A moderate excess

Argumentation and conceptual change in the luxury debate in Swedish dissertations, 1722–1779

Master’s thesis, 60 credits, Spring 2016
Author: Oskar Andersson
Supervisor: Professor Henrik Agren
Seminar chair: Docent Erik Lindberg
Date of defence: 24 May, 2016
Abstract

Research into the luxury debate in 18th century Sweden has focused on poetry and literature, the wording of decrees and the minutes of the Swedish riksdag. One source material largely left unexplored is the body of dissertations published by Swedish universities of the time. Not only is this an unfortunate omission as the universities were important intellectual centres, but also because they had a distinct culture, heavily influenced by Latin and the classics, in which luxury condemnations played a pivotal role. Building on the notion that ideas are best studied as arguments in debates, this master’s thesis examines twelve dissertations published in Sweden in the years 1722–1779 using models of conceptual change and argumentation analysis as theoretical approaches. The results indicate that the academic debate on luxury, through its focus on classical antiquity and conceptual definition, distinguished itself from other contemporary Swedish contributions to the debate, and that the interpretation of its characteristics must proceed from both the dissertation genre and the learned culture of university. The investigation furthermore stresses the importance of the university as a venue for reception of ideas in the latter part of the Early Modern Period and emphasises the dissertations as a central medium in this process.

Keywords: luxury, university, dissertations, Neo-Latin, concepts, argumentation, rhetoric, antiquity, classics
# Table of contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
List of images .................................................................................................................................. 4  

## I. INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 5  
1.1 Voices from Gustavianum .......................................................................................................... 5  
1.1.2 Wieselgren: the utility of luxury, the value of dissertations .................................................... 7  
1.2 Latin culture at the university .................................................................................................... 9  
1.3 Dissertations: “a formal element of academic culture” .............................................................. 11  
1.3.1 Form and content .................................................................................................................. 13  
1.3.2 Authorship, relevance and influence – three prime questions in the reception of the dissertations .......................................................................................................................... 13  
1.3.2.1 Authorship ...................................................................................................................... 14  
1.3.2.2 Relevance ....................................................................................................................... 15  
1.3.2.3 Distribution ..................................................................................................................... 16  
1.3.3. Receivers ........................................................................................................................... 17  
1.4 Theoretical approaches: conceptual change and argumentation ............................................ 19  
1.4.1 Concepts and rhetorical manipulation in the Age of Rhetoric .............................................. 19  
1.4.2 Working definitions and conceptual change ......................................................................... 21  
1.4.3 Luxus in Neo-Latin .............................................................................................................. 22  
1.4.4. Arguments ....................................................................................................................... 25  
1.4.4.1 Arguments against luxury 1500–1700 ........................................................................... 27  
1.4.4.2 The 18th century luxury debate: the challenge of Mandeville ....................................... 28  
1.4.5 Concluding remarks ............................................................................................................ 30  
1.5 Preliminaries ............................................................................................................................. 31  
1.5.1 Research questions ............................................................................................................. 31  
1.5.2 Selection of material .......................................................................................................... 31  
1.5.3. Chronological choice and disposition .............................................................................. 32  

## II. ANALYSIS .................................................................................................................................. 34  
2.1 The period 1722–1743 ................................................................................................................ 34  
2.1.1 Volespaties reipublicae nocias (1722) .................................................................................. 34  
2.1.1.1 Preliminary considerations ............................................................................................. 34  
2.1.1.2 Definition ....................................................................................................................... 34  
2.1.1.3 Arguments ..................................................................................................................... 36  
2.1.1.4 Concluding remarks ....................................................................................................... 37  
2.1.2 Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus (1726) ......................................................................... 38  
2.1.2.1 Preliminary considerations ............................................................................................. 38  
2.1.2.2 Definition ....................................................................................................................... 38  


2.1.2.3 Argumentation ................................................................. 39
2.1.2.4 Concluding remarks ...................................................... 40
2.1.3 Meditations nonnullas luxum ejusque in republica effectum exhibentes (1743) ....................................................... 41
   2.1.3.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 41
   2.1.3.2 Definition ................................................................. 41
   2.1.3.3 Argumentation .......................................................... 41
   2.1.3.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 42
2.1.4 Summary 1722–1743 .......................................................... 42
2.2 Interlude: Two early examples of a changed view on luxury in economic literature .............................................. 45
2.3 The period 1743–1765 ............................................................. 47
   2.3.1 De Luxu (1748) ................................................................. 47
     2.3.1.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 47
     2.3.1.2 Definition ................................................................. 47
     2.3.1.3 Arguments ................................................................. 48
     2.3.1.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 50
   2.3.2 Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans (1752) ................. 51
     2.3.2.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 51
     2.3.2.2 Definition ................................................................. 52
     2.3.2.3 Arguments ................................................................. 52
     2.3.2.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 53
   2.3.3 De legibus sumtuariis (1755) ............................................ 53
     2.3.3.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 53
     2.3.3.2 Definition ................................................................. 54
     2.3.3.3 Argumentation .......................................................... 55
     2.3.3.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 57
   2.3.4 Aphorismi oeconomico-politico (1757) ................................ 58
   2.3.5 Hypomnemata historica de luxu scingothorum antiquo (1765) ......... 59
     2.3.5.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 59
     2.3.5.2 Definition ................................................................. 59
     2.3.5.3 Arguments ................................................................. 60
     2.3.5.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 61
   2.3.6 Concluding summary 1743–1765 ....................................... 61
2.4 The period 1769–1779 ............................................................ 65
   2.4.1 An luxus inflat religionem (1769) ...................................... 65
     2.4.1.1 Preliminary considerations ........................................... 65
     2.4.1.2 Definition ................................................................. 65
     2.4.1.3 Argumentation .......................................................... 66
     2.4.1.4 Concluding remarks ................................................... 66
   2.4.2 De detrimento morum ex luxu (1779) .................................. 67
2.4.2.1 Preliminary considerations ................................................................. 67
2.4.2.2 Definition .................................................................................................. 67
2.4.2.3 Argumentation .......................................................................................... 68
2.4.2.4 Concluding remarks .................................................................................. 69
2.4.3 Concluding summary 1769–1779 ................................................................. 69

III. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION ...................................................................... 70
  3.1 Was there a debate at all? ............................................................................... 70
  3.2 Rhetorical manipulation – the new definition of luxury .............................. 72
  3.4 Argumentation ............................................................................................... 74
  3.5 Interpretation .................................................................................................. 76

IV. SOURCES AND LITERATURE ................................................................. 81
  4.1 Primary sources ............................................................................................. 81
  4.2 Secondary sources .......................................................................................... 81

List of images

Picture 1 ............................................................................................................... 11
Picture 2 ............................................................................................................... 11
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Voices from Gustavianum
Every Wednesday and Saturday at seven o’clock graduating students would gather at Gustavianum, the main university building in 18th century Uppsala, to defend their dissertations. The professor under whose presidium the dissertation had been written, called praeses, commenced the procedure, and students assigned the role of opponents attacked the weaknesses of the dissertation while the respondent did his best to defend his position. The topics of the dissertations could be related to any material studied at the faculty of arts. Occasionally they included contemporary subject matters, even bitterly dividing ones, such as the Cartesian worldview, whose reception was a contentious process in the late 17th century. Another example of a controversial topic, disputed in dissertations produced in Uppsala and elsewhere in Sweden, was the topic of luxury. This thesis aims to explore these contributions to the academic debate on luxury, especially focusing on conceptual change and argumentation.¹

In the interpretative schemes of consumption studies the concept of luxury has acquired an important position. Cited next to economic and social factors, a change in the dominant intellectual position on consumption and on luxury has been subsumed under the causes for the growth of the 18th century English consumer society: The voices of the new discourse on luxury, from Mandeville to Adam Smith, reshaped the concept and gradually provided the intellectual framework for what previously was missing and what trade and riches increasingly supplied the incitements to, i.e. the increased freedom to consume.²

Even more weight is lent the phenomenon of luxury in the 18th century by John Sekora, who in his classical work Luxury – the concept in Western thought contends that conceptual changes in luxury – that might have been “the greatest single social issue” of the 18th century – “represent nothing less than the movement from the classical world to the modern.”³ For it was through detaching luxury from sin, sedition and moral decline and reconnecting it to trade, industry and the labour market that that the groundwork was laid for the removal of sumptuary laws and other millennia old practices of social organisation.⁴

Similar views recur in recent Swedish research on luxury. In another metaphor of origin, Håkan Möller identifies the clash between increased consumption and sumptuary legislation in the 17th century as the “prolonged, convulsive” birth of modernity.⁵ With such a dynamic significance ascribed to the evolution of the concept of luxury and consumption, it is little

¹ Lindroth 1975b, p. 32; 450 ff.
³ Sekora 1977, p. 1–2, 75.
⁴ Ibid. p. 2, 113.
⁵ Möller 2014, p. 53–54.
wonder that recent decades have witnessed an increased interest in the subject and a number of publications in different languages, not only in economic history, but encompassing a wide interdisciplinary cluster with major contributions from the fields of cultural and intellectual history, literature studies, even philosophy.\(^6\)

In Swedish research much of the recent focus has been on the question of demoralization. An interpretation holding sway for most of the 20th century asserted that the dialectical development in the 18th century luxury debates evinced a pattern of demoralization: previously rejected on theological and moral grounds, luxury in the debates and thought of the 18th century increasingly became a question of economy.\(^7\) Recent publications, however, have argued against this position.\(^8\) Since ideals of moderation and social hierarchy formed the basis also of the growing economic arguments, indeed infused mercantilist ideals of national prosperity, it would be wrong to characterise the 18th century luxury debates as a process of dialectical demoralization. For instance, arguments from an economic perspective, in which luxury was accepted as long as it was domestic, were not based on a rejection of previous moral grounds for controlling luxury, but on the desire for economic independence, which was itself perceived as ethical.\(^9\)

Analyses of luxury discourse focusing on gender and geography are also to be found among the recent publications. One of the major assertions in Håkan Möller’s *Lyx och mode i stormaktens Sverige* is that the late 17th-century criticism levelled against luxury must be understood with the help of categories such as the city and women: the city, because fashion changes and dressing fads were more rapid in Stockholm than elsewhere in the country; women, because their new hair styles and dresses seemed directed to social situations outside the confines of their traditional role as mothers.\(^10\)

Choosing their starting point in debates about mercantilist ideas, and in perceptions of gender and urban life, recent publications offer the contours of luxury in Early Modern Swedish culture. The overall image is that of an increase in consumption of foreign fashion in the late 17th century generating a surge of censure, but the results especially indicate that the bigger debates in the 18th century are connected to the influx of ideas on luxury from a wider European debate into a culture already spellbound by economy as a vision, a development interrelated with other phenomena marking the characteristics of the late Early Modern Period, like trade and changes in

---


\(^{7}\) Wieselgren 1912, p. 26. Wieselgren’s view was later incorporated into standard publications on intellectual history, such as Sten Lindroth’s *Svensk lärdomshistoria*, 1975.

\(^{8}\) Runefelt 2001 & 2005.

\(^{9}\) Runefelt 2005, p. 121–123.

social patterns.\textsuperscript{11} Whatever the metaphors for change may be, the research points to a striking shift in consumption patterns, which in turn affected social norms and sparked debates.

Composed of poems, broadsides and dramas, of political tracts, edicts and sumptuary laws, originating from Church, scholars and government alike, the sources preferred in Swedish luxury research can rightly be called wide-ranging.\textsuperscript{12} Indeed, the extent of the debates, reaching a plethora of publication types has been mentioned in other surveys as well.\textsuperscript{13} One source category, however, has been almost completely passed over in silence – the period’s academic dissertations. To find any investigation into them and luxury, the reader will have to trace the path back to the beginnings of research into the 18th century luxury debates, namely to Oscar Wieselgren and his 1912 work \textit{Yppighets nyttat}.

1.1.2 Wieselgren: the utility of luxury, the value of dissertations

Although encompassing only sixty pages and apologetically presented as too superficial in its analysis, Wieselgren’s \textit{Yppighets nyttat} came to have a lasting impact on the history of the luxury debates in Swedish research.\textsuperscript{14} Starting with a presentation of the most important international contributions to the debate – Mandeville, Melon, Montesquieu, Voltaire – Wieselgren then provides a chronological account of the luxury debates in the Swedish arena, subdividing the material according to source material, such as socio-philosophical tracts, speeches, press, dissertations, and so forth.

The investigation’s main results are twofold. Firstly, Wieselgren dates the beginnings of the debate to the speech held by Anders von Höpken in the Academy of Sciences in 1740. Inspired by Mandeville, Melon and Voltaire, von Höpken argued that as long as luxury products are of domestic origin, their consumption generate work opportunities.\textsuperscript{15} Despite being circumscribed and in no way a call to hedonism, this meant a radical rejection of age old luxury perceptions, and starting with this watershed speech, Wieselgren claims, luxury was increasingly presented as potentially beneficial to the national economy and remained so until the late 1760s when it encountered oppositions from advocates of physiocrat theories. Nonetheless, during the reign of Gustav III (1771–1792), sumptuary laws were for the most part annulled.\textsuperscript{16}

The second major result regarded the nature of the debate, for with von Höpken’s speech also the arguments changed. Inspired by continental thinkers the debaters with a pro-luxury stance

\textsuperscript{11} Berry 1994, p. 126; Runefelt 2005, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{12} For example: Ek 1959, p. 97–98; Runefelt 2001, p. 27ff; Runefelt 2005, p. 10; Möller 2014, p. 27; Runefelt 2015, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{13} Berry 1994, p. 126; Berg & Eger 2003, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{14} Wieselgren 1912, p. 3–4. For influence: Sten Lindroth’s \textit{Svensk Lärdomshistoria} (1975) bases its presentation of the debates entirely on Wieselgren (band 2, p. 109). The later history of ideas by Frängsmyr does the same.
\textsuperscript{15} Wieselgren 1912, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p. 24–25, 56–58.
started to separate their argumentation from the field of the traditional rhetorical attacks levelled against luxury from moral and theological grounds, and – just as von Höpken and international thinkers like Mandeville had done – applied a purely economic rationale to the question: if luxury was beneficial to the economy of a state, perhaps the question of morale was not even of importance.

It was only with Leif Runefelt’s dissertation (2001) and ensuing monograph (2005) that this resilient narrative was questioned, both in terms of chronology and in terms of the argumentative analysis. Chronologically, Runefelt dates the beginning of the controversy to around 1723, when a print listing the benefits of luxury for the first time was published in Sweden; and having listed three major arguments: psychological-moral, economic and Gothic, he shows that economic arguments for luxury were present even before the Age of liberty, and, more importantly, that they, even after von Höpken’s speech, always retained a striving for a middle way, always tried to control the possible damages on society of luxury consumption. In short, Wieselgren was wrong to try to separate ethics from economy. Despite this heavy criticism, one of Wieselgren’s achievements was to trace the influence of foreign writers and thinkers on the Swedish contributions to the debate, and in that respect the work is still important, and in some ways the only one of its kind.

Of special importance for this thesis is Wieselgren’s decision to include academic dissertations – in both Latin and Swedish – in his source material. Dividing them as dissertations on economy and history, he lists a small number of theses in his inquiry, some in favour of von Höpken, others critical of him, and assigns a decisive value to them: although “ephemeral” they provide an important medium for the dissemination of ideas, for new thoughts on luxury. Later Swedish researchers have passed over the dissertations in silence, at least the overwhelming majority of those written in Latin, which exposes a possible weakness: left unable to investigate one of Wieselgren’s major sources, they could not form an opinion on their argumentation, nor could they assess the importance of this material for the dissemination of new ideas. By incorporating the Latin dissertations material into the discussion, it is the goal of this investigation to try to remedy the first omission, and to give a tentative answer to the second.

Furthermore, Wieselgren’s own use of the dissertations endorses taking a fresh look at them. As already indicated, he informs the reader that he has chosen to look at only a minor number of publications over all. The reasons for not presenting a more comprehensive study, Wieselgren argues, is that the dissertations do not differ in their argumentation and that their quality does not

---

18 Ibid. p. 121.
19 Wieselgren 1912, p. 3.
invite further research.\textsuperscript{20} If Wieselgren is indeed rejecting certain types of source material based on their aesthetical qualities may be left out of this discussion, but in a rejection of Wieselgren’s choice, at least two positions can be formulated endorsing a renewed investigation into the dissertations of the period.

(1) Taking into consideration Runefelt’s dating of the luxury debates, it appears desirable to investigate the beginnings of the topic in the dissertational material.

(2) As a question defining the Early Modern Period, luxury was a topic present in a plethora of publications in pamphlets, in ballads, in literature, and in theoretical publications.\textsuperscript{21} An investigation of the dissertations from Swedish universities would add a source type long left out in the research following Wieselgren.

Any approach to the dissertations as vehicles of ideas in the luxury debate would not only have to make argumentation a key question, but would also have to consider the concept of luxury and its development, estimated as “central to Enlightenment debates over the nature and progress of society”.\textsuperscript{22} In fact, debates in the period have been characterised as being exactly “struggles over definition”.\textsuperscript{23} Yet further motivations for investigating the luxury debate in Swedish dissertations and also the appropriate approaches thereto are to be found within the genre itself, in the writers, receivers, and in the language in the dissertations were written: Latin.

1.2 Latin culture at the university
At the core of the Early Modern Swedish university culture was Latin. Not only was the language of instruction Latin, but the students were also expected to interact with their teachers in Latin and to produce written exams in this language. But the Latin influence was about more than language instruction and day-to-day academic interaction – antiquity in itself was hailed as a source of role models, of exempla,\textsuperscript{24} indeed as a source of a life philosophy for the students. That six out of eleven chairs at the humanist faculty in Uppsala University were entirely dedicated to

\textsuperscript{20} Wieselgren 1912, p. 37: ”Det skulle vara förspplld möda att i detalj följa alla de talrika tillfällighetsskrifter, där öfverflödsfrågan drages under diskussion, då argumenteringen i allmänhet endast erbjuder relativt få skiftningar och utförandet oftast icke heller ger anledning till vidare granskning.”
\textsuperscript{21} Berg & Eger 2003, p. 7, 10.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p. 7.
\textsuperscript{23} Terjanian 2013, p. 23–24.
\textsuperscript{24} Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (abbrev. HWRh) ii 1994, p. 61; Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum vi 1966, p. 1230–1231: An exemplum or example is a rhetoric term denoting a historic or mythological event or person used by a speaker or writer to concretize an abstract concept, to furnish evidence for an argument, to provide models for mores and vices, etc.
the study of the classical world testifies to the importance ascribed to antiquity and its dominion in the Early Modern Swedish academic world. While it is true that new chairs where established at the university during the 18th century, sometimes at the cost of chairs in classics, and that Latin as a language of instruction and publication was questioned by reformists both on practical and didactic grounds, the major outlines of the university world did not change, and the Swedish university remained a Latin culture throughout the century.

The importance of Latin can be understood through the four functions it has been ascribed in the postclassical world: its role as medium for dissemination of ideas, its educative purpose, as well as disciplinary and its social function. In the academic world these four functions found their most evident manifestation. Latin fostered and disciplined the young scholars, it was the medium in which they received their instruction, in which they read the Roman originals and also produced their own texts. In its social role, knowledge of Latin distinguished the learned men of the period from other groups in society.

But it is not only in its functions, but also in its own linguistic dynamics that Latin reveals its importance. The Latin used in the university culture was Neo-Latin, the type of Latin used from the period of the Renaissance until modern times. In their attempt to recreate the classical tongue of Cicero and Caesar, Neo-Latin writers consciously created a Latin which differed from Medieval Latin in orthography and vocabulary. Not only its form, but also its social extension changed. If Medieval Latin had primarily been the language of the Church, Neo-Latin found further fields of usage: in 17th Sweden, apart from oratory and intellectual language, it was also widely employed within diplomacy. Altogether, Neo-Latin and classical culture played a pivotal role in creating the culture of the Great Power Era. In his *Neo-Latin literature in Sweden in the period 1620–1720*, Hans Helander’s main assumption is that it is precisely in Neo-Latin that the dynamics of the Early Modern Period can be found, both in its vocabulary and stylistics. No studies of conceptual change can therefore be complete without giving ample attention to the learned tongue of the period, and especially to the dissertations, the witnesses of this learned world.

---

26 Lindroth 1975c, p. 67; Lindberg 1984, p. 95.
28 Butterfield 2011, p. 305.
30 Helander 2004, p. 29.
1.3 Dissertations: “a formal element of academic culture”

A *disputation* in the Early Modern Period meant the academic situation in which a *respondent* defended his thesis against an *opponent*. The disputation also signified the – at least by today’s standards – short text written on the subject, which not only presented the theses up for discussion, but also worked as a formal invitation to the debate. A concomitant name for the written text is *dissertation*, which for the sake of clarity has been the term adopted in this thesis.  

Picture 1: Frontpage of the 1672 dissertation *De legibus sumtuariis* (“On sumptuary laws”). (Starting with the abbreviation: Q.D.B.V. (Quod deus bene vertat) “may God grant success!” the title reads – Academic dissertation on sumptuary laws, which under the presidium of Samuel Pufendorf, professor of natural and national law, is being submitted to peaceful examination by Daniel Lossius in the Gothic Academy Carolina. On the day of _ March, in the year 1672_).  

Picture 2: First page, first paragraph of the dissertation *De legibus sumtuariis*.  

The world of dissertations and disputations was the academic world. In the case of Uppsala University, to be precise, it was the world centred on Gustavianum. There the disputations took place, and there the dissertations were printed as well, the printing press being housed in its

---

31 Gindhart & Kundert 2010, p. 11: (“Über alle Fakultäten hinweg ist die Disputatio einerseits verbindendes formales Element akademischer Kultur[…].”)  
32 Historisches Wörterbuch der Rhetorik (abbreviated HWRh) ii 1994, p. 866, 880.
At first glance it seems a small world, but Uppsala – although bearing a mother-like resemblance by virtue of it being the first Scandinavian university – was only one of four universities in 18th century Sweden: Åbo and Lund had been founded in the preceding century, in an attempt by zealous Swedish statesmen to extend structures of learning and government to new regions in the Swedish Empire. Appended to this cluster of learning was the north German university of Greifswald.

Excluding Greifswald, which maintained its German character, Uppsala, Åbo and Lund had similar structures. Founded with Uppsala University as the direct prototype, the latter two rested on the same constitutions as Uppsala University had been given in 1626, regulating among other things academic jurisdiction, elections and grade system. Stipulated in the regulations was also the writing of dissertations and their oral defence, the disputations.

Originally a part of the medieval system of dialectical learning, the oral disputation acquired its written counterpart with the advent of printing. As Uppsala University was restored in the 17th century, so was the system of producing dissertations and the university established itself at the forefront of writing and printing dissertations. Having initially just encompassed a few pages, the size of the dissertations grew at the end of the 17th century, now comprising anything between 20 and 50 pages, occasionally extending even more. The output was impressive: from the whole period 1600–1855 research suggests that approximately 25 000 dissertations were printed; from the 18th century, about 12 000 dissertations have been preserved from Swedish universities, 7 000 from Uppsala alone.

As a standard examination component for the bachelor and the master’s degree, the writing and defence of dissertations was an inescapable chore for the circa 1 500 students enrolled at the nation’s universities around the mid-1700s. Apart from taking extensive tests, the student was required to produce an exercise dissertation (pro exercitio) and to successfully defend it in order to obtain the bachelor degree. To obtain the master’s degree – the highest within the faculty of arts which every student started with at the time and which usually required six years of studies to complete – the “real” dissertation and disputation (pro gradu) were compulsory. But the differences are deceptive, for the dissertations pro exercise and pro gradu seem to show no differences. Pro gradu is neither more extensive nor necessarily better written, and both types of dissertations were printed and distributed at the student’s private expense. Hence, any modern

33 Lindroth 1975b, p. 32, 35.  
34 Ibid. p. 47.  
37 Lindroth, 1975b, p. 33–34; Lindberg 2006, p. 117–118, (Sjökvist 2012 includes a recent bibliography)
expectations based on the quantitative and qualitative differences of, for instance, master’s and doctoral theses must be left aside.

1.3.1 Form and content
Ideally the dissertation was written by the respondent under the supervision of the praeses (Lat. praeses “superintendent”), usually a professor, but that the praeses at times also was involved in the writing of the dissertation is undeniable. The praeses also filled the role of presiding over the disputation act. In this situation, two roles have been ascribed to the praeses, either that of an impartial arbiter or that of an advocate of the respondent.38

A dissertation often follows a standard rhetorical disposition. A brief exordium, often a treatment of the subject held on a more general level, is followed by a statement of intention (propositio) and a request of the goodwill of the reader (captatio benevolentiae). The treatment of the theme then follows in a number of paragraphs, sometimes structured around a couple of overarching arguments, sometimes ordered as pro and contra, before the topic is summarized and the reader is asked to forgive possible faults or the inadequate treatment of the subject (part of the captatio benevolentiae). Throughout, rhetorical figures are a standard component of the text – another indication of the importance of humanist ideals for the education of the period.

Since the humanist ideal of learning (homo trilinguis “a three tongued man”) encompassed Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the reader often has to deal with shorter quotations in these tongues, especially if the dissertation concerns theological material.39 Vernacular languages, e.g. French and German also appear, most often when foreign writers are quoted, with occasional quotes or words from Swedish as well. Yet despite the occasional appearances of several languages in the dissertations, Neo-Latin, the “only truly international language” of the period, is the language offering the key to understanding the dissertations on a purely linguistic level.40 Further hermeneutical challenges will be addressed later.

1.3.2 Authorship, relevance and influence – three prime questions in the reception of the dissertations
In surveys of the material type three points of interest recur: the question of authorship, the relevance of the dissertations as intellectual products, and their distribution. As these questions are of weight for the understanding of the sources and their range, they will now be reviewed more closely.

38 HWRh p. 867.
39 Lindroth 1975a, p. 269 ff.
40 Knight & Tilg 2015, p. 3.
1.3.2.1 Authorship

Ever since the first catalogization of dissertations took place in Sweden, the question of who precisely authored the dissertations has been discussed: was it the respondent or the praeses? Johan Hinric Lidén, ardent bibliophile and creator of *Catalogus Disputationum, in academiis et gymnasiis Sveciae* (five volumes published 1778–1780), suggested as a simple rule of thumb that the dissertations were written by the respondent, unless – curiously enough – “Resp.” was written after the title.\(^41\) Various older biographical entries suggest that the praeses had written all the dissertations under his presidium.\(^42\) However, generic solutions like these have found little understanding in more recent discussions, and such general rules leave out collaborations or synergetic productions, which also must be considered a possibility.\(^43\) But that the praeses in general did influence the content of the dissertations under his presidium cannot be disputed.\(^44\)

It has often been pointed out that the dissertations were of less importance than their defence, that it mattered more for the student to pass the disputation and to show that he was able – in Latin – to defend his theses against the opponent. For this reason, specific authorship was not attributed the same importance as in later times. Some professors, like Petrus Ekerman, even secured a steady source of extra earnings by an abundant output of dissertations, relieving students of one of the examination chores along with their money.\(^45\) This position is lent further weight by the fact that the universities of the day were not primarily research oriented, but rather focused on training the students in classical languages and theology. In that environment, even if the respondents wrote their own dissertations, they were anyway mostly based on the lectures of the professors.\(^46\) As such, the influence of the praeses on the material was expected.

Without more research, the question of authorship cannot receive a general answer. Whether certain types of dissertations were more frequently written by the praeses, whether co-authorship occurred, which the diachronic variations were, are questions the answers of which only individual case studies will be able to unravel.

One interesting case is provided by Pufendorf & Lossius’ *De legibus sumptuariis* (see picture on p. 11), a dissertation frequently quoted in the mid-18th century dissertations treating luxury. In all references to it, its author is only referred to as Pufendorf.\(^47\) It is hard to say what this actually means, as it is one of the only dissertations to ever be quoted from a Swedish university, but it

\(^{41}\) Hedberg 2002, p 98.
\(^{42}\) For instance the entry on Professor Anders Grönwall in *Svensk bandbiografiskt lexikon*, p. 410.
\(^{44}\) Annerstedt 1912, p. 172; Lindberg 1990, p. 168–169; Sjökvist 2012, p. 22. I also follow Sjökvist (2012) in listing the dissertations as a dual authorship, with the praeses’ name first.
\(^{47}\) For instance Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722.
does suggest that Pufendorf either was credited with writing it himself or that a student’s name was not considered important enough to quote.

For now, the question of authorship can be left unresolved. That the praeses influenced, wrote, or only presided over dissertations is not relevant for the starting point of this thesis, i.e. that the dissertations are products of the learned centres of Sweden which in the luxury debate showcases traits particular to that culture, in, for instance, argumentation. At the end of the thesis and in the light of the results, however, the question of authorship will be reviewed again.

1.3.2.2 Relevance
Of greater concern is the question of the value and importance attached to the dissertations as source material. In 1975 Sten Lindroth, doyen of the history of ideas in Sweden, assessed the main value of the dissertations as a mirror of the predominating intellectual culture, and with the exception of the role they played in some controversies, they were not primarily a medium for new ideas or ground-breaking research. In fact, that would be an absurd and anachronistic demand to make on a university culture which first and foremost was an institution aimed at producing learned men.48

Later researchers have chosen to highlight other aspects than ideational content. Lindberg (2006) suggests that the function of the dissertations was pedagogical, because the student was supposed to hone his Latin and dialectical skills, and social, because the dissertations’ abundant dedications worked to strengthen relationships with patrons, relatives and future employers, but contends that they cannot be called scientific by today’s standards.49

The heterogeneity, however, is vast. While some dissertations hardly brought anything new – the view also subscribed to by Wieselgren – others were of higher quality, exploring the epoch’s new fields of interest.50 Of concern to this investigation is a dissertation from 1731, De felicitate patriae per Oeconomiam promovenda (“On the happiness of the fatherland which must be promoted through Oeconomia”), written by Anders Berch under the presidium of Anders Celsius. Ten years later, Berch was to become Sweden’s first professor of economy (oeconomia).

Any evaluation of the dissertations must start from the question that the researcher poses to them. A rejection of source material based on the fact that it only presents a repetition of ideas misses both possibly fruitful questions and the analytical tools available. Three further factors are of special significance to anyone working with the material. To begin with, even though received knowledge is prevailing, the university did undergo changes in the Early Modern Period,

---

48 Lindroth 1975b, p. 32.
49 Lindberg 1990, p. 172 ff; Lindberg 2006, p. 120, 125.
50 Lindberg 2006, p. 121.
especially during the 18th century, for instance when the new chair in economy was introduced in 1741. Therefore, how new ideas on economy were negotiated within the university culture can only be understood if the dissertations are taken into account.\textsuperscript{51} Second, if the praeses influenced the content of the dissertations, they indicate the outlook of the professors active in Sweden. Finally, since the dissertations are rich in quotations and paraphrases, they offer any heedful reader the opportunity to survey the reception of foreign thinkers: for the material shows what the students or the professors actually did read. This seems to be especially interesting during the Age of Liberty, when one considers the important influences of foreign thinkers on the intellectual culture of the period.\textsuperscript{52}

In a survey of the luxury debate within Swedish academia, the dissertations have a key role to play. They can potentially reveal what was discussed within the academy, the positions different professors took in the matter and the extent to which the concept of luxus was challenged. The question of the distribution of the dissertations, important because it suggests the possible ramifications for academic debates through the dissertation medium, must also be considered.

\subsection*{1.3.2.3 Distribution}

Although there remains research to be done on the question of distribution, two stances can be seen in treatments of the genre, one of which is supported by statistics. According to different regulations enacted 1751–1776, the majority of the circa 500–700 copies were to be distributed to student nations in Uppsala, to the university’s administration and to the other universities in the Swedish state. The number of prints is high, being equal to, or indeed even exceeding the number of prints for ordinary books in those times.\textsuperscript{53}

Despite such high numbers, Lindberg (2006) points out that Swedish natural scientists of the day preferred to publish their ideas in monographs or journals to reach an international audience. This indicates that the dissertations were written, or appeared so to the writers, for the local students, the author’s family members and benefactors rather than for international readers, although some were distributed and read abroad.\textsuperscript{54} Still, one must point out that none of the professors in the source material in question were natural scientists. Mostly based on ideas derived from abroad, the luxury debate in the Swedish dissertations might not have garnered much interest on the continent. It appears sensible then to consider that the dissertations had different receivers, dependent on both praeses and topic. The most important conclusion is that a

\textsuperscript{51} Gindhart & Kundert 2010, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{52} Benner & Tengström 1977, p. 36; Frängsmyr 2004, p. 187.
\textsuperscript{53} Östlund 2000, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{54} Lindberg 2006, 122.
high number of copies were sent among the Swedish universities and were thus available to the writers of the dissertations.

1.3.3. Receivers
It was said above that a survey of the luxury debates only can be possible if the dissertations are taken into account. But to be able to work with the dissertations and to use them as potential sources for learned culture, certain fundamental factors in the communication situation must be addressed.

All texts have senders and receivers. The senders in the case of the dissertations have previously been discussed in the question of authorship, and have been identified as the praeses and the student. But who are the receivers? Depending on how the function of the dissertation is understood, there can be three intended receivers. To begin with, there is the receiver accustomed to Latin and well-versed in the world of learning. This reader is not only familiar with the general cultural context, but has also intimate knowledge of specific quotes and paraphrases. This receiver is the student or any learned person of the period, either the direct opponent or other students. Such a receiver also coincides with the function of the dissertations as products of learning. The theses have been written to pass a formal exam, which was done through a display of language abilities and learning in the world of the university. To what extent they also served as disseminators of ideas abroad remains, as indicated, a question for future investigations. Since different professors had different needs of publications abroad, this factor will not be given too much consideration in the present investigation. But even if dissertations were read abroad, the reader would have belonged to the same category of receivers: learned men.

Another likely receiver is the individual to whom the text is dedicated. If one accepts the function of the dissertations as a part of a wider network of patron and client relationships where dedications are used to strengthen connections with beneficiaries, family members and future employers, one also has to accept a receiver who not necessarily is familiar with the full cultural context of the dissertation, indeed not even with the language in every case, as certain addresses are kept in the vernaculars. Hence, one receiver might not be able to take the content of the dissertation to heart at all. Yet, since many students went on to do career within the Church, it is not farfetched to imagine bishops and other future employers as potential dedicatees. Indeed, often they appear specifically in the dedications.56

---

55 Lindroth 1975b, p. 184; Lindberg 1990, p. 171. (on the 112 students under Henricus Hassel’s presidium).
56 For instance Grönwall & Pratenius 1726.
A third possible receiver is the censor. Since no Early Modern dissertations could be published without passing successfully through censorship, their originators stuck to topics which did not damage the state, lacked faith or were immoral. In that sense, the censor must be considered as a third receiver.

To discuss the concept of authorial intention might seem absurd considering the unresolved question on authorship. But since the praeses influenced the material strongly, it can at least be said that the student in his role as author would have no intention of presenting ideas which were contrary to the received instruction or to the social goals he himself had. If the praeses did not necessarily see the dissertations as the prime way of communication with other learned men, he would at least have had the opportunity of furthering his own intellectual agenda among students, upping his own academic production and perhaps even contending with the ideas of other professors. An example of the latter is furnished by the Cartesian controversies 1664, where professors on both sides of the debate used dissertations to defend their positions.

All in all, these considerations moderate the expectations any reading of dissertations can have in regards to a debate. The dissertations do not only have the direct opponent as receiver, but are parts of a wider context, stretching outside of the auditorium where they were defended. Their content is dependent on received instruction, or the ideas of the praeses, and the desire to complete an exam where language skills and display of learning is essential. To talk about a debate where participants join in to defend their original view would be to ignore the limitations of the dissertations. Still, the dissertations are argumentative; they reflect ideas from within a specific intellectual culture, guided by its own formal rules and context. Additionally, they show the reception of thought, be that of Roman authors or of French Enlightenment thinkers. Hence, in a survey of Swedish intellectual life in general, and the luxury debates in particular, the dissertations cannot be left out.

Considering the dominance of Latin and antiquity and the attention to rhetoric in the curriculum of the time, the hypothesis can be formed that the academic dissertations will display a pattern of responses to the luxury debates which are conditioned by their own culture, the Latin culture of the university, and which are different to other contemporary Swedish sources. To investigate the luxury debate in the dissertations is therefore not only an endeavour which concerns itself with material hitherto sketchily treated, but is also an attempt to understand how a distinct intellectual culture reacted to and partook of a debate outside of the confines of its world.

57 HWRh i p. 867.
58 Lindroth 1975b, 451–452.
1.4 Theoretical approaches: conceptual change and argumentation

Both older and more recent research into the history of luxury has often focused on two aspects, namely the concept of luxury itself and the arguments or motives voiced for curbing luxury throughout history.\textsuperscript{59} In an investigation of a debate where the definition of luxury was at the heart of the matter, indeed constituted a pivotal piece of the argumentation, these two aspects must also constitute the framework.

1.4.1 Concepts and rhetorical manipulation in the Age of Rhetoric

An important strand of research into intellectual history has been centred on conceptual definitions. In his \textit{Visions of politics} (2002), Quentin Skinner rejects ideas as timeless units, arguing that they only have the meaning which they are assigned in particular arguments. He draws the conclusion that “the only history of ideas to be written” is the one on conceptual use, especially how normative concepts are used in debates.\textsuperscript{60}

Luxury is a prime example of a normative concept, that is, a concept describing and evaluating “the world of politics and morality”.\textsuperscript{61} It denotes excessive consumption and has throughout history been used pejoratively to condemn different kinds of consumptive behaviours. It has had both political and social implications, manifested in, for instance, sumptuary legislation. Luxury, in short, appraises human behaviour, providing, in Sekora’s words, “an ethic for both nations and individuals”.\textsuperscript{62}

A related school of research is Reinhard Koselleck’s \textit{Begriffsgeschichte}. It investigates the change of fundamental concepts without which historical phenomena such as “the state” could not exist, but differs from Skinner in, for instance, its focus on change over longer spans of time.\textsuperscript{63} Not only due to the limits of this survey is an approach drawing on Skinner more suitable, but also because his focus has been specifically directed at normative concepts and how these change.

Two models for how normative concepts change are \textit{rhetorical manipulation} and \textit{rhetorical redescription}.\textsuperscript{64} Skinner argues that it is by the conscious manipulation of evaluative-descriptive terms, i.e. the terms used “to describe individual actions and to characterise the motives for which they are performed” that different groups or individuals legitimise their behaviour.\textsuperscript{65} This manipulation can start from new, neutral or negative words. An example of a new word in the Early Modern Period used to describe both behaviour and motives is \textit{frugality}, while \textit{ambition} is an

\textsuperscript{62} Sekora 1977, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{63} Koselleck 2002, p. 40–44.
\textsuperscript{64} Skinner 2005 (2002), p. 149, 182.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid. p. 148.
example of a previously negatively used word finding a neutral meaning during the period. Frugality and ambition are two words taken from Skinner’s example of rhetorical manipulation: Protestants of the Early Modern world manipulated the meaning of different words like frugality, ambition and providence to create a larger set of meaning legitimising their accruing of wealth in the period’s religious and social context.66

Rhetorical redescription is a similar process in which motives and behaviours are cast in a new light. Originally a rhetorical device used in the courts of the ancient world, rhetorical redescription was revived with humanism and put to use by various thinkers of the period. It means, in effect, that a lawyer can defend a client accused of e.g. avarice by describing him as having been careful. The lawyer has then turned to a word of neighbouring semantic quality to cast the motive and behaviour of the defendant in a different, better, light.67

Bearing in mind the importance of rhetoric in the curriculum of the Early Modern Sweden – indeed the Renaissance and the Baroque have been called The Age of Rhetoric – the devices of rhetorical redescription and manipulation are valuable interpretative tools in an investigation of the dissertations.68 In a history of ideas placing emphasis on arguments in debates, they could have an important part to play. Skinner defends the larger conceptual implications of rhetorical redescription by pointing to the large scale use. If certain behaviours are cast in different lights enough times in debates, their meaning will gradually change.69

Both rhetorical manipulation and rhetorical description indicate why and how conceptual change could occur and also which types of words are likely to be contested. The former describes a wider tactic of using evaluative-descriptive terms in different ways than before, the latter a type of redescription of the meaning of specific words by turning to semantically neighbouring concepts. They both work to legitimise behaviours. The further relationship between them, however, is not elaborated on by Skinner, but it would be possible – at least tentatively – to see rhetorical redescription as being applied to concepts indicating normative behaviour, like luxury, and that such tactics would be part of a larger strategy of rhetorical manipulation, let’s say, for arguments sake, of wealth and interrelated consumptive behaviours. In this investigation they are models used for structuring the investigation and for interpreting its results. But before the framework for this conceptual study is laid out, it is time to look at how the concept of luxury and its history has been understood in some of the foundational studies of luxury.

67 Ibid. p. 183.
68 HWRh i 1994, p. 910.
1.4.2 Working definitions and conceptual change
Since the inception of luxury research, defining the concept has been a central concern. A wide range of definitions have been proposed, from simple to more refined ones, from descriptions covering short time spans and confined regions, to explanations spanning over long time frames and large geographical areas. Naturally, these definitions depend on the needs of the particular works. For instance, in his influential synopsis of the development of luxury which stretches from the Garden of Eden to Early Modern times, covers cultural metropolises like Greece, Rome, Jerusalem and London, and listens to the voices of philosophers, theologians and authors, John Sekora starts by defining luxury as simply “anything unneeded”. At first, the definition appears too wide to be of any use at all, but in Sekora’s argumentation it is of crucial importance: only by using such a wide concept is it possible for him to research the history of luxury and detect its various manifestations through the ages in both sacred and secular sources.

In The idea of luxury (1994), Christopher Berry uses a similar definition as he argues that luxury as a phenomenon showcases stability in two ways. First, it always means an excessive consumption of products from the categories of food, shelter, sustenance and leisure. Second, luxury is always a political concept, since all societies try to control desires and needs. It can thus be used to understand “the nature of social order”. What occasions changes in this stable concept are primarily perceptions of man’s desires and of the well-being of the state.

This happened in the 17th and 18th centuries. “The classical paradigm” had espoused the view that man, having reached the télos of his existence, the natural life, would cease to experience desires. Desires for food, shelter, etc. would in the natural state be curbed, man’s existence frugal. In this state, human longings could not generate corruption or social conflicts. It was with thinkers like Hobbes, Baron, later Mandeville and Hume that this perception of man changed: desires would not cease and were not automatically inimical to man’s existence, but a part of man’s natural state. This accounted for what Berry calls a de-moralisation of luxury in the sense that intellectuals now started to argue about how luxury consumption, if desires anyway were intrinsic to man, could be used for the benefit of the state. As new connections were drawn between societal well-being and economy, luxury was first seen as positive for trade.

Although also with a focus on concepts, Berg and Eger (2003) approach luxury from within the paradigm of cultural history. The choice of not offering a single definition is programmatic,

---

70 Sekora 1977, p. 23.
71 Ibid. p. 9, 25, 29, 41.
72 Berry 1994, p 7–8.
73 Ibid. p. xi., 63.
74 Ibid. p. 101.
75 Ibid. p. 50, 63.
76 Ibid. p. 101.
for it is precisely through the ever changing definitions of the concept, such as which material goods were labelled luxurious, and which uses the concept of luxury could be put to in various times and by various authors, that the importance of luxury can best be understood.\textsuperscript{77} Some criticism is levelled at Sekora: his luxury definition does not account enough for conceptual change nor for the ambivalence in the way in which it was treated. In sum, Sekora is faulted for not providing enough for the instability of the concept.\textsuperscript{78}

Runefelt does not offer a definition of luxury on the term for the Age of Liberty, but for his survey of the Great Power Era he has looks the words överflöd ("abundance") and l\textit{yx} ("luxury"). Överflöd, he points out, was the more frequently used term, while l\textit{yx} was usually presented in its Latin form, \textit{luxus}.\textsuperscript{79} As överflöd is equivalent to abundance it is not necessarily charged with negativity. However, when överflöd signifies l\textit{yx} it points instead to a specific kind of excess, connected with immoderate consumption in general and with gastronomic delectations in particular.\textsuperscript{80}

So far it is obvious that researchers have defined – or chosen not to define – luxury in various ways, depending on their specific research aims. Three of the definitions are all related to the English word luxury and used in an English context; one is used for sources in Swedish. However, to trace how luxus was used in the dissertations, one has to start from the Latin word, \textit{luxus}, the most frequently used word denoting luxury.\textsuperscript{81}

1.4.3 Luxus in Neo-Latin

It is possible to find a positive meaning of lat. \textit{luxus}, for instance, in the life of kings and queens: luxus can be used to describe richness and wealth befitting royalty.\textsuperscript{82} The overwhelming use of luxus, however, is pejorative, indicating a way of life where sensuous excesses breach social norms of what is considered acceptable.\textsuperscript{83} In classical authors, this subversive type of luxus often has a slightly different denotation depending on the context. In the historians Sallust and Livy, luxus is attributed a crucial role in the explanatory scheme for the decline of the Roman republic. In the dramatist Terence, luxus equals a rejection of traditional mores. Tacitus echoes a Livian theme in seeing luxus as prime cause for the feminization of soldiers, making them unfit for service. The meaning of luxus can be further subdivided into the areas to which it pertains, i.e.

\textsuperscript{77} Berg & Eger 2003, p. 11, 13, 18.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. p. 16.
\textsuperscript{79} Runefelt 2001, p. 165–166.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p. 166.
\textsuperscript{81} HWDh 1994, p. 463.
excesses in the areas food, dress, architecture, furniture and carnal lust. These categories underline that luxus does not signify the excessive consumption of each and every thing imaginable, but is connected to a set of specific goods.

Despite an increased emphasis on the carnal lust by Church fathers, remarkable stability is exhibited in the meaning of the term in the Latin language. It was only in the 17th and 18th centuries that the word began to receive different connotations, partly due to changes in the vernaculars affected by world economy and commercialization. Originally a Latin loan word, the English luxury had roughly carried the same denotation as the Latin luxus, but around the mid-17th century it started to appear more regularly than before in socio-economic contexts, and perceiving it from an economic point of view, both Mandeville and Hume would argue for its redefinition in the subsequent century. In France, where Mandeville was published in 1740 and would have a massive influence, the process of commercialization also led to a new engagement with the term, lucre, and a struggle over definition was central in the 18th century querelle du lucre where nearly all publications attempted to define the concept, generating ambivalence in its meaning. Equally ambivalent was the definition in the German debate on Luxus, where authors also pointed out the relativity of the term: the definition of luxus was historically contingent. That also dissertations should engage with the definition of the concept is to be expected, since the debates on luxury in Sweden to such an extent were a result of the reception of continental and insular writers.

To what degree this basic set of meanings of luxus also applies to Neo-Latin material can be demonstrated by examples from the Pufendorf & Lossius’ dissertation De legibus sumtuariis (1672), already above proffered as an example of a typical dissertation: Many of man’s passions represent a grave danger to society, the author begins, but especially perilous is the insatiabilis habendi libido, “the insatiable desire to have” or the vesana libido per inania opes dissipandi, “the mad desire to vainly waste wealth”. Once a person in the grip of this desire has squandered his own means, he transforms into a terrible threat to his neighbours, endangering their property and resources, all the while feeding the destruction of his own body and soul, making the former weak, the latter dull. The periphrases constructed with libido are tempered by luxuria and the term luxus, but despite these different words, the definition abstracted from the text does in many ways

86 Terjanian 2013, p. 29–30; 54.
87 Wyrva 2003, p. 51.
88 Wieselgren, 1912, chapter 1.
89 Pufendorf & Lossius 1672, §.1.
90 Ibid. §.1, §. 8.
correspond to the different meanings of a classical definition, i.e. luxus to Pufendorf & Lossius is a peril to man, a threat to household and a danger to society.

Having emphasised the need for sumptuary legislation as a possible solution, Pufendorf & Lossius go on to list the types of luxury (per illam luxuriam) on which Europe squanders its resources. Here the context of the dissertations reveals itself, both through the classical education of the writer and the expectations of the audience, for the categories of luxury being applied to late-17th century Europe are those found in the Roman historian Tacitus (Ann. 3.53.). The six areas of luxus are food, architecture, servants, gold vases, affluent dresses, and – a desire specific to women – precious stones. Apart from carnal lust and the addition of servants, the author utilises the general categories found in Roman luxury criticism. Included in the categories are, however, products of the 17th century, the category of dress for instance has sable coats (Zobellinas) and expensive wigs (caesariem factitiam magni pretij). In sum, Pufendorf & Lossius’ definition suggests that classical conceptions were utilized as models, but often expanded by contemporary phenomena.

Drawing on the importance of conceptual development in luxury research, this investigation will concentrate on how the definition of the concept of luxury was used, contested and changed during the debates. Focusing on the definitions as they were given in the texts offers the opportunity to see how participants in the debate made use of them. However, not all dissertations will offer clear definitions, and in those cases it may be difficult to extract the definition of luxury as understood by the author. Moreover, it is probable that luxus is interchangeable with a number of semantically related words, much like lyx and överflöd are in Swedish. These challenges can be met by a closer interaction with the context and co-text, i.e. the direct textual environments of a statement. In other words, the meaning of words and concepts are both semantically and pragmatically dependent and need to be treated as such.

Some have rejected a study of the definition of luxury due to the concept’s inherent instability, i.e. to its contextual dependence, and it is probably naive to believe that one clear-cut definition of luxus was used by one side and another by their opponents. Still, an exploration of the general value ascribed to the term and the argumentation will shed light on the matter, and since luxury was such a controversial topic, it is most likely that anyone writing about it will display an opinion and through that reveal the contours of the definition in use. Moreover, the limited amount of the source material and the homogeneity of the material, for instance its argumentative qualities, simplify conceptual exploration. Despite its inherent challenges, then, a

---

91 Ibid. §. 7.
92 Ibid. §. 2–7.
93 Ibid. §. 6.
semantic investigation still has the opportunity to cast light on a concept poorly scrutinized in Swedish research, and the models of rhetorical manipulation and redescription can offer possible tools for understanding the workings of conceptual change.

1.4.4. Arguments
A debate is a verbal or written confrontation the procedure for which can be more or less codified. The term has French origins and probably stems from the cathedral schools of the 11th and 12th centuries where scholastic methods influenced didactic procedures. In the Early Modern Period, university disputations where one of the prime examples of codified debates, where respondens and opponens were ascribed special roles, arguing for and against the positions of the dissertation.

Central to a debate is an argument, the standard definition of which is “a sequence of statements such that some of them (the premises) purport to give reason to accept another of them (the conclusion)”. Accordingly, an argument requires at least two statements to be complete. Yet, in actual discourse, arguments often appear implicit or incomplete: sometimes the conclusion has to be inferred from a chapter title or the context, at other times the premises are incomplete, occasionally comprising a mere reference to an – often classical – authority (a so called argumentum ab auctoritate) or an exemplum. The solution to this incompleteness is the reconstruction of arguments. It proceeds from a perusal of the text through which conclusions and premises are made explicit or recreated. In a complete argument analysis, the next step would be the evaluation of the argument, but apart from some critical remarks this step will be left out of the thesis as it is the recreation of arguments which is essential to the understanding of the debate, not the evaluation of their logic or probability.

As indicated, most previous research focused on the changing perceptions of luxury has placed written communication at the centre. However, the attention has not always been directed towards a specific debate, arguments, or the works of individual thinkers like Mandeville. Instead “motives” or “purposes” for e.g. sumptuary laws have been categorised based on analyses of the wording of the decrees themselves, or as revealed by other, similar sources. Despite these methodological differences, any discussion of argumentation in the 18th century academic material has to base itself on precisely this research, especially in the face of the shortage of

---

95 HWRh 1994 ii, p. 413: “Debatte bezeichnet eine Form sprachlicher Auseinandersetzung, die auf einem antagonistischen Grundschema beruht.”
96 HWRh 1994 ii, p. 413, 418–419.
97 Audi 2006, p. 43.
98 Ibid. p. 433: “Argument from authority is a kind of argument that uses expert opinion (de facto authority) or the pronouncement of someone invested with an institutional office or title (de jure authority) to support a conclusion.”
100 See Ek 1959, Runefelt 2001 & 2005, Zanda 2011, etc.
research on luxury debates within the world of the university. A further reason is that the academic debates were part of a wider context of luxury discourse, and it is only through an understanding of the larger background that particularities of the academic response can be recognised.\textsuperscript{101}

In the next chapter a set of examples of argumentation types are gathered from research which focused on certain aspects of the luxury debates in the Early Modern Period. Since this survey only forms an introductive background to the results, its aim is not to be extensive, but to offer a rough set of typologies applicable to the dissertations. Before that presentation, three points are particularly worthwhile making about arguments and their taxonomy.

First of all, the classification in previous research, which this thesis to a large degree follows, is based on the content of propositions, not on their formal structures, for instance which type of syllogism or type the argument is based on presents. Such classifications would, however, be a given tool of any larger argumentation analysis since the content–form relationship is crucial for understanding communicative strategies.\textsuperscript{102} While analysing the arguments in the dissertations, at least noteworthy forms, for example argumentum ab auctoritate, will be noted if the authority is deemed recurrent and therefore can be said to have had a large impact on the contents of the arguments and through that on the debate. The recurrence of quotes from Tacitus in \textit{De legibus sumtuariis} would be an example of such an argument from authority. The intention, then, is to incorporate a basic sketch of form into the investigation to create a better understand of how luxus as an idea was transformed into arguments in a debate.

Second, it is important point out that, in comparison to more formal investigations, the classification and naming of the arguments are worked out by induction. It is not the conclusion that needs to supply the label of an argument, but it is rather a balanced consideration of both premises and conclusion which makes an argument “economic” or “anthropological”. However, arguments are sometimes hard to classify since premises and conclusion fit different typologies, which means that the reader will have a certain amount of freedom in his choices. This leads to the third point. Although it is a truism that the classification of arguments is a construct employed to systematize the source material, that arguments together form a unit and that one never should forget this holism, it is only through such differentiation that one can see what is actually unique for different types of materials in different times and geographical areas.\textsuperscript{103} Thus, in the next sections the synopsis of the arguments in the luxury discourse in the 17th century and the 18th century serve to give both a general background. The material is geographically

\textsuperscript{101} Grugel-Pannier 1996, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{102} HWRh i 1994, p. 892.
\textsuperscript{103} Runefelt 2005, p. 121; Zanda 2011, p. 7.
restricted to Western Europe, with focus on England, a country of major importance for the luxury debates, with Swedish material forming the second focus.

1.4.4.1 Arguments against luxury 1500–1700
It is in the overarching categories of arguments that the continuity in luxury criticism reveals itself. Typical of this continuity is that luxury was seen as corruptive, and this corruption could be condemned on theological, political and economic grounds.104 This is seen in the publications of 17th century English thinkers, where typical arguments against luxury are: (1) the philosophical argument: nature has set a limit to man’s consumption which is rational and which man can appreciate through his reason, and when man exceeds that limit, he breaks the laws of nature; (2) the anthropological argument: the true source of man’s happiness rests in virtue alone, not in the satisfaction of needs. Luxury is the result of a long series of needs being satisfied but only leading to new ones, generating new excesses; (3) the theological argument: excess of food and dress result in gluttony and pride. Luxury is then an offence against God; and (4) the political argument: luxury means the corruption of man, which in turn leads to the corruption of the state.105 The economic argument constitutes the fifth category, which can be further subdivided, but whose essence is that luxury is the consumption of products arriving through import. This consumption has a negative impact on the balance of trade.106

Swedish sources exhibit statements similar to the arguments used by contemporary English thinkers, for instance in economic and religious “motives” for sumptuary legislation. Although present since the Middle Ages, economic motives became more salient towards the end of the 17th century due the increase in domestic production. Motivations for the laws founded on religious grounds were similar to those in the English source material – nurtured by luxury, pride would incur divine wrath. Seen diachronically, such religious motivations were more frequent in the 16th and 17th centuries rather than later.107

Further “purposes” behind sumptuary laws as seen in the legislative decrees themselves, in debates in the riksdag and in other texts, are the ethical and the Gothic-national. The ethical purpose being the desire to uphold visual differences among the members of society, visual differences under threat from individuals consuming more than their position in the society of orders allowed.108 The Gothic-national purpose is connected to the strong Gothicism above all representative for the Great Power Era, but similar arguments are found in the 16th century as

106 Ibid. p. 155–156.
well. In a praise of primitivism, the Swedes were seen as especially used to a frugal existence. Luxury is antithetical to the national character, a threat to the virtues of a primeval state of existence.\(^{109}\)

In a survey of the different categories offered by Swedish and English source material, several differences are discerned. This could potentially suggest that the continuity of luxury criticism is exaggerated. More probable, however, is that the different source materials account for some of the differences. The English material is based on the writings of intellectuals treating the question of luxury, while the Swedish research, based on decrees, minutes, and intellectual material, is much more eclectic and focused on the more practical side of luxury criticism, often the formulation of sumptuary legislation. This might potentially push the material in a certain direction, e.g. a strong attention to ethical arguments.

Cultural differences also clarify some of the more obvious disparities. The use of the Gothic-national argument could hardly be expected to appear in English material – although other types of specific appeals to the national character of the English very well could have been invoked: in Spain, for instance, sumptuary legislation was supported by appeals to the Spanish as “frugal and hardy” in contrast to Moorish luxury.\(^{110}\) Lastly, there is the question of research aims, methodological choices and the above mentioned difficulty of classifying arguments which tend to be either incomplete and form parts of larger argumentation patterns.

The differences are important, but can be explained by factors such as the source material and culture. The agreement in several types of arguments, for instance economic and theological types, and the overlapping of the political argument with the ethical, still suggest that there existed a fundamental set of reactions to luxury which manifested themselves in a fundamental set of arguments. This can also be seen in the material from the 18th century.

1.4.4.2 The 18th century luxury debate: the challenge of Mandeville

The real debate on luxury started in the 18th century and came to culmination in England between 1756 and 1763, its real upshot being a gradual acceptance of luxury consumption and a rejection of sumptuary legislation.\(^{111}\) For thinkers like Mandeville, prime inaugurator of the debate, the defence of luxury was grounded on the premise that if trade and industry were beneficial to the state, so too was luxury consumption.\(^{112}\) A state devoid of luxury, eschewing every excess, could never be prosperous: virtue and riches were incompatible.\(^{113}\) Instead, only the


\(^{111}\) Sekora 1977, p. 66.

\(^{112}\) Ibid. p. 113.

\(^{113}\) Berry 1994, p. 127.
state that accepted the vices of its citizens could achieve prosperity. This process of conceptual change has been called the de-moralization of luxury. Fundamental to this transformation, and present already in 17th century material, was the understanding of the state’s well-being in economic, rather than moral, terms. Previously, few had openly argued for luxury, basing their convictions on views of trade. Through his provocative fable, Mandeville changed this, in that he explicitly articulated ideas found previously among thinkers like Barbon.¹¹⁴

A closer look at just a few of the arguments reveals that a consideration of the economic importance of consumption and luxury dominates. In what can be called an anthropological argument, Mandeville sees pride and vanity as anthropological constants. Individuals compete to outdo each other in terms of consumption, resulting in the growth of the economy.¹¹⁵ The growth of the labour market and the steady inventions of artisans are also supported by the luxury of the rich.¹¹⁶ Another argument has to do with the benefits luxury has for money circulation, and thus for the economy.¹¹⁷

While it is true that these arguments gained momentum in the 1700s, the dissertation De legibus sumptuariis treated the relationship between money circulation and luxury consumption, thus indicating that they were already known in Sweden in 1672. There are some, Pufendorf & Lossius wrote, who hold the view that all riches stem from the circulation of money. According to this position, excessive consumption would put long since coffered money in circulation, and more money in motion would generate more opportunities for individuals to make a bigger profit and for the state to exact bigger levies, which in turn meant that recently emptied coffers would soon be replenished to the benefit of all.¹¹⁸

The argumentation in The Age of Liberty was for a long time characterised as de-moralized in comparison with that of The Great Power Era: instead of the classical anti-luxury arguments resting on theological and moral grounds, new arguments focused on luxury’s positive impact within a mercantilist framework. During this time the economic argument appeared for the first time. As indicated above, this position has been challenged by recent studies: the arguments pro-luxury were never devoid of morality, but rather focused on moderation.¹¹⁹ A better description is that although theological arguments became less frequent, and luxury was more debated from

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 253, 257, 259.
¹¹⁸ Pufendorf & Lossius 1672, §. 10.
¹¹⁹ Runefelt 2005, p. 102ff.
economic vantage points, morality remained. The changes cannot therefore be characterised as de-moralization.\textsuperscript{120}

Three arguments appeared against luxury, to a large degree showcasing continuity with the previous century: psychological-ethical, economic and Gothic-national, the former of which shares traits with both the political argument, i.e. luxury is a threat to political stability, and what has previously been called only ethical. From the pro-luxury camp economic arguments were heard, for instance, that luxury furthered thrift and benefitted trade, which indicate that these ideas appeared more often in The Age of Liberty, connected to thinkers like Mandeville and Melon.\textsuperscript{121}

1.4.5 Concluding remarks
Although in no way exhaustive, this brief survey of arguments suggests that there existed a fundamental set of argument types during the 17th and 18th centuries when the question of luxury was debated by European writers. Differences in the argument types do exist, but can be explained as contingent on culture and type of source material. Such differences, however, strengthen the hypothesis that the Latin dissertations will showcase a different type of reaction to the luxury debates, which could be explained by the ramifications of the culture in which they were produced. Differences are also contingent on choices made by the researchers. The more nuanced taxonomy offered by the English material is more applicable to a limited investigation where only one source material is used. Still, argument types like the Gothic-national can only be borrowed from Swedish research. It is against this basic background that it will be possible to understand and classify the arguments used in the dissertations.

\textsuperscript{120} It should be noted though, that this questioning of the de-moralization of luxury only is relevant for the Swedish material.

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. p. 103–104, 106.
1.5 Preliminaries

1.5.1 Research questions
The purpose of this thesis is a diachronic investigation of the luxury debates within the Swedish universities, 1722–1779, using the academic dissertations as windows onto this intellectual exchange. Not only have the sources been largely neglected in previous research, but an exploration of the dissertations will show the particular dynamics of this culture’s reaction, understandable only through its particular context. For this reason, the investigation could also yield answers to how the university culture interacted with contemporary intellectual culture in the Early Modern Period.

Taking into account the notion that ideas are best studied as arguments in debates and as concepts exposed to change, and also considering their position in previous research, the two research questions are:

1) How is luxury defined?
2) Which types of arguments are used for and against luxury?

1.5.2 Selection of material
The source material has been gathered mainly with the aid of the catalogues for Swedish dissertations created by Lidén and Marklin. The first search row was guided by the words lusus, luxuria and semantically related words such as sumptus. Drawing on the connection between luxury and commercialization, lexemes of oeconomia and commercia were targeted in the second search row. The material was then sifted and thirteen dissertations were selected including Pufendorf & Lossius.

As luxury’s fundamentality has led to fruitful interdisciplinary research, it has been attempted to try to capture the range of luxury as it can be seen in different discussions, on topics like moderation, economy and history. It is hard to claim conclusiveness in a comparably short thesis, and certainly luxury may have been discussed without being explicitly named by authors wanting to avoid negative reactions, but of the dissertations explicitly covering the topic in the period, the majority is covered in this survey.

Since the praeses had an important role in the choice of topic for the dissertations, it appeared only natural to accept that the same praeses could hold presidium over different dissertations dealing with the topic. This did still enforce some choices. In some instances only one dissertation under a praeses (e.g, the praeses Henricus Hassel) was included in the survey.
although a second was available. The reason was that its contents were too similar, its ideas less
developed. In these cases the other dissertations are still mentioned.

As far as the ideational content is concerned, some dissertations have been chosen which
exclusively deal with the matter, while others deal with the matter in a few paragraphs only.
Looking at different geographical areas, discussions of various length and type, seems to be the
best way to choose a representative material. That Uppsala dominates the material, however, has
less to do with choice than its dominance in the debates.

The dissertations used are:

2. Hermansson & Lindgreen, *Voluptates reipublicae nocias*, 1722, Uppsala
3. Grönwall & Pratenius, *Felicatatem ex moderamine sumptus* 1726, Uppsala
4. Grönwall & Roswall, *Meditationes nonnullas luxum ejusque in republica effectum exhibentes* 1743, Uppsala
5. Celsius & Berch, *De felicitate patriae per Oeconomiam promovenda* 1731, Uppsala
6. Bring & Drysén, *De oeconomia camerali et commerciis*, 1741, Uppsala
7. Hassel & Gustorff, *De Luxu*, 1748, Åbo
8. Bring & Gram, *Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans* 1752, Lund
9. Dahlman & Waller, *De legibus sumptuariis*, 1755 Uppsala
11. Bring & Qvist, *Hypomnemata historica de luxu sviarogorum antiquo*, Uppsala
13. Sleincour & Calén, *De detrimento morum ex luxu*, 1779, Uppsala

1.5.3. Chronological choice and disposition
The survey covers a period of sixty years for the following reasons: first, it allows the establishing
of the outlines of traditional luxury criticism; second, it encompasses the period of new ideas on
luxury, shortly before and around the time of von Höpken’s speech. Lastly, through this
chronology the reaction at the end of the 1760s can be seen, occasioned by the waning lure of
mercantilism.\[122\] Altogether, this time span allows the tracing of the development of both the
concept and the argumentation, before as well as after the 1740s.

\[122\] Wieselgren 1912, p. 56.
The diachronic perspective demands a chronological disposition. The division of the material into three chronological sections is not an *a priori* partition, but a result of the major trends exhibit by the sources. They should, however, not been seen as absolute, as the further discussion will reveal.

In order to allow for a more nuanced analysis of the context of each dissertation the choice was made to present each of them individually, but still connect them through continuous discussions of the results. In the individual presentations the initial section offers a general background: here the contents of the dissertations and their connection to other dissertations, i.e. their place in the debate, are reviewed. The assumed impact of the praeses on the choice of the topics has also led to a larger focus on the praeses than the respondent. The results of the reading then follow, concentrated on the question of definition and argumentation. Each section ends with a concluding discussion. Both in the analysis and the concluding discussion, the aim has been to relate the results to previous results in the thesis and previous research, although some reflections, such as the possibility of rhetorical redescription, mostly have been kept for the final discussion.

As the dissertations offer different depths and have yielded results of diverse scope, they have warranted sections of various lengths. In a few cases the choice was made to pass over the usual disposition and give a shorter presentation and discussion of the content.
II. ANALYSIS

2.1 The period 1722–1743

2.1.1 Voluptates reipublicae noxias (1722)

2.1.1.1 Preliminary considerations
Defended in 1722, Carolus G. Lindgreen’s *Voluptates reipublicae noxias* (“Pleasures dangerous to the state”) is a dissertation under the presidium of Johan Hermansson (1679-1737), at the time professor skytteanus in Uppsala, renowned for his Latin oratory. As implied by the title, and indeed also by the presidium of the professor skytteanus (the chair for politics and rhetoric installed 1622), the dissertation deals with the implications of “dangerous pleasures” (*voluptates noxiae*) for the state. The main subject, confirms the author, is the delineation of the “the objects of pleasure” harmful to the “public order”, which when used luxuriously and without temperance, destroys the state. Its main thesis is that these pleasure objects and their abuse must be identified and opposed in order to prevent social damage, i.e. arguments usually labelled political. Seen in the context of a luxury discourse of the 1700s, the dissertation takes a traditional stance against luxury.

There are no reservations for including this dissertation in the wider discussion on luxury within academic texts, despite the fact that it identifies *voluptas* as its subject. *Voluptas* is defined as identical with *lucuria*, and *luxus* is used together with *voluptas* as a word pair (*voluptas & luxus*) or simply replaces it. Reinforcing this conclusion as well are the frequent quotes from Pufendorf & Lossius’ dissertation on luxury and sumptuary laws, *De legibus sumptuariis*.

2.1.1.2 Definition
Despite not being clearly stated, a classical definition of *luxus* is adopted throughout the text, both indicating a life of exaggerated sensual pleasures, i.e. both the enjoyment of luxury products, and the products themselves. Altogether, *luxus* is understood as corrupting individuals, families and society. Delineated in chapter two (pages 9–41), the individual areas where luxury manifests itself are the care of one’s body (*cultu corporis*), the pomp of furniture (*adparatu supellectilium*) and ostentatious architecture (*aedium ornatis*).

---

123 Svenskt handbiografiskt lexikon, p. 488; Lindroth 1975c, p. 197.
125 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 8.
127 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 5, 11, 16.
The care of the body encompasses dress. To describe luxury in dress, the author makes use of Pufendorf’s dissertation, quoting “plumes, exotic furs, sable skins and expensive wigs” as the banes of the day, but remarks concisely that in the end all ostentatious dress is luxurious. Further fault is found in the hair dressing trends: men no less than women meticulously order the curls on their heads and waste time before the mirror. Similar images of men given to luxury are also found outside of the dissertation literature, in the character of the petit-maitre, who was ridiculed both in press and in theatre during the Age of liberty.

Next to dress, food is an omnipresent object in the care of the body. Again quoting Pufendorf, food and drink in excess and foreign victuals are assigned to this category. In the description, the temporal boundaries between 18th century Sweden and Rome are collapsed as the author dwells on the amounts paid for certain species of fish by the Roman emperors. Neither the pomp of furniture nor ostentatious architecture are furnished with examples from contemporary times, instead the author mainly looks back to classical authors, mentioning Roman habits in silver ware, furniture, constructions; Pufendorf is again among the authorities. But here the author does differentiate between public buildings or private pomp: ornate buildings serving the state must not be condemned, but it is those for private needs which are dangerous, as they manifest social rivalry, self-interest and impending destitution. This differentiation goes back to the Roman concept of *magnificentia* (“liberality”), which held that expenses on public buildings not were to be understood as luxury, but rather as beneficial to the public.

Since the author is relying on classical authors and transposes the Roman luxury habits for his interpretation of the problem of luxus, it is little wonder that the definition is almost identical with classical luxus, as seen in Latin material of the antiquity. Luxus thus means both immoderation in itself and the objects of immoderation, i.e. the forms in which luxury manifests itself. Little wonder, the objects also conform to classical notions of luxus, being food, dress and architecture. Two remarks are worth making.

One exception is carnal excess, which, although mentioned in the beginning, is not assigned a chapter of its own. As will become noticeable, this is not a one-time exception but a characteristic feature of many definitions of luxury. The explanation can be that the Roman authors were less occupied with this type of luxury, for it was only with the Church Fathers that

---

129 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 11.
130 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 16.
131 Runefelt 2006, p. 103–104.
132 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 18–19.
133 Ibid. p. 22.
134 Ibid. p. 28 f; 58–59.
138 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 2.
the connection between lechery and luxury became part of the classical paradigm. It can also be that prudency and censorship would hinder anyone from writing extensively on the details of carnal excess.

However, having listed the classical areas of luxus, the author chooses to dedicate a chapter to what he sees as contemporary luxuries, no less frequent that the aforementioned of Roman origin. These are dice games, theatres and masquerades, and together they illustrate two further aspects of the luxury concept. First, its inherent wastefulness: For engagement in nocturnal activities like masquerades is a waste of both money and time. Second, it shows that luxus also is associated to an object of luxury which stretches beyond the definition of Tacitus and Pufendorf, namely leisure. After sustenance, shelter and clothing, leisure is the forth category given by Christopher Berry in his attempt to create a universal definition of luxury.

These different strands extracted from the reading suggest that luxus largely was understood with the help of ancient authorities and conceived of as a timeless phenomenon albeit through the mediation of thinkers such as Pufendorf. Still, the definition is dynamical. The author sees it fit to add contemporary phenomenon like dice games and masquerades to the areas where luxury and voluptuousness can be seen.

2.1.1.3 Arguments

To support the main claim, i.e. that the delineated pleasures are noxious to the state, the author produces several arguments. Most pugnaciously, he does this in section four, in a refutation of the argument produced by those whom he calls “Machiavelli’s associates”, in whose view ostentation affords splendour to society, gives its poorer members a chance to make money, and nourishes the arts. Acceptance of any kind of ostentation, the author thunders in his response, is impossible if one considers the damages it inflicts on society. Not only is the individual weakened, but resources accrued through the care and diligence of the family are exhausted, and the spendthrift, at first a mere burden to society but soon an enemy of the state, strives for political turmoil or other opportunities through which he can get a chance to recover his lost means. Moreover, riches better kept within the nation end up in the coffers of foreign powers when luxury is given free reins. Luxury, then, empowers not only internal but external enemies of the state. The argumentation is familiar – to start with there is what most aptly should be called the political argument as it holds luxury accountable for man’s corruption and through that

---

141 Hermansson & Lindgreen 1722, p. 64–65.
142 Ibid. p. 65–66.
143 Ibid p. 68.
corruption of the state.\textsuperscript{144} But it is also familiar for another reason: three times as the argumentation unfolds, Pufendorf, is cited as the – if not only – authority, which suggests the role also of modern authorities in creating the luxury conceptions at the university, and especially in giving models for arguments.

The argument is also economic: excessive consumption creates a deficit as national riches are traded for luxury products.\textsuperscript{145} From a critical point of view, the author fails to answer the second argument advanced by the luxury-friendly “associates of Machiavelli”, for left unanswered remains the question about possible benefits for poor artisans and the arts from luxury consumption: highlighted is only the problem of imported luxury objects. This, however, is a characteristic feature of the economic argument put forth by thinkers 1600–1700: luxury is a question of imported goods and a question of perspective. The effect of consumption of domestically produced goods is seldom discussed.\textsuperscript{146}

2.1.1.4 Concluding remarks
When one considers the importance of antiquity for the Early Modern curriculum and the strong emphasis on learning rather than research, it is little wonder that the definition and the argumentation in \textit{Voluptates reipublicae nociae} follow classical authors and Early Modern authorities such as Pufendorf. Yet it is worth underlining how easily the Roman world and its historians can supply evidence and examples for the types of \textit{luxus} & \textit{voluptates} dangerous to a North European state in 1722. Both temporal and spatial boundaries seem collapsed; Rome is a universal example and can be used because it faced an eternal bane of the state, luxus. It is exactly this source of examples which antiquity supplied for the Early Modern student, and while its importance has been noted in contemporary English publications, the role of Rome in other contributions to the Swedish debate has not been stressed.\textsuperscript{147}

Despite its importance, Rome’s presence must be weighed against the contemporary examples. The author provides more clear examples from his own day, of masquerades, of dice-games, of men with wigs – so much detested by the theologian Jesper Swedberg, subject of Möller’s investigation – and he responds to argumentation from more recent defenders of luxury.\textsuperscript{148} The first dissertation of the survey thus suggests that the academic world, despite its heavy dependence on antiquity, could answer to contemporary controversies, although it did not concern itself with empirical research as we know it.

\textsuperscript{144} Grugel-Pannier 1996, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{145} Ek 1959, p. 100; Grugel-Pannier 1996, p. 158–159; Runefeld 2001, p. 160.
\textsuperscript{146} Grugel-Pannier 1996, p. 158–159.
\textsuperscript{147} Sekora 1977, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{148} Möller 2014, p. 63ff.
2.1.2 Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus (1726)

2.1.2.1 Preliminary considerations
Defended by Jacob Pratenius, presided over by professor of practical philosophy Anders Grönwall, *Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus* (“The happiness of moderate expenses”) was defended in Gustavianum, Uppsala 1726. Its a dissertation which cannot be said, as *Voluptates reipublicae noxias*, to engage in a discourse with any new thoughts on luxus, but is rather a text concerned with the virtue of *moderamen*, moderation, a key concept in the ethical perceptions of the period indicating the balance between extremes. As such, moderation is frequently attested in dissertation material in discussions of moral behaviour: *Moderamine humanorum actionum* (“The moderation of human actions”), *moderamine affectuum* (The moderation of affects), *moderamine irae*, (“The moderation of wrath”), are just some examples from Uppsala’s production, all indicating the importance of moderation for moral behaviour. Moderation is also a concept without which the problem of luxury cannot be understood, for it is the virtuous person’s response to consumption, placing the individual between the poles of destitution and excess.149 It comes as no surprise then that the author of *Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus* rallies the reader against luxus, for sumptus is a product of luxus.150

The soul may be the ruler of the body, but the care of the latter, consisting of dress, nourishment and housing, must not be neglected in order to provide support for the former. For this reason man has been given *appetitus* (“appetite”) and an accompanying *voluptas* (“pleasure”) which together help serve the conservation of the body. As long as moderation is observed, man is living in accordance with nature and appetitus and voluptas are beneficial for conservation. But as soon as the limits of moderation are broken by excess, a luxurious living is the result, first injurious to body and mind, then catastrophal to society.151 Having established his point of departure, the author goes on to sketch the individual areas in which moderation is called for, listing – like the author of *Voluptates reipublicae noxias* – dress, victuals, architecture and furniture.152

2.1.2.2 Definition
A definition of luxus, similar to Hermansson & Lindgreen’s, can be extracted from the dissertation. The classical pejorative meaning remains: luxus is excessive enjoyment of objects which can be touched and tasted, it also indicates the objects themselves (dress, victuals,

---

149 Runefelt 2001, p. 34.
150 Grönwall-Pratenius 1726, p. 30.
151 Ibid. p. 1–4, 6.
152 Ibid. p. 17–29.
architecture and furniture). Luxury can also be beneficial to the state in the form of palaces and churches, for they have the ability to impress foreign visitors of the state’s power. This idea is not the author’s own, but leads through the German thinker Berneggerus and his *Quaestiones miscellaneae* (1611) back to the Roman concept of magnificentia.

### 2.1.2.3 Argumentation

Several standard arguments contra luxus recur in the delineation of the different areas where moderation is called for. Excessive expenses in food and drink are not expedient to society because they reduce the gourmands to poverty, make them unable to support their families and incur debts destined to spin out of control. As a result, the indebted is left a burden to his fellow men. "It would be an all too longwinded undertaking”, the author goes on, ”to glance over all the luxury which is practised with regard to food and drink”; instead he turns to Pufendorf’s dissertation from which he extracts a lengthy quotation enumerating piles of food, exotic wines and imported herbs. What resources would be secured if only the buying and selling of the foodstuffs burdening the gourmand’s table could be forbidden, he muses, and later underlines the importance of not letting precious materials leave the country in exchange for fashion objects or extravagant building materials.

At the centre of these two arguments are order and economy, the former concerned with the risks of poverty inside society and its impact on social relations; the latter particularly targeting the effect of imported luxus products on the resources of the state. To classify the first argument as ethical would not be too far off the mark. The second one is undoubtely economic, and as by Hermansson & Lindgreen, Pufendorf & Lossius, and many other thinkers of the period, luxus is targeted from an outside perspective when the arguments are drawn from the economic arsenal: imported products threat the trade balance. As members of society are employed for different tasks, excessive expenses in their dress act as an ordering principle made visible ”for the sake of order and public utility”, but also constitute a danger to social cohesion. That order is maintained when the social members are easily recognized, is typical for what has been dubbed the ethical purpose for sumptuary legislation. It is also the concern with political power and social order, with the whole of society, instead of with the individual, that one should understand the idea of luxurious architecture. In both

---

153 Grönwall-Pratenius 1726, p. 3.
155 Ibid. p. 17–18.
156 Ibid. p. 18: “Longum nimis foret omnem perstringere luxum, qui circa cibum potumque exercetur.”
157 Grönwall-Pratenius 1726, p. 18–19, 24.
159 Grönwall-Pratenius 1726, p. 21: “boni ordinis, ac publici usus caussa”
dissertations thus far, it is only public luxury which can be accepted: it does help impress foreign visitors and as such boast the glory of the state and it does not create emulation, which would threaten social cohesion.

The dissertation presents arguments centred around the conclusion that moderation is the only solution. The premises are arguments which reject luxurious behaviour as dangerous to the well-being of the state. Expenses for food, dress, housing and furniture are all a threatening to economic, social and political order. Still, it would be unwise to only highlight these standard arguments. The starting point of the dissertation, and also of the overarching argumentation against luxus, is the individual human being and its natural level of consumption. As this natural level also is a moderate level, one could talk of an anthropological constant. Having broken the laws of nature, the first victim of luxus is then the individual himself, who starts degenerating both in body in mind.\(^\text{161}\) This argument has been classified as the anthropological.

### 2.1.2.4 Concluding remarks

As a part of the wider discussion on the virtue of moderation, *Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus* shows the width of the luxus debate within the dissertation material. In most respects it does share both the definition and the argumentation with Hermansson & Lindgreen’s *Voluptates reipublicae noxias*. The differences, for instance, in the use of the anthropological argument, can at least to some extent be explained by the theme of the dissertation. For it starts with the moderation of men’s desires, and does not have the dangers of the state as its central theme.

When one compares the two dissertations with previous Swedish research one finds both agreements and deviations. Examples of the former are the political, ethic and economic arguments. A deviation is the lack of Gothic-national arguments. The reason for this can most probably be explained by the authority of antiquity in general but in particular for the topic of luxury. Moreover, the allure of Gothicism had started to decline after the Great power era.\(^\text{162}\)

Noted in both dissertations, the importance of Roman authors as authorities for both the definition and the argumentation might also explain why neither dissertation ruminates on sexual pleasures as an area of luxury, despite the formative influence of Christian authors on the concept of luxury.\(^\text{163}\) Another possible explanation would be that it would be improper to dwell at any lengths on descriptions of sexual excess.

\(^{161}\) Grönwall-Pratenius 1726, p. 1–4.

\(^{162}\) Lindroth 1975b, p. 305.

\(^{163}\) Berry 1994, p. 87.
2.1.3 Meditationes nonnullas luxum ejusque in republica effectum exhibentes (1743)

2.1.3.1 Preliminary considerations
Published almost twenty years later, in 1743, another dissertation on the topic was written under the presidium of professor Grönwall, Meditationes nonnullas luxum ejusque in republica effectum exhibentes ("Some meditations on luxury and its effects in the state"). In the wider context, it takes as its point of departure the relation between luxury and the state (res publica) and is in this sense closely related to Voluptates reipublicae nocias from 1722. But seen against the background of von Höpken’s speech, delivered just two years earlier, the dissertation offers a tentative possibility to see if there is an awareness of new opinions.

After a brief exordium on the general ills of luxus, the respondent Olavus Roswall provides a definition, lists the areas where it is manifested, treats the reasons for luxus and finally suggests measures to handle it. In terms of disposition then, the dissertation is very similar to previous publications. Further similarities are detected in the content, both in the definition of luxury and the arguments against it.

2.1.3.2 Definition
Regarding the definition, the author says: “The concept of luxury signifies a certain immoderate care for the body and the pleasures” which does not submit to reason and leads to reckless spending on “delicate dresses, sumptuous feasts, expensive furniture, all too grand buildings, in short, all things vain, perishable and wasteful.”164 Not shying away from contemporary luxury maladies, the author also assigns the love of cosmetics, mirrors and games to the category named “care of the body” (cultum ipsius corporis).165 To all intents and purposes, this definition is similar to the ones which have been extracted from previous dissertations, identical to “a way of life where sensuous excesses breach social norms”.166 It also is connected to a general weakening of the mind and body, as luxury accustoms humans to soft dresses and delicate food. This is also similar to the Roman historian Livy’s fear of the feminization of soldiers through luxury.167

2.1.3.3 Argumentation
In the argumentation by now familiar premises and conclusions are stacked on each other for a total rejection of luxus. Luxus in dress creates social confusion and underpins emulation, for

164 Grönwall & Roswall 1743, p. 3: “Notio luxus nobis heic significat, immodicam quandam corporis, voluptatumque curam, atque rationi non obtemperantem, in molliores vestes, latiores epulas, pretiosiorem supellectilim, splendidiore aedes, aliasque res vanas et fluctas, opum profusionem.”
165 Ibid. p. 3.
instance, when the nobility dress up their servants.\textsuperscript{168} Moreover, luxus leads to the dissipation of wealth and the wrecking of morals; in short it poses a serious threat to the state.\textsuperscript{169}

Despite all these similarities, there are indeed some signs that the author is engaging with ideas similar to those forwarded by von Höpken. This alternate luxus view favoured consumption of luxus products manufactured domestically that in turn would favour the arts. A very important role was assigned to the arts for the well-being of the nation, creating employment and increasing wealth.\textsuperscript{170} Exactly this position is attacked by Grönwall & Roswall, for in the discussion of the causes of luxus it is precisely the artisans who are partly to blame: they are the ones who feed the luxus by provide luxury goods.\textsuperscript{171}

\textbf{2.1.3.4 Concluding remarks}

There are no direct quotations of von Höpken in the dissertation, but it is still possible that the author is answering to him indirectly, for when he says “I (we) can hardly be brought to believe that there would exist anyone, who seriously and to the best of his knowledge and belief would maintain that luxury is publically or privately beneficial” the plural form (we) is used instead of the singular (I), so called pluralis modestiae.\textsuperscript{172} This is typically used to minimize the role of the author and to show deference. It is tempting to see von Höpken as one of the prime recipients of such deference.

\textbf{2.1.4 Summary 1722–1743}

So far, three dissertations have been presented, published between 1722 and 1743. To some extent different, e.g. in terms of the perspectives \textit{moderamen} and \textit{voluptates}, yet they all have a common purpose: to argue for the danger of luxus from the perspective of the individual or the state, using the classical world as one of the primary sources.

To a large degree the dissertations also share the same definition of luxus as being an excessive enjoyment of food, drink, clothes, etcetera. This is a definition found in Roman authors, being a common didactic material of the time perused by the students in their effort to perfect their Latin. Some examples are taken from more recent times which also shows that the material does not only consists of reproductions, but is also a reaction to contemporary phenomena. Still the purpose(s) of the texts must not be forgotten: to present a dissertation in Latin and defend it in Latin. A display of knowledge of classical sources was a key ingredient in this situation.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item Grönwall & Roswall 1743, p. 8.
  \item Ibid. p. 4, 11
  \item Wieselgren 1912, p. 24 ff.
  \item Grönwall & Roswall 1743, p. 7–8.
  \item Grönwall & Roswall 1743, p. 7–8.
  \item Ibid. p. 11: “Ad credendum vix adducimur, fore qvempiam, qvi serio & ex anims sui sententia contenderit, luxum publice aut privatim esse utilem.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The recurring quotes of Samuel Pufendorf are noteworthy. His influence as a theorist of
natural law was immense, and it has been pointed out that theories of natural law impacted on
the economic discussion in the 18th century, often providing support for claims that also the
economy needed to be developed by reason: just as the state was a higher point of development
sprung from human reason, so manufactures represented a development from more primitive
agriculture.\textsuperscript{173} \textit{De legissumptuariis} does show awareness of new ideas on luxury, but remains
critical of them. So even though Pufendorf’s natural law may have influenced mercantilist
thought, it had little to say in support of luxury. Nonetheless, that the dissertation presided over
by him is one of the most frequently cited authorities suggests that a wide readership indeed
could exist for dissertations, at least when published by figures of such magnitude as Pufendorf,
whose influence was massive, even mentioned as the most frequent authority referred to by
professor Grönwall.\textsuperscript{174} Furthermore, it suggests that understanding of the luxury concept and
arguments not only came directly from classical sources also mediated through more recent
authorities.

As has been seen, most of the arguments in the three dissertations can be classified as
political, economic, ethic and anthropological. With only some exceptions, they can largely be
correlated to the types of arguments put forth by other sources, both from English and Swedish
source material.\textsuperscript{175} The major exception is the lack of well developed Gothic-national arguments,
which although not a central piece of larger works on economy, yet constituted a standard
component of the anti-luxus repertoire in the Age of Liberty. According to this argument,
consumption of foreign products where to be rejected as they vain and contrary to Swedish
modesty and manliness.\textsuperscript{176} It is true that terms such as effeminization do appear, but they are
seldom parts of larger arguments where virtues particular to the Swedish nation are central. Also
the scanty of theological arguments is surprising, although previous research has pointed out
that these arguments had their hey-day in the 17th century.\textsuperscript{177} As the definition almost exclusively
conforms to Roman writers, it is highly likely that also the argumentation is more inspired by
classical sources than patristic material. This has also been suggested as one of the reasons why
carnal excesses are not discussed at length. Still, the prudency of the times must not be
overlooked.

As Pufendorf & Lossius showed awareness of new ideas of luxus, it is hard to to conclude
that the dissertations actively respond to ideas which were new to the 1700s. That is, they show

\begin{footnotes}
\item[173] Lindroth 1975c, p. 536–537; Magnusson 1999, p. 262–263.
\item[174] Annerstedt 1914, p. 432.
\item[175] For instance Ek, Runfelt, Grugel-Pannier.
\item[176] Runefelt 2005, p. 117 ff.
\item[177] Ek 1959, p. 105.
\end{footnotes}
awareness of pro-luxury arguments, but they do not differ from what Pufendorf & Lossius challenged in 1672. The possible exception is the dissertation from 1743, which might be interpreted as a more direct response to von Höpken’s speech.
2.2 Interlude: Two early examples of a changed view on luxury in economic literature

In 1912 Wieselgren treated the Åbo dissertation *De luxu* (1748) as being the first dissertation to display an altered view of luxury. Prime inspiration is said to have come from Anders Berch’s treatise on economy *Inledning till allmänna boshållningen*, published the year before, already famous and destined to become a handbook in economics used until the 19th century.178 There is no doubt that Berch by virtue of being the first professor of oeconomia, or economy, during a time when the state was trying to establish the subject at the universities would have been read, discussed and a source of inspiration. And as we shall see, there is also no doubt that *De luxu* was an early example of new luxury conceptions. But taking other, previous dissertations into consideration, it is probable that such ideas already were circulating in the university world before 1748.

Although not a full-fledged luxury defence, Berch’s own dissertation (1731) does already show the contours of a new luxury conception. In its discussion of manufactures (chapter 22), Berch engages in an argument with a fictive opponent who would put the crude life style of the ancestors as a role model for contemporary society. Berch dismisses the position by holding the power of economic calculations as more beneficial for the state “than some old habit”.179 Moreover, what was previously regarded as luxury, he maintains, is a necessity today. Such a relativization of luxury was seen in other publications of the period, and has been identified as a characteristic feature of the wider European debate.180

Certain forces at the university did not fail to appreciate Berch’s radicalism. Not only because the author furthered the idea of a new chair of economy at the university – which he himself would be the first to hold a decade later – but also because of the thesis’ function as an overall economic program for the Hat party, attempts at censorship were initiated, which ultimately, however, proved fruitless.181

In 1741, Andreas Drysén, an even more outspoken author and supporter of a new economic rationale, defended his dissertation *De oeconomia camerali et commerciis* (“On cameral oeconomia and commerce”) under the presidium of university adjunct and royal historian-to-be Sven Bring (later ennobled Lagerbring). It is a work celebrating the prime virtues of new economic thought. Oeconomia, the author says, supplies man not only with the necessities for existing, but for a good life; its goal is the gathering of wealth, and without wealth states decline and the arts decay.

---

179 Berch 1726, p. 23.
181 Annerstedt 1914, p. 277.
It is wrong to believe, as people were once wont to, that luxury was the cause of decline of states; on the contrary, “when rightly moderated” luxury can become useful instead of harmful. The true source of decline is poverty. It is poverty which creates criminality and corrupts the population, and in times when warfare is becoming increasingly expensive a poor nation cannot sustain itself against wealthier enemies.

As with Berch, it is within the framework of oeconomia that the new luxury conception takes form. Oeconomia was, broadly speaking, the study and promotion of the wealth and resources of the state and had a strong connection to mercantilism, the dominant economic discourse from the 17th primarily addressing how nations become wealthy, often in a discussion of trade regulations. As old ideals of poverty are rejected when national wealth becomes the prime goal of the science of oeconomia, the author has to reflect on his position on luxury. The answer is an argumentation which rejects the ubiquity of luxury’s corruptive influence. Instead, luxury consumption is viewed as a possible source of wealth provided it is controlled by sumptuary legislation. Most importantly, luxury products must not be imported and unnecessary consumption curtailed (sumtuum minus utilium). Although the author does not provide a distinct definition of luxury, it appears that the concept has lost its general meaning of “a way of life where sensuous excesses breach social norms.” The new definition allows a “moderated luxury”; in fact “moderation” has already appeared as a key concept in the debate, and it will do so in the new contributions to the debate: for no pro-luxury writer embraces a view of luxury which is without control, without moderation.

Although neither Berch nor Bring & Drysén offer a developed defence of luxury, they both illustrate new tendencies in economic thought, unseen in the three previous dissertations. The attempts at censorship also show the radicalness of the new subject of economy, at least through the eyes of many contemporaries. It seems logical that it was only in 1748 that a full dissertation, De luxu, was dedicated to the question of the benefits of luxury. But as shall be seen, it was far from a full defence of luxury.

---

182 Bring & Drysén 1741, p. 34: "Iniuria tamen in hac classe luxus collicare videtur, nam si probe temperetur, odiosam naturam exuit, & utilis potius quam noxius est futurus."
183 Bring & Drysén 1741, p. 1–2.
185 Bring & Drysén 1741, p. 27.
186 Ibid. p. 21.
2.3 The period 1743–1765

2.3.1 De Luxu (1748)

2.3.1.1 Preliminary considerations
The dissertation *De Luxu* (“On luxury”) was published in Åbo in the year 1748 under the presidium of Henricus Hassel, professor of rhetoric. To be precise, the respondent, Olof Gustorff, had defended his *Theses miscellaneae* (pro exercitio) one year before – also under Hassel’s presidium – which already contained remarks that were new in the face of traditional grievances against luxury. But as luxus was only treated in a few short theses ideationally overlapping with *De luxu*, the attention is here given the content of that dissertation.

A study of the close to 120 dissertations under Hassel’s presidium suggests that the praeses had a major influence on the themes treated by the respondents. In what may be labelled a collaborative authorship, topics deemed useful were given to the students by Hassel and their texts were later improved on by him.188 What useful implied can be understood as a mixture of Enlightenment ideals eschewing any criticism of Christianity. This was a general feature of the intellectual development of the period, but it was particularly strong at Åbo University.189

Although the title suggests nothing radical, the dissertation is one of the earliest examples of a changed view on luxury and consumption, and was named as such early on.190 Considering the two previous dissertations with titles equally well adapted to their content, it is tempting to see this culture of utility as inspirational to the sober treatment of oeconomia and luxury. But despite its neutral appearance, the new view on luxus can be seen both in the definition of the term and in the argumentation.

2.3.1.2 Definition
Luxury, according to Hassel & Gustorff, means the use of “commercial goods” (*rerum commercium*) “for the sake of enjoyment and ostentation” (*ornatus et delectationis causa*), and it relates to wider areas like victuals, dress, housing, and more specifically to products such as delicate food and drink, pleasure gardens, palaces and expensive dresses, including those which are given to servants.191 These areas and the products are similar, if not identical, to previous dissertations, reflecting both traditional authors and contemporary phenomena.

Still, two significant changes are discernible. First, that luxury is not simply understood as excess but use; second, that luxury is assumed as a function of commerce. In choosing “for the

---

189 Ibid. p. 205–208.
190 Wieselgren 1912, p. 30.
191 Hassel & Gustorff 1748, p. 1–2.
sake of enjoyment and ostentation”, the author starts from a definition grounded in less offensive terms than words related to excess. In the previous theses, luxury was excessive consumption in general, relating to specific areas including dice games and masquerades, but was never explicitly connected to commerce. As with the other choices of words, the emphasis on commerce becomes more understandable as the argumentation unfolds.

2.3.1.3 Arguments
To provide a first argument in support of his re-evaluation of luxury, Hassel-Gustorff makes use of an argument which might be classified as anthropological or philosophical, but which also could be called theological: since the Creator has provided man with the products and tools needed for manufacture, and since there exist more resources than needed for mere subsistence, consumption over the limits of sheer necessity is natural, and thus luxury is an anthropological constant. This argument is typical for the age, where the ideas of oeconomia, or mercantilism, were deeply suffused with religious sentiments – or at least religious arguments were frequently used by mercantilist thinkers, who posited that divine law encompassed economy and that it therefore was the obligation of man to extract the nation’s resources, refine them and with their aid increase national wealth. In the minds of mercantilist thinkers, economy was “a religious act”. The argument for the use of products *ornatus et delectationis causa* is clearly built on the same line of thought.

But not only the presence of resources, but also the omnipresence of a human taste for refinement suggests the importance of luxury. Hardly anyone, the author argues, could be found who makes use of only that which is absolutely necessary for their survival. To support this claim, the author discusses the omnipresence of enjoyment and ostentation in different age groups. Among infants, in their joy of food and playthings, this desire is already present, and then it manifests itself among grown-ups, even staying among the elderly, among whom, the author claims, it is impossible to find anyone not capable of taking delight in the use of objects which are not there for the sake of mere conservation.

To further reinforce the claim of a constant presence of luxury, a plethora of examples are brought forth from different social groups and different geographical areas. At fairs, farmers of modest refinement marvel at products of the smallest value; in Africa, the savage Hottentots use little stones as ornaments in their ears; in Lapland, the inhabitants add fringes to their shaggy dresses. That is, from pole to pole, civilized and uncivilized alike find pleasure in things which are

193 Hassel & Gustorff 1748, p. 6: “Nec enim facile quisquam vel in hoc vitae spatio reperietur, quem nihil adficiat, nisi quid ad conservationem ipsius absolute sit necessarium”
194 Ibid. p. 5–6.
not necessary for their mere subsistence. A similar argumentation for the ubiquity of luxury had appeared in Mandeville, who pointed to both Hottentots and bishops as luxurious, and in 1765, the same emphasis on the relativization of luxury would be present in St. Lambert’s entry on luxury in l’Encyclopédie. De Luxu, then, is a specimen of the European debate.

Not only is this luxury wide-spread and present from birth, it is also sanctioned by the Creator. It is through divine ordinance that man above all other animals has been assigned the role of extracting and refining the products of the earth. That things are present in an abundance on earth and not only for the mere conservation of life, but also for pleasure, can be easily grasped even by someone not well versed in the subject, the author asserts.

Having argued for the ubiquity of luxury, his next step is to consider the possible advantages and disadvantages of luxury. It is advantageous because it nurtures industry and promotes the arts “without which a cultivated life is impossible”. It does so, because the consumption of luxury products gives the artisans or other producers of goods the opportunity of profit. Luxury products may not ease basic needs – a lowly hut or a spacious palace may be equally potent in keeping the cold at bay, but they are necessary for the growth of the arts by virtue of nurturing them. Were luxury to be prohibited, how many arts would not go to ruin, the author asks. In sum: without luxury, no profit, without profit, no industry and no arts.

This argumentation has its origin in Mandeville, was furthered by French thinkers and found its proponent in von Höpken. It has at its heart the perception that the well-being of the state rests on its wealth, on the valour of its oeconomia. In that sense the ideas in De luxu are not new; in De oeconomia camerali et commerciis the benefits of luxury were already seen from the vantage point of oeconomia, but here the argumentation is more detailed. In the wider perspective of luxury criticism, however, it is a change of considerable importance, and it impacts – as already seen – on the concept itself.

Yet, the author is careful to circumscribe his radical standpoint. Roman history has taught that “in the same way luxury is a good servant is it an awful master”, and to avoid being ruled by luxury, man is by no means to abandon his reason when consuming and should also promote certain types of luxuries over others. The model for this kind of balanced individual having the

195 Hassel & Gustorff 1748, p. 6.
196 Berry 1994, p. 129; Terjanian 2013, p. 43–44.
197 Hassel & Gustorff 1748, p. 4.
198 Ibid. p. 3.
199 Ibid. p. 8–9; “sine qvibus ne concepi quidem potest vita exculta”
200 Ibid. p. 8.
202 Hassel & Gustorff, p. 9: “Ut enim optime servit, ita pessime dominator”
ability to use luxury products is provided by none other than the Roman politician, rhetorician and luxury critic, Marcus Tullius Cicero.\textsuperscript{203}

Hassel’s argumentation also has an impact on the definition of luxury. For it is now clear that the initial definition of luxury as the use of commercial products presupposes both reason and control. In the following dissertations this emphasis on moderation will become even more manifest. In fact, similar ideas were present in other sources of the era, such as later writings of economist Berch and the historian Anders Botin, who both maintained that luxury could be beneficial as long as it was moderated.\textsuperscript{204}

After the discussion of moderation, the argumentation returns to the commercial benefits of luxury and to the luxuries to be promoted above others. Common to the luxury products profitable for a nation is that they have been manufactured domestically, which ensures that wealth stays within the country. Consuming costly products manufactured abroad instead means that riches leave the nation to fill foreign coffers, strengthening foreign powers. History furnishes numerous exempla of this process: it was in this way that superpowers like Tyre and Carthage generated their wealth and power in antiquity and the same process applies for recent nations as well, for example Venice, France and England.\textsuperscript{205}

Yet, that also the domestic luxury consumption must be circumscribed is something which economic logic (\textit{oeconomiae ratio}) demands: on the one hand, because industry and arts in the homeland are too underdeveloped to be able to compete with foreign products in regards to prices, which will be an incitement for smugglers; on the other because the supplies of raw material might be exhausted.\textsuperscript{206}

\textbf{2.3.1.4 Concluding remarks}

Despite these two conditions, and despite the addition of further restraints largely of traditional stock, e.g. the fear of social confusion due to luxury in dress, the view of Hassel & Gustorff is radical for its time. The traditional luxury concept, conceived in antiquity and nurtured by the following centuries held luxury as equivalent to excess. Positing the use of commercial goods “for the sake of enjoyment” (\textit{delectationis causa}) at is centre, the definition of Hassel & Gustorff instead understands luxury as natural and beneficial, provided it is controlled by reason. As was the case in \textit{De oconomia camerali et commerciis}, the keyword in this new luxury conception is a moderate luxury, a concept of considerable importance for contemporary thought.

\textsuperscript{203} Ibid. p. 11.
\textsuperscript{205} Hassel & Gustorff, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid. p. 22–23.
That the author was aware of this radicalism and even expected a negative reaction is supported by the last paragraph of the dissertation. Instead of containing a summary of the arguments and a final attempt at convincing the audience, normal to the pernarratio of the typical disposition, the author discusses the possibility of reducing the wicked type of luxury through education.\textsuperscript{207} By itself strange in terms of dispositional choice, seen against the backdrop of previous argumentation this is strongly contradictive. This lack of rhetorical clarity suggests on the one side the speculative method of the author, on the other side a final caution against possible backlashes; the latter seems more probable in this case. One is wise to remember the third type of receiver of the text: the censor. Since the dissertation was meant to pass through censorship and be the stepping stone for a career, any position must be tempered against the rules, in this particular case not defending positions which could be perceived as immoral or contrary to state interests. If the author was aware that attempts were made to censor Berch in 1731 remains unknown, but that the question could be perceived as sensitive, although the chair of oeconomia had been installed in Uppsala in 1741, is clear.

2.3.2 Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans (1752)

2.3.2.1 Preliminary considerations
1752 in Lund, the dissertation Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans (“An examination of some precautions regarding commerce”) was defended by Johan Gram. Sven Bring, one of the prominent intellectuals of the day deeply influenced by Enlightenment ideas – as would later be obvious in his historical production and stress on source criticism – acted the part of praeses.\textsuperscript{208} Bring had, as can be recalled, eleven years earlier been involved in a dissertation displaying a new view of luxury, namely De oeconomia camerali et commerciis. In this second dissertation the topic of luxury once more occurs in the discussion of commerce. Its purpose is to investigate the fundamental base of commerce, that which sustains commercial enterprises and in turn enriches the state, giving it “strength and growth”.\textsuperscript{209} Among the topics under discussion are food, drink, freedom and thrift, all of which benefit commerce and manufactures: in order to have a large population, i.e. many manufacturers and consumers, victuals must be in abundance; to maximise economic growth, certain trade regulations must be sloped, others enacted; and a nation’s industry can only prosper through toil and thrift. It is against this very mercantilist background

\textsuperscript{207} Hassel & Gustorff, p. 25–26.
\textsuperscript{208} Lindroth, 1975c, p. 14, 37, 678.
\textsuperscript{209} Bring & Gram 1752, p. 1.
that the last chapter on luxus must be understood, as luxus brings several of these fundamentals of commerce together.\textsuperscript{210}

2.3.2.2 Definition
Straight away the author makes the definition of the much disputed luxus concept the subject of his discussion, establishing that “Luxus is the abundance and use of things necessary, useful and delightful.”\textsuperscript{211} As in previous pro-luxury dissertations, a definition is used where positively charged words play an important role: “necessary” implies basic needs, “useful” is a word with considerable positive connotation in 18th century Swedish enlightened culture, and “pleasant” lacks connotations of degeneration and echoes rather of refinement. Moreover, to designate luxury objects as necessary, useful and pleasant objects is in itself an attack against those who would see human life constrained by objects of mere necessity.\textsuperscript{212} Luxury is both that which is necessary and delightful. In \textit{De oconomia camerali et commerciis}, it can be remembered, economy was praised precisely because it brought not just necessities, but wealth to men.\textsuperscript{213}

That luxury is both the \textit{abundance} and the \textit{use} of these objects allows for a further subdivision, that between a moderate and an immoderate luxury. Humans should only be allowed an abundant consumption as long as it is \textit{moderatus}. \textit{Moderatus luxus} means a mode of consumption which does not hurt the household fortunes or inflicts damage on the body. It also means the consumption of products manufactured within the state. By introducing the concept moderate luxury it is possible for the author to separate one strand of luxus from \textit{intemperance}, thus counteracting several of the standard arguments levelled against luxury.\textsuperscript{214} What remains is a luxus which can be tamed so that it does not damage the individual or the state. As seen, this position is shared by other writers of the era: they eschewed an uninhibited luxury, conditioning their defence on the virtue of moderation. As in previous dissertations, this type of redefinition is essential to the argumentation.

2.3.2.3 Arguments
To begin with the author undermines the main argument against luxury, i.e. that luxus corrupts individuals and as a consequence destroys empires. It is true, the author concedes, that individuals and families have been corrupted by excessive consumption and as consequence also the state, but it was not luxus \textit{moderatus} which destroyed the great empires of history; that was the accomplishment of luxus \textit{immoderatus}. Support for this claim is also offered by the luxurious

\textsuperscript{210} Ibid. p. 6–7, 10–11, 20–21.
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid. p. 31: “affluentia & usus rerum necessariarum, utilium & jucundarum.”
\textsuperscript{212} Ibid., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{213} Bring & Drysén 1741, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{214} Bring & Gram 1752, p. 29, 32.
Frenchmen and Englishmen of the day: their empires would long ago have crumbled if mere consumption was the cause of state rot.  

Instead of being a corruptor, luxus is one of the fundamental bases of trade and a source of growth. Two arguments for the position that luxury exerts a positive influence on state well-being are that luxus consumption nourishes the arts and feeds the poor. This position was already met in a dissertation published thirty years earlier, Voluptates reipublicae nocias, and more by contempt and hostility – it must be said – than rational arguments. Luxury also confers benefits to the rich, in the shape of products which add to their enjoyment of life. What is more, luxus creates a bigger population through its attraction of foreigners. The growth in population creates further possible buyers. For domestic commerce, then, a moderate luxury consumption is nothing but advantageous, and benefits the state rather than ruins it. In supporting its pro-luxury arguments with the possible benefits for employment, population and industry, the author reveals himself as a typical defender of luxury.

2.3.2.4 Concluding remarks
Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans shares thoughts with the previous dissertation where Bring was involved, such as the idea of a moderate luxury. Moreover, the role of luxury as a causative force in history is under discussion. As with previous mercantilist writers, luxury is not seen as a destroyer of the world: it is wealth which creates empires, and if wealth is dependent on commerce, luxury has a role to play, albeit circumscribed.

The types of arguments can be mainly classified as either economic in the sense that luxury is seen primarily as connected to commerce and wealth. The question of social order, for instance, is not covered in the dissertation. This can probably be explained by the limited scope of the dissertation.

2.3.3 De legibus sumtuaris (1755)

2.3.3.1 Preliminary considerations
In 1755 De legibus sumtuaris (“On sumptuary laws”) was defended by Ericus Waller. Laurentius Dahlman, who had succeeded Anders Grönwall as professor ethicus et politicus (practical philosophy) in Uppsala 1748, held presidium. The title puts the work in the debate on the use

---

215 Ibid. p. 31.
216 Ibid. p. 33.
217 Ibid. p. 33.
218 Sekora 1977, p. 113.
219 Annerstedt 1914, p. 432.
of sumptuary legislation and Pufendorf appears as one of the authorities, but it is also partaking in the wider discussion of luxus, referring to both Melon and Montesquieu.

Having concerned himself with the definition of luxus and the difference between useful and wicked luxus, the author refutes Sparta as an ideal, commends Athens and luxurious France, turns then to the actual laws themselves and discusses why certain laws must exist to ban wicked luxus. The theme of the dissertation is a delineation of what constitutes on the one hand a moderate luxury useful for the state (*usu civitatis*), and on the other a type of luxury that is corrupting, and in consequence in need of legislation.\(^{220}\)

Like Pufendorf & Lossius’ *De legibus sumptuariis* (1672), this treatment of sumptuary laws is concerned with luxury, its meanings and its role in society. But in comparison to the earlier dissertation, Dahlman & Waller provide a defence of moderate luxury consumption seeing its positive effects for the state. As with the two previous pro-luxury dissertations, the defence proceeds from the opening discussion of the definition.

### 2.3.3.2 Definition

Similar to Hassel-Gustroff’s *De luxu*, which defined luxus as products of trade serving ostentation and pleasure, and similar to *Nonnullas circa commercia cautelas examinans*, where luxus was held to be the use of things necessary, Dahlman & Waller adopt a definition which in itself is neutral: \(^{221}\) “All that we expend for our use which has a bigger price or copiousness than that which nature by necessity needs, is superfluous and goes by us under the name of luxury.”\(^{222}\) While it is true that the definition differs from the two aforementioned dissertations in that it does not encompass commercial goods nor holds the use of necessities to be luxury, it does agree on one keyword: *usu*, “use”. This choice of word, antonymous of *abusus*, holds special importance by virtue of not being pejorative by default.

In the next classificatory step – also similar to the two dissertations – luxus is further subdivided: there exists one type of luxus which in itself is base (*luxus per se*), such as drunkenness, and there exists another type, possibly good and beneficial to man in his earthly condition, a type which lends him “lawful pleasures” and “conveniences”. This luxus type can only be bad *per accidens*, i.e. through abuse.\(^{223}\) The luxury concept is consequently ambivalent, lacking the absolute value it had in traditional luxury criticism, and ambivalence was also typical of the conceptual changes the term underwent in other places in Europe.\(^{224}\) More importantly,

\(^{220}\) Dahlman & Waller 1755, p. 8.

\(^{221}\) Hassel & Gustorff 1748, p. 1–2; Bring & Gram 1752, p. 31.

\(^{222}\) Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 6: “Quicquid, majoris pretii vel copiae; ad nostros usus impendimus, quam quo natura, paucis content, necessario eget, id superfluum est, robisque Luxurie nomine venit.”

\(^{223}\) Ibid. p. 6.

\(^{224}\) Terjanian 2013, p. 54; Wyrva 2003, p. 51.
however, it lends man the freedom of luxury enjoyment, all the while placing moderation at the centre.

As held by previous defenders of luxury, luxus needs to be reined in; it needs to be *moderatus* to be beneficial.\(^{225}\) Again, this subdivision makes it possible to defend luxus from many classical arguments, but it also helps discern between objects of luxury which are good and bad respectively, the former of which according to his line of reasoning share the following characteristics: first of all, the objects of beneficial luxus are those commodities which benefit either the individual or the state, but preferably both at the same time. More importantly, useful luxury products share a domestic origin and are made from a material which is rich in abundance and would not compromise a nation’s trade balance. In this sense, luxurious architecture can be accepted as a class of useful luxury, as long as the state is not to suffer from the lack of such material, and in consequence would be forced to import it. Such architecture would on the other hand be an example of an immoderate luxury type.

2.3.3.3 Argumentation
That the individual and the state are the two standards by which luxus is to be measured is easily inferred from the argumentation, which supports the overarching conclusion that one type of luxus can indeed be useful for the individual and the state, and that this type should be furthered, while the other types must be counteracted. The dissertation uses an argumentation including both pro and contra arguments.

The counter argumentation is an attempted rebuttal of several of the classical arguments against luxus and it is needed to convince the reader that luxus can indeed be beneficial. It is obviously false that God or nature prohibits all consumption but that which is absolutely necessary for man’s conservation, the author insists – like Hassel & Gustorff – because in that case the affluence on earth would be superfluous. That pride is nurtured by luxury consumption will be all but a temporal concern, for as time passes, man will become used to life’s beneficial and enjoyable products and find less pride in using them. It can also not be correct that society is corrupted by luxury – is it indeed not poverty which creates crime rather than wealth, he asks himself.\(^{226}\) For an ancestral, simpler life-style, the author likewise shows little understanding, deeming it raw and unkempt.\(^{227}\) The same kind of lack of understanding for any kind of argument from the ancestors was exhibited by Anders Berch in 1726.\(^{228}\)

\(^{225}\) Bring & Gram 1752, p. 32; Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 10.
\(^{226}\) Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 6–7.
\(^{227}\) Ibid. p. 6–7.
\(^{228}\) Berch 1726, p. 23.
argument, strong in other sources at the time, has not been present in the dissertations, this is clearly a refutation of that position.

The author also treats the exemplum of Rome, specifically the fall of the Roman republic, so often used in argumentation for sumptuary legislation. Luxury legislation must be dependent on the wealth and the amount of luxury. What happened in Rome must not happen in every state. It would be much wiser, he contends, to look to France, a nation where moderate luxury has created wealth rather than corruption.229 This is a typical way of defence against the argument of Rome, also employed by Bring-Gram (1741), who used both the French and the English as counterexamples in their rejection of such unforgiving generalizations.230

Another counterargument used against the hoary exemplum of Rome is based on a view of history where wealth and luxury play a civilizing role. In this conception, the author traces the origin of beneficial luxury to the oldest of times from when it took gradual steps aided by both the arts and the sciences. Luxury is therefore a by-product of civilisation.231 When one posits this view of history against the exemplum of Rome, where luxury was both symptom and cause of decline, one sees that luxury is posited as an opposite to decadence, being both a cause and symptom of progress. In a European context the same argument had a contemporary advocate in Hume, who contended that luxury could be a positive force in history.232

Not only the lessons of Roman history have been misleading, but also Sparta must be refuted as an image of virtue, he adds. Some claim that “Spartan parsimony” was the source of their greatness – but were the Spartans really more outstanding in power and glory than “voluptuous Athens”, he asks rhetorically. In a prime example of argumentum ab auctoritate, the author refers to the Greek biographer Plutarch, who listed more exceptional Athenians than Spartans, seven compared to four “and that is with the exception of Socrates and Plato”.233

The recurrence of Rome must be seen against the background of the Enlightenment debates. As has been shown by research, the role of Antiquity in Enlightenment thought was not a minor one.234 In France, Voltaire defended Athens while Rousseau chose Sparta as his ideal of a good state. Next to civic humanism and virtue, luxury and frugality were central characteristics of that debate.235 While the presence of Rome in the Swedish luxury debates has not completely been unmentioned, a much stronger emphasis on Rome and also antiquity appears in the dissertation

---

229 Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 9, 14.
230 Bring & Gram 1752, p. 31.
231 Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 6.
232 Sekora 1977, p. 120–121.
233 Ibid. p. 10.
234 Bourgault 2013, p. 437.
material. As has been seen previously, Roman authors, especially Tacitus, and the general knowledge of classical history played a decisive role in providing material and examples for the argumentation in the academic luxury debates. Naturally, the argumentation for luxury within the academic luxury debate also had to contend with these arguments and did so by furnishing counter examples from history and contemporary states.

With the assumption that the number of inhabitants and their wealth constitute the basis for the stability of the nation, the argumentation pro-luxury starts from state interests. For it is exactly through luxus that these are furthered: First, in that luxury creates circulation of wealth otherwise stored up, and wealth, once it has become accessible to more people, will further thrift. Second, in that more children will be begotten, as parents with more assets have more hopes of being able to nurture their offspring. It would be apt to classify this type of arguments as economic, as they both are assumed causes for national wealth.

2.3.3.4 Concluding remarks
Like previous luxury defenders, Dahlman & Waller propose a definition of luxury based on the idea of a use of products. The choice of the Latin word usus indicates a much more neutral position, semantically connected to utility and far removed from the pejorative connotations luxury usually conveyed, such as excess or abuse. With pro-luxury writers, Dahlman & Waller also have the perspective of oeconomia in common. To them, luxury is laudable if it benefits the state. But to be beneficial it has to be moderated, which most often is equal to sumptuary legislations or other measures.

The most obvious argument is the one based on an economic rationale, similar in many ways to the thoughts of Mandeville, Melon, and Voltaire. Present is also an argument which can be called philosophical or theological: abundance is a constant feature of the creation, always present to man, and it cannot be available for other reasons than to be developed and enjoyed. Noteworthy is also that luxury relates to an interpretation of history where antiquity plays a key role. Compared to other publications which have been investigated as participants in the luxury debate, such as laws, decrees, political tracts, the dissertations appear to build more strongly on arguments and examples gathered from classical sources. Finally, a conception of history reveals itself in the material, bound to luxury, wealth and civilization. That luxury is connected to a positive view of development in general has been glimpsed in the material previously as well. Two dissertations which particularly capture the importance of history in the luxury debates are

---

236 Runefelt 2005, p. 119.
237 Dahlmann & Waller 1755, p. 10–11.
Aphorisimi oeconomico-politico defended in Åbo in 1757 and Hypomnemata historica de luxu sviogothorum antiquo, defended in Lund in 1765, to which it is now time to turn.

2.3.4 Aphorisimi oeconomico-politico (1757)

In Aphorisimi oeconomico-politico (1757) Sigfrid Porthan treats various subjects relating to oeconomiae in eight reflections. A stern defender of mores, Porthan settles accounts with the idea of extended religious freedom, declaring it madness to allow “religious freedom” (libertatem conscientiae) to attract foreign artisans.238 But even less credence should be given to those who believe that luxury should be accepted for the benefit of the state, a topic to which he dedicates the first three reflections.

But it is not for its definition of luxus that the dissertation is interesting, nor is it for its argumentation, which in most respects is typical: luxus creates envy, which destroys the state – the political argument –; or luxus undermines mores and Christian doctrine – the theological argument, etc. rather, the dissertation is remarkable because it is answers directly to von Höpken’s speech on luxury by questioning his interpretation of Tacitus. It is unbelievable, Porthan wonders, that some men “otherwise very sagacious and in these very matters much learned” would maintain that the Roman corruption grew from other sources reasons than luxus.239 Is it not so, he goes on, that the causes they present – which von Höpken had taken from Tacitus and used in his 1741 speech – such as lack of laws, violence and corruption, have their origin precisely in luxus?

That Tacitus, and other Roman historians, had a special role in the academic luxury debate has been seen many times in this survey, especially in the dissertations having Pufendorf as one of their main authorities. That von Höpken used Tacitus, his favourite writer, as authority in his attempt to argue for luxury further shows how important a role antiquity in general, and Roman historians in particular, played even among those who were willing to take a pro-luxury stance. Hence, it would be too simplistic to see the argument from Rome as being only used by those who wanted to attack luxury. Antiquity was so important for the learned men of the time that it always could provide an example, even if one had to twist and turn the evidence in favour of the taken position. But this was not necessarily accepted by other thinkers. In Aphorisimi oeconomico-politico it is shown how one side, the traditional critics of luxus, was unwilling to give its right of interpretation.

238 Kalm & Porthan 1757, p. 6–7.
239 Ibid. p. 4: ”a sagacissimi ceteroquin ingenii, atque in hisce rebus exercitatissimis viris”
2.3.5 Hypomnemata historica de luxu sviogothorum antiquo (1765)

2.3.5.1 Preliminary considerations

In 1765, thirteen years after *Nonnullas circa commercia cantelas examinans*, another dissertation was presided over by Sven Bring: *Hypomnemata historica de luxu sviogothorum antiquo*, or “A historical survey of the ancient luxury of the Svio-Goths (Swedes)”. From a number of medieval sources respondens Johannes Qvist gathers examples of affluent dresses, banquets, fruit gardens, and the temple of Uppsala “shining with gold-plated walls” in his attempt to reject the position that the Swedes were a poor people during antiquity. In fact, he concludes, the ancient Swedes did not live in deprivation and were as prone to luxury as the Swedes of his own days.

This was not the first time that luxury was as a topic in a historical dissertation. About ten years earlier, in “A brief survey of the history of pomp in Sweden” (*Ett kort utkast till praktens historia i Sverige*), Carl William Strang had tried to compare the way of life in antiquity with his own times, ending up with the conclusion, that the development of man in the arts of sciences had made society better.

Bearing in mind the ideas of luxury’s historical importance surveyed in the previous dissertations it is clear that Bring & Qvist’s dissertation is not the only one understanding the question of luxury diachronically. But it is unique in the source material used for this thesis, by virtue of being the only purely historical study of luxury. The chronological disposition means that it also lacks a conventionally structured rejection or defence of luxury. It would be wrong, however, to imagine that is does not participate in the debate on luxury.

2.3.5.2 Definition

As early as in the first paragraph, the author contends that he does not belong to those who reject every kind of luxury as vain and dangerous to the state. In their rejection, he continues, the critics make the mistake of “attributing to luxury what are the errors of men.” Luxury signifies instead “the abundance and use of things necessary, useful and delightful”. This definition is the same as the one Gram offered in his dissertation, also presided over by Bring, which is suggestive of the importance of the praeses for the topic, an importance possibly stretching from mere inspiration to full authorship. The objects of luxury are not explicitly stated, but can be induced both from the text and previous dissertations with similar definition: they concern food, dress and architecture.

---

240 Bring & Qvist, 1765, p. 5–6: “parietes aureis fulgebant obducti laminis”
241 Ibid. p. 16.
242 Wieselgren 1912, p. 34–35.
243 Bring & Qvist, 1765, p. 3.
244 Ibid. p. 3.
245 Ibid. p. 31: “affluentia & usus rerum necessariarum, utilium & jucundarum”
2.3.5.3 Arguments
In several ways, Qvist’s dissertation is more radical than Strang’s work on the history of Swedish pomp. First of all, its main theme is to argue for the fact that Swedes always were luxurious: That a country’s historical level of luxury is something that needs to be researched and defended is in itself a radical position. But that the Goths, the proto-Swedes who often had been used as exemplum to counteract any kind of effeminizing luxury – albeit not frequently in the academic debate – were now called luxurious meant both a strong rejection of the projected virtues of the ancestors and, in consequence, also of the so called Gothic argument. It is true that Strang had conceded that antiquity had its own faults, that it was not better than the present, but celebrating the Goths as luxurious was a different thing. To understand this, one has to remember that the prime enemy in economic, or mercantilist, thought had become poverty, rather than luxury and excess.

The author also tries to reject the classical theological argument by showing the connection between religion and luxury. For the transition from heathendom to Christendom did not mean the end of luxury. Instead luxury was accepted by the new religion as long as it was decorous, i.e. moderate. The noblemen learned from the Church how to build castles in stone. At the same time, new and elegant textiles and ways of dressing arrived in Scandinavia. Seeing the Church or Christianity as compatible with luxury, even furthering it, is an approach unlike that of previous authors.

Noteworthy, the author, like Hassel-Gustorff, saves a censure against luxury for the end of the text. Having started by identifying himself as a supporter of a moderate luxury, having sketched the history of luxury in Sweden, and doing so because he sees luxury as synonymous with wealth and prosperity, he ends the dissertation conceding that luxury in the old days probably was less harmful than today, because it was practised only by a few, and not widespread among the lower classes. The positioning of this criticism at the end of the text obscures the previous statements, much like Hassel-Gustorff’s discussion on how to combat the wicked sides of luxury. As similar choices of argumentation appear in two dissertations taking similar radical standpoints, they are likely insurances against criticism, either in the form of the opponent at the disputation or in the form of the censor. Worth noting in this context is that a dissertation was censured in 1722 because it was too critical of the Swedish-Gothic antiquity.

---

246 Wieselgren 1912, p. 35.
247 Bring & Qvist, 1765, p. 18.
250 Annerstedt 1914, p. 276, 346.
2.3.5.4 Concluding remarks

Hypomnemata historiae de lucu sviogothorum antiquo is unique in that it argues for luxury using Swedish history as a source for its arguments. It corresponds to the incipient idea of progress in the productions of Swedish 18th century historians, of whom Bring, or Lagerbring as he is normally referred to in Swedish historiography, was a representative: history shows human progress in areas of knowledge, culture, and civilisation. Increased wealth and increased consumption are parts of this picture. Lagerbring was not the only historian at the time concerning himself with luxury: Olof von Dalin noted the lack of wealth in the Middle Ages, that man was not aware of the benefits of domestic consumption.

Despite this general background, the dissertation is bold in its argumentation contending that the Goths were luxurious and that the Church not only accepted luxury but also brought new kinds of elegance in buildings and dresses. The definition is typical of the pro-luxury argumentation in general and is very similar to the ones proposed by both Gustorff and Gram, the other respondents under Bring’s presidium. This supports the importance of the praeses for the conception of the dissertations, either as an inspiration or direct author of the theses.

2.3.6 Concluding summary 1743–1765

Several new lines of thought appear in the source material of this period, related to the concept itself, the argumentation, and the sources for the ideas. What can be seen in the conceptual practice is the appearance of a new definition of luxus. It starts from a set of positive words, claiming luxury to be use rather than abuse. In the second step the separation of luxury into two types, luxus moderatus and immoderatus is proposed. What is called immoderate luxury does in many ways encompass the target of traditional luxury criticism: it is a luxury which degenerates men, undermines the economy and subverts the state. Moderate luxury, in contrast, is a practice of consumption which is regulated by reason; reasonable means both what is harmless to man and to the state in which he lives.

The significance of moderation for the luxury debates during The Age of Liberty has been noted before, but the heavy attention given to moderation especially in the definitions shows that it was as pivotal to the understanding of what luxury was and could be, and was lent a crucial role both in the definition and in the argumentation. For that the authors start by defining luxury does not only mean that they followed standard dispositions, but also that within this disposition the definition was central to the whole argumentation. Without a moderate luxury, the pro-luxury position was indefensible.

252 Wieselgren 1912, p. 33.
If one considers the areas related to luxury, they are now more than before focused on goods of trade. It is true that dress, food, architecture all involve the consumption of products which could be bought and sold, but the emphasis that words for commerce receives in the wording of the definitions suggests that the new definition is more focused on luxury as a feature of trade than before. This is understandable since luxury is being defended as a part of the wider advancing of the subject of economy.

The attention given to the definition of luxury was not only a Swedish phenomenon and most debates in the 18th century were focused on definitions. Thus, the influence of foreign ideas on the luxury debates cannot be disregarded: Mandeville, Melon, Hume, giants in the European luxury debate, all concerned themselves with the definition. But in Swedish publications partaking in the debate, the emphasis on the definition seems to have been particularly strong in the dissertations. When viewed together, the employment of specifically positive words like use, moderation and trade in the definition of luxus can best be explained in Skinner’s terms as a conscious attempt at rhetorical redescription: the authors are trying to convince the reader to accept the definition of a term used to describe and evaluate a behaviour which by the opposite side in the debate is branded as wicked. In a wider strategy, to win the case for luxury, it serves a fundamental purpose in the defence of a new type of consumption. In the end the reader should be convinced of the new position on luxury.

Accompanying this new definition is a set of arguments which all show the natural or positive aspects of luxury. One argument type emphasises that an abundance of things, given by God or nature, is a constant in human existence, and that and that it exists for a reason. In using concepts such nature, reason, and God to support the conclusion that luxury is natural, even theologically justified, this line of thought bears resemblance to arguments against luxury classified as philosophical, anthropological or theological. Since the economy was perceived to be just a part of God’s general plan, these arguments on behalf of luxury should in a Swedish context better be termed theological than anything else, even though they do incorporate strands of thought termed anthropological or philosophical in other surveys.

Although long maintained as accurate, the picture painted by Wieselgren has been revised by recent research: moral arguments were not banished from the discussion as thinkers argued in favour of luxury; instead they constituted a basis for the arguments for a new economy of mercantilist design. However, not only morality continued to play a pivotal role, the

---

254 Terjanian 2013, p. 23–24.
dissertations also suggest that theological arguments played an important role in the pro-luxury argumentation: compared to the first three dissertations which showed little signs of theological argumentation, the dissertations in the period 1743–1765 have shown more arguments classifiable as such.

Still, the theological arguments did change. Instead of disappearing from a debate which was labelled demoralized by Wieselgren, theological arguments were salvaged, redressed and incorporated by economic and mercantilist thinkers. God no longer condemned consumption – it was man’s obligation to extract a nation’s resources and refine them and moderate luxury consumption was divine will. This is not surprising, if one considers the importance of theology in the economic debates and considers the luxury debates as a part of this wider discourse. 259

The purely economic arguments form a bridge to previous strands of luxury criticism emphasizing the potential economic drawbacks of luxury consumption. Central premises in the argumentation for an acceptance of moderate luxury is that luxury helps the arts, the industry and population growth. This continuity has supported the claim that the economic argument was not a matter of much debate during the Swedish luxury debate: everybody agreed that imported luxury was bad. 260 This position has its merits. As seen, a moderate luxury could never harm state interests. Still, the economic argument encompassed more than just the question of import and export – it also had to do with the questions such as the circulation of money and population growth.

Forming the most typical argumentum ab auctoritate, the Roman historians’ explanations of the fall of the Roman republic and later corruption of the Principate was part of what has been called the classical luxury paradigm. This has been noted in material outside of the academy as well. 261 But in the academic world of Early Modern Sweden, steeped in the knowledge of classical languages and educated by the exempla of antiquity, the annals of history, or the Roman argument, were one of the most central and unifying elements of the luxury debate, for history and its causality was of importance also for the defenders of luxury. They respond to the key question of decline by either rejecting it, i.e. by pointing to the examples of France and England, or by positing luxury as a force concomitant of development, of civilization.

Despite the importance of classical languages and literature, the growing influx of foreign thinkers must be underlined. In the dissertations taking a pro-luxury position, quotes appear, most of often in French, from Melon and Voltaire, but even Mandeville, “the famous English

259 Frängsmyr 1976, p. 221, 226.
260 Runefelt 2005, p. 121.
author of the fable of the bees” is referred to. This supports the position that the luxury debate was fertilized by foreign ideas, and that French and English writers were either read or talked of at the university.

The period 1740–1765 witnessed the most dissertations being pro-luxury. At the end of the 1760s, the mercantilist program started to lose its lustre. This was also reflected in a decline in the dissertations pro-luxury. The two last dissertations in this survey return to a refutation of luxury, in many ways similar to classic rejections.


2.4 The period 1769–1779

2.4.1 An luxus influat religionem (1769)

2.4.1.1 Preliminary considerations
During his career as history professor in Åbo Johannes Bilmark (1728–1801) presided over 232 dissertations. Many of them covered morality, and several the contemporary questions of economy, utility and luxury.\(^\text{264}\) It would not be far off the mark to characterize Bilmark as a steadfast guardian against new ideas on economy and luxury.\(^\text{265}\) This suggests that even though Henrik Hassel, who held presidium over *De luxu*, was an influential supporter of utility and “Christian Enlightenment”, not everybody in Åbo during the 18th century shared the same position.\(^\text{266}\) From Bilmark’s abundant presidium one dissertation has been chosen: Johannes Dahlberg’s *An luxus influat religionem* (“Whether luxury influences religion”).

*An luxus influat religionem* is a dissertation which by virtue of title and content treats luxury from the perspective of theology. Ignoring the evident enemies of religion, i.e. atheists, the author instead wants to consider one of those habits that fall in the flank of religion, namely luxury.\(^\text{267}\) Having discussed the virtues of religion for man and society, the immediate dangers of luxury are revealed in detail. Since luxury nurtures sins such as pride and greed, its dangers are imminent. This can also be glimpsed from the annals of history. The dissertation ends with the appellation that religion must be kept unharmed from the evils of luxus.

2.4.1.2 Definition
In defining the luxus, the author shows awareness that he is treating a semantically disputed concept, for he asserts that he puts forth his definition “after having dismissed the opinions of others”. Luxus is “the more frequent use of things created than reason demands”. Later he modifies “use”, calling it either “abuse” or euphemistically “a less controlled use”; the “things created” he further specifies as “material objects”.\(^\text{268}\) Compared with previous luxus-friendly dissertations, it is obvious that the definition in this case has other argumentative goals. When denotations like *abuse* are found, and luxury is separated from reason, little room is left for any kind of moderate luxury.


\(^{265}\) Bilmark & Dahlberg 1769, p. 9.

\(^{266}\) Lindberg 1990, 108.

\(^{267}\) Ibid: “missis aliorum opinionibus, intelligimus, frequentiorem rerum creatarum usum, quam ratio postulet.”; p. 4. “[…qui in rerum materialium usu consistit”; p. 5: “luxus in abusu, vel si ita placet, minus ordinato usu rerum creatarum consistat”
2.4.1.3 Argumentation

The dissertation presents two main arguments against luxury: the theological argument and the Roman argument. The theological argument is built up in the following way. To begin with, the author argues for the importance of religion for social well-being: The presence of fear of God and other Christian virtues in the social members benefit the well-being of the whole social body. Then the threat posed by luxury to Christians is supported by the effects of luxury: first, luxury weakens the body, giving the soul a dilapidated habitat; second, luxury stimulates a growth of the affects, in turn enfeebles man’s reason, forcing him to cross the boundaries set up by religion, a prey to both greed and pride. Through luxury then, man is separated from God and his religion and by consequence subverts society. Turning against arguments highlighting utility in luxury, the author concludes that luxury is so corrupting that any kind of rapprochement between religion and luxus in the name of utility is impossible.269

If the author is responding directly to the author of Hypomnemata historica de luxu svio-gothorum antiquo cannot be inferred from the text itself, but that the true happiness of men and society lies in godliness, and that godliness is irreconcilable with luxury, no matter its putative utility, is at least a direct response to the kind of fervent belief in the blessings of economy which thinkers like that dissertation’s author had espoused. This shows that the classical theological argument was not out of the discussion, although it initially rarely surfaced at all in the material in its classical form. Considering that many students were aspiring vicars, this is certainly unexpected.270 The most plausible explanation is the focus on classical readings throughout the years of education.

The Roman argument is offered by history, “that renowned witness of truth”.271 Rome was virtuous and religious when it was poor; its true heroes lived in the 3rd century B.C., before the conquests of Rome and the seeping in of Asian luxury and subsequent corruption of its citizens. With the entry of luxury, Romans started looking for further sources to feed their desires, neglecting their old ways as a result.272 The reader is to understand that an analogous process threatens all societies given to luxury.

2.4.1.4 Concluding remarks

On a critical note, it is worth noticing how pliable the Roman argument is. That a student wishing to defend religion against luxury uses classical theological arguments is an expected strategy. Furthermore, that he utilizes the example of the Roman Empire to further his anti-

269 Bilmark & Dahlberg 1769, p. 5: "quod inter castam religionem atque pinguem luxuriam major sit discrepantia, quam ut haec commode & in utilitatem generis nostri arcte unquam conjungi queant."
270 Lindroth 1975b, p. 184.
271 Bilmark & Dahlberg 1769, p. 9: “testis illa veritatis”
272 Ibid. p. 9–10.
luxury argumentation is also expected seeing that the lion’s share of the text’s receivers would have been steeped in this world and its power as an exemplum. What is striking is instead that he proffers the example of the decline of the heathen Roman religion as analogous to Christian development. Not only the general laws of history, but also the laws for religious decline are proffered by Roman sources: Heathendom can teach Christians about religion!

2.4.2 De detrimento morum ex luxu (1779)

2.4.2.1 Preliminary considerations
A dissertation contributing to the debate on luxury from the perspective of moral philosophy is De detrimento morum ex luxu (“On the moral danger of luxury”), defended by Daniel Calén in 1779. Its praeses, Johan Sleincour, had succeeded Laurentius Dahlman in 1765 as professor of politics and ethics in Uppsala and presided over more than a hundred dissertations between 1745 and 1782, the subjects of which largely correspond to the subjects he taught: society, morals, religion and politics. In the words of the university historian Annerstedt, Sleincour was “far superior to his predecessors” (Grönwall and Dahlman) and the dissertations under his presidium were steeped in moral sincerity and piousness.\(^{273}\) In this particular dissertation, the subject is the negative influence luxus has on the individual and on the state. That Sleincour officially lectured against luxury and other signs of moral decline such as gambling and dancing suggests that he, as other praeses, had a huge influence on the topics of the dissertations.\(^ {274}\)

The whole world is in constant flux, the author asserts. Kingdoms come, kingdoms go, people previously called barbarians create splendid realms while former empires wane. A seemingly dark process appears to govern the state of things, but after closer examination, one realises that change always has a cause, a cause which can be understood. One source of dreadful decline is luxury, for as soon as luxury has seeped into a population it spreads rapidly, weakening it, becoming a catalyst for decay. Illuminating examples of this are provided by the annals of Roman history. The only hope is to battle it with religion, laws and the examples of the king, which all together form the mores of the population. Central to the dissertation is the idea that mores are informed more by the examples and opinions of others rather than the judgement of the individual. Luxury among a few is therefore a danger for the morality of the whole society.

2.4.2.2 Definition
There are several definitions of luxury in the text, more or less variations typical of the classical paradigm, and as it has been the case with previous dissertations, the definition in itself carries

\(^{273}\) Annerstedt 1914, p. 433–434.

\(^{274}\) Ibid. p. 434.
clues as to which side of the debate the author chooses to take. “Luxury is the consumption and use of things being more lavish than the rightful perception of life’s necessities, delight and propriety demand” is one definition; the other one states that luxury is a “pervasive and immoderate usage (of things)” existing for the sake of “utility and convenience”. As with previous definitions serving anti-luxury goals, this definition gives no room for a moderate or useful luxury or for arguments of utility. Luxury by itself is antithetic to such concepts.

From the typical areas of luxury comes one prime example of this: clothes. Luxurious garments are the ones not made to serve their prime function, that is to shield the body from the environment, but created for vanity and ostentation, changeable by the day, and with highest expense. Here one can see the pejorative meaning of luxury as wasteful. Another meaning comes from the fact that luxury is effeminizing. It creates persons only desiring an existence without any hardships. Any positive meaning ascribed to the term by preceding writers is gone.

2.4.2.3 Argumentation
Sleincour & Calén use what has been called the philosophical argument which bears much resemblance to the theological argument used by the pro-luxury side: Materials present to man are given by nature to help ease the hardships of life, but it depends on man’s faculty of reason to use these moderately, for otherwise what is destined to be helpful will become detrimental. Luxury is thus both unnatural and unreasonable and any claim that a reasonable use of material objects, as previous thinkers claimed, could be called a moderate luxury does not fit the argumentation. Another argument is related to health. Luxury destroys both man’s body and soul, both of which become suffused with comfort and refuse any kind of exercise or training.

However, the all-embracing argument, covering both the introduction and the conclusion of the dissertation, is that luxury levels a threat of decline against the existence of societies or peoples: it is the Roman argument Rome, supported by one of the most famous Roman historians of decline, Sallust. This argument from authority, according to which luxury, as proven by examples of history, is the seed of decline for peoples and states, builds on morals and their relation to wealth as the pivotal force of historical causality.

Compared to the arguments presented by the recent defenders of a moderated luxury, historical causation remains crucial to the perception of luxury. Still, it is a slightly different view

276 Ibid. p. 6: “non pro coeli temperie ad corpus tegendum, servandum & decore ornandum apta, sed vano gustui, in dies mutabili, ad splendorem atque pompam maximo cum sumtu accommodata.” p. 6: “perverso & immoderato usu”
277 Ibid.
279 Sleincour & Calén 1779, p. 4–5.
of history. For central is not wealth, it is morals which drive history. It is also supported by the Roman example. Frequent allusions and quotes of Sallust, also a proponent of a moral vision of history, reinforce this perception.

2.4.2.4 Concluding remarks
The position of the author is clear: luxury is an immoderate use of material objects which has catastrophic consequences. The argumentation presented shows the influx of a moral thinking, as it ascribes the biggest importance to morals. In comparison to previous writers, the author does not concern himself with economy, preferring to connect luxury and moral to historical decline. Therefore he makes no connection between luxury and foreign imports.

2.4.3 Concluding summary 1769–1779
The last two dissertations suggest that, just as in the wider Swedish debate, the support for luxury was waning during the 1760s. Compared to the period 1743–1765, luxury finds no supporters in the dissertation material and instead critics armed with the traditional set of arguments against luxury reappear. One difference compared to the earlier anti-luxury dissertations is that the role of Pufendorf in supporting the definition of luxury has disappeared. This is a trend which can also be seen in other dissertations published up until 1799 on the subject. Although the limits of this thesis have hindered their full inclusion, a cursory reading of these dissertations lends support the conclusion suggested by the material from the period 1769–1779: no dissertations after 1765 see luxury as tool of economic prosperity and few concern themselves with a definition of the term. This strongly suggests that the careful attention given the definition in the period 1743–1765 was part of a strategy of redefining the concept and winning the argumentation for luxury.

—

III. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The academic dissertations have shown a different response to the luxury debate compared to other contemporary material. Although the analysed dissertations evince the same antithetic positions, pro- and anti-luxury, as other Swedish sources, there are major differences as far as the types of arguments are concerned, and the respondents’ focus on defining the concept. Building on the framework of Quentin Skinner’s theory according to which ideas should be studied as arguments in a debate, these differences have been uncovered by analysing the dissertations as rhetorical products imbedded in the cultural context in which they were produced. In this concluding section the main results will be considered again followed by an attempt to interpret them. But to begin with, a central assumption of the thesis, namely that of the debate, will be discussed.

3.1 Was there a debate at all?
As previously mentioned, a debate is a verbal or written conflict the procedure for which can be more or less codified.\(^{281}\) What this explanation implies, is the presence of at least two combatants vying for the supremacy of their respective positions. The question then arises, whether the authors of the dissertations are actively trying to combat other respondents or praeae with their argumentation, or perhaps mainly the opponent of the disputation, or if they are responding to the world outside of the academy. This question can be analysed in many ways, but three angles, namely quotations, argumentations and receivers, offer particularly interesting insights.

Were one to look mainly at the ideational content of the dissertations, one would have to concede that the quotations cited by the respondents suggest the debate was fuelled by influences from new and old thinkers, rather than other contemporary Swedish dissertations. In the material from the period 1722–1743, Pufendorf’s *De legis sumptuariis* is the most frequently cited modern authority, while Roman historians and thinkers constitute the lion’s share of classical authors. In the period 1748–1765, new authorities can be discerned in the material, for instance one finds among the quotations or references Melon’s *Essai politique sur le commerce* (1734) and von Höpken’s speech; but references to the Roman authorities still reoccur. In sum, the dissertations do not contain quotes from other dissertations, Pufendorf & Lossius being the exception, which could indicate that the dissertations were not meant as responses to an ongoing academic debate on luxury.

Yet, when one considers the genre of academic dissertations, the reason for omitting quotations from other theses seems obvious. The primary purpose of university studies was to

\(^{281}\) HWRh 1994 ii, p. 413.
produce learned men, the educational process for which depended on the learning of classical languages and the assimilating of ancient authorities. It makes sense to understand the dissertations as end goals of this process, where knowledge of Latin and argumentation was essential for passing the exam. In this context, showcasing an intimate knowledge of the authorities which were held in high esteem meant adding value to the paper. This might be the reason why Pufendorf’s dissertation was assiduously quoted while others, penned by more humble authors, were not. In other words, the lack of quotes from other dissertations is genre-dependent and does not rule out that the writers of dissertations did read or answered directly to other dissertations. The high number of prints and the distribution of the dissertations provide at least a formal support for this assumption.

Another hindrance to the identification of a possible opponent to the dissertation is a technique often employed in debates by both respondent and opponent: Instead of actually registering the other side’s argument, subjecting it to a careful analysis and then providing a rational response, participants often tend to only answer questions that suit their purpose, or simply state the opinion they want to propagate. That is, the academic dissertations do not build on rational arguments or answer to specific opponents, but rather discuss topics that interest the respondents and suit their goals. For instance, when Dahlman & Wallerus respond to the anti-luxury position they maintain the absurdity of having poverty as an ideal. Nowhere in the analysed material do the critics of luxury actually hold poverty as an ideal, but rather moderation – a position, as we have seen, remarkably similar to the pro-luxury position. The twisting and distorting of the alleged opponent’s position is typical of debates where rhetorical skill rather than critical reasoning rules the ground and this can be observed in the dissertation material. Although many of the arguments were standard for the luxury debates at the time, and may not have been perceived as having an individual author, this type of argumentation strategy still presents a reason why it can be difficult to accurately pinpoint who the authors are contending with directly.

One could try to understand the participants of the debate through the imminent receivers of the texts, which presents two possibilities. The only receiver who actually was expected to form a direct reply to the dissertation was the student acting the part of opponent. That he did not deliver his response in a written publication means that the most immediate participant in the debate is inaccessible to us. Another possibility would be to see the different praeses as the main participants in the debate, with their own students constituting their phalanx. If the praeses influenced the topics it seems likely that they must have been responding to dissertations which other praeses were responsible for. In this sense, the dissertations could be seen as part of an
exchange of ideas between praeses, or a way for prases to propagate their own positions among the students in a more formal manner.

Still, to single out one receiver would be wrong. Since the dissertations were written in an argumentative form and part of a formalised procedure for composition, publication and distribution, they should be regarded both as an academic exercise involving students and praeses, and as a reaction to contemporary phenomena. In this sense, the dissertations partake in a debate which stretches outside the confines of the university and draws inspirations from other sources, for example the press and political tracts, but which nonetheless filters ideas through the lens of the academic world, as indicated by the ubiquity of the Roman argument. The focus on Rome and antiquity is the strongest evidence that the dissertations can be regarded as an academic debate, as responses to arguments within the academy, despite there not being any direct connections to other dissertations, Pufendorf excluded. Such a generous understanding of the scope of the debate, sometimes embracing the themes of a general discussion in the outside world, at other times restricting itself to the academic world, is what makes it possible to interpret a handful of dissertations over the period of sixty years as constituting a debate.

3.2 Rhetorical manipulation – the new definition of luxury
The classical definition of luxus is pejorative and indicates a way of life where sensuous excesses breach the social norms of what is acceptable. In a transferred meaning, luxus is also used to describe different areas or objects where it manifests itself, for instance, in dress and food. Although connotations such as carnal lust were added, this definition held sway throughout the following centuries.

The first major contestations of the concept occurred in the 17th century and had at their root a different view of society, where economy and trade were seen as key contributing factors to the wealth of the state, and in the ensuing century, as a part of the Enlightenment debate on economy, the debate intensified. 282 18th century Sweden, enthralled by the promises of economy and utility, was a fertile ground for an imported debate on luxury, and just as finding a definition for the term was a main topic in many continental publications participating in the debate, especially among the thinkers central to the debate, such as Mandeville, Melon, Hume, also the dissertations occupy themselves with the different meanings of luxus.

Until the 1740s, the dominant definition is the classical: Luxus means an immoderate consumption or use of products, which relate to dress, food, housing and to some extent leisure. The definition is drawn largely from Roman authors, especially Tacitus, but often mediated through Pufendorf and enriched by contemporary ideas which relate luxury to leisure activities.

Still, considering that the intellectual framework was laid in the antiquity, it would be wrong to overly emphasise any novelties. In connotation luxus is only pejorative: it indicates what best can be summed up as different types of degeneration, be it of the individual or the state.

Although dominant, or perhaps rather due to its dominance, the classical luxury definition was rarely spelled out with a high level precision. It was only with the advent of dissertations mainly dealing with commerce and economy that the earliest attempts at forging a new definition appeared in the source material, and soon more dissertations dealing with luxury started to occupy themselves with the question of semantics. Pivotal for pro-luxury writers was to establish that luxury could be beneficial rather than harmful. They distanced themselves from the rigid core meaning of the concept which equated luxury with excess and proposed instead a new, more nuanced interpretation: Luxury could be restrained or excessive, it could imply use or abuse, or, in the writers’ own words, it could be moderatus or immoderatus.

On the one hand this should be understood as reflecting the conviction held by the majority of thinkers at the time, i.e. that moderation was a fundamental virtue in general, but which was especially important for the pro-luxury side which sought limited acceptance for a concept universally condemned.\textsuperscript{283} For achieving a general acceptance of all types of consumption was never, as the material has shown, their goal, but rather a consumption which could benefit trade and manufactures within a mercantilist ideology. On the other hand, the dissertations go against a long tradition of thought, and one has to allow for the possibility that the debaters chose arguments built on the least controversial premises in order to be convincing, a typical argumentative strategy.\textsuperscript{284}

Why one would chose to keep the word luxury and try to create a contradictive moderate luxury can be explained by rhetorical redescription, the second of Skinner’s models. This ancient rhetorical device entails the attempted redescription of certain morally dubious behaviours by characterising them from a slightly different, albeit neighbouring, angle. For instance, a comportment blamed as avaricious lets itself be redefined as careful. Since this device belongs in ancient rhetoric, and rhetoric was revived in the Renaissance and became one of the prime subjects next to Latin at Swedish universities, it is not unexpected that dissertations occupy themselves with it, even if the impulse to do so is external, a part of a wider phenomenon.\textsuperscript{285} Used by the defenders of luxury, the new concept was an attempt at wringing the classical definition from the hands of their opponents, calling excess a moderate excess. Since luxus was an important concept when it came to understanding consumption, the only choice for anyone

\textsuperscript{284} Ottmers 2007, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{285} Terjanian 2013, p. 23–24.
wanting to argue for an increased consumption was to keep the term but to subject it to a rhetorical redescription.

After 1765, just as dissertations defending the mercantilist perspective were decreasing in numbers, the interest in defining luxury quickly waned. Up until then the pro-luxury side had endeavoured to make the concept more palatable by attempting to redefine it. When the pro-luxury stance no longer was represented in the dissertation material – nor outside the academy – the concept was no longer subject to contestation, and accordingly did not need to be defined with the same kind of vigour. This shift helps identify the late 1760s as the end point of the luxury debates thereby confirming the chronology suggested by Wieselgren, according to which mercantilist thought lost its influence around 1770.286

In sum, the source material shows how a concept regulating the limits of a previously, unanimously condemned behaviour, is being redefined. The redefinition proceeds from the introduction of new values: abuse is replaced by use, excess by moderation. Although moderation was an important concept in Early Modern thought, its introduction in the definition of the term luxury suggests that rhetorical redescription of the term luxury was taking place. In other words, a conscious choice was made to insert the concept of moderation in the definition of luxury, as a fundamental part of the pro-luxury argumentation. When luxury lost its lure, also the definition became less central, and its critics could proceed in their rejections without having to test their genius in semantic matters.

3.4 Argumentation

The hypothesis of this paper was that the Latin culture of the university showcases a different response to the luxury debate as compared to other source materials. This hypothesis is confirmed by the type of arguments present in this dissertation.

Having excluded the dissertation material, previous research of the 18th century luxury debate in Sweden indicated three types of arguments mainly used against luxury, relating to social relations, economy and Gothicism.287 Although it is true that social, political and economic arguments recur in the dissertations, the material exhibits a slightly different balance in its argumentation patterns. The Gothic-national argument is never invoked. Instead, the most recurrent argument, perhaps even the most binding component of the argumentation over all, is the Roman argument. This argument sets the example of Rome at its centre, arguing that luxury contributed to the decline of the Roman republic, corrupted the Principate, and that by analogy

286 Wieselgren 1912, p. 59.
287 Runefelt 2005, 103–104.
the same process applies for the age of the dissertations as well. History is a teacher for life, a magistra vitae, in Cicero’s words, capable of helping future generations make wiser choices.

Among those arguing for luxury, the argumentation encompasses three dimensions: (1) an argument bearing resemblances to the anthropological or philosophical argument in English sources, but which here has been identified as the form of theological argument characteristic of mercantilist ideology: more resources are available than man needs for survival, and that God or Nature has supplied him with this shows that they serve a purpose. To refine the raw materials provided by God is an act invested with no small measure of sacredness. (2) Several arguments which revolve around economy appear: due to luxury the population grows, the arts flourish, trade increases and through that the state flourishes; (3) the argument which rebuts the Roman example, and posits moderate luxury as a constructive force generating wealth; France and England, indeed even the Goths, are employed as striking illustrations of luxury’s blessings, counteracting Rome.

Despite it not being emphasised in Swedish surveys, this focus on Rome and antiquity also can be compared to the wider European Enlightenment context, where the role of antiquity was a heated topic during the 18th century. Just as in these debates, the idea of antiquity was not purely historical, but was tied to the present – it dealt more with the here and now than with the past. Despite sharing this interest with continental, especially French thinkers, these differences in argumentation and especially the importance of Rome are not only a solid indication that there was such a thing as an academic luxury debate; they are also the best example that the culture of the university fostered a different response to the problem of luxury. Luxury was viewed through the lens of antiquity and both sides of the debate reacted against this backdrop.

The role of Rome for the luxury was emphasised by Sekora (1977) who compared the dread Englishmen in the 18th century felt for the luxuries of Rome with the reaction Europeans of his time exhibited towards Nazi atrocities in the Second World War. Sekora’s comparison is certainly hyperbolical, but it does highlight the important connection between luxury and the sense of history in the Early Modern Period. To the writers and thinkers of the day, luxury formulated a link between the past and the present, infusing the latter with meaning through its perceived role in the past. But this meaning was contested. For the defenders of luxury attempted to give meaning to the present by luxury’s role in history: luxury propelled humankind forward, instead of degenerating it. It seems fair to say, then, that in the debate on luxury not only consumption and its social function were questioned, but also wider concepts of history.

288 Frängsmyr 1976, p. 221, 226.
289 Bourgault 2013, p. 467.
Moreover, the theories of rhetorical manipulation and redescription can offer a partial answer to the composition of the arguments. If the conceptual redefinition worked from the given definition, the pro-luxury argumentation seems to work from the standard set of arguments of the opposing side. The theological argument underlining the moral obligation to consume resources is a response to the idea that God condemns luxury consumption. As it never calls for the consumption of products which threaten the trade balance, the economic argument retains certain parts of the traditional luxury criticism: both sides in the debate agree on the danger of luxury consumption for the economy if the products are imported. This line of thought featured in the general debate as well. Counteracting argument constitutes the basis of any debate, but in retaining the same group of arguments when crafting their own arsenal, the pro-luxury side appears to be trying to redefine the basis on which the conceptual redefinition takes place. These arguments are therefore understandable as a part of the rhetorical redescription of the luxury concept: the definition and the arguments form parts of a whole in constant interaction. Similar observations have been made of other thinkers as well. Some of Mandeville’s argumentation, for instance, has been characterised as definitional.

If rhetorical redescription can explain the way in which the luxury debates operated, it is tempting to see it working together with rhetorical manipulation as part of a wider reaction to new realities of the Early Modern Period, connected to commerce and economy. Just as Protestant thinkers tried to justify their behaviour mainly in terms of piousness, so did luxury defenders try to justify consumption based on concepts and arguments which often rested on religious grounds, if not explicitly, then at least covertly, in the desire to uphold moderation as a virtue. Rhetorical redescription is thus one way in which rhetorical manipulation worked. But that question would have to be the subject of larger surveys.

One important question, though, remains to be explored, namely the interpretation of the luxury debated in the Swedish academic material.

3.5 Interpretation
This final section, which focuses on the participants and the context of the dissertation, is an attempt to provide an interpretation of the academic luxury debates between 1722 and 1779, by asking what the driving force behind the academic debates was. While it is true that this survey cannot answer all questions concerning the praeses and their role in the academic world, several major contributions to the luxury debate in Swedish academic dissertations have been analysed in

292 Berry 1994, p. 129.
this thesis and the results have uncovered important findings, especially on the role of the praeses, which alongside other factors help explain the debate.

A handful of praeses played significant roles in the luxury debate. Sven Bring appears three times as adjunct/praeses for dissertations arguing for a revision of the luxury concept, and in two of these papers, the definition is identical. Bilmark fills the role of praeses only once, but he held presidium over at least two further dissertations reacting strongly against the new ideas on luxury.

The chair held by the praeses seems to have been of secondary importance for the position the dissertations took in the debate. As professor of politics and ethics, Anders Grönwall presided over two dissertations against luxury. His successor Laurentius Dahlman held presidium when *De legibus sumptuariis* was defended 1755, a dissertation with a pro-luxury position. His morally strict successor Sleincour appears in the last dissertation in the survey as a stern critic of luxury. In Åbo, Henrik Hassel was a professor of rhetoric, but despite the subjects' close connection to antiquity, he was praeses for *De Luxu*, one of the early dissertations trying to revise the concept. This indicates that the angle from which luxury was debated was of more importance for the choice of arguments than the chair of the professor.

To what extent the particular university culture influenced the subjects is of course hard to say. To Lindberg (1990), Åbo University appeared to be a fertile ground for ideas on Christian utility, hosting among others Henrik Hassel. Still, Åbo was also the university where Johannes Bilmark presided over more than dissertations than any other professor, and as mentioned, at least three of them were attacks on luxury and fitted his overall condemnation of cultural phenomena.

Consequently, a plausible explanation for the general position of the dissertations seems to be the position of the individual praeses on the topic. Whether they themselves wrote the dissertations or not, their positions as revealed through their lectures or other channels appear to have been of crucial importance for the manner in which luxus was treated. It is noteworthy that within this small number of professors, both Anders Grönwall and Johannes Bilmark, two luxury critics, lived frugally enough to donate considerable scholarships at their respective universities or nations.293 One is tempted to draw the conclusion that they – at least from the perspective of economy – practiced what they preached.

The dissertations’ main purpose was to present a set of arguments in Latin and to show erudition after a long period of studies mostly focused on classical authors and rhetoric. But they had other functions, and thereby other receivers, as well; in the social network they functioned as tokens of clienthood. This begs the question if the major dedicatees can be connected to the

content of the dissertations. Could for instance an aspiring vicar defend a pro-luxury dissertation? Yes, both *De Laecu* and *De legibus sumtuariis* have arch-bishops as dedicatees. This does not mean that all bishops must have been enemies of mercantilism and a revised position on luxury, but since anti-luxury dissertations, for instance *Felicitatem ex moderamine sumptus*, are dedicated to arch-bishops as well, the dissertations suggest that the topic might not have been influenced by the dedicatees’ position. To return to the three different receivers discussed in the introduction, the dedicatees were of less importance than the readers within academia and the censor, who appears to have guided compositional choices in two dissertations.

If one moves away from the authors and directs one’s attention to the content of the dissertations, the survey shows that the debate was heavily influenced by the works students studied at the university and the language of erudition, Neo-Latin. These contributed considerably to how the writers crafted their arguments and how they treated the definition of luxus. Since the dissertations were actual exams on Latin and classical texts, this is hardly surprising. The initial hypothesis, i.e. that the dissertations display a different response than other publications participating in the Swedish luxury debate has throughout this thesis both been thoroughly tested and confirmed. It should be emphasised, nonetheless, that this response was different in its argumentative strategies, but apart from that largely followed the debate outside of the academy, both chronologically and in its main positions, pro- and contra luxury.

Apart from the classical influence, there is another intellectual world which emerges from the dissertations, namely the contemporary one. For on top of the classical foundation sit the numerous quotations, betraying the influx of ideas on economy and consumption from the mid-18th century, from both English and French thinkers. It is in such mixes of classical and modern that the Age of Liberty comes to light, where one can see the ancient world being tested by new thoughts on economy and politics.

Furthermore the dissertations show other similarities to the European context. It has been argued that the development of luxury criticism in Early Modern England best can be characterised as a steady flow of condemnations, interrupted by more heated outbursts caused by the topic’s association to contemporaneous political debates. An analogous inference can be drawn from the dissertations. For domestic political factors clearly stimulated the debate: The success of the mercantilist friendly hat-party between 1738 and 1739, as well as the foundation of the Academy of Sciences in 1739 to further mercantilist ideas and economic policies, von Höpken’s speech in 1740, the growth of economy as a subject and the establishment of a chair in economy in 1741 – these were all signs of a wider intellectual trend spreading in Sweden with a

---

294 Sekora 1977, p. 77.
distinct influence on the debate on luxury. As the investigation has shown, it is around this period that dissertations arguing for the economic benefits of luxury become more numerous, and it is also around the time of mercantilism’s decline that dissertations of this type give way to classical rejections. Despite evidence that the benefits of luxury was discussed before, as Anders Berch’s dissertation (1731), the debate only became vital in the 1740s. To mark the period around 1740 as the starting point for a new view of luxury, and as a consequence seeing the luxury debate in the dissertations as part of the wider Swedish debate on luxury and economy is therefore a clear result of the investigation.

There were, however, other factors, apart from the intellectual ones, which spurred on the debate. That wigs and masquerades caused an indignation which found expression in the dissertations shows the influence of contemporary phenomena.

Altogether, the individual praeses’ position, irrespective of his chair, the world of learning and Neo-Latin, the dissertation as genre and its purpose, foreign ideas and socio-economic development, are all different elements that shaped the debate. The academic debate should be understood as a product of these forces.

Although Wieselgren’s study of the dissertations included only a small number and can be construed as superficial at times, he ascribed a decisive importance to the academic dissertations in his study. Can this position be maintained? In the case of Berch and Bring, leading intellectuals of the day, the importance of the praeses suggests that the dissertations might have played an important role as disseminators of ideas for the debate. However, to provide a definite answer to the question is impossible without mapping the actual reception of the dissertations in the wider luxury debate. For now, it is enough to note that they were undoubtedly taking an active part in the debate and that they fostered a response conditioned on the particulars of their own context. This had less to do with a unique position on luxury – the debate had two sides – than with the way arguments and concepts were used.

The dissertations are a crucial source material for intellectual life in Early Modern Sweden in more than one way. The material for this survey does not open up the domains of dusty learning but a world where the dynamics of the Early Modern Period emerge. Not only does Neo-Latin vocabulary show the changes in the period, but the dissertations have also shown themselves to be particular capsules of this process as well. Moreover, the importance of the praeses allows historians to approach the intellectual development of leading figures of learning. Last but not least, through quotations and paraphrases, the dissertations allow researchers to trace the influx of ideas and their reception in the intellectual world. To further ignore the vast chamber of ideas

295 Lindroth 1975c, p. 49, 96.
296 Wieselgren 1912, p. 3–4.
present in the 25 000 dissertations is not only neglectful, but directly misleading in understanding the intellectual development of Early Modern Sweden. A detailed study of the luxury debates, or economic debates in Sweden at the time, must consider the academic dissertations and position them within the debate.
IV. SOURCES AND LITERATURE

4.1 Primary sources

Bring & Drysén, 1741, *De oeconomia camerali et commerciis*, Uppsala.
Bring & Qvist, 1765, *Hypomnemata historica de luxu sviæothorum antiquo*, Uppsala.
Celsius & Qvist, 1765, *De felicitate patriae per Oeconomiam promovenda*, Uppsala.
Dahlman & Waller, 1755, *De legibus sumtuariis*, Uppsala.
Hassel & Gustorff, 1748, *De Luxu*, Åbo.
Hermansson & Lindgreen, 1722, *Voloaptates repulluciae nocies*, Uppsala.
Hjelmgren & Carlborg, 1792, *De luxu*, Lund.
Munthe & Lagerlöf, 1793, *De vi luxus in vitam humanam*, Lund.
Pufendorf & Lossius, 1672, *De legibus sumptuariis*, Lund.
Sleincour & Calén, 1779, *De detrimento morum ex luxu*, Uppsala.
Wadell & Blomberg, 1799, *De necessitate legum sumtuarium*, Åbo.

4.2 Secondary sources

Hofberg, Herman, 1906, Svenskt handbiografiskt lexikon, Stockholm.
Knight, Sarah & Tilg, Stefan, 2015, ”Introduction”, in Sarah Knight & Stefan Tilg (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin studies, Oxford.
Lindberg, Bo, 1984, De lärdes moderśmål: Latin, humanism och vetenskap i 1700-talets Sverige, Göteborg.
Lindroth, Sten, 1975, Svensk lärdomshistoria: 1-3 (a-e), Stockholm.


Ottmers, Clemens, 2007, Rhetorik, Weimar.


Scott, Alison, 2015, Literature and the idea of luxury in Early Modern England, Ashgate.


Tengström, Emin, 1973, Latinet i Sverige: Om bruket av latin bland klerker och scholares, diplomater och poeter, lärdomsfolk och vältalare, Stockholm.

Terjanian, Anoush Fraser, 2013, Commerce and its discontents in eighteenth-century French political thought, Cambridge.

Wiesing, Lambert, 2015, Lusus, Frankfurt am Main.


Östlund, Krister, 2000, Johan Ibre on the origins and history of the runes: three Latin dissertations from the mid-18th century, Uppsala.