a clear theory of human freedom and that what Iselin presented was not the vision of a world after politics, but the genealogy of a new form of modern republic in which individual men could enjoy the rule of law *and* freely participate in a commerce driven, but nevertheless faithfully Protestant, Enlightenment.

Recognising Iselin's roots within Swiss Protestant reform republicanism, in turn, raises questions about the allegedly apolitical character of the 'German Enlightenment'. Recent research has shown that the traditional view of the German Enlightenment as a *Sonderfall* is no longer tenable. German thinkers were fully integrated into European debates on aesthetic patriotism, political and economic reform, and luxury, and they praised

Swiss reform republicans, in particular Zimmermann and Iselin, for being at the forefront of some of these developments. What made Iselin's *History of Mankind* so popular within German reformist circles, right up to the end of the eighteenth century, was that it showed how ideas of patriotism and the rule of law which had traditionally been associated with republican political discourse could be adapted to fit the specific requirements of monarchical settings. Hence, rather than trying to analyse German thinking of the second half of the eighteenth century in historically dubious categories such as pre-Romanticism, or early Idealism (all of which are in one way or another committed to the idea of a German *Sonderweg*), the works of people like Abbt, Mendelssohn and Herder (and even Kant and Hegel) should be read as part of an ongoing, wider debate about the possibility of (monarchical) commercial republicanism and the overcoming of Rousseau's transformed Hobbism – a debate which had important roots in Swiss reform theories of the 1750s and 1760s.

Studying Iselin's Swiss background, finally, also sheds some new light on the position of the 'Scottish Enlightenment' within eighteenth-century European reform discourse. While the revisionist historiography from the 1970s and 1980s has successfully debunked the myth of Hume and Smith as the founding fathers of market capitalism and stressed the importance they attached to the study of the natural origins of authority, stadial histories of private property and the bearing that state-based forms of wealth, like public credit, might have on the nature and future of the modern world, the Scottish Enlightenment continues to be studied largely in isolation from the rest of Europe. There is some work on the influence of Hume and Smith on the political thinking of Kant and Hegel, but very little exists on the reception of Scottish thinkers within republican reform circles. The eagerness with which Bernese republicans and other Swiss reformers studied and discussed the works of Hume, Smith, Kames and Ferguson suggests that the divide, not only between Scotland and the Continent, but even between Scotland and eighteenth-century reform republicanism is narrower than generally assumed. The fact, of course, that Iselin borrowed heavily from Hume's *History of England* and Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* doesn't make either of them republicans. The members of the *Patriotic Society* remained highly suspicious of Hume's anti-religious stance, and they repeatedly criticised his advocacy of luxury. This, however, did not

diminish the esteem they had for Hume both as the greatest living historian and as a reform thinker whose views on the history of modern liberty, they believed, were supportive of their own ideas of moral legislation. Their reading of Smith is perhaps even more interesting. In the *History of Mankind* Iselin presented Smith as a contributor to a Europe wide debate on aesthetics and placed him (not quite correctly) alongside people like Levesque de Pouilly, Baumgarten, Sulzer, and Mendelssohn. There is a strong similarity between Iselin and Smith's respective ideas of sympathy and the origin of moral judgement, and it is easy to see why Iselin found the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* so useful for his attack on Rousseau's account of pity. As Iselin saw, the *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* like Rousseau's second *Discourse*, offered a fully naturalistic theory of morality in which the principle of pity played a key role. In contrast to Rousseau, however, Smith had generalised pity into a purely disinterested form of sympathy, thereby opening the way for establishing both a negative *and* positive version of the golden rule. As a self-conscious republican, Iselin might have been critical of the *Wealth of Nations*. But this was not the case. Instead, he wrote glowing reviews, both in the *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* and the *Ephemeriden der Menschheit*.[3] He clearly saw Smith as part of a wider British, French, Italian, and German reform discourse which tried to stress the crucial importance of economic development for any kind of moral and political advancement. Smith's specific contribution to this debate consisted less in the originality of his ideas but in the clarity with which he stated his position. Iselin also praised Smith's opposition to England's colonial politics; and especially referred his readers to Smith's account of the revival of European agriculture through the spread of commerce and foreign trade in Book Three of the *Wealth of Nations*. Smith continued to play a major role within the reform writings of the subsequent generation of Swiss thinkers; Karl Viktor von Bonstetten even placed the study of Smith at the heart of his political educational programme.[4] While Bonstetten who, from the 1780s

3 *Ephemeriden der Menschheit*, 1777, Fünftes Stück, Zweiter Teil, p. 61-101; *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1777, 31. Band, Zweites Stück, p. 586-589 and 1779, 38. Band, Erstes Stück, p. 297-303.

4 See especially Bonstetten's *Ueber die Wirkung der staatswirtschaftlichen Grundsätze auf das Erziehungswesen. Nach Schmith* [sic], first published in *Schweizerisches Museum*, 1786. Dritter Jahrgang, Erstes Quartal, Juni, Zürich, p. 1-32; reprin-

onwards, became a leading spokesmen for economic openness claimed that the *Wealth of Nations* "contains such an enormous treasure of political and philosophical truths, that it will take centuries for these gold mines to be coined and to circulate throughout Europe"[5], his friend Johannes von Müller, a firm advocate of the idea of Bernese military aristocracism and author of the *Geschichten der schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft,* drew heavily on the works of Adam Ferguson.

There is a great need for a proper study of the Swiss reception of Scottish social and political thought. However, already the study of Iselin and of the Bernese *Patriotic Society* clearly shows that the specificity of eighteenth-century Swiss reform discourse cannot be understood from either the perspective of the history of economic thought or the history of 'classical republicanism'. There have been various attempts (mostly during the first half of the twentieth century) to study the contribution of Swiss thinkers to the development of European economic thought and to evaluate the extent to which Swiss political economists fitted into the mould of either mercantilist or liberal thinking.[6] Although many of these studies provided useful insights, the overall result has been unsatisfactory, not least because categories such as 'Mercantilism' or 'Liberalism' are far too abstract and ahistorical to provide an acceptable analytical grid for any historically accurate reconstruction of past debates. The past few years have seen a renewed interest in the study of eighteenth-century Swiss intellectual history. Much attention has been paid to such concepts as civic humanism and classical republicanism, on the one hand, and to Swiss discourse on natural jurisprudence, especially natural jurisprudence, on the other, and there has been a tendency to portray these idioms as constituting two different, if not mutu-

ted in *Bonstettiana: Schriften. Reden, Aufzeichnungen, Idyllen 1762-1797*, Zweiter Halbband, edited by Doris and Peter Walser-Wilhelm, Bern 1997, p. 475-493.

5 Ibid., p. 476: "*Schmiths Theorie der Nationalreichthums* enthaltet einen so grossen Schatz politischer und philosophischer Wahrheiten, dass Jahrhunderte verfliessen werden, ehe diese Goldminen in geprägter Form in Europe kursieren."

6 For a more detailed discussion of the study of Swiss political economy, see my introduction, 'From Republicanism to Welfare Liberalism', to the special issue of the *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, on 'Economie Politique', vol. 50 (2000), p. 275-303.

ally exclusive, historical traditions of thinking about politics and the nature of citizenship. There is a danger that by superimposing this dichotomy onto eighteenth-century material (describing the differences in position within the 'Swiss Enlightenment' as those between natural jurisprudence and virtue, or political patriotism versus cosmopolitanism) of slipping back into precisely the kind of strongly ideological analytical matrix of nineteenth-century historiography which saw Iselin's *History of Mankind* as little else but an expression of the kind of Enlightenment optimism which paved the way for utopian socialism.

A great inspiration for some of the recent work has come from the Anglo-American scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s on the European 'republican tradition' and, in particular, the reception of Florentine civic humanism in the Neo-Machiavellian England of James Harrington and revolutionary America. There has been some debate amongst historians about the validity of this itinerary and whether, for example, it should have included the Dutch republics or Switzerland. The suggestion would probably have received strong support from some eighteenth-century Swiss observers themselves, notably the aforementioned Johannes von Müller whose historical work undoubtedly presents the most genuine eighteenth-century attempt in Europe to capture the spirit of Machiavelli and apply his recommendations for Italy to the case of the Swiss Confederation. If civic humanism was about placing valour before property, then Switzerland had a lot to offer in that respect. The vitriolic attacks that the young Bernese and Zurich patriots launched during the Seven-Years War against modern corruption and their belligerent calls for a return to their republics' heroic founding principles might well have warmed any true civic humanist's heart. It is not clear, however, whether the term 'civic humanism' really does apply to the mixture of theology and morality that can be found in eighteenth-century Switzerland; nor is it easy to find the kind of clear-cut distinction between a 'discourse of jurisprudence' and a 'discourse of virtue' which, it is said, lay at the heart of Europe's early modern intellectual world.

For eighteenth-century Swiss reform republicans, virtue described not only the relationship among equals, but also the ideals underlying the right behaviour within the social sphere of property relations. Accordingly, they expressed great reservations about the relevance of the model of "Spartan military monasticism", as one writer put it, for present problems of the

Swiss Confederation.[7] The same reservations about the ideal of austerity were also made by those moderate Swiss Protestants who firmly rejected the Augustinian description of fallen man's thinking as purely utility-based calculation and who tried to find ways to discard evaluations of fallen behaviour as a simple manifestation of concupiscence. Iselin was keen to rescue luxury from such moral criticism and re-described it as compatible with virtue provided economic rationality was preserved. This is not to say that for Iselin there no longer existed any conflict between virtue and rights; their relationship continued to be highly problematic and had to be recognised as such. Iselin's theory of 'commercial republicanism' or 'commercial humanism' was firmly grafted onto the study of the tensions between the political and the economic, between wealth and virtue, or of the limits which an international economy placed upon a nation's political and moral aspirations, the influence of luxury and of the place and function of purely political virtues for the survival of modern states. The questions that needed answering were, how much 'political patriotism' was needed if the Swiss city republic were not to become something completely different and whether minor virtues like frugality, diligence and perseverance were likely to survive if the political virtues had gone. Answers to these questions varied considerably and did so according to a whole array of different factors including not only the theological, moral, political and economic preferences of individual thinkers but also the internal structure of the cantons to which they belonged. Reform thinkers who were citizens of large territorial republics like Berne emphasised the minor virtues as necessary ingredients of the structure of a sustainable moral economy outside the city walls. At the same time they strongly upheld the continuing relevance of genuinely political *mores* for the moral discipline and character of those invested with power and responsibility for upholding the rule of law.

The questions that Iselin raised remained at the centre of Swiss reform discourse up to the fall of the old Confederation, so that the answers that the next generation gave strongly resembled the ones presented in the *History of Mankind*. When Hegel took up his post as a private tutor in Berne during the mid 1790s, he encountered a sophisticated debate on modern republicanism that had been going on for more than three decades. His frustration with official Bernese politics, its highly ritualistic character and hostility to change was shared by many younger Bernese, even by the young Karl Ludwig von Haller, whom Hegel later attacked in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. If for Hegel and the younger Bernese reformers of the 1790s the reforms hadn't gone far enough, Haller, from the perspective of post-revolutionary Europe, believed that late eighteenth-century Berne had already changed too much and, as a result, had already lost some of its most characteristic features. So, while Hegel was looking forward and continued to work on forging a new alliance between republican politics and commercial society, Haller was looking backwards to a time when Berne was still a 'republic' in the Bodinian sense, a sovereign corporation or free city which was able to exercise command over its subject territory in the same way and with the same legitimacy as any other sovereign was able to rule over his personal domain. There is a strong continuity between eighteenth-century Swiss commercial republicanism and nineteenth-century Swiss Liberalism. From a nineteenth-century liberal perspective, however, pre-revolutionary Switzerland became no more than the Ancien Regime, marked by arbitrary aristocratism, political short-sightedness, the unresolved conflict between city and countryside, and continuous economic decline. The only beacon of light that shone in this period of darkness was the figure of Rousseau whose resilience and steadfastness in the face of persecution came to be seen in terms of the heroic struggle of the individual against oppression, for a better and morally rewarding future. One cannot really blame nineteenth-century Liberals for finding Rousseau more interesting than Iselin. Compared to Rousseau, Iselin was a poor stylist and while Rousseau's works have lost little of their original freshness, Iselin's often clumsy and outdated German now makes much of his writing feel rather antiquated. Many of the things that he said came to be said much better by those who followed in his footsteps. But the problems that he tried to solve have lost little of their pertinence, and if one wants to understand the shift from late-medieval city politics to commercial republicanism and from commercial republicanism to republican liberalism (as it was also called in early nineteenth-century Switzerland) and liberal welfarism, Iselin's works are still worth revisiting.

[7] Leonhard Meister, "Abhandlung über die Frage: In wie fern ist es schicklich dem Aufwande der Bürger, in einem kleinen Freystaate, dessen Wohlfahrt auf die Handelschaft gegründet ist, in Schranken zu setzen?", in *Ueber die Aufwandgesetze*, edited by Isaak Iselin, Basel 1781, p. 24.