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Duty versus Pleasure. Philosophical Libertinage Amongst Swedish Civil Servants and Diplomats in the Eighteenth Century

Essential characteristics of the early modern civil servant, the *Amtmann*, the *ämbetsman*, were a sense of duty, loyalty and service to the public office and the Crown, but there was also a certain degree of education and intellectual culture necessary to carry out the responsibilities of the office.[1] As Dan Edelstein has shown, many of the people who "were" the Enlightenment – those in the philosophical and learned networks of the French-speaking republic of letters – were office-holders, cultivated persons working with books, ink and paper.[2] There is no reason to assume that similar intellectual interests should not be found amongst civil servants in the Northern Baltic area as well.

When our attention turns to very high officials with access to most of the knowledge available in their time, including subversive writings and foreign, clandestine or prohibited literature, it becomes relevant to ask why and to what degree they were interested in philosophy. If it was by personal interest or conviction, why and when did philosophical emancipation or *libertinage* attain such proportions that it potentially conflicted with the duties of the public office? A famous case in this respect was the French *directeur de la librairie* Malesherbes, who protected the "Encyclopédie" while he was ultimately in charge of censorship and publications surveillance,[3] but similar contradictions can be found on other levels and other scales throughout the European administrations.

In this contribution, we will look at the conflicting roles and loyalties of two officials, Count Gustav Philip Creutz (1731–1785) and Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd (1746–1783). A poet, civil servant, diplomat, prime minister and university chancellor, but also an *esprit fort*, Creutz could be described as a libertine in the full sense of the term, both intellectually and morally emancipated. Ehrensvärd, in his turn, appears in contemporary sources as a discreet officer and courtier, theatre director and diplomat, but his private documents and library reveal a passion for Enlightenment philosophy, silent disagreements with the royal court, and a distinct interest

[1] This article was written as part of the project "Agents of Enlightenment. Changing the Minds in Eighteenth-Century Northern Europe" (Academy of Finland, 2017–2021, grant numbers 307668 and 326253).
[2] Dan Edelstein: *The Enlightenment. A Genealogy*. Princeton 2010.
[3] Roger Chartier: *Les origines culturelles de la Révolution française*. Paris 2000 [1990], pp. 61–57.

in freemasonry. Moreover, his philosophical preferences were significant for his work for the royal theatres, as they notably influenced his choices of repertoire for the royal Opera.

To define their attitude about how they handled their multiple roles, I have chosen to use the competing notions of "duty" and "pleasure", both central to how eighteenth-century officials perceived their role as civil servants and the object of their leisure occupations respectively. *Libertinage* is understood here primarily in the sense of *libertinage érudit*, that is, as a curiosity towards philosophy going as far as to take a critical stand against religious authorities. By extension, it also includes some degree of morally emancipated attitudes that challenged or transgressed contemporary norms of conduct concerning, for instance, private life and sexuality.

This paper will first present the two protagonists and their attraction towards contemporary radical philosophy. Thereafter, I will deal with problems of religion and conscience in the exercise of public authority. Finally, I will look at how intimate feelings and private interests conflicted with the public duties of the civil servants.

The temptation of philosophy

Gustav Philip Creutz was the youngest child of Count Carl Creutz and Baroness Barbro Wrede, both from important noble families in Eastern Finland. After the Swedish defeat at Poltava, Carl Creutz had been a prisoner of war in Siberia, where he had embraced Pietism, which strongly influenced Gustav Philip Creutz in early childhood. Having studied at the university in Åbo, Gustav Philip Creutz entered civil service and the central administration in Stockholm in 1751. He almost immediately befriended Count Gustaf Fredrik Gyllenborg (1731–1808), with whom he was admitted to the literary society *Tankebyggarorden*. Both Creutz and Gyllenborg became famous for their poetry, particularly Creutz, who composed erotic poems in a modern, light and sensual style. His best-known poem is *Atis och Camilla*, a pastoral epic in five parts on the progress of love, which is considered part of the canon of Swedish literature.[4]

[4] On Creutz, see Arvid Hultin: *Gustaf Filip Creutz. Hans levnad och vittra skrifter*. Helsinki 1913; Gunnar Castrén: *Gustav Philip Creutz*. Stockholm / Borgå 1917; Marianne Molander-Beyer (ed.): *La Suède & les Lumières. Lettres de France d'un Ambassadeur à son Roi (1771–1783)*. Paris 2006, pp. XVII–LXXXI; Charlotta Wolff: Lyrical Diplomacy. Count Gustav Philip Creutz (1731–1785) and the Opera. In: Pierre Yves Beaurepaire et al. (eds.): *Moving Scenes. The Circulation of Music and Theatre in Europe, 1700–1815*. Oxford 2018, pp. 143–156; Charlotta Wolff: "Un admirateur des philosophes modernes". The Networks of Swedish Ambassador Gustav Philip Creutz in Paris, 1766–1783. In: Chloe Edmondson et al. (eds.): *Networks of Enlightenment. Digital Approaches to the Republic of Letters*. Liverpool 2019, pp. 173–200.

Many of the members of the above-mentioned literary society worked at various levels of the administration. This denotes a form of sociability where educated amateurs engaged with literature and philosophy. Literary sociability provided a space of freedom and equality that appealed to the lesser nobility and the bourgeoisie in a hierarchic court society. At least one of the conveners was a devoted freemason. The society, active in the late 1750s, had the outspokenly patriotic objective to improve the Swedish language and enhance literary culture in Sweden. These features were typical of the secret or semi-private associations that flourished in Scandinavia during the decades to come.[5]

Literary sociability also greatly inspired Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd, who came from a rather recently ennobled family of artillery and marine officers. In his late teens in 1763–1764, he lived at the sea fortress Sveaborg outside Helsingfors (Finnish: Helsinki) with his uncle, the famous Count Augustin Ehrensvärd (1710–1772), his cousin Carl August Ehrensvärd (1745–1800) and his cousin's drawing teacher, Elias Martin (1739–1818), who would later become a famous artist. In their artistic and witty company, he developed a strong taste for art and literature and expressed his desire to become a "philosopher". Like Creutz, in his youth, Ehrensvärd wrote poems, some of which were published, but unlike Creutz, he did not nurture any stronger literary ambition and did not achieve literary celebrity. In 1773–1774, when Ehrensvärd had become the director of the royal theatres, he was invited to the intimate suppers known as "the king's academy", which included both renowned men of letters and distinguished amateurs appreciated by Gustav III.[6]

From a young age, both Creutz and Ehrensvärd were attracted to books and to authors of sharp philosophical writings. Creutz particularly admired Voltaire, who also admired him. In 1763, Creutz was appointed as Swedish envoy to Madrid, his first diplomatic mission which started a period of twenty years spent uninterruptedly abroad. On his way down to Spain, he stopped over in Paris and then in Ferney, where he met with Voltaire, who wrote very favourably of him to his friends Damilaville, Marmontel and Madame Geoffrin.[7] After three years in Spain, Creutz got his long-desired transfer to Paris, where he reunited with the philosophers he had befriended in 1763: Marmontel, d'Alembert, Diderot, Morellet, Raynal, d'Holbach and Helvétius. These friendships, which deepened through Creutz's intense frequentation of Madame Geoffrin's and Madame Necker's salons, were not just *any*

[5] Ann Öhrberg: *Samtalets retorik. Belevade kulturer och offentlig kommunikation i svenskt 1700-tal*. Höör 2014.
[6] On Ehrensvärd, see Bengt Hildebrand / *Pierre de la Blanchetai*: Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd. In: *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 12 (1949), p. 460; Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd: *Dagboksanteckningar förda vid Gustaf III:s hof*, ed. by Erik Vilhelm Montan. Vol. 2. Stockholm 1878.
[7] Quoted in Hultin, *Gustaf Filip Creutz*, pp. 158–160.

philosophers, but *the* central figures of what Robert Darnton calls the "High Enlightenment". They were the radical and materialist philosophers – sceptical of the existence of God such as described in the Bible – who advanced their agenda of liberty and equality through the "Encylopédie", to which they contributed; its last volumes were still being published when Creutz returned to Paris.[8]

The same philosophers also became important to Ehrensvärd, who had the opportunity meet them in 1771 when he visited Paris in the company of Prince Gustav on his *grand tour*. It was during this tour that Gustav (III) learned that he had become king upon the death of his father, Adolf Fredrik. Ehrensvärd described his time in Paris as the happiest in his life, as he had been introduced in a coterie that he called "*la société des savants*", while others called it republican, and it included Helvétius, Marmontel, Thomas, abbé Morellet and Grimm, all of whom he met daily.[9]

Both Creutz and Ehrensvärd had remarkable book collections. After Creutz was promoted to the rank of ambassador in 1772, he constituted a large personal library; at the time of his death in 1785, it included over 2100 volumes. Among his books, we find the second part of Mirabaud's "Le monde, son origine et son antiquité" (1751), which contains materialist reflections on the supposed immortality of the soul. Also included were several books by d'Holbach: "Système social, ou principes naturels de la morale et de la politique" (London 1773), "Système de la nature" (1770), generally perceived as atheist, and "Le Christianisme dévoilé", which criticised Catholicism and the Catholic clergy for being detrimental to life in society. The library also contained the even more sulphuric "Traité des trois imposteurs" (the impostors being Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed); the "Recueil nécessaire, avec l'Évangile de la raison" attributed to Voltaire; marquis d'Argens's translation of Emperor Julian's "Défense du paganisme"; abbé Joseph Gautier's "Réfutation du Celse moderne, ou objections contre le christianisme", and Fréret's "Examen critique des apologistes de la religion chrétienne". These were all very representative of the anticlerical and even the antireligious "forbidden bestsellers" of the eighteenth century.[10]

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[8] Robert Darnton: The High Enlightenment and the Low-Life of Literature in Pre-Revolutionary France. In: *Past & Present* 51 (1971), pp. 81–115; on Creutz and the Enlightenment, see Wolff, Un admirateur des philosophes modernes.

[9] Quote in Nils Erdmann: *Hemma och borta på 1700-talet. Ur greve Claës Julius Ekeblads brevväxling med Gustaf III:s broder, prins Carl, samt unga diplomater och kammarherrar.* Stockholm 1925, pp. 210–211; see also Hildebrand, Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd.

[10] Charlotta Wolff: *Vänskap och makt. Den svenska politiska eliten och upplysningstidens Frankrike*. Helsinki 2005, pp. 238–246, here p. 242; Robert Darnton: *The Corpus of Clandestine Literature in France, 1769–1789*. New York 1995.

Ehrensvärd's library, catalogued after his death, was not as large as Creutz's, but it did cover over 1200 volumes, mostly history and memoirs, laws and treaties, dictionaries, classics, French and Swedish *belles-lettres*, and dramatic literature. It included a 1780 Geneva edition of Diderot and d'Alembert's "Encyclopédie", as well as works by Marmontel, Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Like Creutz, Ehrensvärd also owned a copy of Raynal's "Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes" as well as Voltaire's satire, "La Pucelle d'Orléans".[11]

Books were collected for personal pleasure and out of curiosity, but they were also useful to others. As part of their education, Creutz let young Swedes visiting Paris use his library.[12] As a diplomat, he also played the role of a literary correspondent to his friends at the Swedish court, and in this type of intellectual transfer, book shipments were essential. Creutz kept his protector and friend, the young Crown Prince Gustav (born in 1746), informed of all philosophical, literary and artistic news that might interest him, sometimes sending him a new publication. On 13 September 1769, he sent the eighth volume of the "Encyclopédie", with the most interesting passages marked in the margin, but he asked him to keep it for himself. He pointed out that the most daring statements had been concealed in the articles on grammar.[13] Ehrensvärd, although also a diplomat, used books more for his personal pleasure as well as for semi-professional purposes. His interest in theatre as well as his brief position as director of the royal theatres clearly appear in the catalogue of his library, which contained five volumes of dramatic literature, both Swedish and French and mostly comical, and seven opera scores.[14]

Problems of conscience

Both Creutz and Ehrensvärd became diplomats after some years of activity on the literary and dramatic scene, Creutz as an author and Ehrensvärd as a theatre director. While Ehrensvärd's diplomatic career lasted only a couple of years before his untimely death, Creutz served as a diplomatic agent for two decades, first in Madrid and then in Paris. When he started his mission in France, it was as the Francophile minister of an anti-French, Anglophile government that

[11] Catalogue des livres de feu M. le baron d'Ehrensvärd, Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), U 37:3.
[12] H. Arnold Barton: *Count Hans Axel von Fersen. Aristocrat in an Age of Revolution*. Boston 1975, pp. 14, 32.
[13] Creutz to Prince Gustav, Paris, 13 September 1767, quoted in Marianne Molander (ed.): *Le Comte de Creutz. Lettres inédites de Paris 1766–1770*. Göteborg / Paris 1987, p. 61.
[14] Catalogue des livres de feu M. le baron d'Ehrensvärd, Kungliga Biblioteket (Stockholm), U 37:3.

did not perceive the legation in Paris as very important. As a consequence, Creutz did not have many official duties, although he did have a secret mission from the court, seeking to gain Louis XV's support for strengthening the monarchy in Sweden. A "harmless" minister, he thus still had the leisure to spend time with his philosophical friends. All this changed in 1771–1772, when Prince Gustav became king and reinforced the Swedish monarchy through a coup d'État, after which Creutz was elevated to the rank of ambassador, and the embassy in Paris became a key player in the Swedish diplomatic game. That suddenly made Creutz, together with the Austrian Count Mercy, the Spaniard Count Aranda and the Scotsman Lord Stormont, one of the highest ranked foreign diplomats in Paris. The balance between philosophical and worldly sociability in his everyday occupations now shifted, and he had less time for intellectual radicalism.[15]

The diplomat's duty was to inform his masters and negotiate for them. This made it necessary for him to frequent certain influential milieus, such as the high aristocracy, but it also fed his curiosity for some others. Some of the ambassador's frequentations could also become close friends of his, which meant a risk of bias in his negotiations for the crown. In Creutz's case, this became obvious, for instance during the American War of Independence, when he mingled with representatives of the British opposition and of the pro-American, liberal French aristocracy such as the marquis de Lafayette or the family de Noailles, while both Louis XVI and particularly Gustav III had long taken a rather cautious attitude towards openly supporting the rebels.[16] The pretext of collecting information thus gave the diplomat an excuse to frequent radical circles and read books that his superiors would not necessarily have approved of, and it gave him a personal margin of manoeuvre.

The competition between personal interests on the one hand – in this case in radical philosophy – and the official duties of his diplomatic mission on the other was still very real. Despite Creutz's personal friendship with atheists and republicans, as the official representative of the king of Sweden, the ambassador was, among other things, head of the Swedish Lutheran embassy congregation, which was one of two large Lutheran parishes tolerated in Paris under the principle of diplomatic immunity, the other being the chapel of the Danish legation. This was a ceremonial role, of course, as the religious services were provided by a Lutheran priest employed by the Church of Sweden, Doctor Frédéric Charles Baer of the faculty of theology

[15] Wolff, Un admirateur des philosophes modernes, pp. 177–178.
[16] Ibid., p. 183; Ead.: När Amerika var frihetens vagga. Sverige, revolutionen och den transatlantiska alliansen. In: Henrika Tandefelt et al. (eds.): *Köpa salt i Cádiz och andra berättelser*. Helsinki 2020, pp. 315–331, 403–404, here p. 323.

at the University of Strasbourg, who was strongly connected to the French and Swedish academies of science. The ambassador attended all services at his chapel and had to conform to the official orthodoxy of the Church of Sweden. This does not seem to have been a problem for Creutz, who showed a formal but detached observance of religious practices like many other noblemen, although his personal relationship with the official Church could theoretically have been complicated by the Pietism of his family. As a matter of fact, his nonconformist background might actually have nurtured his interest in anticlerical writings. An interest in philosophy, in its turn, was perhaps not as great an obstacle for being a credible protector of the parish; in fact, Doctor Baer himself took a lively interest in Enlightenment philosophy. By comparison, Genevan envoy Jacques Necker and his wife, who hosted weekly luncheons with the most radical of the philosophers, remained strict Calvinists as private citizens.[17]

In essence, being an ambassador was to publicly represent a sovereign, to impersonate a state and fulfil certain expectations linked to this status. In French police reports, the Swedish ambassador is described as observing certain rituals and duties, such as paying his respects to the king and the royal family, having audiences with a minister, travelling in a carriage of a certain quality, showing himself at the theatre or seeing certain people.[18] These representative duties and the expectations linked to that role eventually had very little to do with the ambassador's personal feelings about them. As a long-time courtier, Creutz was well aware of this distinction and possible contradiction between the public person and the private man, between outer and inner, physical body and free spirit. In fact, while he was described by some contemporaries as somewhat absent-minded when his attention was not immediately required, others described him as extremely distracted, passionate and emphatic; his own writings reflected a strong distinction between public duties and private pleasures.[19]

Public duties, private liaisons?

[17] Janine Driancourt-Girod: *L'insolite histoire des luthériens de Paris. De Louis XIII à Napoléon.* Paris 1992, pp. 121–144; Erik Naumann: Frédéric Charles Baer, de. In: *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* 2 (1920), p. 555; Jean-Denis Bredin: *Une singulière famille. Jacques Necker, Suzanne Necker et Germaine de Staël.* Paris 1999.
[18] Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, Contrôle des étrangers, vols. 2–49; Wolff, *Vänskap och makt*, pp. 209–210, 214; see also Wolff, Un admirateur des philosophes modernes.
[19] Castrén, *Gustav Philip Creutz*, pp. 346–349; Wolff, Un admirateur des philosophes modernes, p. 173.

Philosophical libertinage was not seldom associated with an emancipation from contemporary morals and sexual norms.[20] Being a diplomat meant being separated from one's country, relatives, friends, and sometimes even one's wife, for several months, years or decades. Books, arts, correspondence, mistresses and deep individual friendships provided the means to compensate the relative loneliness and occasional isolation that characterised the profession. In some cases, however, it seems that the special friendships and intimate liaisons of diplomats went so far that they had the potential to affect the agents' capacity to exercise their public duties, and the French police also reported on the most spectacular liaisons and mistresses of the foreign diplomats in Paris.[21]

On 9 May 1773, after Curt von Stedingk, one of his intimate young Swedish friends staying at the embassy, had left Paris, Creutz wrote him a letter saying that without him, he felt alone in the entire world.[22] Twenty days later, on 29 May, he wrote that when he went out to see other people after having received letters from his friend, he was so transformed and beaming with happiness that unknowing people would congratulate him on some lucky event.[23] A socialite, Creutz resented loneliness. As a former poet, he was skilled in the emotional genres, and his private correspondence with both younger male friends and with King Gustav III displays an abundancy of feelings which are difficult to categorise as either spontaneous expressions of true feelings or rhetorical means and artifices.[24]

Nevertheless, according to his contemporaries, Creutz kept his emotions to himself with people other than his most intimate friends. Interestingly, the French police, which otherwise were very perceptive of the foreign diplomats' personal interests and passions, never seem to have grasped or taken interest in human relations at the Swedish embassy. No reports were made during the second half of the century about any improprieties or unbecoming liaisons at the Swedish residence, contrary to certain other diplomatic missions in Paris. This seems to indicate that the Swedish diplomats and the people around them were skilled at concealing most of their passions and emotions to outsiders, in case these inclinations were not entirely compatible with the public image of their position. In June 1772, in a letter of a rare straightforwardness, Creutz advised his beloved friend Stedingk to "moderate" the expressions

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[20] Michel Delon: *Le savoir-vivre libertin*. Paris 2000, pp. 19–47; see also Robert Darnton: *Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France*. New York 1995, pp. 85–114.

[21] For instance, the Venitian ambassador's extravagancies for his mistress in 1779 retained the attention of the police; Archives du Ministère des affaires étrangères, vols. 22–23, 31.

[22] Creutz to Curt von Stedingk, Paris, 9 May 1773, Finnish National Archives, Curt von Stedingks arkiv, vol. 103.

[23] Creutz to Curt von Stedingk, Paris, 29 May 1773, Finnish National Archives, Curt von Stedingks arkiv, vol. 103.

[24] Charlotta Wolff: Kabal och kärlek. Vänskapen som alternativ sociabilitet i 1700-talets hovsamhällen. In: *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 89 (2004), pp. 85–115; Molander-Beyer, *La Suède & les Lumières*, p. LXXVII.

of his friendship, as the "laws established by prejudice" were stronger than reason, that only "cowards" would exempt themselves from complying with those laws, and that they needed to be careful in their communications.[25] Whatever Creutz's most intimate life was like, he certainly had assimilated the teachings of Castiglione on the perfect courtier as well as those of Caillères and other theorists of diplomacy. Despite being often described as naïve and as readable as an open book, he was discreet and secretive about the most sensitive matters, and he made a clear distinction between exercising his public duties and his intimate pleasures. They were also physically distinct, as he often went out for walks in the woods or the countryside when he needed privacy or when he wanted to be alone with his thoughts or with his closest friends.[26]

As for his attitude towards religion, he showed a clear determination to make spiritual choices of his own. His suspicious attitude towards religious authorities may have come partly from his upbringing, but his distaste for the clergy seems to have only increased over the years, perhaps fed by his experiences in Catholic Spain and, above all, by his philosophical readings, which also included Seneca and the classics. On his deathbed in 1785, he sent away the clergyman who had come to see him. His public reputation, after all, was so impeccable that he could allow himself this liberty and spiritual integrity in his private life.[27]

Ehrensvärd was less lucky. In his case, literary and philosophical interests, and probably also personal relations and antipathies, clearly interfered with exercising his public authority during his short term as theatre director. He had long been interested in dramatic literature, and his appreciation of French philosophical playwrights such as Marmontel grew during his visit to Paris in 1770–1771. When the king founded the first Swedish public opera in 1773, Ehrensvärd was appointed its director. He was not a high-profile personality, but he did endeavour to put on a rather radical French philosophical comic opera disguised as a light and pleasant piece for the summer season of 1776. This opera was Grétry's "Lucile", with lyrics by Marmontel. The story is that of a supposedly noble young girl about to marry a young nobleman. She discovers that she is actually the daughter of her wet nurse and a commoner, and the question is whether her fiancé will still marry her. He will, and her future father-in-law states that birth is less important than noble thinking.[28]

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[25] Creutz to Curt von Stedingk, Paris, 25 June 1772, Finnish National Archives, Curt von Stedingks arkiv, vol. 103.
[26] Jean-François Marmontel: *Mémoires*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Guicciardi. Paris 1999, p. 302.
[27] Castrén, *Gustav Philip Creutz*, p. 425.
[28] Jean-François Marmontel et al.: *Lucile, opera-comique i en act*. Stockholm 1776.

The play was translated into Swedish by a young woman, Anna Maria Malmstedt, and dedicated to the king's brother, Duke Charles, who was also a protector of the freemasons. The play was a success, but Ehrensvärd still felt obliged to resign shortly afterwards. There is no evidence of exactly why, but it is possible that he felt uncomfortable in his position between different factions at the court and that he was too close to some political factions that were unpleasant to the king. "Lucile" was perhaps more of a radical play than it first appeared, and putting it on the repertoire was something of a political statement. It was an anti-aristocratic play promoted by Duke Charles, who advanced a political and aesthetical agenda of his own, sometimes openly defying Gustav III's policies. Those were dangerous grounds to tread on for a courtier. The king repeatedly denigrated Ehrensvärd's person and family background, and this attitude probably offended Ehrensvärd, given his sensitivity to matters concerning birth and equality.[29] After continuing for some years to serve as a courtier and an officer of the king's guard, he was eventually appointed Swedish minister at The Hague in 1780 and transferred to Berlin in 1782. He did not enjoy his work as a diplomat and did not achieve much as a negotiator, as he suffered from a strained private economy and even more strained health. In this situation, literature, art and correspondence with his cousin again became his main consolations.[30]

Conclusions

Both Ehrensvärd and Creutz were of discreet natures when it came to intimate feelings and opinions. Both also belonged to a milieu cultivating the arts and worshipping friendship. Apart from the tensions and rivalries inherent to diplomacy or court society, most of the conflicts we observe in the exercise of their public duties thus fell between the expectations of serving the Crown and the ideas for which it stood on the one hand and their personal inclinations and world views on the other. Both men had strongly assimilated the ideals of the French Enlightenment and a certain intellectual radicalism, which was not supported by the Swedish Crown and even less by the Lutheran Church of Sweden.

When, thus, did philosophical emancipation or *libertinage* attain such proportions that it conflicted with the duties of the public office? Creutz and Ehrensvärd, as former courtiers,

[29] Charlotta Wolff: Opéra-comique et idéaux politiques en Scandinavie, 1760–1790. In: *Orages. Littérature et culture 1760–1830* 15 (2016), pp. 58–59.
[30] Hildebrand, Gustaf Johan Ehrensvärd.

were extremely skilled in maintaining a balance between their public role and their private passions, and they were aware of the limits of their freedom. This limit was transgressed first if philosophical emancipation and private passions became too public and too obvious, as indicated by Creutz's letters. Philosophical or political radicalism, like non-conformism and sexual deviances, needed to be discreet and could not suffer too much publicity. If private passions and interests appeared to violate contemporary perceptions of morality, they became intolerable. Second, philosophical *libertinage* conflicted with the exercise of public duties if it ruined the diplomat's reputation. The respectability of a position provided a certain security, but not even Creutz could openly express his religious scepticism until on his deathbed. Third, pleasures such as bibliophilia, art collections, expensive lovers or excessive luxury consumption, could eventually become an obstacle to the exercise of public duties if they ruined the official's economy. This happened to many diplomats in eighteenth-century Paris, including Creutz, but again, in his case, he was able to conceal it at least to the French police spies until the end of his mission.