

THE ARTS OF CONSENSUS IN THE “CONCERT OF NATIONS”: INSTITUTING CONCORD THROUGH SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION IN THE MODERN ERA

In the light of the recent commemoration of such major European divisions as the Lutheran Reformation (1517) or the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), the modern era is often construed as a painful stage in the construction of our modernity. Such emphasis on religious strife and international divisions has often discouraged scholars from investigating the opposite trend towards conciliation and the institution of concord as well as its various expressions. Studying the role of the arts in peace negotiations has recently uncovered women's participation in diplomacy and conflict resolution through cultural policy (e.g. in Sweden, Spain, England and the Netherlands). Moreover, the circulation of knowledge which contributed to the shaping of a “Republic of Letters” whose cohesiveness, despite its tensions, has been described in various studies dedicated to the emergence of scholarly networks. Lastly, the increase in intellectual as well as social exchanges resulting from the custom of *peregrinationes academicae*, either to major European universities, or to places where scholars hoped to find patrons who secured them jobs or pensions, played a decisive role in bringing closer the political and diplomatic agendas of the various nations. Such trend, inherited from the Middle Ages, was given new impetus in the early modern age.

Thus, the emergence of an intellectual community of thinkers, scientists, poets, artists, diplomats and courtiers, united in the common goal of knowledge sharing (despite frequent rivalries and controversies), would lead us to reflect on the progressive emergence of the notion of collaborative knowledge as a first step towards conflict resolution, if not toleration.

This original project therefore aims at studying both the confessional and the scientific elements in the cross-cutting and encompassing scholarly networks of the modern era. Our aim is to reveal, by studying the various instances of scientific exchanges in theology, philosophy, the natural sciences, including cosmology, astronomy and medicine, as well as the rewriting of myths by humanists, scholars, historiographers and poets, that scholarly networks played a decisive role in fostering peace and concord at the national and international levels through knowledge sharing.

The project will encompass three interrelated elements: ideas, protagonists and symbols. It will try to understand the nature of ideological rifts by focusing on the shift from *dissensus* to consensus in continuity with our recent research on scandal as a radical breach in cultural and social cohesion which calls for a solution through a general healing process.

This project calls for a redefinition of the extent of the political and religious spheres in order to shed light, thanks to its interdisciplinary approach, on the importance of cross-confessional cooperation in the creation of scientific and intellectual communities. It aims at addressing the role of intellectual solidarity in shaping the “concert of nation” in the modern era and its role in instigating consensus and concord by merging traditions and heritages.

The major aim of the project is to analyse the instigation and practice of concord through increased convergence between ideas, actions and symbols.

Taking the idea of consensus as a starting point, the various ways and means of transcending divisions from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment will be explored, by adopting an interdisciplinary approach. This will eventually lead to a redefinition of the notion of “Republic of Letters” as well as to a reflection on the intellectual foundations of an element of political theory. How does knowledge sharing foster consensus? What are, on the one hand, the political implications of formal and generic choices in community building? On the other hand, how does natural knowledge, through the cooperation between philologists, philosophy and artist, lead its various protagonists to fellowship and contribute to conflict resolution between nations?

This project will analyse a wide variety of sources and documents mainly referring to natural sciences so as to enlighten, through a wide variety of methodological and disciplinary approaches, the decisive role played by scholarly networks and scientific cooperation in establishing concord.