

Moralizing metaphors: Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff on parliamentary oratory

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SUMMARY

It is commonly assumed that real political eloquence can only exist under a free and popular government. But in monarchies, public oratory has had little effect on decision-making processes and therefore seems to have degenerated into an ideological affirmation of princely rule and is judged a negligible phenomenon. But recent research has shown that political power is much more than the taking of collectively binding decisions. It also has a symbolic dimension that is related to the performative representation of the commonwealth's socio-political order. To assess political eloquence in monarchies, the article focuses on the parliamentary oratory of Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff, the only German-speaking practitioner of political oratory in the seventeenth century to have published some of his orations in book form. Analysing the speeches shows Seckendorff as an erudite and experienced political thinker. A deep understanding of both the reality and theory of the *Ständestaat* found expression in the most prominent feature of his oratorical practice: his ingenuity to find or create new metaphors depicting the relationship between ruler and subjects. Seckendorff crafted political metaphors to expose the moral foundations of a good commonwealth and to exert moral pressure on his audience. His oratory was about 'moral education'. Seckendorff himself, however, overlooked the fact that the very ceremoniousness of his speeches carried a performative force that shaped and reshaped the socio-political order of the commonwealth.

Eloquence in monarchical commonwealths has never received a good press. The *locus classicus* is Tacitus' *Dialogue on Oratory* where the orator Maternus denies the very existence of oratory in monarchies:

What orator have we ever heard of in Sparta or in Crete? A very strict discipline and very strict laws prevailed, tradition says, in both those states. Nor do we know of the

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existence of eloquence among the Macedonians or Persians, or in any people content with a settled government.¹

This verdict became a commonplace in rhetorical theory and eventually persisted for centuries. In the eighteenth century, for instance, David Hume complained of the inferiority of eloquence in England based on the unquestioned assumption that 'popular government' had to be regarded as 'a circumstance which seems requisite for the full display of these noble talents'.² But why, exactly, should the form of government determine the potential quality of a people's eloquence and, more specifically, why should there have been no place in a monarchy for the art of public speech?

These questions touch on fundamental assumptions about the purpose of eloquence. Generally, oratory is defined in terms of persuasion. Thus Quintilian in the first book of his *Institutio Oratoria* – one of the most influential works on the topic ever written – deals with what he calls 'the common definition of rhetoric as the power of persuading'.³ But this definition just tells us what rhetoric is; it does not tell us what rhetoric is used for; it tells us nothing about its possible purposes. Another longstanding tradition assumes that the orator's ultimate goal consisted in exerting influence on processes of decision-making. In the words of Aristotle: 'rhetoric exists to affect the giving of decisions'.⁴ But that holds true only for two of the three classical types of oratory, namely deliberative oratory, addressing public assemblies, and forensic oratory, trying to convince a judicial tribunal. At the same time, many historians and political scientists alike believe that decision-making is also the very essence of the phenomenon called 'politics'; hence it can be inferred that only speeches of the deliberative and forensic kind should have real political impact.⁵ That is especially true for the deliberative type which in some cases is characterized as the only 'true' form of political oratory. That is illustrated by the fact that the Aristotelian term *symbouleutikos* is translated both as 'political' and 'deliberative'.⁶

¹ Tac. Dial. 40,2 (translation taken from Tacitus, 'The Dialogue on Oratory', in *The Agricola and Germany of Tacitus, and the Dialogue on Oratory*, trans. A.J. Church and W.J. Brodribb, rev. edn (London, 1877), pp. 147–97, p. 195). I am grateful to Johannes Helmrath, Jörg Feuchter and Kolja Lichy for an inspiring panel on parliamentary oratory at the 58th conference of the ICHRPI in 2007.

² D. Hume, 'Of Eloquence', in Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, vol. I (London, 1889), pp. 163–74, p. 167.

³ Quint. Inst. 2,15,3 (translation taken from Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria: Books I–III*, with an English translation by H.E. Butler (Cambridge, 1920), p. 301).

⁴ Arist. Rhet. 2,1,2 (translation taken from Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (Mineola, NY, 2004), pp. 59).

⁵ For the identification of politics with decision-making see among others M. Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. by G. Roth and C. Wittich, vol. I (New York, 1968), p. 53; J. Garrand, 'Social History, Political History and Political Science: The Study of Power', *Journal of Social History* 16 (1983), pp. 105–21, p. 107; A. Hillgruber, 'Politische Geschichte in moderner Sicht', *Historische Zeitschrift* 216 (1973), pp. 529–52, p. 533; H.-C. Kraus and T. Nicklas, 'Einleitung', in Kraus and Nicklas (eds), *Geschichte der Politik: Alte und neue Wege* (Munich, 2007), pp. 1–12, p. 1.

⁶ W. Rhys Roberts (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*) translates *symbouleutikos* as 'political', whereas J.H. Freese prefers the term 'deliberative'. Aristotle, *The 'Art' of Rhetoric*, trans. J.H. Freese (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

But when it comes to monarchies, so the argument goes, there can be no fully fledged eloquence just because parliaments and law courts – even if such institutions exist – lack the power of decision-making. In these milieus, consequently, there is no need to be able to persuade their members by public speech.⁷ Instead, the sole source of binding decisions is the prince, and princes are generally not known to approve attempts to influence their decision-making by persuasion; they take counsel, of course, but in most cases the only thing an orator can do is to praise His (or Her) Majesty. The activity of praising, however, is exactly the province of the third type of oratory identified by classical rhetoric, ceremonial or demonstrative oratory. Obviously, demonstrative speeches are not aimed at decision-making and therefore ceremonial oratory is often believed to have no political impact at all. The situation seems to be even worse in monarchies with some form of public assembly, because in a monarchical environment parliamentary eloquence – usually held to be the stronghold of political oratory – seems to degenerate into ceremonial and ideological affirmation of princely rule. This argument can be reduced to two propositions: first, eloquence in monarchies is predominantly ceremonial oratory; and second, this type of oratory, because it does not affect decision-making, has no political impact and is, in the end, a negligible phenomenon.⁸

But is this argument, which was developed from the theoretical standpoint of classical rhetoric, really convincing? And can it be used by historians to explain the specific oratorical practice found in different monarchical commonwealths? Of course, it cannot be the aim of this article to supply generally applicable answers, but it will be helpful to examine a concrete example to see what an answer might look like. The cases in question come from the principalities that made up the Holy Roman Empire in the later seventeenth century. Although the period beginning with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 is often called the ‘Age of Absolutism’, in most of the Empire’s principalities the territorial diets (*Landtage*) – the common type of representative body at that time – remained in existence.⁹ Accordingly, here we have some good examples of parliamentary oratory taking place under princely rule that was, in theory at least, ‘absolute’.

The first thing to note is that the line of argument presented above has indeed been used to assess oratorical practice in the diets. Georg Braungart, for instance, has judged that parliamentary oratory in these assemblies was ‘often an empty ceremony which preserves the outer appearance but corresponds neither to the political

⁷ See, for instance, W. Jens, *Von deutscher Rede*, 3rd rev. edn (Munich, 1983), p. 25.

⁸ For the seventeenth century, see W. Barner, *Barockrhetorik. Untersuchungen zu ihren geschichtlichen Grundlagen* (Tübingen, 1970), pp. 154–5.

⁹ See V. Press, ‘Vom Ständestaat zum Absolutismus: 50 Thesen’, in P. Baumgart (ed.), *Ständetum und Staatsbildung in Brandenburg-Preussen: Ergebnisse einer internationalen Fachtagung* (Berlin, 1983), pp. 319–27; B. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Vormünder des Volkes? Konzepte landständischer Repräsentation in der Spätphase des Alten Reiches* (Berlin, 1999), pp. 1–45; K. Krüger, *Die landständische Verfassung* (Munich, 2003). The concept of Absolutism has been challenged by N. Henshall, *The Myth of Absolutism: Change and Continuity in Early Modern European Monarchy* (London, 1992), whose book has led to serious debate in German-speaking historiography. See recently H. Duchhardt, ‘Die Absolutismusdebatte – eine Antipolemik’, *Historische Zeitschrift* 275, (2002), pp. 323–31.

reality nor to the true intentions'.¹⁰ The phrase 'empty ceremony' can be seen as a perfect abbreviation of the two propositions put forward by rhetorical theory: oratory in the diets was of the ceremonial type; as such it was 'empty' in the sense that it does not affect 'political reality', i.e. decision-making.

To be sure, there is no denying the fact that the parliamentary oratory in question was essentially ceremonious and focused on the display of consent and harmony between the prince and the estates. But does that really mean that ceremonial speeches in the context of a diet had no political impact just because they did not contribute much to 'real' decisions? This conclusion only makes sense if one conceives of politics in strictly instrumental terms. But recent research has shown that political power is much more than the taking of collectively binding decisions. In addition to the instrumental dimension of decision-making, political power also has a symbolic dimension that is related to the ceremonial and performative representation of the commonwealth's socio-political order.¹¹

The following analysis shows that seventeenth-century parliamentary oratory had a profound political impact, even though it was ceremonious in nature and performed in 'absolutistic' environments; it also shows that this impact was based on the fact that the speeches symbolized a territory's political order and thus contributed to its ongoing maintenance.¹² However, there is a serious obstacle in the way of such a study. Although speeches were common elements of ceremonial acts of all kinds, their manuscripts were rarely preserved.¹³ A noteworthy exception is the oratory of Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff – a Franconian noble, statesman, political theorist and, crucially, the only German-speaking practitioner of political oratory in the seventeenth century to publish some of his orations in book form. Forty-four speeches given on different occasions appeared under the title *Teutsche Reden* in 1686; a second edition was published in 1691.¹⁴ Of these speeches, 12 were delivered by Seckendorff at territorial diets and are of interest here. What is more, instead of writing a

¹⁰ G. Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit: Studien zur Praxis höfisch-politischer Rede im deutschen Territorialabsolutismus* (Tübingen, 1988), p. 130: 'oft nur ein leeres Zeremoniell, das den äußeren Schein wahrt, aber weder der (innen-)politischen Realität noch den wahren Intentionen entsprechen muß'. But see Braungart, 'Die höfische Rede im zeremoniellen Ablauf: Fremdkörper oder Kern?', in J.J. Berns and T. Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1995), pp. 198–208, where he convincingly describes the functions of the courtly speech in general.

¹¹ See G. Göhler, 'Politische Institutionen und ihr Kontext: Begriffliche und konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Theorie politischer Institutionen', in Göhler (ed.), *Die Eigenart der Institutionen. Zum Profil politischer Institutionentheorie* (Baden-Baden, 1994), pp. 19–46; B. Stollberg-Rilinger, 'Einleitung', in Stollberg-Rilinger (ed.), *Was heißt Kulturgeschichte des Politischen?* (Berlin, 2005), pp. 9–24; A. Landwehr, 'Diskurs – Macht – Wissen: Perspektiven einer Kulturgeschichte des Politischen', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 85 (2003), pp. 71–117.

¹² See J. Feuchter and J. Helmrath, 'Einleitung – Vormoderne Parlamentsoratorik', in Feuchter and Helmrath (eds), *Politische Redekultur in der Vormoderne: Die Oratorik europäischer Parlamente in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), pp. 9–22.

¹³ See Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, p. 8.

¹⁴ V.L. von Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden und Entwurff von dem allgemeinen oder natürlichen Recht nach Anleitung der Bücher Hugo Grotius' (1691)*, ed. with an afterword by M. Vec (Leipzig, 1691; repr. Tübingen, 2006). The editions of 1686 and 1691, at least partly, differ in pagination and because Vec decided to reprint the second edition, all following page references also relate to the edition of 1691.

preface, he opened the book with a 'Discourse ... of the Nature, Quality, and Use of Speeches to be held publicly at particular Occasions'¹⁵ in which he developed his own theory of ceremonial eloquence.

Accordingly, the first task of this article will be to describe Seckendorff's oratorical practice and the style and structure of his parliamentary speeches in detail. This will be followed by a presentation of Seckendorff's theory of courtly eloquence and shows how certain assumptions implicit in the 'Discourse' prompted him to misdiagnose the function and effect of his own oratorical practice. Drawing on insights provided by the cultural history of politics in general and the research on pre-modern parliamentary oratory in particular this article will conclude with a reassessment both of Seckendorff's oratory and the general function of political eloquence in monarchies.

VEIT LUDWIG VON SECKENDORFF: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Few people in seventeenth-century Germany were better positioned to understand the inner workings of princely government and territorial estates than Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff. He was born on 20 December 1626 in the village of Herzogenaurach to a Franconian family of Protestant nobles.¹⁶ He spent most of his youth in Thuringia where he attended the renowned *gymnasium illustre* in Gotha. In 1642, he took up his studies at the University of Strasbourg and concentrated on courses in law, history and philosophy. One of his teachers was the celebrated professor of history, Johann Heinrich Boecler (1611–72), who had a great influence on the young Seckendorff not only as a scholar, but also as an orator. In the 'Discourse', Boecler was one of the few individuals mentioned by name and Seckendorff tells the reader that Boecler once helped him to improve his rhetorical abilities.¹⁷ After two years of study Seckendorff left Strasbourg and gained access to the court of the Landgraves of Hesse-Darmstadt. He was made a *Hoffunker* (gentleman of the court) and allowed to continue his studies at the University of Marburg. The Thirty Years War shattered all hopes of completing his studies in 1646. As a result, the young noble planned to join the Landgrave's life guards. But instead of launching a career in the Hessian military, Seckendorff accepted an offer from his former benefactor, Ernest the Pious (1601–75), Duke of Saxe-Gotha, to take up a court position in Gotha.¹⁸ For the next

¹⁵ Seckendorff, 'Discurs an statt einer Vorrede/ Von der Art/ Beschaffenheit und Nutzen der Reden/ welche bey sonderbarer Gelegenheit öffentlich gehalten werden müssen/ und von etlichen Umständen/ die den Autorem dieser jetzo publicirten Reden betreffen', in Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, pp. 29–68.

¹⁶ See M. Stolleis, 'Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff', in Stolleis (ed.), *Staatsdenker im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Reichspublizistik, Politik, Naturrecht*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main, 1987), pp. 148–71; J.R. Wolf, 'Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff und die Versuche zur Reform des Hessen-Darmstädtischen Finanzstaates unter Landgraf Ludwig VI.', in W. Heinemeyer (ed.), *Hundert Jahre Historische Kommission für Hessen 1897–1997. Festgabe dargebracht von Autorinnen und Autoren der Historischen Kommission*, vol. I (Marburg, 1997), pp. 513–52, here pp. 513–19; D. Blaufuß, 'Seckendorff', in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin 1999), pp. 719–27; S. Strauch, *Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff (1626–1692): Reformationsgeschichtsschreibung – Reformation des Lebens – Selbstbestimmung zwischen lutherischer Orthodoxie, Pietismus und Frühaufklärung* (Münster, 2005); M. Vec, 'Nachwort', in Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, pp. 1*–85*.

¹⁷ See Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 65.

¹⁸ See A. Klinger, *Der Gothaer Fürstenstaat: Herrschaft, Konfession und Dynastie unter Herzog Ernst dem Frommen* (Husum, 2002).

12 years, Seckendorff remained in the duke's service and had a very successful career, leading him to become the chief administrator and best-paid civil servant in Saxe-Gotha. Then in 1664, to the bewilderment of his contemporaries, he resigned from all his posts and left Gotha, presumably because of personal shortcomings on his master's side.¹⁹ But Seckendorff remained in the business of government; that same year he was appointed chancellor (*Kanzler*) to Duke Maurice of Saxe-Weitz (1619–81) and with that he was again in charge of the administration. The duke died in 1681 and shortly after that Seckendorff retired to his estate near the village of Meuselwitz in Thuringia. Being free from all princely posts, he nevertheless continued to serve as the *Landschaftsdirektor* (Director of the Territorial Estates) in the principality of Altenburg. After a decade of scholarly life in Meuselwitz, he finally assumed the chancellorship of the newly established University of Halle. But his tenure was brief: after less than one year in the job, Seckendorff died on 18 December 1692.

POLITICAL METAPHORS: SECKENDORFF'S PARLIAMENTARY SPEECHES

It is quite telling that the last office Seckendorff was to hold during his life was in a university, because his fame rests more on his writings on a wide range of topics, especially administrative science, political philosophy, imperial law and history, than on his practical work. In 1656, he published the work for which he is best known, the *Teutscher Fürsten-Stat*, a tract on statecraft and administration that became an immediate bestseller and established his reputation among statesmen and scholars alike.²⁰ Seckendorff wrote it while in active service to Ernest the Pious; most of his other works date from his scholarly life after he had retired in 1681.²¹ But none of these books outmatched the fame of his early *Fürsten-Stat*. As its title clearly indicates, this book examines statecraft from the perspective of princes. Later scholars, accordingly, tended to see Seckendorff as an exponent of the processes and disciplines aligned most intimately with the exercise of princely prerogative – state-building and the new science of cameralism.²² But Seckendorff was by no means propagating 'absolutism'. On the contrary, the estates' right of political participation was emphasized over and over again throughout his work.²³ With this in mind, it is not easy to understand why he has not received much more attention from parliamentary historians. Even if in practice Seckendorff was a court official and the head of the princely administration, he was also – and indeed for a much longer period – the head of the estates in the principality of Altenburg. This multiplicity of roles was

¹⁹ See Strauch, *Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff*, pp. 113–16.

²⁰ V.L. von Seckendorff, *Teutscher Fürsten-Stat* (Frankfurt am Main, 1656). See Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 16*–28*.

²¹ *Christen-Stat* (1685), *Ius Publicum Romano-Germanicum* (1686), *Teutsche Reden* (1686), *Commentarius historicus et apologeticus de Lutheranism* (since 1688). For a bibliography of Seckendorff's works see Stolleis, 'Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff', pp. 169–71; K. Jönsson and M. Wolfes, 'Seckendorff, Veit Ludwig von', in *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. XVIII (Herzberg, 2001), pp. 1313–22 and the additions in Vec, 'Nachwort', pp. 13*–14*.

²² See, for instance, Stolleis, 'Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff', p. 168 and A.W. Small, *The Cameralists: The Pioneers of German Social Polity* (Chicago, 1909), p. 69.

²³ See Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 24*; F. Grunert, *Normbegründung und politische Legitimität. Zur Rechts und Staatsphilosophie der deutschen Frühaufklärung* (Tübingen, 2000), p. 25.

mirrored in his collection of parliamentary speeches. On the one hand, five of the 12 speeches at territorial diets were delivered by Seckendorff on behalf of the prince addressing the estates of Gotha and of Naumburg respectively;²⁴ the remaining seven speeches, on the other hand, were written and given when he was director of the Altenburg Estates.²⁵

As Seckendorff remarked in the 'Discourse', each of his speeches consisted of three parts: 'Titles and compliments' (*Titulen und Complimenten*), the 'main act' (*Hauptwerck*), and 'elocution and ornament' (*Ausarbeitung und Zierde*).²⁶ Seckendorff's treatment of the first two of these was quite conventional and does not need long explanation. In the first part, the orator is concerned mainly with the demands of court protocol – in German called *Curialien*, – i.e. the correct forms of address, the right handling of titles and honours, and the giving of all the necessary compliments.²⁷ The second part is named the 'main act' and, according to Seckendorff, 'it might be a wish, an expression of thanks, a request, a declaration or something else'.²⁸ Here Seckendorff is referring to a variety of speech events that regularly occurred at court. Two such events framed every gathering of the territorial estates – the diet's inauguration and its concluding session. Both centred on the presentation or publication of a written document and were bracketed by two speeches, one delivered on behalf of the prince and the other on behalf of the estates. During the inauguration ceremony this document was the princely proposition containing the agenda for the deliberations to come whereas the diet was closed by the publication of the recess that recorded the outcomes of the meeting.²⁹

As in the case of the use of titles and compliments, the 'main act' also appears to be business as usual, hardly worth a second thought.³⁰ But there is more to the 'main act' than this. The sections of the oration concerned with the speech events were not only called 'main acts' by Seckendorff, but also 'essential parts' (*essential-Stücke*), i.e. referring to the 'essence' or, to use a more modern term, the subject of the speech.³¹ It is clear that Seckendorff distinguished between the non-linguistic socio-political event on the one hand and the oration related to it on the other. With respect to territorial diets, the

²⁴ All speeches in Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden* are numbered. The five orations he delivered as court official are: XVII (Gotha, 1663, pp. 137–46), XVIII (Naumburg, 1671, pp. 146–53), XIX (Naumburg, 1671, pp. 154–63), XX (Naumburg, 1678, pp. 163–72) and XXI (Naumburg, 1678, pp. 172–81).

²⁵ The speeches on behalf of the estates are: XXXII (Altenburg, 1673, pp. 267–74), XXXIV (Altenburg, 1678, pp. 286–92), XXXV (Altenburg, 1678, pp. 293–8), XXXVI (Altenburg, 1681, pp. 299–306), XXXVII (Altenburg, 1681, pp. 306–13), XXXVIII (Altenburg, 1685, pp. 313–23) and XXXIX (Altenburg, 1685, pp. 323–33).

²⁶ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', pp. 52, 56 and 44.

²⁷ See M. Beetz, *Frühmoderne Höflichkeit. Komplimentierkunst und Gesellschaftsrituale im altdeutschen Sprachraum* (Stuttgart, 1990).

²⁸ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 52: 'Hauptwercks/ es möchte nun ein Wunsch/ Dank/ Bitte/ Erklärung oder anders seyn'.

²⁹ See Seckendorff, 'Verzeichnis der Reden/ welche in diesem Buch anzutreffen/ samt Anmerckung etlicher Stücken und Amplificationen/ welche über die Curialia & substantialia gebraucht worden', in Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, pp. 69–96. Here, every parliamentary speech event was connected either to the 'publication of the Diet's proposition' or to the 'publication of the Diet's Recess'.

³⁰ See Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, p. 267 and Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 47*.

³¹ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 49.

salient fissure is that which separated the inauguration (or closure) as such from the speeches that describe it. But this distinction cannot be as sharp as he has presented it, because 'to inaugurate' and 'to close' are performative verbs and their use 'in explicitly performative utterances causes precisely that action to be carried out that is expressed by the particular verb'.³² Seckendorff's 'main acts', in other words, are nothing less than 'speech acts' *sensu* Austin and Searle.³³ Inaugurational speeches did not describe the act of inauguration; they *were* the inauguration. This is a first indication of the functions of parliamentary oratory, a subject to be considered later.

What makes Seckendorff's parliamentary oratory particularly special is neither its compliance with the rules of court protocol nor the handling of the 'main act'. Rather, it is the third part of his speeches – *Ausarbeitung und Zierde*, as he called it. It is not for nothing that *Ausarbeitung* has been translated here as 'elocution', a term drawn from the technical vocabulary of rhetorical theory. Although Seckendorff claimed that his speeches were not written following the rules of rhetorical theory, at least the 'Discourse' was partly arranged according to traditional schemes. When he gave a preview of the subjects he intended to treat in the 'Discourse', Seckendorff hinted that he would 'speak first about the person of the orator, then about the subjects about which one has to speak, and finally about the subjects' disposition, elocution and ornament'.³⁴ The 'point of pronunciation and gesture' was touched on briefly later. Although partly in disguise, here we have the classical four parts of oratory: invention, disposition, elocution and pronunciation. But of the four, only elocution was held by Seckendorff to be a specific part of his speeches. According to the eighteenth-century neoclassical rhetorician John Ward, elocution is defined by the orator's concern 'to give his thoughts an agreeable dress, by making choice of the fittest words, clearest expressions, ... with other ornaments of stile, as may best suit the nature of his subject'.³⁵ But since antiquity, rhetorical tradition has accumulated a plethora of means to be used for elocution purposes and one may ask what rhetorical figures are chosen by Seckendorff to give his speeches 'an agreeable dress'. The answer is easy to find because by *Ausarbeitung* (elocution) Seckendorff almost always understood 'amplification' and sometimes he even referred to the whole third section under the name of this particular rhetorical figure.³⁶ Both terms seem to be quite

³² 'Performative verb', in H. Bussmann (ed.), *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, trans. and ed. by G.P. Trauth and K. Kazzazi (London, 1996), p. 356. See E. Fischer-Lichte, 'Performance, Inszenierung, Ritual. Zur Klärung kulturwissenschaftlicher Schlüsselbegriffe', in J. Martschukat and S. Patzold (eds), *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'performative turn': Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Cologne, 2003), pp. 33–54.

³³ See J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words* (Oxford, 1962) and J.R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge, 1969).

³⁴ 'anfangs etwas anführen/ so die Person des Redners/ darnach was die Materie, davon man zu reden hat/ und dann deren Disposition und Ausarbeitung und Zierde angehet', Seckendorff, 'Diskurs', p. 44.

³⁵ J. Ward, *A System of Oratory, Delivered in a Course of Lectures Publicly read at Gresham College, London*, 2 vols (London, 1759), vol. I, p. 30. See K. Massey, 'John Ward (1679?–1758)', in M.G. Moran (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century British and American Rhetorics and Rhetoricians: Critical Studies and Sources* (Westport, Conn., 1994), pp. 235–44.

³⁶ Given the intricacy of early modern rhetorical theory, it is not surprising that 'amplification' is not always placed under the heading 'elocution'. See, for instance, T.M. Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago, 1994), p. 139.

interchangeable, as can be seen best from the book's table of contents: 'List of orations that can be found in this book along with the annotation of a number of pieces and amplifications that were used beyond the *Curialia* and substantials'.³⁷ Consulting John Ward again on this matter one finds that 'by Amplification is meant not barely a method of enlarging upon a thing; but so to represent it in the fullest and most comprehensive view, as that it may in the liveliest manner strike the mind, and influence the passions'.³⁸

The question arises why Seckendorff obviously felt the need to use this rhetorical figure all the time. He was faced with a problem. The main speech acts at the inauguration or closure in the case of a territorial diet were quite short. In theory, on behalf of the prince it would have sufficed to say something like 'Hereby, the diet is opened'. Of course, inauguration so curt would have come off as insulting because, for as Seckendorff reluctantly admits, 'something had to be said at solemnities'.³⁹ To avoid empty talk, Seckendorff resorted to amplification by enlarging and varying the one theme he believed to be crucial in the context of territorial diets: the proper relationship between the prince and his subjects.⁴⁰ Accordingly, all his parliamentary speeches were for the most part elaborate expositions on this issue. In contrast to the fixed general theme itself the arguments, motives, and examples to illustrate and present it could be drawn from every suitable source, for 'after all', Seckendorff writes, 'just a single saying in prose or in verse, a parable or a story, a picture, an inscription and the like can be the occasion for a great and long speech'.⁴¹ Given his educational background, Seckendorff relied mainly on stories and sayings from both Scripture and classical literature. But the variety of his sources is less important than the fact that he deployed them as metaphors for the relationship between lords and subjects.⁴²

Refining the analysis, one is able to distinguish three different types of political metaphor that Seckendorff used to amplify his principal theme. The first group is made up of 'patriarchal metaphors' in which the prince is understood in terms of a 'father'. To be precise, the model was the *pater familias* of Roman Law, who 'had absolute control over all persons and all property within his household'.⁴³ Accordingly, for pre-modern contemporaries 'father' was associated with notions of authority and rule above all else. In accordance with Lutheran theology, in some of Seckendorff's speeches the princes' rule is compared with the rule of God who – as the

³⁷ Seckendorff, 'Verzeichnis', p. 69.

³⁸ Ward, *A System of Oratory*, vol. I, p. 292.

³⁹ 'Weil nun bey Solennitäten/ dem Herkommen nach/ etwas geredet werden muste'. Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 58.

⁴⁰ Seckendorff, 'Diskurs', p. 62; see Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 49*.

⁴¹ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 62: 'Doch kann eine einige Sentenz in prosa aut versu, eine Gleichniß oder Geschicht/ ein Bild/ eine Inscription und dergleichen/ einen Anlaß zu einer grossen und langen Rede geben'.

⁴² See G.P. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, 1980), p. 5: 'The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another'. See D. Peil, *Untersuchungen zur Staats- und Herrschaftsmetaphorik in literarischen Zeugnissen von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 1983).

⁴³ George Mousourakis, *The Historical and Institutional Context of Roman Law* (Aldershot, 2003), p. 40.

heavenly father – is the only bearer of true absolute power. In 1678, for instance, Seckendorff explained on the occasion of the diet's opening in Altenburg:

On earth and concerning matters of temporal government, the high authorities are in God's place. God reveals his will briefly and because it is holy and just the people only reply 'Amen'! Now, if the laudable authorities imitate God in this and propose what is just, fair, and expedient, the loyal subjects will also soon say 'Yes'.⁴⁴

Seckendorff made the analogy even more explicit in a speech delivered in 1685, when he asserted that 'a righteous and Christian ruler knows that he is God's vicegerent and envoy'.⁴⁵ By contrast, Seckendorff never based any of his amplifications on the metaphor of the *Landes-Vater* (Father of the Land); at the most, he used it as a title when addressing the prince.⁴⁶ This is of particular significance because in other territories this particular metaphor was of utmost importance when the office of the ruler had to be expounded in speeches or sermons.⁴⁷

'Organological metaphors' constitute the second type of political imagery found in the orations. To be sure, depicting the commonwealth as a 'body' and ruler and subjects as its constituent 'parts' was as conventional a metaphor in seventeenth-century political theory as the patriarchal image. But here again, Seckendorff's use of corporeal metaphors was remarkable for its socio-political precision. Sometimes he confined himself to the conventional usage. In an inauguration speech delivered in 1685, Seckendorff observed that 'authorities and subjects, masters and servants are human beings separated according to ... status, but they stand united in a mystical body (*corpo mystico*) as head and members'.⁴⁸ But 14 years earlier, the same metaphorical comparison was made using the famous dream of Nebuchadnezzar to be found in the Book of Daniel. In the second chapter, Daniel tells the King of Babylon that he – the king – dreamed of a statue made of different materials: 'This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay'.⁴⁹ Daniel himself revealed afterwards that

⁴⁴ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 34, p. 288: 'Die hohe Obrigkeit ist in der Welt/ und in weltlichen Regiments-Sachen an GOTTes statt: GOTTE aber offenbahret seinen Willen kurtz/ und weil solcher heilig und gerecht/ so replicirt das Volck darauff nur Amen! Wenn nun löbliche Obrigkeit auch hierinnen GOTT nachahmen und sich vernehmen lassen/ mit dem was recht/ billig und tunlich/ so werden getreue Unterthanen auch bald ja sagen.'

⁴⁵ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 38, p. 316: 'Ein rechtschaffener Christlicher Regent weiß/ daß er GOTTes Stathalter und Abgesandter ist'.

⁴⁶ See for instance Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 28, p. 147 or Speech 29, p. 163; see also P. Münch, 'Der Landesvater: Historische Anmerkungen zu einem Topos der deutschen politischen Kultur', *Journal für Geschichte* 5 (1986), pp. 36–43 and V. Seresse, *Politische Normen in Kleve-Mark während des 17. Jahrhunderts: Argumentationsgeschichtliche und herrschaftstheoretische Zugänge zur politischen Kultur der frühen Neuzeit* (Epfendorf/Neckar, 2005), pp. 186–91.

⁴⁷ See J. Eibach, 'Preußens Salomon. Herrschaftslegitimation und Herrscherpflichten in Predigten anlässlich der Krönung Friedrichs I.', in J. Kunisch (ed.), *Dreihundert Jahre Preußische Königskrönung. Eine Tagungsdokumentation* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 135–57, p. 147; T. Neu, 'Rhetoric and Representation. Reassessing Territorial Diets in Early Modern Germany', *Central European History* 43 (forthcoming).

⁴⁸ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 38, p. 321: 'Obrigkeit und Untertanen/ Herr und Diener/ sind Menschen nach Personen und Stand Unterschieden/ doch stehen sie in einen *corpo mystico*, als Haupt und Glieder vereinigt'.

⁴⁹ Daniel 2. 32–3 (King James Version).

the four parts of the body should be interpreted as four kingdoms and Seckendorff was very well aware of this interpretation. Nevertheless he told his audience: 'To me, this image seems not only to be like the well-known four monarchies but also like any realm, principality, and land, should it be great or small.'⁵⁰ For the rest of the speech, Seckendorff developed Nebuchadnezzar's dream into an elaborate corporeal metaphor of the socio-political order of the commonwealth: 'The head of the political image and body is the high authority: No body can exist without a head.'⁵¹ The silver breast and arms stand for the political estates and the third part, belly and thighs made of brass, represent the guilds and trade companies in the cities. Lastly, the legs and feet are identified with the rural population dependent on agriculture. But the orator was not content with the mere identification of the statue's parts. He also explained in painstaking detail the duties of every limb, i.e. what it was to do to secure the well-being of the body politic in the literal sense.⁵²

As we have seen, patriarchal and organological metaphors alike conceived of the commonwealth as a structured whole (family, body) and the prince as a part of it (father, head). The leadership of the prince was then deduced from his position within the whole. But this is not the only possible way of justifying monarchical rule metaphorically. This can be shown by the third kind of political imagery, which may be called 'functionalist metaphor'. Here, the ruler and the commonwealth were conceived as two separate entities. Unlike the patriarchal and organological metaphors, the rights and duties of the prince were not inferred from his position within the commonwealth but rather from his function in relation to it.⁵³ This was the case, for instance, when Seckendorff closed a diet in 1678 with a speech that expounded the 'comparison between architecture and statecraft' based on the assumption 'that a reasonable ruler and an experienced architect have almost the same principles'.⁵⁴ Consequently, the prince's function was to design and erect the 'political building' that would serve the welfare of both ruler and the subjects.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 29, p. 155: 'Mir kömmt dieses Bild nicht allein vor/ wie die bekanten vier Monarchien/ sondern wie ein jedes Reich/ Fürstenthum und Land/ es sey klein oder groß/ insonderheit.'; see Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, pp. 274–6.

⁵¹ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 29, p. 155: 'Das Haupt des Politischen Bildes und Leibes ist die hohe Obrigkeit: Kein Leib kan ohne Haupt bestehen.'

⁵² The duty of the prince is to lead and govern the whole body (Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 29, p. 158); the political estates are responsible for the body's strength and its ability to defend itself (p. 159); the merchants and traders accommodate the others parts with food and energy (p. 159). So far, the application of the metaphor is congruous, but regarding the peasants it is obviously quite difficult to connect what they really do – farming – with the biological functions of legs and feet, i.e. transportation. Accordingly, Seckendorff changed the focus and highlighted the fact that legs and feet had to carry the weight of the other parts (p. 161).

⁵³ Eibach, 'Preußens Salomon', p. 149 speaks of 'therapeutical metaphor' when dealing with sermons that depicted the prince as a doctor or a nurse. This can be interpreted as just a sub-category of functionalist metaphor, because it is more decisive that the prince is defined through his function in general than the function's specific nature. See also B. Stollberg-Rilinger, *Der Staat als Maschine: Zur politischen Metaphorik des absoluten Fürstenstaats* (Berlin, 1986).

⁵⁴ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 21, p. 172: 'Vergleichung ... zwischen der Architectur oder der Bau-Kunst und der Regier-Kunst'; 'daß ein verständiger Regent und ein erfahrener Baumeister fast ein-erley Principia haben'.

⁵⁵ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 21, p. 173: 'Politischen Bau'.

The functionalist metaphor that Seckendorff used most often conceived of the prince as 'the sun'. This particular trope was used in no less than three of the parliamentary orations in *Teutsche Reden*.⁵⁶ And although this metaphor is usually associated with Absolutism and in particular with Louis XIV, Seckendorff displayed enormous talent to apply it to the structures of the *Ständestaat* in various ways. At the opening of a diet in 1681, Seckendorff addressed Duke Frederick of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg as 'our political sun'. Speaking as their director, Seckendorff told the prince that the territorial estates 'are heliotropes, to be compared with the plants, flowers, and fruits that always follow the sun and are eager to receive its beams'.⁵⁷ And this botanical metaphor also provided an analogy for the classes lacking political participation rights: the poor were like 'little unsightly field flowers' and the peasants and townsfolk were described as the 'chicory that is under almost everyone's feet'.⁵⁸ During the closing ceremony of the same diet, Seckendorff again spoke of 'the prince sun', but he changed the metaphor for the people. Now, he made no distinctions according to socio-political status but declared: 'The subjects are the industrious bees that support not only themselves with their efforts but also acquire a surplus for their master'.⁵⁹

The last of Seckendorff's parliamentary orations contains a functionalist metaphor that is stunning for its originality and creativity. Unusually, it was not taken from Scripture or classical literature but allegedly from Seckendorff's encounter with an Ethiopian at court. Seckendorff asked the 'reasonable man' how people could live and survive a climate as hot as Ethiopia's. The Ethiopian explained that it was possible to do so due to a great mountain range in Ethiopia, because of which the vapours arising from the plains did not evaporate but caused thunderstorms and rainfall every day. And in combination with this rainfall, the intensive solar radiation gave rise to fertility instead of burning the land.⁶⁰ Apart from the interesting fact that this hydrological phenomenon is described correctly,⁶¹ the Ethiopian's account obviously inspired Seckendorff to imagine the structure of the state in a radical new way:

The Estates of a realm and therefore also of this principality are by old custom somewhat superior to the mere mass of subjects and approach their head of state as the sun. They are, so to speak, the hills and the steps by means of which everything that can

⁵⁶ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 36, 37 and 39. For the metaphor of the 'sun king' see C. Koslowsky, 'Princes of Darkness: The Night at Court, 1650–1750', *Journal of Modern History* 79 (2007), pp. 235–73.

⁵⁷ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 36, p. 303: 'sind die Heliotropia, mit den jenigen Erd-Gewächsen/ Blumen und Früchten zu vergleichen/ die sich immer nach der Sonnen richten/ und dero Strahlen zu empfangen gleichsam begierig sind.'

⁵⁸ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 36, p. 303: 'die kleinen unansehnlichen Feld-Blumen'; 'fast jedermann unter den Füßen liegende/ Wegwarten'.

⁵⁹ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 37, p. 311: 'Die Untertanen sind die arbeitsamen Bienen/ die mit ihrer Mühe nicht allein sich selbst nehmen/ sondern auch einen Überschuß vor ihren Herrn erwerben.' see also Eibach, 'Preußens Salomon', pp. 149–50 and Peil, *Untersuchungen*, p. 300.

⁶⁰ See Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 39, pp. 326–7.

⁶¹ This is a case of orographic precipitation. See W. Brutsaert and J.C. Osemund, *Hydrology: An Introduction* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 90–92.

be contributed by the realm is raised up on high and brought before the bright face of the prince. There it is accepted with mercy and grace and is again spread out as a gentle and beneficial dew and rain across the whole realm.⁶²

In essence, this metaphor contains a very strong statement in favour of the territorial estates because they are depicted as an indispensable part of the commonwealth. It is due to them only that the prince and the subjects can interact in a way beneficial to all and without them 'the great heat of the sun and the lowness and dry brittleness of the soil would make everything uninhabitable and barren'.⁶³ Regardless of whether the estates appear as hills, bees or plants, in all three instances of the sun metaphor two structures remain the same. Firstly, the fundamental opposition of the solar prince and his earthly principality is maintained. In all cases, secondly, the relationship between the two poles is defined by the function of the prince to guarantee 'illumination and refreshment' and the metaphor allows understanding both terms either literally or figuratively.⁶⁴ It should also be noticed that this metaphorical setting – strictly speaking – does not include the idea that the subjects also have a function for their prince because the sun receives nothing from the earth; it just shines. But this aspect is not made explicit although it remains a potential resource for argumentation.⁶⁵

By now, the salient characteristics of Seckendorff's parliamentary oratory should be clear. On the one hand, his speeches are quite conventional regarding their first two parts. Here, we see Seckendorff acting as a typical functionary of the courtly sphere who knows what has to be said to carry out the standardized 'main acts' relating to the territorial diets (inauguration and closure) and who is able to follow precisely the rules of court protocol at the same time. On the other hand, the third and most extensive part of every speech shows Seckendorff as an erudite and experienced political thinker. A deep understanding of both the reality and theory of the *Ständestaat* finds expression in the most prominent feature of his oratorical practice: his ingenuity to find or create new metaphors depicting the relationship between ruler and subjects.⁶⁶

SECKENDORFF AND THE PURPOSE OF POLITICAL ORATORY

The question of the purpose and political impact of this special form of parliamentary oratory is all the more legitimate because Seckendorff was – like most rhetoricians – convinced that a connection existed between the form of government and the

⁶² Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 39, p. 328: 'Die Stände eines Landes/ und also auch dieses Fürstenthums/ die nach altem Herkommen/ vor und über den gemeinen Hauffen der Unterthanen in etwas erhaben sind; und sich also ihrem Landes-Haupt als der Sonne nähern/ sind gleichsam Hügel/ und die Stufen durch welche das jenige/ so das Land ertragen kan/ in die Höhe und für das helle Angesicht des Landes Fürsten gebracht/ daselbst in Hulde und Gnade angenommen/ und wieder als ein sanffter und nützlicher Thau und Regen über das gantze Land ausgebreitet wird.'

⁶³ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 39, p. 328: 'Sondern die allzu grosse Hitze der Sonnen/ und die faule Niedrigkeit und dörre Sprödigkeit des Erdbodens/ würde alles unwohnbar und öde machen.'

⁶⁴ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 36, p. 301: 'Erleuchtung und Erquickung'.

⁶⁵ See Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, ch. 11.

⁶⁶ See Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 49*.

quality of eloquence. In absolute monarchies, he claimed in the 'Discourse', the sovereign 'does not need many more words than a captain when he drills and commands his company'.⁶⁷ Even though he did not regard the German princes as absolute monarchs, it remains the case that Seckendorff did not employ his profound oratorical skills for the classical purpose of eloquence – persuasion. None of his metaphors, biblical sayings or classical stories was used to influence the decisions of a prince or estates. However, he would not have published a whole book about 'solemn and public oratory' if he had considered it useless and empty.⁶⁸

To understand what Seckendorff really thought to be the purpose of eloquence we have to turn once again to his political imagery. In all metaphorical settings, the well-being of the body politic as a whole appears to be dependent on the virtuous conduct of the individual parts of which it is composed. Regardless of whether the state is compared with a body, a building or even an alloy of metals, Seckendorff always means to convey a set of guiding norms of political conduct. At the risk of oversimplification, we can single out three key concepts – love, loyalty and harmony.⁶⁹ To establish a 'wonderful and pleasing harmony', all political actors had to be united in a 'bond of love'.⁷⁰ For the prince, that meant above all else that he had to respect the rights and liberties of the territorial estates and to give them a share in government. The conduct of the estates, on the other hand, should follow the values of loyalty and allegiance. All in all, everyone should seek harmony and consent preventing both absolutism and monarchomachism.⁷¹ Welfare derives from values. This Seckendorffian formula might sound quite strange to modern political scientists, who tend to infer the quality of a commonwealth from its institutional arrangements rather than from the personal conduct of its personnel. In pre-modern times though, when personal face-to-face interaction was the most important mode of political communication, this formula was unquestioned. With this in mind, it becomes clear that Seckendorff crafted all these political metaphors to expose the moral foundations of a good commonwealth, to clarify the duties of prince, estates and subjects respectively, and to exert moral pressure on his audience to behave according to the presented values.

His political oratory, in short, was not about persuasion and decision-making, but 'moral education'.⁷² Seckendorff was very well aware of this purpose and he was even

⁶⁷ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 32: 'Er hat nicht viel Worte mehr bedurfft/ als ein Hauptmann/ wann er seine Compagnie exerciret oder commandiret'. See Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, p. 258 and Barner, *Barockrhetorik*, pp. 163–4.

⁶⁸ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 45: 'oratoria solenni & publica'.

⁶⁹ The metaphor that compares the state with an alloy of metals is to be found in Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 32, pp. 271–2. On political values see also Seresse, *Politische Normen in Kleve-Mark*.

⁷⁰ Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, Speech 29, p. 155: 'herrliche und erfreuliche harmoni'. The term 'harmony' also occurs: Speech 32, p. 271, Speech 34, p. 289, and Speech 38, p. 321. See also Speech 35, p. 296: 'Band der Liebe'. Elaborate references to 'love' are also to be found in Speech 28, p. 147 and Speech 39, p. 327.

⁷¹ See Vec, 'Nachwort', pp. 51*–4* and Braungart, *Hofberedsamkeit*, pp. 269–72.

⁷² See Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 50*; See also F. Oser and R. Reichenbach, 'Moral Education: Philosophical Issues', in T. Husén and T.N. Postlethwaite (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Education*, 2nd edn, vol. VII (Oxford, 1994), pp. 3920–25.

able to explain why he adopted it in the first place. As the reader is told in the 'Discourse', it was because of Duke Ernest the Pious that the young court official began to develop his moralized political eloquence: 'Because according to custom something had to be said at solemnities, he [Duke Ernest] liked it when a moral was also put forward.'⁷³ Given his reputation for piety, it is hardly surprising that the duke should have made a 'general principle' that every speech at court had to be edifying in addition to its original aim. Whether this story is true or just a retrospective mystification is of little importance; either way, Seckendorff continued this practice even after he broke with the Duke. We have every reason to think that Seckendorff also believed deeply in the necessity of moral speech in political contexts.

And although it is very difficult to measure the exact effect of moral pressure, Seckendorff was certainly right in believing that his method of 'moral education' was not only empty talk. The representative assemblies of medieval and early modern Europe inhabited a political culture predicated on hierarchy, consent and honour and it was virtually impossible to express dissent overtly, in public speech.⁷⁴ Rather, these representative bodies cherished unity and harmony as their central values. Accordingly, an orator who was capable of invoking these values vividly, as Seckendorff did, could strengthen his audience's adherence to the common political morality.

But at a certain point, Seckendorff's insistence on morality prompted him to misrepresent his own oratorical practice to some degree. As we have demonstrated, he was correct to state that moral speech contributed to the political impact of parliamentary oratory, but he also assumed erroneously that this impact was exclusively due to his moralizing amplifications. In doing so, he completely ignored the very nature of his political oratory as a whole. It may be that Seckendorff chose his metaphors according to their moral content, without regard for the setting in which they would be delivered. But they were delivered in the general context of 'solemn and public' speech – that is to say they were the stuff of ceremonial oratory.⁷⁵ Seckendorff resisted the idea that ceremony itself could have political impact, because he was outspokenly and entirely anti-ceremonial.⁷⁶ Good speeches, he believed, should present the 'main act' very briefly and every additional paragraph that contained no moral content was regarded by him as 'mere ceremonial', i.e. superfluous and meaningless.⁷⁷

⁷³ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 58: 'Weil nun bey Solennitäten/ dem Herkommen nach/ etwas geredet werden muste/ so sahen sie gern/ wann ein oder ander morale mit fürgebracht wurde.'

⁷⁴ For the importance of public consent see G. Althoff, 'Colloquium familiare – colloquium secretum – colloquium publicum: Beratungen im politischen Leben des früheren Mittelalters', in G. Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter: Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), pp. 157–84. For possible forms of latently expressing dissent see G. Haug-Moritz, *Der Schmalkaldische Bund 1530–1541/42: Eine Studie zu den genossenschaftlichen Strukturelementen der politischen Ordnung des Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation* (Leinfelden-Echterdingen, 2002), pp. 246–56; and D.M. Luebke, 'Ceremony and Dissent: Territorial Estates, Procedural Conflicts, and the "Fiction of Consensus" in the Early Modern Empire', in B. Marschke and J. Coy (eds), *The Holy Roman Empire, Reassessed* (New York, forthcoming).

⁷⁵ Seckendorff, 'Discurs', p. 45: 'oratoria solenni & publica'.

⁷⁶ See Vec, 'Nachwort', p. 41.

⁷⁷ See Seckendorff, *Teutsche Reden*, p. 49 (brevity), p. 50, p. 52 and p. 58 (complaints about 'mere ceremonial' parts).

What Seckendorff overlooked is the possibility that the very ceremoniousness of his speeches might also have some sort of political function. Both the 'main act' and ceremony did indeed have a function and produced some sort of impact. To start with the 'main act', it was shown above that the parts of the speech that dealt with either the inauguration or the closure of the diet were characterized by the occurrence of speech acts containing explicit performative utterances. According to J.R. Searle, such speech acts are used to create institutional facts and Searle's example of this process of creation perfectly fits the analysis of parliamentary oratory: 'Thus when the chairman of the parliament says, "I hereby declare the parliament in session," a new status-function is imposed on the speech act, the status-function of making it the case that the parliament is in session.'⁷⁸ Therefore, it is a basic function of ceremonialized parliamentary oratory to perform communicative acts that define and mark a certain time and place as 'parliamentary' in the first place.⁷⁹

Turning to ceremony in general: after two decades of renewed interest in the subject there can be no doubt that ceremonial acts were vital to the early modern commonwealths as a way to constitute and express the socio-political order.⁸⁰ With respect to the special case of parliaments, Thomas Bisson argued some twenty years ago that because the 'ceremonial representation of society was a constant and variable feature' of such assemblies, they 'were often the scene of a political rhetoric consistent with the ceremony and designed to elicit undebated assent'.⁸¹ And although he was concerned with medieval assemblies, the intrinsic connection between parliamentary oratory and ceremonial representation could also be established for the Elizabethan Parliament, the Polish Sejm and the German Reichstag.⁸² Hence Peter Mack is surely right in claiming that one of the functions of parliamentary oratory was 'notably the creation and celebration of political community'.⁸³

In general, metaphor allows not only for 'understanding', but also for 'experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' and therefore metaphorical comparison creates the analogies it pretends to be based on.⁸⁴ Is there a better way to create and cele-

⁷⁸ J.R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York, 1995), p. 116.

⁷⁹ See Braungart, 'Die höfische Rede im zeremoniellen Ablauf', p. 207.

⁸⁰ See the seminal contributions: R. Darnton, 'A Bourgeois Puts His World in Order: The City as a Text', in Darnton, *The Great Cat-Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), pp. 107–43; H. Ragotzky and H. Wenzel (eds), *Höfische Repräsentation. Das Zeremoniell und die Zeichen* (Tübingen, 1990); J.J. Berns and T. Rahn (eds), *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1995) and E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 252–93.

⁸¹ T.N. Bisson, 'Celebration and Persuasion. Reflections on the Cultural Evolution of Medieval Consultation', *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 7 (1982), pp. 181–204, here pp. 184 and 183.

⁸² See P. Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 215–52; K. Lichy, 'Reden als Aushandeln: Rhetorik und Zeremoniell auf dem polnisch-litauischen Sejm zu Beginn der Wasa-Zeit', in Feuchter and Helmrath, *Politische Redekultur*, pp. 149–72 and A. Krischer, 'Politische Repräsentation und Rhetorik der Reichsstädte auf dem Reichstag nach 1648', in Feuchter and Helmrath, *Politische Redekultur*, pp. 135–48.

⁸³ Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, p. 251. See also J. Helmrath, 'Der europäische Humanismus und die Funktionen der Rhetorik', in T. Maissen and G. Walther (eds), *Funktionen des Humanismus: Studien zum Nutzen des Neuen in der humanistischen Kultur* (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 18–48, p. 37.

⁸⁴ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, p. 5.

brate political community than a mode of speech that enables one to experience the socio-political order – a thing that is abstract and complex – as a concrete and simple thing like a family, a body or a building? All the powerful and brilliant metaphors for the commonwealth were surely meant by Seckendorff as edifying descriptions of a stable and God-given socio-political order. But in the end the performative force of his ceremonial speech shaped and reshaped that order as well.

Let us return, finally, to rhetoricians such as Maternus who denied the existence of real political oratory in monarchies. In the light of Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff's parliamentary rhetoric, this claim has to be rejected. Rather, as his speeches make clear, parliamentary oratory in the seventeenth century had considerable political impact, although it was not about decision-making in a narrow sense. That impact stemmed from two functions, of which only the first was known and intentionally cultivated by Seckendorff: (1) as moral speech, political oratory prescribed how one should behave within the order of the commonwealth; and (2) as performative speech, political eloquence constituted and (re-)actualized that very order. As long as parliamentary speeches dared to define the polity and to expound on the prince's duties, real political eloquence had not yet ceased to exist.