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AUFHEBUNG IM DOPPELTEN WORTSINN:
THE FATE OF MONASTIC LIBRARIES
IN CENTRAL EUROPE, 1780-1810

I want to begin by considering a group of words in the German language that appear simultaneously to mean one thing, but also exactly the opposite. The word *reizen*, for example, can mean to irritate, to put off, but also to attract strongly: *Das reizt mich ungemein*. Surprisingly, technical terms are also not exempt from this kind of inherent inexactitude. The meaning of the word *Säkularisierung*, for example, is, as Martin Heckel described in a 1984 article, „vielfältig schillernd.”¹ In Heckel’s article and elsewhere in the literature, we read of the broad spectrum of meanings that accrue to this word, reaching on the one hand from desecration and desacralization – Latin *profanatio* – to quite the other extreme, namely what might be seen as the greatest success of religious belief, namely the complete adoption and integration of religiously derived doctrine into secular life: this is the meaning of *Verweltlichung* that Karl Marx develops in „Zur Judenfrage” of 1844.² A closely related term is *Aufhebung*, and it is of similar semantic ambivalence. On the one hand it can mean the abolition of an institution or a corporation (as happened to the Jesuits in 1773 by order of Clemens XIV – this is in-

1. Martin Heckel, „Das Säkularisierungsproblem in der Entwicklung des deutschen Staatskirchenrechts” *Christentum und modernes Recht: Beiträge zum Problem der Säkularisation*, ed. Gerhard Dilcher, Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 421 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), p. 35.

2. Cf. the article *Säkularisation, Säkularisierung*, in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck, eds., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972-1990), vol. 5, p. 815.

deed the example explicitly used in Grimms' *Wörterbuch*³) or the annulment or rescission of a law. Yet we also frequently use the very same word to mean „to preserve, to save for later use,” as in the phrase *gut aufgehoben*. Are words such as these just semantically imprecise, or does their range of meanings in fact relate, accurately and wisely, to paradoxes that inhere to real processes? In the case of the dissolution of monastic libraries in the German-speaking regions of Catholic Europe between 1780 and 1810, the seemingly contradictory word-meanings of *Säkularisation* and *Aufhebung* both appear to apply in almost equal measure: „Destruction” and „preservation” co-exist strangely and paradoxically to describe the course of these events and their outcome. Whether anything I say here applies to secularization outside the world of books and libraries, I must leave to others to debate and decide.

Let us look at the end of monastic library culture in Central Europe at the turn of the 18th to the 19th century. It is now commonly agreed that the monasteries did not collapse of their own, as proponents of the Enlightenment from Voltaire onwards regularly opined, but instead were experiencing a „letzte Blütezeit,” a last flowering, as even the political inheritors of the Bavarian Secularization of 1802-1803 now grudgingly admit.⁴ The undeniable fact is that throughout the 18th century, often until the very moment of their dissolution, monasteries were flourishing across the southern, Catholic half of Germany and throughout the Austrian Empire like seldom before in their history. The Benedictine monastery of Altenburg, located in the hill country of northern Austria near Horn, was typical for having rebounded from the moral decline and ferment of the Reformation era and the depredations of the Thirty Years War.⁵ In the imperial capital of Vienna, the number of monasteries had soared from 25 in 1660 – already a stately number – to no fewer than 125 forty years later, in 1700.⁶ All told, 2163 abbeys, monasteries, hermitages, and other houses of monastic orders were counted in the Habsburg Empire around

3. „Aufhebung,” in Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1854), vol. 1 (A-Biermolke).

4. See the conciliatory comment by the former Bavarian Ministerpräsident, Max Streibl, in his Geleitwort, in Josef Kirmeier and Manfred Treml, eds., *Glanz und Ende der alten Klöster* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1991), p. 5. See also Eberhard Weis, *Die Säkularisation der bayerischen Klöster 1802/03: Neue Forschungen zu Vorgeschichte und Ergebnissen*, Sitzungsberichte. Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse (Munich: Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften; C. H. Beck, 1983), p. 23: Außerdem kann als erwiesen gelten, daß die bayerischen wie auch die meisten deutschen Klöster um 1803 größtenteils intakt waren im Gegensatz zum Zustand sehr vieler Deutscher Klöster am Vorabend der Reformation.

5. G. Stenzel, *Von Stift zu Stift in Österreich* (Vienna: Kremayr & Scheriau, 1977), p. 47-51.

6. Brigitte Vacha, ed., *Die Habsburger: eine europäische Familiengeschichte* (Graz, Vienna, Cologne: Styria, 1992), p. 333.

1770. In neighboring Bavaria, a much smaller European power, there were more than 200 monasteries by 1800, including the imperial abbeys, wealthy and *reichsunmittelbar*, such as Sankt Emmeram in Regensburg. Between Austria and Bavaria – and of enormous relevance for the progress of the Enlightenment in the Bavarian-Austrian region and indeed throughout Central Europe – were the ancient and powerful ecclesiastical states of Passau and Salzburg. Their possessions, powers of taxation, and authority in religious matters extended deep into the territories of both of their secular neighbors, and this political power together with their sophistication as enlightened capitals, had become a serious irritation to their Catholic, but increasingly secular and aggressive neighbors.⁷

The period beginning with the coronation of Charlemagne in Rome in 800 and ending with the French Revolution of 1789 has been called by Austrian sociologist August Maria Knoll the „Carolingian millenium.”⁸ Just as monasteries were central to the preservation and cultivation of knowledge and the spread of Christianity during this millenium, the library, or *armarium*, was a central fixture in almost every monastery: even smaller institutions often lavished extraordinary attention on them, as in Waldsassen, far north in the Upper Palatinate.⁹ Libraries served a dual function for monasteries. They were on the one hand substance and source of the *sapientia divina*, the knowledge of the divine, critical in the struggle against heresy and ignorance. At the same time, libraries were also the very public manifestation of this knowledge, integrating books, architecture, sculpture, and painting into a unified programmatic statement celebrating the importance of books and scholarship, an artistic program that in fact reached its peak in the 18th century, celebrated in ceiling frescoes all over the southern German region, as well as in the finest details.¹⁰ This characterized not only the libraries of religious orders with a long history of active scriptoria and the resulting rich collections of manuscripts, such as Melk and other Benedictine foundations and also the abbeys of the other prelate or-

7. Georg Heilingsetzer, „Die Benediktiner im 18. Jahrhundert: Wissenschaft und Gelehrsamkeit im süddeutsch-österreichischen Raum”, unpublished manuscript, [1991?].

8. Franz Unterkirchner, Die älteren Bibliotheken Österreichs, in F. Unterkirchner et al., *Die Bibliotheken Österreichs in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1980), p. 1.

9. Johannes Goldner, *Bayerische Klosterbibliotheken*, Kleine Pannonia-Reihe; 210 (Freilassing: Pannonia, 1983), p. 38.

10. For a recent and quite extraordinary treatment of the details and programmatic statements contained in German libraries of the Baroque, see Edgar Lehmann, *Die Bibliotheksräume der deutschen Klöster in der Zeit des Barock*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1996). See also Eric Graham Garberson, *Places for Books Monastic Libraries of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in South Germany* (Ph.D. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1991), and the standard work by Gert Adriani, *Die Klosterbibliotheken des Spätbarock in Österreich und Süddeutschland* (Graz: Styria, 1935).

ders, the Augustinians and Cistercians among them – even the libraries of the so-called mendicant, or beggar, orders, e.g. the Franciscans and the Dominicans. Despite the admonitions of teachers like Francis of Assisi that books should be kept only for liturgical purposes, the mendicant friars often developed sizeable collections. Modern estimates have placed the total number of books in the libraries of the mendicant orders in Bavaria alone at 342,000 volumes by 1800.¹¹ The contemplative orders, too – the world-removed Carthusians, for example – often had libraries of substance, as we will see in greater detail later on.

Since books and libraries represent a unique convergence of the physical and the spiritual, of the historically extraneous with the ultimately fundamental realm of ideas,¹² it is not surprising that rulers have often had difficulties deciding what to do with hostage libraries which in one way or another have fallen into their hands. They waver between ignoring them as useless, burning them as harmful, or carting them off as valuable trophies. During the Reformation and Peasant Wars of the 16th century, the libraries of enemies were regularly destroyed, though more enlightened rulers were also quick to appropriate monastic libraries for their own use. Luther typically urged the suppression (and one assumes destruction) of what he called the „foolish, useless, and harmful monks’ books, such as *Catholicon*, *Florista*, *Grecista*... and similar such asses’ dung.”¹³ The Thirty Years War saw the organized removal of whole libraries for the purpose of depriving one’s religious opponents of their cultural arsenal and of enriching one’s own¹⁴ Perhaps the most notorious occurrence of this type was the sacking of the Heidelberg Palatina by Maximilian of Bavaria and its transfer to the Vatican, where it resides to this day. The crucial distinction for our purposes is the one between suppression and destruction on the one hand and confiscation and re-dedication on the other, for the latter disposition conforms precisely to the complex meanings of *Aufhebung* and secularization discussed above.

Among other causes, it was surely the wealth and prominence of the southern German monasteries and religious orders that in the late 1700s led the absolutistic state to abandon centuries of patronage and seek to appropriate the wealth and, not incidentally, the intellectual potential contained in their libraries. When the pope dissolved the Jesuit

11. Ladislaus Buzás, *German Library History, 800-1945*, trans. William D. Boyd (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1986), p. 159.

12. Gerd Schmidt, *Waffenlärm und Grabesstille: Buch und Bibliothek im Spiegel der Metapher*, *Philobiblon* 34.1 (1990), p. 3-12.

13. Martin Luther, „An die RATHERREN aller Städte deutsches Lands [1524]”, *D. Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1899), vol. 15, p. 50. (English trans. by W. D. Boyd, in Buzás, op. cit., p. 149.)

14. Buzás, op. cit., p. 154.

order in 1773, the libraries of the Jesuits were quickly confiscated by the Catholic powers to become the foundation on which new universities were built and court libraries were expanded, not only in Central Europe, but everywhere Jesuit influence extended, including the New World.¹⁵ But it was not only avarice on the part of European states that eroded their support of monasticism. The entire Enlightenment period was decidedly unfriendly to monkery as a decadent holdover of the Dark Ages. In an age when reason and utility were held high, Voltaire commented scathingly on the monks' contribution to the community with the following words: „They sing, they eat, they digest.”¹⁶ In Austria, the views of Maria Theresia towards monks and especially those of her son Joseph were only slightly less caustic than Voltaire's, especially with regard to the contemplative and mendicant orders. In his 1765 *Denkschrift* to Maria Theresia on the condition of the monarchy – he was at the time an impressionable young man in his early 20s – Joseph shows how well he had absorbed the anti-monastic teachings of his teacher Bartenstein¹⁷ and his mother's ministers, chief among them, of course, Kaunitz, who wrote at about the same time that „the population and the production of goods is suffering due to the great number of these celibates...”¹⁸ Like them, Joseph minced no words in expressing his disdain for these allegedly parasitic, indolent social elements.¹⁹ Years later, soon after the death of his mother in 1780, Joseph II issued a decree dissolving the monasteries of these very orders, in his propaganda cleverly invoking a non-existent close friendship with the pope to cover for his actions that were presented as a pious *renovatio ecclesiae*.²⁰ Joseph also dissolved a number of monasteries of the prelate orders, such as St. Paul in Carinthia, whose finances had fallen into disarray.²¹ In the following years, a total of 738 monasteries were dis-

15. Klemens Löffler, *Deutsche Klosterbibliotheken*, Bücherei der Kultur und Geschichte, 27, 2d ed. (Bonn u. Leipzig: Kurt Schroeder, 1922), p. 74.

16. T. C. W. Blanning, *Joseph II and Enlightened Despotism* (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1970), p. 8.

17. Josef Hrazky, „Johann Christoph Bartenstein, der Staatsmann und Erzieher”, *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 11 (1958): 221-251.

18. Adolf Beer, ed., *Denkschriften des Fürsten Wenzel Kaunitz-Rittberg* (Vienna: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1872), p. 107.

19. Alfred Ritter von Arneth, ed., *Maria Theresia und Joseph II. Ihre Correspondenz sammt Briefen Joseph's an seinen Bruder Leopold*, 3 vols. (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1867-1868), p. 350-51.

20. Elisabeth Kovács, Joseph II. und die Aufhebung der kontemplativen Klöster in der österreichischen Monarchie, *Mauerbach und die Kartäuser: Symposium über die Kartäusergeschichte und -spiritualität*, 27. und 28. Mai 1983. ed. James Hogg (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1984), p. 1-10.

21. Waltraud Krassnig, „Die Aufhebung des Stiftes 1782-1787”, in Günther Hödl and Johannes Grabmayer, eds., *Schatzhaus Kärntens: Landesausstellung St. Paul 1991: 900 Jahre Benediktinerstift* (Klagenfurt: Universitätsverlag, 1991), vol. 2: *Beiträge*, p. 207-216. On St.

solved across the monarchy, with much of their wealth and the revenue from the sale of their possessions given over to an enormous state foundation called the „Fund for Religion”, which paid for much of the expenses of the Church in Austria until well into the 20th century. This reallocation strategy shows incidentally that Joseph, though antimonastic, was not fundamentally anticlerical. As his biographer Derek Beales has pointed out, „one of the principles of [Joseph’s] legislation was that much of the proceeds from his suppressions of contemplative monasteries should go to funding more parish clergy. He was not atheist, deist or Protestant, but a Catholic reformer.”²² Joseph’s fundamental attitude was not to destroy or eradicate, but to reapportion resources within the Church: in keeping with our earlier discussion of these terms, we could call this *Aufhebung* without *Säkularisation*.

To illustrate the manner in which monasteries and their libraries were disposed of during the Austrian *Klostersturm* of the 1780s, let us consider one monastery hit during the first wave of these Josephine measures: the charterhouse of the Carthusians at Gaming, some 30 km south of the Danube in the Alpine foothills.²³ Its library contained 20,000 books, making it the largest of any Carthusian monastery in Europe. In accordance with the dissolution orders from Vienna, the Court Library was given first choice of books and manuscripts based on a review of the catalog. Seeing itself still in the Renaissance mold as a repository for the rare and the beautiful, the Court Library took only several hundred of the most precious works. Most of these are still in Vienna today, and include 106 incunabula and 15 especially valuable medieval manuscripts. By far the greater part of the library, over 12,000 volumes, was transported to the university library in Vienna. That left 6000 to 7000 books in Gaming not selected for Vienna. Some of these came to the nearby Capuchin monastery at Scheibbs. Others were auctioned off or given away by the state commissars. Many were just left in the monastery and carried off by local peasants.

In the years following what today is still called the *Klostersturm*, the libraries of other dissolved monasteries were broken up much like

Paul and other prelate monasteries dissolved in this period, see also Adam Wolf, *Die Aufhebung der Klöster in Innerösterreich 1782-1790* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1871).

22. Derek Beales, Christians and philosophers : The Case of the Austrian Enlightenment, in Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best, eds., *History, Society and the Churches: Essays in Honour of Owen Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 189.

23. Brunhilde Hoffmann, *Die Aufhebung der Kartause Gaming*, *Analecta Cartusiana*, 58 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Universität Salzburg, 1981). Specifically on the library at Gaming, see Sabine Fischer, „Die barocke Klosterbibliothek der Kartause Gaming: ein Zeugnis aufklärerischen Denkens zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts in Österreich,” *Unsere Heimat* 58 (1987), p. 30-46.

that of Gaming.²⁴ The Court Library in Vienna would take only a very few of the finest pieces, the so-called *cimelia*. The universities of the empire, such as those in Innsbruck, Prague, Graz, and especially Vienna, and the newly created public libraries, such as the Studienbibliothek in Linz,²⁵ received second choice, which meant the lion's share of the books. Much religious literature went to the new Josephine seminaries, to the libraries of the new bishops in Linz and St. Pölten, or to parish house libraries. Everything else was sold to bibliophiles or as scrap paper, with the proceeds applied to book purchasing needs of the schools or universities or for the general needs of the Religion Fund.

A recurring motif in the popular literature of the period and the years since is that of monastery books on their way to the state depots being thrown out in front of carriages to improve traction on muddy Alpine roads.²⁶ Another is of 20th century customers of Austrian cheese shops unpacking their wares at home and discovering that the wrapping paper has been torn from some ancient monastery book. There may be some truth to these claims, but by and large Austrian authorities appear to have been quite meticulous in safeguarding and cataloging monastic libraries before carting them off, both to prevent theft and to give the authorities in Vienna and the local provincial capital an opportunity to make informed selections.²⁷ The monks themselves were turned out or became secular clergy (*Weltpriester*), but were never abused or killed as they would be in France a decade later. Even the most hated of the Josephine monastery commissars, the „Dictator Austriae“, as one abbot called him, Joseph Valentin von Eybel, took care that as little as possible of the libraries was lost, and that the books came reliably to their new homes.²⁸ Not that he was so enamored of monastery books (nor of the monasteries themselves), as it turns out: His reports reveal him to be just a conscientious civil servant with a

24. There are many excellent regional treatments describing the disposition of these libraries, for example Simon Laschitzer, *Geschichte der Klosterbibliotheken und Archive Kärntens zur Zeit ihrer Aufhebung unter Kaiser Josef II. Carinthia: Zeitschrift für Vaterlandskunde, Belehrung und Unterhaltung* 73.6-8 (1883), no. 6, p. 129-148, no. 7, p. 161-187, and no. 8, p. 193-205; and Franz Karnthaler, – Das Schicksal der Tiroler Klosterbibliotheken in den Jahren 1773-1790, *Biblos* 5 (1956), p. 123-129; and most recently Christiane Tropper, *Schicksale der Büchersammlungen niederösterreichischer Klöster nach der Aufhebung durch Joseph II. und Franz (II.) I., Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 91 (1983), p. 95-150.

25. Konrad Schiffmann, *Die k. k. Studienbibliothek in Linz* (Vienna: Verlag des österr. Vereins für Bibliothekswesen, 1908).

26. See, for example, Friedrich Reischl, *Die Stiftsberren. Ein Buch von den Abteien und Propsteien in Österreich*, 3d, expanded ed. ed. (Vienna: F. Reischl, 1917), p. 55.

27. Cf. Tropper, op. cit., p. 138.

28. Hans Sturmberger, *Zwischen Barock und Romantik. Skizzen zur Geschichte der Aufklärung in Oberösterreich*, *Jahrbuch des Oberösterreichischen Musealvereines* 93 (1948), p. 172.

mission to perform.²⁹ We do find in his pamphlet, *Was ist ein Pfarrer?* (1782), in which he mainly inveighs against monks and the Roman curia, an inkling of his plans for monastic libraries, recommending that they be given over, at least in part, to parish priests, who were in the front line of Joseph's pastoral reform plans.³⁰ In this tract, Eybel argues that the parish priests could put these books to far better use than the indolent monks could. The disposition of monastic libraries in Austria therefore reflects the very conservative, fundamentally pious nature of Josephine absolutism: Their dissolution, or *Aufhebung*, was a destructive as well as a preserving act.

Just a few years after the events I have described in Austria, true revolution convulsed France, changing forever the way contemporaries looked at the past and at the future, but also in the process brutally destroying French monasticism. When, in 1802 and 1803, the Austrian *Klostersturm* seemed to repeat itself in neighboring Bavaria, much was similar, but there were fundamental differences reflecting the passing of an age – and of the Holy Roman Empire. A look at the architect and principal agent of library secularizations in Bavaria shows how thoroughly the entire ideological and philosophical context had been transformed by the events in France. Baron Johann Christoph von Aretin (1772-1824) was one of the most fascinating and controversial figures of 19th century Bavaria.³¹ Historian, member of the academies in both Munich and Göttingen, an aggressive anti-Austrian, anti-Prussian pamphletist, in his student days in Wetzlar also a notorious womanizer, Aretin had already made a name for himself as a firebrand and sympathizer both of the French Revolution and the radical Illuminati before coming to the Court Library in Munich in 1802. His biographer (and great-grandnephew) Erwein von Aretin describes him as „one of the best-hated men of intellectual Munich”.³² Aretin's life was ridden with

29. Numerous reports filed by Eybel on his confiscatory activities are maintained by the Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv in Linz. Especially well documented is the confiscation of the library at Mondsee: see for example OÖLA Stiftsarchiv Mondsee, v. 3, no. 21, where Eybel reports in detail on his provisions for moving the monastery's library to Linz, opting to send it by land rather than on the Ager and Traun rivers so as to avoid loss and the need to press subsequent claims against the transporter.

30. Joseph Valentin von Eybel, *Was ist ein Pfarrer?* (Vienna: Joseph Edler von Kurzbeck, 1782), p. 41-42.

31. The following is based on several accounts of Aretin's life and his direction of the confiscations of Bavarian monastery libraries: Erwein von Aretin, „Christoph Freiherr von Aretin. Ein Lebensbild aus der Zeit des Ministers Montgelas”, *Gelbe Hefte* 3.1 (1926), p. 15-34, 100-133, 317-329; E. H. Dummer, *Johann Christoph von Aretin and the Library Scene in Bavaria in the Secularization Period 1802-1811*, ACRL Microcard Series; 44 (Rochester, NY: University Press, 1944); E. H. Dummer, „J. Christoph von Aretin: A Re-evaluation”, *Library Quarterly* 16.2 (1946), p. 108-121; and Paul Ruf, *Säkularisation und Bayerische Staatsbibliothek*, vol. I: *Die Bibliotheken der Mendikanten und Theatiner (1799-1802)* (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1962), esp. p. 6ff.

32. E. v. Aretin, see note above, p. 21.

intrigues, feuds, and scandals. Even his transfer from the Court Library in Munich to a judgeship in provincial Neuburg in later life was shrouded in allegations concerning a stabbing incident in which one of his many northern German enemies, the pedagogue Friedrich Tiersch, was the victim.³³ But of greatest consequence for Aretin's character in our context and for his role in the confiscation of monastic libraries was that he was, as Paul Ruf has put it, „an almost fanatical lover of books, one might even say a bibliomaniac”.³⁴ Hot tempers and bibliomania are a pairing of personal qualities which may have gone out of style today, but they were documentably rampant in many parts of Europe during the 18th and early 19th centuries.³⁵

Aretin traveled to Paris for three months in 1801 for a visit to the Bibliothèque Nationale to study its organization and structure, probably sent by his friend, the later Marshall Ney. Eight million books and manuscripts are said to have flooded into Paris in these years – what a delight it must have been for Aretin to be there. His exposure to the French model in this revolutionary period was to find almost immediate application back home, where within a year Aretin was entrusted with the selection of books for the Court Library from the hundreds of monasteries in Bavaria. For Aretin, the liquidation of these venerable collections was nothing other than a „literary business trip”, as he put it,³⁶ beginning with the Premonstratensian monastery of Schäftlarn, south of Munich.³⁷

Within a few weeks, Aretin had reached Benediktbeuern, after Tegernsee his first truly major prize. Founded around 740 at the foot of the Bavarian Alps by St. Boniface, Benediktbeuern possessed an important scriptorium in the Middle Ages, its library was among the most important in German-speaking Europe. A separate, free-standing building was erected between 1722 and 1724 to house the library and to protect books and archives in the event of fire in the main building.³⁸ When Aretin arrived in April 1803, he estimated that Benediktbeuern possessed about 20,000 volumes.

33. Ibid., p. 129ff.

34. Ruf, op. cit., p. 7.

35. Cf. Jean Viardot, „Naissance de la bibliophilie: les cabinets de livres rares”, in Claude Jolly, ed., *Histoire des bibliothèques françaises. Les bibliothèques sous l'Ancien Régime 1530-1790* (s.l.: Promodis-Éditions du Cercle de la Librairie, 1988) 269-289.

36. Johann Cristoph von Aretin, *Briefe über meine literarische Geschäftsreise in die baierischen Abteyen*, Bibliotheca Bavarica (Munich: Langen-Müller, 1971).

37. Stiftsbibliothek Schäftlarn, *Bücher-Schicksal: Die Säkularisation der Stiftsbibliothek Schäftlarn 1803. Ausstellung in Zusammenarbeit mit der Bayer. Staatsbibliothek und der Universitätsbibliothek München in der Stiftsbibliothek Schäftlarn, 10. Nov. - 8. Dez. 1991*, Ausstellungskatalog[e], 4 (Schäftlarn: Stiftsbibliothek Schäftlarn, 1991).

38. Leo Weber, *Das Bibliotheksgebäude des Klosters Benediktbeuern*, in Lothar Altmann, ed., *Festschrift für Norbert Lieb zum 80. Geburtstag* (Munich: 1987).

Unlike Tegernsee, where the monks had hidden books under their beds and in their habits, Aretin seems to have had a fairly easy time of it in Benediktbeuern.³⁹ For one, the abbot, Karl Klocker, had already been harassed into silence, if not submission, by the secularization commissar Von Ockel the month before, and the library had even been sealed the preceding November. Aretin knew its contents well, since they had been inventoried in many published accounts that Aretin carried with him on his journey—the standard sources for the 18th century wandering scholar. He chose over 7000 manuscripts, printed books, and music scores for the Munich *Hofbibliothek* and the other libraries of the state. It was decided to send the more valuable books by land, and the rest, well-packed and sealed, by river downstream to Munich. Wooden boxes had to be assembled in all haste – it is said that the sawmill in Benediktbeuern spent days cutting boards for them.⁴⁰ Here, as in Austria, surely much was lost: Dietmar Stutzer describes in lurid detail how crates broke open, spilling their contents on the ground, and whole wagons collapsed under the weight of the booty. 12,000 or more books stayed behind in the library. Their fate is known. They were not lost, but instead remained relatively undisturbed for 35 years and were ultimately sold by auction in 1839 and 40, when the library and the rest of the former monastery was under the control of the Bavarian army.⁴¹ Today, Benediktbeuern is once again a monastery, and has been since 1930, when it was purchased by the Salesian order. It is now home to the Salesians' philosophical-theological university, and its library houses 130,000 volumes.⁴²

One of the trophies Aretin sent back to Munich from Benediktbeuern was the manuscript of the *Carmina burana*, a collection of 318 often ribald songs in macaronic Latin and German, first published by the Munich librarian Johann August Schmeller in 1847⁴³ and made

39. This account follows closely: Wolfgang Jahn, „Die Aufhebung des Klosters Benediktbeuern“, in Josef Kirmeier and Manfred Treml, eds., *Glanz und Ende der alten Klöster. Säkularisation im bayerischen Oberland 1803*, Veröffentlichungen zur Bayerischen Geschichte und Kultur; 21 (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1991), p. 70-77.

40. Dietmar Stutzer, *Die Säkularisation 1803: Der Sturm auf Bayerns Kirchen und Klöster*, 3d ed. (Rosenheim: Rosenheimer, 1990), p. 300.

41. Gerhard Heyl, „Der Verkauf der Klosterbibliothek Benediktbeuern 1832-1841, vornehmlich nach Akten des bayerischen Kriegsarchivs“, *Mitteilungen für die Archivpflege in Bayern* 24 (1978), p. 25-42.

42. Goldner, op. cit., p. 14.

43. Frequently reprinted, e.g. J. A. Schmeller, ed., *Carmina Burana. Lateinische und deutsche Lieder und Gedichte einer Handschrift des XIII. Jahrhunderts aus Benedictbeuern auf der k. Bibliothek zu München*, 2d ed. (Breslau: Silhelm Koebner, 1883). For a brief description of the manuscript and its history, see Karl Dachs and Elisabeth Klemm, eds., *Thesaurus librorum: 425 Jahre Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. Ausstellung München 18. August - 1. Oktober 1983* (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1983), p. 106, and the literature cited there.

world famous by Carl Orff 90 years later. As is clear from his journal and from anecdotes such as those surrounding the *Carmina burana*, Aretin loved his job as confiscator. He felt no shame at all in „extracting the brains from the corpses of the monasteries”, as one of his biographers put it aptly.⁴⁴ It does little to change history that we now know that at the time the monasteries of Bavaria were anything but moribund, but instead were blossoming like rarely before in their past.

The quantity of books that issued forth from Bavarian monasteries was staggering even by today's standards. The ecclesiastical libraries of Bavaria had upwards of 1.500.000 volumes in their possession at the time.⁴⁵ Of these, Aretin selected about 200.000 volumes for the court library, making it within a few decades, in the estimation of many contemporaries, including the British Museum's Antonio Panizzi, second only to the Bibliothèque Nationale as the foremost library of Europe.⁴⁶ Hundreds of thousands of other books went to schools and to the Bavarian university in Landshut, now the library of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich.⁴⁷ Despite this relatively germane re-use of these books, an extraordinary number of books were sold to paper dealers such as Alois Kaut for pulping.

At first, of course, the flood of books led to a chaos in Munich of almost biblical proportions.⁴⁸ Aretin actually lost his job not because of the Thiersch stabbing incident, but because he was at a complete loss to devise a system to replace the trained memory of the librarian in assisting scholars to find what they needed in the sea of new books. Ultimately, the totally unprecedented situation forced the caretakers of these new riches not only to build a monumental edifice to house these riches – the building that still houses the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek today – but also to abandon the traditional ideal of the librarian as „vivant catalogue”, and to recreate their discipline as something entirely new: an abstract science of information organization. In 1808, we read for the very first time in any Western European language the term *Bibliothek-Wissenschaft*, „library science”, as a conscious alternative to *Biblio-*

44. E. v. Aretin, op. cit., p. 28.

45. Buzás, op. cit., p. 159f.

46. H. Hauke, Die Bedeutung der Säkularisation für die bayerischen Bibliotheken, *Glanz und Ende der alten Klöster. Säkularisation im bayerischen Oberland 1803*, ed. J. Kirmeier, and M. Treml, Veröffentlichungen zur Bayerischen Geschichte und Kultur; 21 (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1991), p. 94.

47. Adolf Hilsenbeck, „Die Universitätsbibliothek Landshut-München und die Säkularisation (1803)”, *Festschrift Georg Leyh. Aufsätze zum Bibliothekswesen und zur Forschungsgeschichte dargebracht zum 60. Geburtstage am 6. Juni 1937 von Freunden und Fachgenossen* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1937), p. 180-192.

48. For a description of the chaos in Munich, see Otto Hartig, Die Erschließung der Münchener Handschriftensammlung, *Bayerland* 43 (1932), p. 393-402.

thebetskunde, or „librarianship”, which tends even to this day to be associated with the person and the scholarship of the librarian. Ironically, the creator of order in the chaos of Munich books was a secularized Benedictine monk, Martin Schrettinger alias Pater Willibald, who following his voluntary departure from the monastery of Weißenhohe near Nuremberg, entered the service of the court library in 1802.⁴⁹

A second irony of history: In the night of March 9, 1943, the first large air attack by Allied bombers was launched on the city of Munich. An incendiary bomb hit what was now called the Bavarian State Library, penetrating the roof of the main reading room and setting off a fire that would incinerate half a million volumes—one quarter of the entire library. Destroyed in the fire were whole collections in the humanities and natural sciences, including what had been the world’s largest Bible collection, assembled by the atheist Aretin. The losses would have been far greater had not the director of the manuscript collection, Paul Ruf, already distributed 1400 large wooden crates of books and other treasures to safe places all over Bavaria, including many buildings that had been or were once again monasteries.⁵⁰ This distribution recreated, if but for a moment in time, a decentralization of library resources that the Bavarian state had sought with uncompromising singleness of purpose to overcome 140 years before. The fate of the Munich Bible collection, left behind and destroyed, revealed the Achilles heel of all centralization, no matter how sophisticated the organization scheme at its root, and indeed the weakness of any dependence on a single system of information organization in an uncertain world.

How, if at all, do the losses of World War II affect our final judgment of the way monastery libraries were liquidated near the end of the Ancien Regime? One must ask the question in German to bring out the whole irony of the situation: *Waren (bzw. sind) die aufgehobenen Klosterbibliotheken beim Staat gut aufgehoben?* There is obviously no simple answer to this question. We must observe on the one hand that many thousands of books were destroyed, and the artifactual values associated with individual copies of books – bindings, provenance remarks, etc. – have been lost forever. On the other hand, however, much of the intellectual and cultural value attached to the *content* of these works has not only been preserved, but also become more universally avail-

49. On Schrettinger’s achievement, see the recent work by Uwe Jochum, *Bibliotheken und Bibliothekare 1800-1900* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991). See also the article „Martin Schrettinger” in *Lexikon des gesamten Buchwesens* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1934), vol. 3, p. 239, and Adolf Hilsenbeck, „Martin Schrettinger und die Aufstellung in der Kgl. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek München,” *Zentralblatt für Bibliothekswesen* 31 (1914), p. 407-433.

50. Karl Dachs, Eine „Reserve seltener Drucke” für die Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, *Bibliotheks-Forum Bayern* 4.3 (1976), p. 175.

lable through the centralization and concentration of these resources in Munich, Vienna, and other large libraries. We must also mention the innovations in library organization that the *Bücherflut*, the „flood of books”, set in motion, such as the modern indexing methods introduced by Schrettinger and others, making these resources more accessible to scientists and researchers than they would ever otherwise have been.⁵¹ The discovery and later celebrity of the *Carmina burana* may serve us as a *pars pro toto* in this discussion: it might never have happened had the manuscript continued to languish in the small chamber in the library at Benediktbeuern where Aretin discovered it. The same might just be said of many other discoveries of the 19th century made in libraries: The libraries of the monasteries had fulfilled their mission and passed what they had preserved during turbulent centuries back to secular society.

51. Despite a full appreciation of the cultural losses incurred through the *Säkularisation*, Munich historian Eberhard Weis (op. cit., p. 51) concurs with this finding, as did many years earlier the respected Catholic library historian Klemens Löffler, in *Deutsche Klosterbibliotheken*, op. cit., p. 6.