Corruption in pre-modern societies

CHALLENGES FOR HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Edited by
MARIA FILOMENA COELHO
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Contents

An *Ancien Régime* for the Papal Revolution

'corruption' as a latent philosophy of history

LEANDRO DUARTE RUST[1]

'Whoever deals with the past is confronted.
This antinomy will not be resolved here,
and we don't know if it can be solved yet.
But one thing seems certain:
we need to tackle this antinomy.'

Reinhart Koselleck, 1971.

I.

A concept is a nautical chart of thought. The moment it opens the mind to the codified representation of vast landscapes of reality, it guides reasoning along certain routes, directing its navigation towards singular expectations of meaning. At once figurative and operative, a concept has information about a set of different phenomena yet forge a specific context for the skill of abstracting the world, situating understanding. Although it serves as a support for many points of reference, relating to different themes—from natural to cultural—a concept usually prompts the mobilization of past experiences, which are thus integrated into a purpose, into the search for an intellectual destiny. Through a concept, *one registers, but also assigns a certain content*.

The history of the Latin Middle Ages has plenty of examples of this. That is, names whose mere usage triggers decisive consequences for understanding. This occurs, for example, with 'freedom'. We historians use this term with a familiarity that goes beyond the frequency and reach it enjoyed in the medieval period. We use 'freedom', 'free', 'freely' and other terms with a semantic flexibility that exceeds previously existing boundaries in the language. A result of mass experiences and uses, our discursive relationship with 'freedom' spreads through writing in many ways, some explicit and intentional, others discreet, instinctive, perchance imperceptible.

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However, when we use the word and its lexical spectrum, we are not only imparting naturalness to our arguments, making them less harsh and hermetic to those who read or hear them. We do more than encourage identification by re-encountering what is already known, creating a specular game between reader and text. We direct the reading to a singular argument. We trace a path to the axiom that intricate religious and legal values presumably converged — in the Middle Ages as well as in the modern world — to form collective bodies focused on political action.[2] This is not an exception. There are numerous familiar-sounding terms of everyday and easy usage among us that direct the thought to specific situations: 'order',[3] 'rationality',[4] 'sensibility',[5] 'religion',[6] 'subject',[7] 'art',[8] 'crises'.[9]

For this chapter, I am arguing for a similar status for "corruption". My hypothesis is that the word corruption has played the role of a *guiding concept* for the writing of medieval history. According to Reinhart Koselleck, a term serves as a guiding concept by playing simultaneously a two-fold role: pinpointing an object relevant to the order of history and inscribing a period of time for that object.[10] In other words, when such

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[2] An attempt to disassociate the *libertas* of the medievals from this notion of 'freedom' of the moderns may also found in: SCHMITT, Jean-Claude. La conquête de la liberté. In: D'ACUNTO, Nicolangelo; FILIPPINI, Elisabeta (Org.). Libertas: secoli X-XIII. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2019, p. 3-26. Also : AVON, Dominique. *La Liberté de Conscience*: histoire d'une notion et d'un droit. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2020.

[3] For example: GROSSI, Paolo. *A Ordem Jurídica Medieval*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2014; LARKINS, Jeremy. *From Hierarchy to Anarchy*: Territory and Politics before Westphalia. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p. 53-72; SALVADOR-BELLO, Mercedes. *Isidorean Perceptions of Order*: The Exeter Book Riddles and Medieval Latin Enigmata. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2015.

[4] D'AVRAY, D. L. *Medieval Religious Rationalities*: a Weberian analysis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; LINGUA, Graziano; PEZZANO, Giacomo. Repenser la rationalité économique: de *l'homo oeconomicus* à *l'homo relationalis*. *Noesis*, vol. 20, 2012, p. 283-302 ; VINCENSINI, Jean-Jacques. Civilisation médiévale et discontinuités rationnelles. *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, vol. 245, 2019, p. 61-76.

[5] BOUCHET, Florence ; KLINGER-DOLLÉ, Anne-Hélène (Dir.). *Penser les Cinq Sens au Moyen Âge*: poétique, esthétique, éthique. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015; BROOKS, Ann. *Genealogies of Emotions, Intimacies, and Desire*: theories of changes in Emotional Regimes from Medieval Society to Late Modernity. New York: Routledge, 2016; BOQUET, Damien; NAGY, Piroska. *Medieval Sensibilities*: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018.

[6] SCHMITT, Jean-Claude. *Le Corps, les Rites, les Rêves, le Temps* : essais d'anthropologie médiévale. Paris: Gallimard, 2001; GUERREAU, Alain. *El Futuro de un Pasado*: la Edad Media en el siglo XXI. Barcelona: Crítica, 2002; LURDES ROSA, Maria. A religiosidade medieval como campo de trabalho historiográfico: perspetivas recentes. *Revista História das Ideias*, vol. 36, n. 2, 2018, p. 57-81.

[7] DE LIBERA, Alain. *Arqueologia do Sujeito*: nascimento do sujeito. São Paulo: Editora Fap-Unifesp, 2013; HAIDU, Peter. *Sujeito Medieval/Moderno*: texto e governo na Idade Média. São Leopoldo: Editora Unisinos, 2005.

[8] SCHMITT, Jean-Claude. *O Corpo das Imagens*: ensaios sobre a cultura visual na Idade Média. Bauru: EDUSC, 2007; BASCHET, Jérôme. *L' Iconographie Médiévale*. Paris: Gallimard, 2008; KESSLER, Herbert L. *Experiencing Medieval Art*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019.

[9] FELLER, Laurent. Introducion : Crises et renouvellements des Élites au haut Moyen Âge: mutations ou ajustements des structures ? In : BOUGARD, François ; FELLER, Laurent ; LE JAN, Regine (dir.). *Les Élites au Haut Moyen Âge*: crises et renouvellements. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006. p. 5-30; DE JONG, Mayke. The Empire that was always decaying: the Carolingians (800–888). *Medieval Worlds*: Comparative & Interdisciplinary Studies, vol. 2, 2015, p. 6–25; CÂNDIDO DA SILVA, Marcelo. Crise e fome na Alta Idade Média: o exemplo dos capitulários carolíngios. *Anos 90*, Porto Alegre, v. 24, n. 45, p. 185-207, 2017.

[10] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto, 2020, p. 63-84.

a notion appears in the text, a decision is made about the meaning of history.[11] When we label certain practices, conditions, or events as 'corruption', we (1) single out a set of events, which then emerge as endowed with common aspects, and (2) invest them with a specific duration, gathering them within the same time frame.[12] As a guiding concept, the idea of corruption "thematizes not only the events that occurred at the empirical level, but primarily the conditions of possible histories".[13] In short, *this term delimits a subject to be known and the conditions for its knowledge.*

Nevertheless, this is not a general hypothesis. It was formulated during the examination of the current state of the art of historiography about a specific theme: the so-called Gregorian Reform. One of the keynotes at the beginning of this century has been the effort to revive[14] and expand the definition of the Gregorian Reform as 'the' medieval revolution. Seeing the 11th century as the scene of a rupture in civilisation, as a new moment of life in society in the Western world, spread through influential publications, including research monographs,[15] research syntheses,[16] university handbooks,[17] biographies.[18] Indeed, the historiography of the last two decades has been characterized by the recurrence of certain emphases. One of them is to frame revolutionary action as anti-corruption policy. One of the main innovations that would result from initiatives led by pontiffs such as Leo IX (1049-1054), Nicholas II (1059-1061) and Gregory VII (1073-1085) was a radical fight against corruption. Stringent logic, with many implications, comes into play at this point. Just as the idea of 'revolution' serves as a breaking point, so does the contrast between corruption and

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[11] Cf. BOY, Renata Viana. Between law and history…, this volume.

[12] "Los 'estratos del tiempo' remiten a […] distintas dimensiones y profundidades, y que se han modificado y diferenciado […] con distintas velocidades." Portanto, "La ganancia de una teoría de los estratos del tempo consiste […] en poder medir distintas velocidades, aceleraciones o demoras, y hacer así visibles distintos modos de cambio que ponen de manifesto una gran complejidad temporal." In: KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Los Estratos del Tiempo*: estudios sobre la historia. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Paidós, 2001, p. 35, 38.

[13] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos...* p. 82.

[14] See: RUST, Leandro Duarte. "A história como revolução: a Idade Média e a essência da Modernidade." In: *A Reforma Papal (1050-1150)*: trajetórias e críticas de uma história. Cuiabá: Editora da UFMT, 2013, p. 57-83.

[15] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Papacy and Law in the Gregorian Revolution*: the canonistic work of Anselm of Lucca. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998; CANTARELLA, Glauco Maria. *Il Sole e la Luna*: la rivoluzione di Gregorio VII papa, 1073-1085. Roma: Editori Laterza, 2005; ALTHOFF, Gerd. Rules and Rituals in Medieval Power Games: A German Perspective. Leiden: Brill, 2019, p. 171-214; MARTINE, Tristan; WINANDY, Jérémy (Dir.). *La Réforme grégorienne, une "révolution totale"?* Paris: Garnier, 2021.

[16] BELLITTO, Christopher M. Renewing Christianity: A History of Church Reform from Day One to Vatican II. New York : Paulist Press, 2001, especially p. 47-62 ; GOUGUENHEIM, Sylvain. *La Réforme Grégorienne* : de la lutte pour le sacré à la sécularisation du monde. Paris: Temps Présent, 2014.

[17] D'ACUNTO. Nicolangelo. *La Lotta per le Investiture*: uma rivoluzione medievale (998-1122). Roma: Carocci Editore, 2020.

[18] CANTARELLA, Glauco Maria. *Gregorio VII*: il papa che in soli dodici anni rivoluzionò la Chiesa e il mondo occidentale. Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2018.

anti-corruption take on the form of an epochal divide. Revolutionary, the 'Gregorian Reform' emerges as the episode that decreed the end of a world in which corruption prevailed as a social rule. The hypothesis put forward here is designed to be applied to the present case. Far beyond a mere record or description, the approach is based on the suspicion that when speaking of 'corruption', scholars delimit the horizon of possibilities in the decades before 1050, thereby setting up the heuristic conditions necessary to sustain the image of a later Papal Revolution in the path of historiographical discourse.[19]

From this point on I start analyzing the discursive intricacies of this historiographical operation.

II.

The idea of 'corruption' addressed by historians of the Papal Revolution is simple. Suffice it to observe how they characterize the exponents of yesterday's world, that is, the popes who ruled between 950 and 1050, to note that this idea usually comprises two semantic layers. Let us start with an overview: "the [...] northern European audience [...] evidently was prepared to believe that the Romans—and perhaps especially their popes—were ineffectual, morally corrupt, untrustworthy and capable of anything".[20] The expression 'morally corrupt' smacks of inaccuracy.[21] It is hard to link it to a specific behaviour or concrete social action. However, as Kathleen Cushing's text progresses, it is given more precise contours. Let us see this excerpt about John XII (955-963): "his accession to the apostolic see was more than a little irregular (arranged, against canon law, in his predecessor's lifetime) and his pontificate was reputedly characterized by scandal, bribery, political intrigue, revolt and deposition".[22] From the new list, two elements delimit a roll of corrupt practices: 'bribery' and 'intrigue'. From this perspective, corruption is the illegitimate intermediation of public positions and figures, an interpretation that is corroborated

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[19] As for the challenges, often implicit, entailed by the use of the term corruption for the study of medieval history, cf. COELHO, Maria Filomena. Corruption in the Middle Ages as a research problem, this volume.

[20] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century*: *spirituality and social change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005, p. 20.

[21] Albeit imprecise, the expression delimits a circumscription seen as a moral problem, corruption loses the tonality of a social phenomenon and takes on the colors of individual failure. As the following pages will show, such a semantic orientation has relevant implications for historical thinking. Regarding this individualizing accent of corruption and its analytical criticism, see: ROMEIRO, Adriana. *Corrupção e Poder no Brasil*: uma história, séculos XVI a XVIII. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2017, p. 88-89.

[22] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 21.

by what comes next, as the author continues: "many other examples can easily be found of popes who owed their promotions and their positions, or at least their downfalls, to the intrigue of Roman noble families".[23] This statement, in turn, allows a little more precision: 'corruption' here is the aristocratic intermediation of the public space.[24]

This is the first semantic layer. It is a discursive segment that the social sciences consolidated during the first half of the 20th century by spreading the Weberian terminology of 'patrimonialism' as a synonym for such a complete appropriation of the public by the private sphere to the point of rendering them indistinct.[25] In recent publications, the Gregorians emerge as revolutionaries for their total rejection of this assimilation that would characterize aristocrats and oligarchs. That is what Francis Fukuyama argues in the controversial and influential *The Origins of Political Order*, published in 2011: 'Pope Gregory's goal was to end corruption and rent seeking within the church by attacking the very source of patrimonialism, the ability of bishops and priests to have children.'[26] The presence of the aristocratic ethos — found in the search for genealogical perpetuation — emerges in the book as a force that drags the public sphere and the state itself into irreversible decline. That is what can also be read in the monumental *Revolution: Structure and Meaning in World History*, which Saïd A. Arjomand brought out in 2019. According to Arjomand, if Benedict VIII (1012-1024) and John XIX (1024-1032) restructured Roman administration and strengthened ties with the imperial court it was because 'the exclusive appropriation of the papal pontificate by the parochial and otiose Roman aristocracy", which had

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[23] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 21.

[24] In another text, a competent thematic synthesis chapter published in 2015, the argument addresses the idea of a tenth-century 'feudal anarchy', in which aristocratic relationships and logics become politically predatory and erratic: 'Although modern scholars have described the period c. 1050–c.1250 as the growth of a "papal monarchy", envisaging the evolution and development of centralized institutions as mechanisms that enabled ever-growing papal supervision over the affairs of the Western Church and its peoples, such labels are arguably far too sweeping for characterizing the type of power that the papacy actually exercised. That said, as the effects of tenth-century invasions began to recede and western European society slowly re-emerged from the effects of a disintegrating Carolingian world order, new opportunities for consolidation and stability appeared.' CUSHING, Kathleen. Papal Authority and its Limitations. In: ARNOLD, John H. (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 522. Note how the phrase 'effects of a disintegrating Carolingian world order' is close to the well-known idea of a tenth century populated by social and political upheavals due to a 'feudal mutation.' A prime example of the application of these conceptual premises to the tenth-century papacy is: COLLINS, Paul. *The Birth of the West*: Rome, Germany, France, and the Creation of Europe in the Tenth Century. New York: Public Affairs, 2013, especially p. 33-89.

[25] See: VARRAICH, Aiysha. Corruption: an umbrella concept. *QoG Working Paper Series*, vol. 5, 2014, p. 20-25; ROTHSTEIN, Bo; VARRAICH, Aiysha. *Making Sense of Corruption*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 89-103.

[26] FUKUYAMA, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order*: from prehuman times to the French Revolution. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011, p. 265.

elevated 'two Italian popes, Benedict and his brother, John' had been 'disturbed [by] the dire Saracen menace to Rome'.[27] In this case, the restructuring was not driven by a sense of governance, but by an oligarchic instinct for survival, for self-preservation.

The second semantic layer can be noticed even before the first has been fully excavated. It is clear in the mention of 'bribery', the idea of a subordination of political relations to economic coercion. Let us go back to the pages of *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century*, from where we selected the quotes by Kathleen Cushing. For that work also runs on this other level by placing emphasis on passages like this: 'keeping the papacy in the family [...] was thus not only desirable, but also profitable both for the family in question as well as the papacy itself'.[28] As can be seen, despite having a 'moral' root, corruption was an economic issue. Practices highlighted as corrupt are named by the clerical handling of money, especially concerning large sums changing hands during a pontifical succession. Prominent in this regard is the eve of the Papal Revolution: the years from 1044 to 1046, when a feverish sequence of resignations, elections and reversals led to the rise of three pontiffs, namely Benedict IX (1032-1048), Sylvester III (1045-1046) and Gregory VI (1045-1046). As stated in *Popes and Antipopes: the politics of eleventh century Church Reform,*[29] by Mary Stroll (2012); and *Inventing the Public Sphere: the public debate during the Investiture Contest,*[30] by Leidulf Melve (2007), when it comes to accusations of corruption levelled against the three popes involved, historiography has echoed the conclusion formulated fifty years ago by Peter Partner: 'whether it is proper to speak actually of a sale of the papacy we do not know, but the taint of money [was?] attached to the election, even if simony in the strict sense was avoided'.[31]

The corruption allegedly targeted by the Revolution was a routine of aristocratic intermediation of public figures and economic coercion of politics. As I said, a simple notion.[32] But this compact and cohesive definition plays a complex conceptual role that branches out in many ways.

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[27] ARJOMAND, Saïd Amir. *Revolution*: Structure and Meaning in World History. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. 244.

[28] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 22.

[29] STROLL, Mary. *Popes and Antipopes: the politics of eleventh century Church Reform*. Leiden: Brill, 2012, p. 22-23.

[30] MELVE, Leidulf. *Inventing the Public Sphere*: the public debate during the Investiture Contest. Leiden: Brill, 2007, vol. 1, p. 122-123.

[31] PARTNER, Peter. *The Lands of Saint Peter*: the Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance. London: Eyre Methuen, 1972, p. 107-108.

[32] For a concept of corruption with other nuances and application possibilities, cf. WEST, Charles. Corruption in the Middle Ages and problem of simony. This volume.

Corruption arises as the *sufficient cause of a sociological divide* between the government elite and government institutions. Pointing to the incidence of corrupt practices, historiography has presented as satisfactorily showed — that is, already endowed with factual coherence — the postulate that social recognition of the papacy was uncoupled from social knowledge about its occupants. 'Even if the morals of some popes were not all that could be desired by contemporaries, it is more than evident that the papacy as an institution not only continued to function but was in fact esteemed'[33] —argued Cushing. 'The papacy sank to its absolute nadir. Or it is safer to say that it was the popes themselves who sank. The papacy continued to command respect'[34] — that is how Thomas F. X. Noble clearly verbalized the dissociation. *'La cattedra di Pietro sembrerebbe già mettere al riparo dalle debolezze e dalle turpitudini degli uomini che vi siedono sopra. Le sue prerogative sono fuor di dubbio'*[35] — recently stressed Glauco M. Cantarella. The argument is tautological, up to a point. As an *aristocratic intermediation* and economic coercion through *clerical dealing with money*, corruption was tacitly limited to individual action. Its scale is demarcated at the biography level. As such, it is extremely difficult to believe it had any systemic impact on the social fabric or affected structuring relationships. The idea of 'corruption' works as a silent prohibition, marking the point where thought must halt, by virtue of its internal coherence.

My aim with this analysis is not revisionism. It is possible to propose a nuanced interpretation of the reputation of the popes that preceded 'the Revolution'. To show that such a reputation for corruption not only satisfied political agendas, but was offset by other reputations: that 'the much-maligned Theophylacti family that dominated Rome in the early tenth century had a positive local reputation for monastic patronage',[36] that Benedict VIII and John XIX acted as zealous defenders of the liturgical integrity — and universal supremacy — of the Roman faith before the high clergy of Constantinople.[37] To the strong argument that 'it cannot be denied that aristocratic Roman families [...] often fulfilled the worst expectations of contemporary

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[33] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 23.

[34] NOBLE, Thomas F. X. Narratives of Papal history. In: SISSON, Keith; LARSON, Atria A. (Ed.). *A Companion to the Medieval Papacy*: growth of an ideology and institution. Leiden: Brill, 2016, p. 24.

[35] CANTARELLA, Glauco Maria. *Gregorio VII...* p. 25.

[36] HOWE, John. *Before the Gregorian Reform*: The Latin Church at the turn of the first millennium. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016, p. 242.

[37] SIECIENSKI, Anthony Edward. *The Papacy and the Orthodox*: Sources and History of a Debate. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 241-242.

chronicles by using the papacy as a means of obtaining and consolidating political power,[38] one can oppose the demonstration by David Whitton and, more recently, by Chris Wickham, that those same families did not transform papal hegemony into a platform for the expansion of their private fortunes.[39] But that is not the point. My goal is not to question the pertinence of the 'corruption' category. Largely, it is about the opposite: to demonstrate how that term determines the criteria by which the expectation of meaning generated by historiographic reason is considered to have been met. To demonstrate, in short, how such a category makes historical knowledge relevant, not the other way around.

The conceptualization of a split between government elite and institution lends credibility to the idea that a relevant portion of institutional functioning and, especially, of institutional legitimacy was not linked to the holders of social power. In that case, who might have been the binding force? Let us reformulate the question with more accurate information. If papal prerogatives and social esteem were not perpetuated by the ecclesiastical and lay elite, who kept them active? The answer is left unsaid. In general, the subject for such a sociological arrangement is not explicitly named, it does not emerge between the lines. As far as I could read, I came across an author who, modelling the Papal Revolution, proposed an alternative formula: Robert Ian Moore, who linked the institutions of the year one thousand to the 'entrance of the multitude into history'.[40] But Moore is an exception. The rule is that the image of a historical subject, in this case, does not emerge. For it is prevented from emerging.

It is possible to note that the current conceptualization connects the idea of corruption directly with two others: that of kinship (arranged on the threshold of reasoning thanks to the axiom of aristocratic intermediation) and that of wealth (implied by the postulate of economic coercion). These are two founding categories of the concept of 'manorial or feudal power', which thus orbits the semantic field of 'corruption'. The latter, therefore, exerts an attraction on the former, linking it to the biographical and episodic level. The consequence is that manorial logics and

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[38] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 22.

[39] WHITTON, David. *Papal Policy in Rome*, 1012-1024. (PhD Thesis) Wolfson College, 1979, p. 63-184; WICKHAM, Chris. *Medieval Rome*: stability and crisis of a city, 900-1150. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 186-220.

[40] MOORE, Robert Ian. *The First European Revolution, c.970-1215*. London: Blackwell Publishing, 2000, especially p. 160-189. Moore outlines the Gregorian Reform as a chapter or phase in an incomparably larger revolution. A 'social revolution' that, occurring decades before and after the year 1000, caused pressure and community stimuli —'from below' the social structure—to determine the discretionary spheres existing in the institutions of the period.

relationships emerge as symmetrically opposed to the legitimacy of institutional prerogatives. A condition of possibility for knowledge is thus installed. Rather, a *condition of impossibility*: under these characterizations, a subject capable of perpetuating papal functionality and social esteem cannot be a manorial force.[41] This limiting condition becomes unspeakable when it comes to thinking about the history of an agrarian society, repeatedly described as the stage of the full implementation of feudalism, as is the case of Latin Christianity in the year one thousand. The *unsaid is a heuristic demand inscribed by the idea of corruption*.

This silencing, in turn, unfolds into a new narrative tension. Whilst this prevails, the text is kept on the verge of being traversed by sharp contradiction. The cohesion of the term 'institution' is about to run out. Once its sociological expressiveness is restricted; once the decision has been implicitly made to restrict the scope of the social significance of the exercise of papal power in contexts prior to the Revolution, the discursive efficacy of speaking of 'institution' is challenged. Or, drawing once more on Koselleck, the 'reality of conceptuality'[42] loses its formulating power. Thus, it is necessary to adjust the concept to its closure, nominally reformulating it, since, due to the consolidated uses of the notion of corruption, it no longer covers a dynamic state of affairs. Such an adjustment was occurred when Kathleen Cushing coined the intriguing term 'passive institution'. The idea appears in different parts of her writing but achieves greater visibility in characterizing the early revolutionary process, which allegedly began during the pontificate of Leo IX: 'his use of papal legates and especially his many reforming councils [...] mark the beginnings of the transformation of the papacy from being a significant albeit passive institution into one which had seized the initiative'.[43] Prior to the 1050s, the mechanisms of papal administration

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[41] Long before being a historiographical effect, this development occurred in medieval reality itself, with, for example, the canonical discourse on corruptibility preventing the emergence of certain historical subjects as legal subjects. Cf. TORRES FAUAZ, Armando. *Lesser and corruptible*: the worth of a humble man's word during the Middle Ages, this volume. This interpretative model permeates his vast and wealthy production, but I believe that the paradigmatic examples, in addition to the work, are MOORE, Robert Ian. Family, community, and cult in the eve of the Gregorian Reform. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, s. 5, n. 30, 1979, p. 46-69; MOORE, Robert Ian. The Peace of God and the Social Revolution. In: HEAD, Thomas; LANDES, Richard (Ed.). *The Peace of God*: *social violence and religious response in France around the Year 1000*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 308-326. See also: RUST, Leandro Duarte. "A história como revolução..." p. 57-83. Moore's historiographic influence noted in: HAMILTON, Louis. *A Sacred City*: *consecrating churches and reforming Society in eleventh-century Italy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010, especially p. 56-88.

[42] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos...* p. 74.

[43] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy...* p. 66. The concept of 'passive institution' is not new. At the time Cushing's book published, the term appears in at least two bibliographic niches: the literature on financial management formally addressed the subject of passive institutions, and there was a rich body of constitutional studies and political theory on the illegitimacy or passive legitimacy of institutions.

comprised an entity designed to cater for fragmented, casuistry interests, 'more than prepared to provide what Karl Leyser aptly termed "a costumer's service".'[44] The privileges granted by the Petrine primacy 'demonstrate that the papacy during the tenth and earlier eleventh centuries was an essentially passive institution, fixed in Rome, where individuals came for sanction, privileges, guidance and increasingly, it must be noted, judgment'.[45] It is worth noting how the idea of a 'passive institution' shapes the argument for locating power within the sphere of the individual, of local intermediation and of the episodic variety of social circumstances: precisely the parameters delimited by the uses of the notion of 'corruption'. In *Église et Réforme au Moyen Âge*, from 2008, Jean-Hervé Foulon followed a similar intellectual pathway. After demonstrating that the feudal Church was marked by *'étroite symbiose entre les motivations religieuses et profanes', that 'les cas de simonie sont extrêmement fréquents' and 'le nicolaïsme apparaît donc aux détours des chartes'*, probably due to the *'rélle sécularisation de l'Église fondée sur l'interpénétration étroite entre christianisme et féodalité'*, Foulon states: *'durant la prmière moitié du Xie siècle, les interventions pontificales restèrent épisodiques et furent simplesmente des réponses à des initiatives locales'*.[46] When the semantic rule was established to describe the institutional, the concept of 'corruption' had an even broader effect; it *regulated the vocabulary available to express power relations* of a given period.

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[43] As examples, see respectively: ALMAZAN, Andres; HARTZELL, Jay; STARKS, Laura. Active Institutional Shareholders and Costs of Monitoring: Evidence from Executive Compensation. *Financial Management*, vol. 34, vol. 4, 2005, p. 5-34; ENGEL, Christoph. Hybrid Governance Across National Jurisdictions as a Challenge to Constitutional Law. *European Business Organization Law Review*, vol. 2, n. 3-4, 2001, p. 569-583. However, the way in which Cushing uses the expression does not suggest a connection between the two strands. On the other hand, the idea of institutional passivity relates to a wide range of possibilities of forms of resistance, commonly referring to how subaltern groups or dominated classes establish strategies of social action. Example: SCOTT, James C. *Domination, and the Arts of Resistance*: *hidden transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. For obvious reasons, I have ruled out the possibility that the expression formulated in that sense. Despite the apparently *en passant* use of the expression —moreover, the only reference given is a review by Karl Leyser on the publication of the volumes of *Papsturkunden 896-1046*, by Harald Zimmermann — I infer a certain sociological functionality in its use, as if it explained the efficiency and social scope of an institution. I was unable to identify a theoretical framework that might have supported such a construction of the category. See also: LEYSER, Karl. Papsturkunden 896-1046, 1: 896-996. - Papsturkunden 896-1046, II: 996-1046, edited by Harald Zimmermann. *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 39, n. 2, 1988, p. 246-248.

[44] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy*... p. 23. An interpretive model that she expanded about a decade later, covering the history of the papacy as a whole: 'Throughout the middles ages after all, the papacy chiefly operated what has been termed by Karl Leyser "a customer's service": not only did papal legislation as noted above often come in the form of rescripts to letters from the localities, but papal privileges for monasteries, bishoprics, churches and also bulls of canonization often originated outside Rome. Even at its "height" under Alexander III (1159–81), Innocent III (1198–1216), and Boniface VIII (1294–1303), the papacy operated through a range of changing structures and personnel'. CUSHING, Kathleen. Papal Authority and its Limitations..., p. 517. As for my understanding of the relevance and political role of the personalization of papal power, see: RUST, Leandro Duarte. *Colunas de São Pedro*: a política papal na Idade Média Central. São Paulo: Annablume, 2011.

[45] CUSHING, Kathleen G. *Reform, and the Papacy*... p. 24.

[46] FOULON, Jean-Hervé. *Église et Réforme au Moyen Âge* : Papauté, milieux réformateurs et ecclésiologie dans les Pays de la Loire au tournant des XIe-XIIe siècles. Paris: De Boeck, 2008, p. 39, 45, 46, 49, 91.

In speaking of 'corruption', we historians guide an entirely contemporary expectation about political protagonism. By imparting historical relevance to corrupt practices, we inscribe tacit prohibitions and subtle norms that end up delegating to a future context the retribution of the search for those capable of imprinting a human mark that goes beyond the local, the biographical and the casual. We postpone the meeting of our readers with the protagonists of history, that singular collective that, since the late 18th century, transcends all individual stories.[47] As for the study of Latin Christianity, such postponement results in a kind of sociological 'de-substantialized'[48] of political institutions and elites prior to 1050. And, stripped of social density, the context surrounding the year one thousand becomes, on the narrative level, a focus of conceptual tension, which, in turn, will require expanding the temporal grammar conjugated by thought. That is what I will show next.

III.

De-substantialized, the context characterizes a picture of stagnation. In the study of the Middle Ages, the presence of corruption is linked to the image of a social development marked by slow rhythms that tend towards a Newtonian equilibrium, i.e. a situation in which the acting forces cancel each other out, giving rise to a state of rest or inertia. As an example, let us see the following argument, taken from *La Réforme Gregorienne: de la lutte pour le sacré à la sécularisation du monde*, an introductory summary released by Sylvian Gouguenheim in 2010 and re-published in 2014. After referring to the period around the 1000s as being populated by '*plusieurs papes débauchés, peu socieux du prestige ou du pouvoir de l'institution dont ils avaient la charge*', Gouguenheim explains that '*en fait, il n'y eut pas déclin ou progrès constant: les crises révélèrent de grands pontifes ou mirent en lumière les incapacites des autres*'.[49] This cyclical alternation between waning and waxing papal policy creates the impression of a zero-sum game, in which there are no significant changes. Truth be told, the author nuances this interpretation, pointing out '*les progrès de l'administration, inspires du modele byzantin, bien que lents, furent sensibles. La chancellerie commence à se*

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[47] See: KOSELLECK, Reinhart; MEIER, Christian; GÜNTHER, Horst; ENGELS, Odilo. *O Conceito de História*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2013, p. 119-132. E ainda: KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Futuro Passado*: contribuição à semântica dos tempos históricos: Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto/Editora da PUC-Rio, 2006, p. 41-60.

[48] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *The Practice of Conceptual History*: timing history, spacing concepts. Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 9.

[49] GOUGUENHEIM, Sylvain. *La Réforme Grégorienne...* p. 40.

développer au IXe siècle, des bureaux spécialisés apparaissent, les services financiers prennent forme'.[50] However, the impression of a story written as Newton's First Law remains. For, in this case, the force driving progress is, in practice, a factor external to Latin Christianity—the influence of a Byzantine model—and yet capable of producing a 'slow' movement. Due to its nature, the Latin world, where corruption prevails, is a system of forces that tends to stagnation or inertia.

Albeit partially, this relative immobility of historical time is supported using the notion of 'corruption' as a synonym for the corrosion of a virtuous political model: the Reformation. The reforming action is, for the historiography dedicated to the tenth – and eleventh-century papacy, a political dynamo, a catalyst for transformations. When an achievement worthy of note is attained, it is because this source for the creative mind has been tapped: *'bien avant la reforme grégorienne, plusieurs papes exprimèrent une volontè de progrès, favorisée par un pouvoir impèrial qui fut, sinon le promoteur, du moins l'accompagnateur de la réforme'*[51] — appears elsewhere in Gouguenheim. For this reason, renewing eleventh-century historiography requires, according to Maureen Miller, redirecting the attention dedicated to the papacy to the local spheres of the ecclesial web, where the Reformation that the great institutions transformed and propagated was hatched: "the renovated narrative of the investiture conflict that might be achieved from this perspective would be a story of local efforts at reform synergized and transformed through innovation at the centre and of the creation of a powerful new 'transnational' institution".[52]

However, these views of transnational reform as the effective and efficient political language during the medieval centuries contain a capital nuance: from the viewpoint of a study of power relations in the tenth and eleventh centuries, they locate *the causes of change in the future*. The popes and other prominent ecclesiastical figures around the year one thousand belonged to a political world that was more rigid and close to stagnation the farther they were in time from the generations that acted in

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[50] GOUGUENHEIM, Sylvain. *La Réforme Grégorienne...* p. 40.

[51] GOUGUENHEIM, Sylvain. *La Réforme Grégorienne...* p. 47.

[52] MILLER, Maureen. The Crisis in the Investiture Crisis Narrative. *History Compass*, vol. 7, n. 6, 2009, p. 1575. In this brief yet eloquent text, Miller proposes a historiographic shift that directly impacts the 'great narratives' crystallized throughout the 20th century regarding the 'Gregorian Reform'.In general, what is at stake is prioritizing the writing of a social history that includes the development, at local level and in new documentary niches, of the technologies of power generated by the reform in addition to the techniques and languages conveyed by institutions such as the papacy or the imperial court. However, this proposal still leaves a 'great narrative,' which took shape in the 19th century, intact: it is the postulate that, in the Middle Ages, political action always has, as an efficient cause, a 'reforming spirituality'. A premise on which I tried to establish a critical reading, especially in: RUST, Leandro Duarte. *Colunas de São Pedro*....

1050 or 1080. The political model they corrupted by prioritizing manorial kinship and wealth lies ahead. Their successes stemmed from behaviours that gave early prominence to future priorities: they are identified by the similarity with the decisions taken by Leo IX or Gregory VII. On the other hand, such men appear by transgressing legality or legitimacy when they move in the opposite direction of the course of action that, one day, would be adopted by Urban II (1088-1099) or Paschal II (1099-1118).

Largely, the history of the period spanning from 950 to 1050 is a countdown narrative of how the Reformation, continually latent, is brought to the fore, removed from the reach of corrupt practices, which delay its imminent consummation. This teleology turns the future into the gravitational centre of historical becoming, exerting a power of acceleration as the decades follow each other on the page. In other words, the closer to 1050 or 1080, the more intense the pace of transformations. Note how Glaucon Maria Cantarella characterises the period from 1042 to 1046:

> 'quattro/cinque anni possono apparire pochi visti con l'occhio dei posteri, ma sono molti e possono essere molto lunghi. Benedetto IX cercò di confortare la posizione del papato attraverso una serie di azioni che andavano dalla disponibilità nei confronti del re all'attuazione a Roma di alcune di quelle riforme che nelle Chiese del regno stavano dando pienamente i loro frutti'.[53]

What dilates temporality here, making forty-eight months denser in meaning than forty-eight months ten years earlier, is the transposition to Italy of the reform that 'was fully bearing fruit' in the kingdom of the Teutons.

There is a semantic alignment between 'corruption' and 'reform'. The closure of the first is opposed by a drastic opening of the second to the conceptualization of time. 'Reform' starts to encompass precisely what is prohibited to a context through the uses of 'corruption': the integration of biographical trajectories in a new time, which 'refers to itself and dispenses with the need to be linked to a concrete object or subject'.[54] In the stagnation of an era marked by corruption lies the antecedent that gives coherence and cohesion to this thematization of a new time mode: '*dans le feu purificateur de son action conciliaire*', writes Michel Bur regarding Leo IX, '*peu importait au pape qui avait nommé qui, pourvu que le bénéficiaire fût indemne de toute corruption. Affaire de conscience droite encore une fois. Toute la réforme de l'Eglise est sortie de là*'.[55]

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[53] CANTARELLA, Glauco Maria. *Gregorio VII...* p. 63.

[54] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos...* p. 88.

[55] BURR, Michel. Léon IX et la France. In: BISCHOF, Georges; TOCK, Benoît-Michel (Ed.). *Léon IX et son temps*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2006, p. 257.

More than the record of empirical evidence, the characterization of corrupt practices acts here as a contrast that imparts clarity to the reforming action as a temporal coefficient. As antithetical concepts, 'corruption' and 'reform' 'enter a state of temporal tension that, in new ways, links the past to the future'.[56] This tension imposes a livelier movement on history by populating it with new, dense events that follow each other at a greater speed than before; *'sappiamo bene che l'accelerazione e la concentrazione di interventi consapevoli atti trasformare gli assetti di una istituzione costituiscono una specie di principium individuationis dell'azioni riformatrice'* — explains Nicolangelo D'Acunto.[57] In this conceptual plot, what precedes 1050 is not a past that limits future possibilities, but the incomplete, unfinished future. The past is here a field of expectations of the reforming era, which emerges described as the quintessence of power: 'like Norman Kantor, Walter Ullmann, R. W. Southern, R. I. Moore, and Peter Haidu, I view the Gregorian Reform as a revolution', explicates Suzanne Verderber in the very first chapter of *The Medieval Fold: power, repression, and the emergence of the individual*, of 2013, and goes on, 'the term "reform" connoting the eradication of corruption rather than the deep structural transformation of society, the manifestation of a veritable will to power, that the Gregorian Reform represented'.[58] Thus, the Reformation leads to historiography as a self-referential category.[59]

This process can be noticed in Florian Mazel's work.[60] His proposal to reformulate of the concept of the Gregorian Reform as a 'Total Revolution' of life in society is quite insightful. Starting with the chronology. Mazel seeks to conceptualize a range of processes that supposedly took place from the mid-11th century to the first half of the 13th century: therefore, a two-hundred-year revolution. Above all, it's about

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[56] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos…* p. 88.

[57] D'ACUNTO. Nicolangelo. *La Lotta per le Investiture…* p. 21.

[58] VERDERBER, Suzanne. *The Medieval Fold*: *power, repression, and the emergence of the individual.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 31-32.

[59] As a counterpoint to this approach, see: HAMILTON, Sarah. Pastoral Care in Early Eleventh-Century Rome. *Dutch Review of Church History*, vol. 84, 2004, p. 37-56; BARROW, Julia. Ideas and Applications of Reform. In: NOBLE, Thomas F.X.; SMITH, Julia M. (Ed.). *The Cambridge History of Christianity*. Volume 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c.600–c.1100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 345–362; BARROW, Julia. Developing Definitions of Reform in the Church in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries. In: BALZARETTI, Ross; BARROW, Julia; SKINNER, Patricia (Ed.). *Italy and Early Medieval Europe*: papers for Chris Wickham. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 501-511.

[60] MAZEL, Florian. Pour une redéfinition de la réforme "grégorienne". FOURNIER, Michelle et al. (Dir.). *La Réforme "grégorienne" dans le Midi (milieu XIe - début XIIIe siècle)*. Toulouse: Privat, 2013, p. 9-38; MAZEL, Florian; NOIZET, Hélène. *L'Inventaire de la Chrétienté*: la fabrique épiscopale du territoire au Moyen Age. Paris: Éditions B2, 2021; MAZEL, Florian. Introduction. Une "révolution totale"? Penser la réforme grégorienne par-delà les frontières historiographiques. In: MARTINE, Tristan ; WINANDY, Jérémy (Dir.). *La Réforme grégorienne, une "révolution totale" ?* Paris : Garnier, 2021, p. 15-25; MAZEL, Florian. La réforme grégorienne. Un tournant fondateur (milieu XIe-début XIIIe siècle). In: MAZEL, Florian (Dir.). *Nouvelle Histoire du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Seuil, 2021, p. 291-306.

highlighting radical transformations, which, from morality to spatiality, from disciplinary rules to property organization, supposedly culminated in the irreversible separation between the ecclesial institution and the *societas christiana*. This would require orienting the historical lexicon, directing it from the key concept of a revolutionary process defined by the intentionality of agents and the realization of an ideological agenda to the pluralism of *'processus plus souterrains ou plus ambigus qu'elle [l'Eglise] engagea et les résistances qu'elle rencontra en atténuèrent souvent la radicalité. La production du neuf se fit à travers toute une serie de compromis, d'adaptations et d'ajustements qui furent d'ailleurs la raison même de l'acceptation progressive du changement'*.[61] Mazel is equally concerned with stripping the word 'revolution' of *'ce qu'il charrie de violence et de "table rase" du passé'*, for only then, as the vehicle of a different semantic commitment, will it become *'véritablement heuristique'*.[62] However, an absence is felt in this sophisticated conceptual panorama: an equally complex chain of causalities for the establishment of the Total Revolution. As seen in *Nouvelle Histoire du Moyen Âge*, from 2021, rupture is already the beginning of a new era. Largely, the Gregorian Reform there is akin to the sacred in Mircea Eliade: it manifests itself in history.[63]

As for its realization, the transformation arises from awareness. It emerges from *'revendications des réformateurs'*, from battles fought over such ideals as the right order of ecclesiastical affairs, going into action as a *'programme de "moralization" des clercs et de "liberation" des structures de l'Église de l'emprise des laïcs'*.[64] In this view, the emergence of a 'radical clerical ethics' in the mid-11th century is not only the impetus for a new totalization of reality, but also *an immanent element* that makes historical dynamization possible, which enables a continuous birth of the new. Reacting to all forms of corruption, this ethics is the constant that encompasses different events and concatenates them in a flow of similar conditions, which will be repeated throughout

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[61] MAZEL, Florian. Introduction. Une "révolution totale" ?... p. 23.

[62] MAZEL, Florian. Introduction. Une "révolution totale" ?... p. 23.

[63] See: ELIADE, Mircea. *O Sagrado e o Profano*: *a essência das religiões*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2001, p. 15-23. There is more to this association than a fortuitous connection. When writing this article, a secondary working hypothesis occurred to me: that Kantian phenomenology — the cornerstone of Mircea Eliade's studies — is one of the epistemic frameworks behind the temporal characterization of religious phenomena in French writing when it comes to the Gregorian Reform — especially of that historiography with *annalistes* roots, as is the case of Florian Mazel. Such a hypothesis, however, would imply dealing with issues that go beyond the scope of this text; as Mazel himself indicated, gauging a religious 'fact' or 'object' is a challenge that addresses seminal premises of the process of elaborating historiographical truth. See: MAZEL, Florian. Histoire et religion, entre pratique historiographique, príncipes épistémologiques et enjeux de sociétés. *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, vol. 109, n. 4, 2021, p. 701-716.

[64] MAZEL, Florian. La réforme grégorienne. Un tournant fondateur... p. 295.

the heterogeneous landscape of Latin Christendom. In other words, *it is the very pillar of time*. In turn, it's supposed absence, often — but not only — pointed out by the confirmation of corruption, suffices to decree certain immobility, a state of social rest. Similarly, in *La Maison Dieu*, a major work released in 2006, pre-existence to the 'age of reform' is what allows Dominique Iogna-Pratt to refer to the period from 880 to 1040 as a time of '*une eclipse d'un bon siècle et demi*'.[65]

As can be seen, 'reform' and 'corruption' are not mere depositories of information or factual catalogues, but 'words that intend to conceptualize processes that unfold in historical time'.[66] Both provoke, albeit imperceptibly, a remarkable effort of abstraction, since they make it possible to manage notions such as stagnation and acceleration, permanence and rupture, persistence, and differentiation. They are more than names. They are ways of talking about history, of inscribing durations and determining the movement and even the intensity of collective experiences. In the case of 'corruption', its use is capable of investing a given period with the image of past that is already obsolete, a certain state of affairs whose finitude has already been decreed by the proximity of a future that, populated by necessary and universalizable innovations, was integrated into the execution of the history of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Evoking it is a way of unravelling two coherent and homogeneous totalities that enable the inscription of temporality in language: the past and the present, the absent and the effective, the evanescent and the structuring. In speaking about 'corruption', we tie up some loose ends regarding the transformation of time, about how it would have ceased to be a static landscape inhabited by characters and events to become the actual historical agent.

IV.

Characterizing the Gregorian Reform as a revolution — and, not infrequently, as 'the' medieval revolution *par excellence* — goes beyond the field of historical science. Similar intellectual investments occur in legal studies and political theory, thanks to

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[65] IOGNA-PRATT, Dominique. *La Maison Dieu*: une histoire monumentale de l'Église au Moyen Âge. Paris: Seuil, 2006, p. 317.

[66] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. *Histórias de Conceitos...* p. 171.

the influence exerted by *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, the first volume of a seminal synthesis released by Harold Joseph Berman in 1983.[67] At the intersection of these two domains, a recent study thus begins an assessment of the current importance of the topic: 'In recent decades, the rule of law has been highlighted as the solution to numerous problems', writes the author, the Danish professor of political science Jørgen Møller. 'This emphasis on the rule of law has made scholars probe its historical roots and, in this connection, reengage with an older literature on the modernization of the West'. This is followed by a point that deserves even greater attention: 'In the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, scholars have attempted to identify the *point de départ* of the European development. Surveying this literature—and perusing what medieval historians have written on the subject—two points of consensus can be identified. First, the roots of the rule of law that we know today is to be found in medieval Western Christendom'. More specifically, this starting point for the rule of law could be found in the Gregorian Reform or Papal Revolution, which "did turn church-state relations upside down in the eleventh century".[68]

It does not seem to me by chance that Møller identified the current intellectual quest with that carried out by Alexis de Tocqueville in the mid-nineteenth century. Tocqueville was the first author to give a conceptual treatment to the expression 'Old Regime'.[69] With the publication of *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, in 1856, the expression was elevated to a concept tailored to reflection not only on the government regime against which rose the revolutionaries of the 1790s, but also on French society and times prior to the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly in July 1789. Hence, Tocqueville consolidated a decisive theoretical nexus: the premise that the Revolution was preceded by a period whose distinct characteristics are

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[67] Here are examples of this intellectual investment: COLOMBATTO, Enrico. It Was the Rule of Law: Will it be the Rule of Judges? *Revue Économique*, vol 58, 2007, p. 1163-1180; BARSHACK, Lior. The Communal Body, the Corporate Body, and the Clerical Body: An Anthropological Reading of the Gregorian Reform. In: BESSERMAN, Lawrence (Ed.). *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures*: New Essays. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p. 101-121; MØLLER, Jørgen. Bringing the Church Back In: Ecclesiastical Influences on the Rise of Europe. *Politics and Religion*, vol. 12, n. 2, 2019, p. 213-226; DE MESQUITA, Bruce Bueno. The Invention of Power: popes, kings, and the birth of the West. New York: Public Affairs, 2022. For a critical approach to Harold Berman's theory see: AUSTIN, Greta. How Old was the Old Law? Talking about Change in the History of Medieval Church Law. *Bulletin of Medieval Canon Law*, vol. 32, 2015, p. 1-18; AUSTIN, Greta. New Narratives for the Gregorian Reform. In: ROLKER, Christof (Ed.). *New Discourses in Medieval Canon Law Research*: Challenging the Master Narrative. Leiden: Brill, 2019, p. 44-57. It is possible to note the influence, albeit to a lesser extent, in other fields of knowledge, such as philosophy: NEMO, Philipe. The Invention of Western Reason. In: BROGAARD, Berit; SMITH, Barry Smith (Ed.). *Rationality and Irrationality*: Proceedings of the 23rd International Wittgenstein-Symposium. Wien: Öbv&hpt, 2001, p. 224–241.

[68] MØLLER, Jørgen. Medieval Origins of the Rule of Law: The Gregorian Reforms as Critical Juncture? *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, vol. 9, 2017, p. 279.

[69] DOYLE, William. *The Ancien Regime*. London: MacMillan, 1986, p. 9.

communicated by the use of the expression '*Ancien Régime*´ [in English Old Regime]. Since then, studying the Revolution has meant characterizing of the *Ancien Régime* as an immediately preceding historical phase. That is precisely what has happened in the writing of medieval history with the use of the concept 'corruption': it has provided the Papal Revolution with an Old Regime.

As a synonym of aristocratic intermediation and economic coercion of public agents, the concept gives the decades prior to 1050 the fundamental aspect of an age dominated by a power confined to casuistry, an open field for arbitrariness and the pursuit of merely private interests. More. As far as it outlines the image of a split between political institutions and elites, 'corruption' underpins the certainty that we are dealing with a period in which the government did not have institutions that were minimally representative of life in society, lacking greater collective vitality, as occured on the eve of the French Revolution according to Tocqueville.[70] A model of society is also inscribed in this libertarian *topos*. Finally, dominated by the regime of privileges constantly obtained from a 'passive institution,' collective life becomes the painful process of perpetuating aristocracy. Painful because it is deformed, pulverized into an endless injunction of cases, exceptions, and inequalities: the most visible manifestation of a feudal regime. As William Doyle argued, this is another political *topos* of the late 18th century.[71] One which Tocqueville would reposition in the intellectual milieu as a philosophical and historical issue when he reflected on the possible consequences of the nobility's loss of governing capacity to the dissemination

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[70] Says the Count of Tocqueville: 'It is not the purpose of this book to tell how this ancient constitution of Europe gradually weakened and deteriorated; I limit myself to stating that, in the 18th century, partly ruined everywhere. [...] All the powers of the Middle Ages that still exist suffer from the same disease; all exhibit the same withering and languor and, what is worse, everything that, without belonging specifically to the constitution of that time, has become attached to it and has kept its imprint somewhat alive, promptly loses its vitality. In this contact, the aristocracy contracts a senile weakness and political freedom itself, which pervaded the entire Middle Ages and its works, seems to suffer from sterility wherever it retains the characters that medieval times gave it.' TOCQUEVILLE, Alexis de. *O Antigo Regime e a Revolução*. São Paulo: Edipro, 2017, p. 60-61. See also: DOYLE, William. *The Ancien Regime*... p. 4-9. According to Nicolango D'Acunto, medieval populations were the 'great history of the West' until the outbreak of the ideological struggle between Gregorian reformers and defenders of the imperial cause, from the 1070s onwards: 'A questa domanda possiamo rispondere considerando che la guerra tra i riformatori gregoriani e l'Impero fu combattuta con le armi vere e proprie, ma fu pure una *war of words*, di parole scritte e declamate, e di idee che dal chiuso delle corti prorompevano con forza inusitata nelle piazze e nelle chiese delle città, coinvolgendo per la prima volta le masse popolari, che fino ad allora avevano assistito passivamente ai rivolgimenti della grande storia del Medioevo occidentale'. D'ACUNTO. Nicolangelo. *La Lotta per le Investiture*... p. 12. There seems to me to be a tangible parallel between the image of historical passivity—which, as we have seen, linked to the application of 'corruption' to the study of the tenth and eleventh centuries—and the way in which Tocqueville characterizes the loss of collective vitality of the institutions of the Old Regime.

[71] 'Why is it then that in France the same feudal rights have excited in the hearts of the people a hatred so strong that it has outlived its very object and therefore seems inextinguishable? The cause of this phenomenon is, on the one hand, that the French peasant had become a landowner and, on the other hand, that he had completely escaped the rule of his lord.' ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE. *O Antigo Regime e a Revolução*... p. 71, e ainda 72-73. Ver; DOYLE, William. *The Ancien Regime*... p. 3.

of a popular hatred against the old French institutions — the very sap that would nourish the French Revolution.[72]

As the antithesis of the Reformation, 'corruption' underpins a process of temporalization. It emerges as an argumentative platform that drastically separates two periods, between which there is no continuity. Distinguished by the prevalence of corrupt practices on the one hand and a radical clerical ethics on the other, they would have extraordinarily little or nothing in common. Except for the fact that the first moves, teleologically, towards the second, since revolutionary action acts as the driving force; as the impulse that releases and moves the social totality towards the new and different; as, in short, synonymous with history itself. The concept of 'corruption' leads the understanding to a multi-faceted dichotomy: stagnation *versus* acceleration, local *versus* total, individual *versus* collective. The effect is the consolidation of a perspective that makes *a long portion of the medieval past seem anachronistic to the actual Middle Ages* — just as Tocqueville had considered anachronistic the privileges and feudal rights preserved under the Old Regime.[73] 'Corruption' opens a fissure, a breach through which a metahistorical meaning passes into the text and pressures the representation of a past to respond to demands projected by other times. As did Tocqueville in *L'Ancien Régime and la Révolution*, where, as Marcelo Jasmin noted, "modern individualism, administrative centralization, the distancing of citizens from public experience [...] are some of the themes [...] whose focus goes far beyond the specific historical situations in which they emerged".[74]

When it comes to the study of the 10th and 11th centuries of Latin Christianity, the notion of 'corruption' involves the outline, often dotted, of a latent philosophy of

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[72] JASMIN, Marcelo. Historiografia e Liberdade em *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*. *Estudos Históricos*, vol. 17, 1996, p. 99-104, 111-112.

[73] 'To refer to Europe as an *ancien régime* or semi-feudal society is to ratify the assumption that the forces and institutions of permanence were on the verge of collapse. It is obvious that such labels and images represent a retrospective inference, and that the choice of one of these sets is a historical judgment.' MAYER, Arno. *A Força da Tradição*: a persistência do Antigo Regime. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987, p. 16.

[74] JASMIN, Marcelo. Historiografia e Liberdade em... p. 96. In another passage, Jasmin emphasizes: 'Tocqueville's history-study, by thematically outlining it objects and going beyond the narrative discourse of events, proposes a broad set of theories that enable a general reflection of politics regardless of the specific context in which they originate. [...] a significant part of the conclusions of Tocqueville's historiography results in a political science that, although formulated from a particular experience, aims at universality of theoretical abstraction.' (p. 98) Also: 'The historical conception of *L'Ancien Régime* consistently upholds the notion of a secular historical process that subsumes the totality of the forms of the modern Western states to the same principle of development and the same direction'. (p. 105) See also: ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE. *O Antigo Regime e a Revolução*... p. 65-58. 138-150. My argument about the meaning of authenticity and historical anachronism became even more influenced by the reading of: HESPANHA, António Manuel. *Caleidoscópio do Antigo Regime*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2012, p. 7-40.

history. Which makes me think that more relevant than indexing thematic permissions, than authorizing or disallowing a certain use of the term, a History of Corruption should primarily contribute to reflecting on historiographical practice.[75] It may be that, by replicating this model of a Revolution and its Old Regime to an even more distant past than the 18th century, we will act like revolutionaries of the 1790s, who sometimes eclipsed the historical depth[76] of the world around them.

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[75] When placing such emphasis on historiographic practice, I am not just referring to a conceptual problem, but truly to a heuristic one, which concerns the long path that goes from reading historical sources to drawing conclusions, cf. FERNANDES, Alécio Nunes. *Corruption, for whom? What the sources say, what historians see*, this volume.

[76] CAIANI, Ambrogio A. Re-inventing the Ancien Régime in Post-Napoleonic Europe. *European History Quarterly*, vol. 47, n. 3, 2017, p. 439.

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