The Politics of Innovation

The Controversy on Republicanism in Seventeenth Century England

Benoît Godin

Innovation has become a word of fashion over the last sixty years, particularly in technological matters. Yet, we may have forgotten it these days but innovation is a political and an essentially contested concept. It began to be used by ancient writers on change and the stability of political constitutions, came into wider usage after the Reformation as a King's legal prohibition, then became a polemical weapon used against every kind of opponent to the established order, including "innovating" princes. More recently, namely in the second half of the twentieth century, innovation became an instrument of governments' economic policies (Godin, 2012a).

Despite this political connotation, there are no entries on innovation in dictionaries of political thought or mentions in studies of political ideas. To be sure, change, under different aspects, is widely studied: revolution, crisis, progress, modernity. Yet innovation as a concept is still waiting for its history to be written. There is not a single article in the literature on the history of the concept nor on the use of the concept in political matters – although historians like J.G.A. Pocock, Q. Skinner

and J. Farr have stressed the conceptual innovativeness of the political theorists. Historians and political scientists may have focused too much on 'classical' authors and theories. Until the twentieth century, innovation was used in a different kind of literature than the classics and theories, that is, pamphlets and tracts.

From the Reformation onward, innovation (whose etymology comes from *in* + *novare*, c.1500) was widely used as a concept in religious matters. The English Puritans accused the bishops of "innovating" in matters of Church doctrine and discipline, using the word as such, thus launching the first controversy on innovation (Godin, 2012b). In fact, it is that specific controversy that contributed to the diffusion of the concept in the following decades. In mid-seventeenth century England, innovation started being discussed in politics, particularly with regard to the Republicans. The (failed) attempt to establish a republic in mid-seventeenth century England was certainly one of the greatest political innovations up to that time and, as Jonathan Scott has suggested, "the innovatory nature of the republic was hard to disguise" (Scott, 2000: 235). In the context of a monarchy, it challenged the established order directly.

Such a context of order has been widely studied by scholars for a long time, and need not be repeated here (e.g. Hill, 1972). What must be stressed is that this context explains the use (or rather non use) of a central concept of the Western world: innovation. Innovation is a bad thing. It threatens authorities. Before the Nineteenth Century, innovation is a concept used pejoratively against every deviant, from the heretic to the political revolutionary and the social reformer.

It was through the discourses of critics of republicanism that innovation entered into politics. The concept served to discredit the political innovator or republican. However, republicans themselves rarely if ever discussed their project in terms of innovation. In fact, few if any innovations of the time were acknowledged as such. David Zaret has aptly called this phenomenon the "paradox of innovation": innovation was everywhere but it was rarely sought after or defended openly (Zaret, 2000).

This paper is a study on the concept of innovation, the extent to which it permeated politics, and the representations that writers de-

veloped on innovation. It will be shown that innovation is a morally-charged concept, and this connotation explains the fate of the concept for centuries (innovation remained negative until late in the Nineteenth Century). To the Republicans, innovation was too pejorative a concept to use to define their project. In contrast, the concept was used without reservation by the Republicans' critics. To the Royalist, innovation points up the Machiavellian designs of Republicans.

This controversy on innovation, the second to occur in mid-seventeenth century England, is more than just semantic. It has many things to teach the student of politics about context (order), self-presentation (image) and political action through persuasion. Words are markers of the social understanding of the world, and reflect social and political values (Skinner, 1988; Farr, 1989). Furthermore, as Reinhart Koselleck, among others, suggests, "in politics, words and their usage are more important than any other weapon" (Koselleck, 1969: 57).

In addition to being a paper on the intellectual history of innovation, this paper is a contribution to the history of political thought. It looks at how innovation as a pejorative and derogatory concept got into political discourses and how, in turn, politics made use of the concept and contributed to its meaning. The paper is not a paper on the history of republicanism or theorists of the republic. Many arguments against Republicanism are well known to experts on political thought.[1] These are studied here to the extent that they contributed to a then (relatively new and) emerging concept: innovation.

The first part of this paper puts innovation in perspective with a brief introductory discussion of the meaning and use of innovation over time. The second part examines the discourse held by English Royalists against the "innovators of State", through a pamphlet published in 1661, the first political pamphlet to use innovation in its title. The third part documents a controversy between the English Republican Henry Neville and his critics, and the use made of innovation to support a case. The fourth part analyzes what innovation meant to people at the time, explaining the use (and non use) of the concept. The final part of the

1 There exist many books on republicanism. As examples, one may consult the works of J.G.A. Pocock, Paul A. Rahe, Caroline Robbins, Jonathan Scott and Blair Worden.

paper studies what effects this representation of innovation have had on the concept in the centuries that followed.

The paper focuses on England for two reasons. One is the fact that English writers were key contributors to a pejorative representation of innovation, particularly from the Reformation onward. Second, England is an ideal case study. In fact, this paper is part of a work in progress that examines representations of innovation over time in several countries (England, France, Italy, Germany and the United States). England is a perfect example of the representations of innovation current in these countries, at least up to the French Revolution.

One important distinction needs to be made from the start. In order to properly appreciate innovation and its meaning over the period studied here, it must be remembered that innovation is distinct from novelty, at least in the vocabulary. Innovativeness is accepted to many extents, often openly, at least in certain social spheres and activities, like those that "give pleasure" and in science, as Aristotle put it. In contrast, novation and innovation refer to introducing or bringing in some new thing that changes customs and the order of things in a non-trivial manner and, because of this meaning, it is feared, forbidden and punished. To anticipate my conclusion: this meaning explains why the concept was avoided by the innovators (Republicans) themselves.

Innovation as a Category

For most of its history innovation, a word of Greek origin (καινοτομία), carried a pejorative connotation (Godin and Lucier, 2012). As "introducing change to the established order", innovation was seen as deviant behaviour, forbidden and punished. It is through religion that the concept of innovation first entered common discourse in the Western world. This occurred from the late 1400s onward (proceedings of bishops, visitations, sermons, trials) and reached a climax in the 1630s in England, leading to one of the first controversies on innovation, between King Charles I and his protégé William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, on the one hand, and puritans like Henry Burton and William Prynne on the other (Godin, 2012b). Burton accused the bishops

of "innovating" in matters of Church discipline and doctrine, and urged people "not to meddle with those that are given to change", an expression from Solomon's proverbs that, in the decades following Burton's use of it, would be widely repeated against religious innovation. In seventeenth and eighteenth century England, documents by the hundreds made use of "innovation" to discuss religion, using the word as such. Over a hundred of these documents made use of innovation in their titles, a way to emphasize a polemical idea and get a hearing.

During the Renaissance, the concept of innovation shared a place with that of heresy in religious discourses, particularly after the Reformation. It was precisely during the Reformation that the fate of the concept was determined for the centuries to follow. In 1548, Edward VI, King of England, issued a declaration *Against Those That Doeth* ***Innouate***. Trials and punishments followed. A century later, Charles I, while explaining to his opponents why he had dissolved the Parliament, protested against parliamentarians' innovations and proclaimed that he had never innovated himself. Even a King did not innovate.

Table 1. Uses of Innovation as a Concept Over Time

Religious	→	Political	→	Social	→	Economic (technology)

Later the concept came to be equated with political revolutions, as this paper documents. This was only a beginning. Next, it would be the social reformers' turn to be accused of being innovators. Like the religious and political innovator, the "social innovator", as some called the socialists in the nineteenth century, was accused of overthrowing the established order, particularly property and capitalism. The social innovator was seen as being a radical, as many accused French socialists of being on the eve of the revolution of 1830 and after (Godin, 2012c).

This use of innovation in religious, political and social matters occurred many centuries before innovation came to be applied to technology. In fact, technological innovation is only the latest development in the history of the concept innovation. In the 1950s and the follow-

ing decades, governments de-contested and legitimized a centuries-old and contested concept – innovation. Supported by social researchers as consultants, governments made technological innovation an instrument of economic policy (Godin, 2012a).

A Monarch Accepts no Innovation

The reign of King Charles I (1625-49) was one of the most innovative periods in England's history, if one believes what was said by people at the time. From 1628-29, parliamentarians regularly accused His Majesty of "innovating" (using the word as such) in matters of religion ("changing of our holy religion") and politics ("taking or leavying of the subsidies of tonnage and poundage not granted by Parliament") (England and Wales, Parliament, 1654: 206-14). Between 1637 and 1641, puritans accused the King and his *protégé*, Archbishop of Canterbury William Laud, of "innovating" in religious doctrine and discipline.

This was only the beginning. In 1642, the Parliament sent nineteen propositions to the King, asking for a more direct role in the government of the Kingdom, from the nomination of the Privy Council and ministers to the education and marriage of the King's children. As answer, Charles responded: *Nolumus Leges Angliae mutari* (We do not want that laws of England be changed) (England and Wales, Sovereign, 1642: 14). Some years later, the King put some of his thoughts on these propositions, among others, in *Eikon basilike* (1648), which was published posthumously, and stated: I see "many things required of Me, but I see nothing offer'd to Me, by way of gratefull exchange of Honour" (p. 75). "In all their Propositions", claimed Charles, "I can observe little of (...) which are to be restored" but "novelty" (p. 91), "destructive changes", "popular clamours and Tumults" and "**innovating** designes" (p. 82-83).

The worst was still to come for Charles. On January 30, 1649, he was beheaded. Two months later, the Parliament addressed a declaration, claiming: "The *Representatives* of the *People* now Assembled in *Parliament*, have judged it *necessary* to change the *Government* of this *Nation* from the former *Monarchy*, (unto which by many injurious incroachments it had arrived) into a *Republique*, and not to have any more a *King*

to *tyrannize* over them" (England and Wales, Parliament, 1649: 20).

When Robert Poyntz (*bap.* 1588-1665), Knight of the Bath[2] and royalist writer, published his tract *A Vindication of Monarchy* in 1661 on "the danger that cometh by the abuse of Parliaments" (p. 35), the failure of a republic in England was only a few years behind him. Yet, works on republicanism were increasingly produced in the country for over a decade, from John Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) and *The Readie and Easie Way to establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660) to Marchamont Nedham's *Interest Will Not Lie* (1659). In turn, pamphleteers increasingly leveled charges against republicans: Milton the "diabolical rebel", James Harrington "the utopian", and republicans as "innovators".

Poyntz was the first to use the concept innovation ("innovators") in the *title* of a discourse entirely devoted to (a reply to) the republicans. He was rivaled only by lawyer and puritan William Prynne, whose use of the concept against the "Matchiavilian and Innovating Republicans" was regular in many of his political writings from the mid 1650s onward. To be sure, the accusation of "innovating" in/of "both Church and Common-wealth" was widespread in the English writings for several decades.[3] However, the concept is used thereafter with explicit reference to the "republican".

In his pamphlet, Poyntz defended the monarchy with references to Roman history, and interpreted innovation as anything against the rules of common law. The argument from history and customs was a commonplace argument learned from rhetoric, and every writer studied here uses it. To Poyntz, "Our fanatick Polititians who teach men rebellion, and to flatter and deceive the People, and to effect their own designes, do say, that the supream power is originally in the People, and habitually inherent in them, and is derived from them, so as they may chastise and change their Kings, and assume again their power (…) do incite the People to rebellion" (p. 155).

To Poyntz, "There are two Pests and cankers, [which have caused

2 Poyntz received this Order at Charles I's coronation.

3 Some royalists like Robert Filmer and John Bramhall made uses of the concept, but only infrequently in political matters despite the large volume of documents that they published.

Parliaments] so necessary for the Publick good, to prove the bane and ruine thereof" (p. 39). One is the King's absolute (and discretionary) power. As might be expected from a royalist, Poyntz spent only a few sentences on this pest. Furthermore, he refers to Roman emperors rather than English history. The other pest is Parliament. This is the pamphlet's main focus. Poyntz discusses this pest under eight headings:

Right of bishops to sit in Parliament.
Associations in Parliament against the King's and people's will.
Sedition and rebellion against the Sovereign.
Principles of **Innovators.**
Principle that the Prince holds its crown from the people.
Principle that the supreme power resides in the people.
Principle of the power of people to elect their Prince.
King's Legislative power.
Prerogative of the King.

Poyntz starts by discussing the right of bishops to sit in Parliament, offering three reasons not dissimilar to what a republican would propose for any representative of the people in Parliament. Bishops need to be part of the Parliament because it is a matter of representation of every part of the commonwealth. People are not bound by laws if they have no voice in Parliament. Second, the bishops' learning and judgment provide for enlightened advice and assistance. Third, bishops pay taxes.

However, Poyntz's main argument is developed with the republicans in view, not the bishops. As a first entry into the matter, Poyntz argues that making associations in Parliament against the King's (and people's) will is unlawful. "Love of liberty and the desire of dominion" (p. 53) is "the most effectual means to disturb peace, to introduce **innovations** in the State, and to weaken all bonds of loyalty and obedience" (p. 49). Although "in these great attempts and dangerous experiments upon a state and Common-wealth" men's designs "do really aime at some good reformation, and intend to proceed upon justifiable grounds and reasons, or at least so seeming", yet "they slip almost insensibly into the use of dangerous and unlawful means" and are driven "to violent motions"

(p. 54). Here is stated Poyntz's understanding of innovation: violence, sedition and rebellion against the Sovereign.

Poyntz devotes a large part of his text to what he calls the principles of republicans as "innovators" of State. First, the principle that a king holds its crown from the election of the people and may be deposed at will. False, says Poyntz. Power is established by God, and "evil Kings are set over us, by which the authority of all Kings is established". The people "are incompetent judges, and not capable to discern a King and a Tyrant; and in respect of their ignorance, they alwayes gave great advantage unto those who were ambitious, seditious, and lovers of novelties" (p. 87).

The second principle of innovators is that the people have supreme power. But, asks Poyntz:

> How can they reconcile themselves with St. Paul, who saith, the Powers are of God (...); with [the doctrine of] Aristotle, and other learned men affirme, that by nature men are subject and servants to others? (p. 111). There is a difference between the powers which are God, and the administration, or the evil execution of those powers. In the beginning were Kings (...) but some people, after they were weary of Kings, governed themselves by their own laws. [This] was worse than the Tyranny of one man (p. 113).

The third principle of innovators is that the people have power to elect their Prince. False, replies Poyntz again. Those who transfer "power unto others, have, after those acts are consummated, no power to deal in any thing appertaining to that Power by them transferred" (p. 122). It is not a delegated power (p. 123), but a "contract" which binds forever (p. 130). Even a tyrant cannot be removed.

> I grant, that there is often an abuse of the Law (...) and there is an abuse of the Regal power and prerogative (...) under the colour and pretence of reason of State. [But] these corruptions and abuses, are not sufficient causes, for the abolishing the good and ancient institutions in Common-wealth, or the proper and necessary rights of Monarchy (p. 145-46).
> Poyntz concludes his pamphlet as follows: "Although the cause of re-

bellion proceedeth not from ambition, revenge, and the like, but from actions of good intention, for reformation of the Church or Common-wealth, rebellion and civil war doth follow" (p. 153). To Poyntz:

> A Civil war, or rebellion doth most commonly produce more pernicious effects in one year than either the insufficiency or Tyranny of a Prince can in an age (p. 155). The People ever desirous of **innovations**, and prone to all licenciousness, when the reins are but slackned, they do expose to the fury of their provoked Soveraign (p. 155-56).

What does Poyntz have to say explicitly and generally on political innovation? Poyntz could hardly ignore that "All human affairs are ever in a state of flux and cannot stand still", as Machiavelli put it in *The Discourses* (I, 6). He had lived through the civil wars, the execution of Charles I, the government of Cromwell, the restoration of monarchy (Charles II) and he had read the discourses by the Republican writers. In fact, Poyntz accepts change because, over time, there is corruption. Things need to be reformed. "By the course of time they [the Church and Common-wealth] are carried through the corruption in manners, defects in government, and in the execution of good Laws, into a stream of abuses, contempt and confusion" (p. 4). However, the corruptions are not "indurable, but removable". Yet, to Poyntz acceptable change is not innovation because "alteration" is dangerous. Change must be limited in scope. Change is better conducted "with a fair, orderly and prudent reformation or temporary toleration, then by (...) **Innovations**, especially sudden". In the latter case, "the minds of men are disquieted, fuel is brought into fiery and turbulent spirits, and the peace of the Church and Common-wealth indangered, if not destroyed" (p. 4).

The Republican Innovator

Poyntz has put into text a conception of innovation that soon led to a controversy. "Before the seventeenth century", so argued Scott, "most English defenders of the commonwealth principles assumed their com-

patibility with monarchy". However, during the mid-century "it became a key republican claim that (…) monarchies in Europe had all in practice become tyrannies" (Scott, 2004: 38). Many arguments were developed in seventeenth-century England to support a republic: references to history (Parliaments are old) and to natural law (a Republic is the best or correct form of government) and the use of models (the Romans) (Scott, 2004: 110; see also Skinner, 1965; 1972; 2001). In every case, it was a matter of defending two principles: the public good (as a government goal) and constitutional government (rather than a government of one person) (Scott, 2004: 36). To some, it was also a matter of providing a basis for stability or a balance of dominion for the prevention of alteration, like Harrington's agrarian law (Scott, 2004: 182).

Republicanism in seventeenth-century England certainly represented a great innovation. But writers at the time rarely if ever acknowledged this innovation. No innovator thought of naming himself an innovator. As a consequence, use of the concept innovation is very rare among the most important Republican writers. Only a few authors – Harrington, Milton, Nedham and Algernon Sidney – used the concept, and they used it only in a few documents (of the hundreds they produced). There is still less use of the concept in key Republican texts such as Harrington's *The common-wealth of Oceana* (1657) and Nedham's *The Case of Common-wealth* (1650), and none among others, like Milton's *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649).

The few uses that the above writers made of the concept were for two purposes, but not for discussing republicanism as innovation.[4] One use continued the tradition of the previous decades, namely for naming changes in religious matters. Such is the case in Nedham's *The Case of Common-wealth* or Milton's *Aeropagitica* (1644) as well as in the latter's *Eikonoklestes* (1650) discussing Charles' *Eikon basilike.* Another use of the concept is in interpreting history. For example, Harrington's *The prerogative of popular government* (1657) discusses how the Florentines were addicted to innovation by changing the Senate (p. 30). He

4 An exception is Milton. He uses the concept twice in a context of republicanism: *A Discourse shewing in what state the three kingdomes are in at this present* (1641: 2-3); *A soveraigne salve to cure the blind* (1643: 23). Yet Milton uses innovation in a negative way and minimizes innovation.

also uses the concept to discuss the (Machiavellian) dichotomy between monarchy and democracy, and the difficulty of conquering the first and keeping the second: absolute monarchy is governed by discipline and command while democracy always innovates or breaks orders (p. 61, 64). Finally, Harrington makes reference to Bacon's essay *Of Innovation* (1625) while discussing the origins of the Agrarian law (p. 101).

The same kind of use of the concept is made by the republican Henry Neville, to whom we now turn. Neville explicitly refused to use the concept innovation to talk about his remedy for the disease of England. In the work discussed below, Neville makes three uses of the concept innovation, all three in a historical context: the Romans not dividing the lands equally (as Romulus did) in conquered Athens (p. 57); the Normans changing the government and invading the rights and liberties of people (p. 113); and the Scots refusing innovations in matters of religion (p. 162).[5] In a conflicting view, two authors engaged in a controversy with Neville, and they did not refrain from using the concept against him. Let's look at the controversy.

Neville (1620-94), a republican, a friend of Harrington and an admirer of Machiavelli,[6] produced the pamphlet *Plato Redivivus: or, a Dialogue Concerning Government* published anonymously in 1681. The text, republished several times in the following decades, is a dialogue between an English gentleman, a Noble Venetian and a Doctor (of State) developing a proposal for the exercise of the royal prerogative through councils responsible to Parliament.

To Neville, there is a disease in the State which arises from the fact that the Prince is a tyrant. He puts his own interest before the interests of his people. The very first governments were instituted "for the good and Preservation of the Governed, and not for the Exaltation of the Person or Persons appointed to Govern" (p. 30). To Neville, "The Cause Immediate of our Disease, is the inexecution of our Laws" because the

5 The first two occurrences serve to support republican principles, but in a negative way, as Milton did. The innovator is an invader of rights and liberties of people.

6 Neville has been associated with the English translation of Machiavelli's works published by John Parker in 1675. In *Plato Redividus*, Neville talks of Machiavel in terms of "Divine Machiavel" (p. 21), "Incomparable Machiavel" (p. 188), "the best and most honest politician" (p. 217).

King thinks (and is advised) that they are against his interest (p. 253-54).

Neville's pamphlet is divided into three discourses (representing three days). On the first day, the speakers agree that there is a problem or disease in England and on the need for a remedy. The English gentleman reminds his interlocutors of the "wise Custom amongst the Ancient Greeks" that "when they found any Craziness or indisposition in their several Governments, before it broke out into a Disease, did repair to the Physicians of State". But "in our days, these Signes or Forerunners of Diseases in State are not foreseen, till the whole Mass is corrupted, and the Patient is incurable, but by violent Remedies" (p. 10).

The second day turns to the causes of the disease. The Venetian asks "What Reasons this Nation [England], which hath ever been esteemed (and very justly) one of the most considerable People of the World, and made the best Figure both in Peace, Treaties, War, and Trade, is now of so small regard, and signifies so little abroad?" (p. 16). The gentleman answers: one of the primary causes

> is the Breach and Ruin of our Government [which] lyes agonizing, and can no longer perform the Functions of a Political Life (p. 20). Our courtiers (...) have played Handy-Dandy with Parliaments, and especially with the House of Commons (...) by Adjourning, and Prorogating, and Dissolving them (contrary to the true meaning of the Law) (p. 20-21).

Turning to the Venetian, the gentleman adds: "your Government, which hath lasted above twelve hundred years, entire and perfect; whilst all the rest of the Countreys in Europe, have not only changed Masters very frequently in a quarter of that time, but have varied and altered their Politics very often" (p. 24). Like Harrington, Neville is looking for stability in the government.

To the gentleman, the government of England is the best form of government: a mixed monarchy. Yet the problem is that the King has destroyed the balance: he has the prerogative to call and dissolve Parliaments, and approve laws as he pleases (p. 111-12). In such a context, asks the doctor, what remains of our liberties or rights?

The third day is devoted to the remedy. To Neville, four powers of

the Crown hinder the execution of our laws (p. 256f): the King making war as he pleases, levelling taxes as he pleases, nominating people to offices as he pleases, and employing the public revenues as he pleases. Neville's remedy is to have "His Majesty exercise these four great *Magnalia* of Government, with the Consent of four several Councils", elected in Parliament, and each year one-third changed (p. 259); together with a Parliament elected every year (p. 269).

Like Poyntz, Neville accepts change. However, unlike Poyntz Neville's "reform of the government" is really innovation: "Bill that make considerable alterations in the administration we have need of" (p. 222). Yet Neville never uses innovation in this context, but rather alteration, reform, rectification and melioration. The stated goal is to help the Prince, not overthrow him. Let's postpone the answer to why Neville refused to talk of innovation after looking at the replies to his position and the controversy it generated.

Plato Redivivus generated two full-length replies that qualified the "libel" as innovation and its author as an innovator. The two replies deny any disease in the State and, consequently, refuse any changes. The first came from an anonymous author (W.W.) and was titled *Antidotum Britannicum: or, a counter-pest against the Destructive Principles of Plato Redivivus*. The pamphlet was published in the same year as *Plato Redivivus* (1681).

Like Neville's, the pamphlet is a dialogue, between Platophilus (Henry Neville) and Britanicus (W.W.), to whom "the Government of England is a rare and admirable mixture of Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy" (p. 6). The entire tract is concerned with portraying republicans as subversive. The main argument of the tract concerns erecting boundaries. To the anonymous writer, "Kings are made by God" and "The people only nominate or designe" their King. "The Vote or Consent of the People is only a *Medium*" (p. 17). It is a fallacious principle "that if the People have the most Property and Possessions in Land, that they must therefore have the most Power". This is a "design" "to make the People hate Monarchy, and to be in love with Democracy" (p. 37). "The Nobles and Gentry in a Monarchy are a great Security to the government while they keep themselves within their proper bounds" (p. 40).

But, replies Platophilus, "the Commons were an essential Part of the Parliament" long ago (p. 56). Perhaps, adds Britanicus, but "They were

rarely Summoned", (p. 57). Platophilus repeats Neville's statement that courtiers have played handy-dandy with parliaments "by Adjourning, Proroguing and Dissolving them" (p. 71). In turn, Britanicus replies that "The House of Commons anciently was Concerned only in Statutes, Grants, and Subsidies, or such like, but of late they claim (...) to be made Parties in all Judgments" which appertain to the King only (p. 79). Parliaments "must keep themselves within their just bounds (...) leaving to the King his undoubted Prerogative" (p. 75).

To the anonymous writer, "It belongs to the King, that those Laws and Customs which he shall think to be just and profitable, that he confirm and cause them to be observed", not "any new law, but (...) the just Laws that are already in being" (p. 114-15). "All **Innovations** in Government are Dangerous", says he. It is "like a Watch, of which any one piece lost will disorder the whole" (p. 172). This is a much-repeated argument in the literature against innovation, since the time of Aristotle (*Politics*, V, iii, 1303a; viii, 1307b). Although sudden and violent, innovation prepares imperceptibly, little by little, by degree.

Three years after *Antidotum Britannicum*, Thomas Goddard, Esq., published *Plato's Demon: or, the State-Physician Unmaskt; Being a Discourse in Answer to a Book call'd Plato Redivivus* (1684). The text is a dialogue (again) between an English gentleman and a merchant. The author's authoritarian sources are Hugo Grotius' *De jure belli ac pacis* and the Bible.

Like the anonymous writer, Goddard starts with sedition. It is our duty, Goddard writes, to oppose:

> the Seditious, Conspiracies, and Traiterous Associations, of Our little, malicious scribling Enemies (...). Among many of that deceiving, or deceived Crew, none seems more impudently extravagant than the Author of a Libel call'd *Plato Redivivus*. [Neville] makes us believe that he is supporting Our Government, whilst he endeavours utterly to destroy it. Any private person, who authoriz'd by our lawful Government, shall publish either by words or writings, any arguments or discourse, against the Constitution of the Government by Law establish'd, is a pestilent, pragmatical deceiver, a seditious Calumniator, and Perturbator of our Peace: His words and writings become scandalous Libels (p. 13-14).

Goddard's first of three discourses is concerned with demonstrating

that there is no disease in the State, but rather "Extreme happiness of the English Nation" (p. 5): a form of government (monarchy) "eternall secur'd from the corruption of Tyranny" and "a Prince so moderate and so just" (p. 6). In the course of his argument, and throughout the whole tract, Goddard develops many conceptual distinctions reminiscent of philosophical dichotomies (substance-accident, form-matter, soul-body) and used them to make a case against innovation. First Goddard distinguishes between the Governors and the Constitution. The former is "subject to weaknesses and infirmities, and (...) may be easily remov'd or chang'd, without destroying or altering the Government" (p. 17-18). But a

> Politician is certainly most unfit for a Prince's Cabinet, or House of Parliament, who finding, it may be, some mismanagement in State-affairs, should presently resolve to pull down the Fabrick it self, I mean Monarchy, and in its place build up a phantastical Commonwealth, then transform that into an Optimacy, then an oligarchy, till having pass [*sic*] through all the misfortunes, which **innovation** and change have generally produc'd (p. 18).

To Goddard, "to alter, nay totally destroy the ancient establish'd Government (...) would have been so much contrary to the Wisdom and judgment of Plato" (p. 24). "No one Polity, or Form of Government or laws whatsoever [meaning ancient Greece], are universally proper for all places". The authority of Plato, Lycurgus or Solon shall "be admitted no farther than their laws are proper or convenient for us" (p. 31). To be sure, the Greeks had good laws, but "the Form of Government [Republic] succeeded as generally all **Innovations** do" (p. 41). "Nothing is left, but some few wandring, remains of old rustick monuments, which serve only to testifie that they once have been" (p. 224). The lesson is clear: "support the present Government by Law established, [so] that we may avoid the Plague of **Innovation**" (p. 46) and "the misfortunes, which **Innovation** generally produces" (p. 47).

Goddard devotes his second discourse to natural law. Neville has attributed the turbulence of the present time, says Goddard, to the constitution of the Government which needs to be altered. Wrong, replies

Goddard. In support of his view, he presents a further distinction. Government is divided into the Material part (the People) and the Formal part (where Power resides) (p. 59-60). According to Goddard, Neville means the formal part needs to be altered, and he is mistaken. Sickness in the body politic resides in the material part (the discontented and turbulent men).

"How comes it then to pass that so many Philosophers, and all Antimonarchical Authors, pretend, That the People were before the Prince, that they are above him, that they made him, and by consequence, may depose him"? It comes "from the Ignorance of some ancient Philosophers, and the impious complaisance of some of our modern Wits" (p. 90), namely those neglecting the history of the Bible. To Goddard, those philosophers (Lucrecius, Hobbes) say that the world was made by chance. "How comes it to pass, that Accident and Chance" have been so fitting to us (p. 94)? "When Men grow fond of their own Imaginations they run over all, and neither Reason nor Religion have any Power to stop them" (p. 108). To Goddard, history "make[s] me capable of defending the doctrine, and the good constitution of our Government, against all hot-brain'd and ambitious **innovators**" (p. 211-12). "Our Author hath not produced one single authority, or one little piece of an Act, Statute or Law, to prove that the Soveraign power is in the people", only private opinion (p. 289).

Goddard's final discourse continues with more history and makes a parallel between Ancient Rome and modern England:

> The *Roman* Commonwealth was one of the *worst Government*, that ever subsisted so long (p. 241). Its chief *default* proceeded from the *exorbitant power of the people* (p. 242). Though they set on foot the popular pretence of Liberty and Property, yet honour and Empire was the true game, which they themselves hunted (p. 252): outward appearance, for the good of the people, but truly for the advancement of his own private designs and Empire (p. 253).

Goddard observes the same in England:

> Many of our own worthy Patriots, who cry up so much for Liberty and Property, and the interest of the people, intend more really their own particular advancement (p. 259). Many privileges may be granted to the people at first for encouragement, which afterwards may be inconsistent with the safety of the Government (p. 248).

Goddard concludes by repeating his belief that since there is no disease, there is no need to "comply with our Authors Popular Government" (p. 314). "Should the House of Commons become our masters, what could they bestow upon us, more than we already enjoy, except danger and trouble", those "fatal consequences, which such a popular **innovation** would induce?" (p. 325).

Popular Innovation

What representation of innovation does one derive from the above controversy? As mentioned already, innovation as a concept was first used widely in religious matters, particularly after the Reformation. It was deviant behavior and meant introducing change to the established order, namely Protestantism (sixteenth century), then popery or new doctrine and new discipline in the Protestant Church (seventeenth century) (Godin, 2012b). It covers a larger range of heterodoxies than just heresy. All deviant people are innovators. When people started using the concept in religious matters, it was to emphasize the broader innovative behaviour of 'heretics' and to make analogies with the 'revolutionary'. However, it was left to others to develop this latter representation of innovation.

Innovation in politics carries essentially the same meaning as introducing change to the established order, in this case the political order. However, innovation includes one more pejorative connotation that gave it bad press for centuries: it is sudden and violent.

The four texts discussed in the previous two sections all start with change, either to propose or deny it. To Poyntz, there is "corruption" which necessitates "reform". To Neville, there is a "disease" with calls for a "remedy". On the other hand, the anonymous writer and Goddard believe that there is no disease and therefore no need of change. To them those who introduce change or reform are innovators, in a pejorative sense.

Poyntz is certainly the author who discusses change most widely. To a certain extent Poyntz accepts change, but limited change. That change is necessary is based on the fact that time corrupts things. Poyntz's first entry into the subject is via religion: "That some Rites and Ceremonies we retain which have been polluted, yea (...); yet (...) pollution and impiety may be worn or wrought out" (p. 23). "If we look for a Church where there are no scandals (...) neither any imperfections and defects, we must go out of the world" (p. 24). To Poyntz, acceptable change has two characteristics. First, it must take context into account, rather than be abstract. Laws, he says:

> May well be made to look forward, and for the future, but they must of necessity be made fit for the present time (p. 12). Although it be true that all the Divine Laws extend not their power of binding in all times, and to all persons; and positive Laws Ecclesiastical must be fitted to the times and manners of men (...) yet great consideration ought to be taken, of the difference of variations of times, and of other circumstances, reasons, and inconveniences, before any new Laws, Orders or Discipline either in the Church or Common-wealth be imposed, or the old and inveterate Lawes and customs repealed and abrogated (...). We ought not onely to look simply upon the nature and quality of the things in themselves, and in abstract, but how they stand in relation, and connexion with old matters and things of long establishment, and of great importance (p. 16). Saint Augustine said, of some evils in the Roman State [that it is better to] observe and keep antient Laws and customes, although they are not of the best (...) especially if the changes and alterations [suggested are] driven on by violent and pertinacious Spirits (p. 16-17).
>
> Applied to political matters, the argument becomes gradualism. This

is the second characteristic of acceptable change to Poyntz: "The alterations in the State and Government (...) if they are not discreetly handled, and affected by degrees in an orderly course, and carried still on with the ease and contentment of the people, they will in short time be disquieted, and either turne back into the old way like sheep driven, or violently run head-long into some new" (p. 18).

Unlike Poyntz, both the anonymous writer and Goddard have very few words about change. To the anonymous writer, when there is no inconvenience there is no need of change. "We ought to defend that Kingdom and Government, which Reason persuadeth us unto, Experience approves, and Antiquity commendeth; when inconveniences in the old Laws are not apparent; and the conveniences to come by the new, are not infallible, it will be perillous to change the Laws, but more perillous when many, and most perillous when fundamental" (p. 215-16). On the frontispiece of his tract, the anonymous writer placed the following: *Res nova non tant utilitate, Proficiunt, quam Novitate efficiunt*. (Novelties do not serve utility; they rather produce more innovation).

Like the anonymous writer, to Goddard there is no disease, but rather "Extreme happiness of the English Nation" (p. 5). "The Subjects of England enjoy a greater Liberty, than was known to any of our Ancestors before us" (p. 321). Goddard finds no fault in the present government that would lead one "to desire any change or **innovation**" (p. 361). "A [more frequent] Parliament cannot make us more" happy than we already are (p. 326). "What can our new masters do for us more than is already done" (p. 368). "We have a King merciful, loving, and tender to us" (p. 372). Goddard's conclusion is "When there is no disease, there can be no cure" (p. 375).

Antimonarchy, Violence and Design

To those at the time, three characteristics constitute innovation. First, innovation, or rather the innovator (because the discourses on innovation are first of all concerned with the innovator), is deviant: unlawful and guilty of "Capital Crime", says Poyntz (p. 58). The innovator is the one who breaks laws. To Poyntz, "**Innovators** are not ruled by any customes and Lawes, but such as please them" (p. 25). Others shared

his belief. The anonymous writer develops his whole argument against innovators based on the violation of boundaries. On several occasions he stresses the duty of people to keep within their just and proper "bounds". To Goddard too, the innovator "has no religion", he is a "dissenter". "I do not think the Papists (...) so dangerous to our Government, as the *Dissenters*" (p. 340). The papists "hath no ill influence upon our Civil Government" (p. 350).

In the present case, deviance means antimonarchy or the "popular" doctrine of republicanism. The pamphleteers put it explicitly as such. To the anonymous writer, *Plato Redivivus* is "a Hotch Potch of antimonarchical Principles" (p. 4) to "infect His Majestie's good Subjects". Goddard calls the republican writers "Antimonarchical Authors" (p. 90) whose principle is "**innovation** of popular power" (p. 367), "*exorbitant power of the people*" (p. 242). To Poyntz, the innovators deserve the name "Patrons of Popular liberty" (p. 136). Of the three royalist authors, no one put it better than the anonymous writer in his preface (no page number): "They who are troubled with the Itch of **Innovation**, cannot but be rubbing upon Majesty". Their "design is to turn Monarchy into Anarchy" and "propagate so many pernicious Maxims and Popular Theorems tending to the Subversion of the established Government". And he continued: "Monarchy is the most sure Basis of the peoples Liberties and the only Staple of their Happiness". If monarchy were replaced by Councils, "it would open a Door to all Calamities, and Confusion". Liberty of conscience introduces "Arbitrary Power in the State". To the anonymous writer, "Novatian himself [the first antipope] was not a greater **Innovator** than these Men".

Secondly, and not its least characteristic, innovation in this view is "violent". This characteristic distinguishes innovation from what it meant before then, particularly in religion. To be sure, in the 1640s innovation in religion was discussed as "dangerous", but due to its consequences on doctrine and discipline, not because it was violent – although it was regularly stressed that innovation leads to wars. From then on, innovation is necessarily sudden and violent. Innovation is 'revolutionary'. It is necessarily great or major change – while 'minor' or symbolic novelties were also innovation to ecclesiasts. This new connotation of violence is fundamental to explaining the fate of the concept

for centuries to come.

The reader has seen plenty of citations in the previous sections that are witness to the 'revolutionary' behavior of the innovator. "Rebellion" and "sedition" are key words used against the innovator – revolution as new beginnings and historical inevitability was not used in this sense at the time. On one hand, the innovator, because of "his fiery and turbulent spirit" as Poyntz put it, leads people to sedition. On the other hand, "inevitable" and "fatal" consequences follow "popular **innovation**", as Goddard stated (p. 325, 367). All authors are unanimous as to these inevitable consequences, from the general to the political: danger and troubles, division and factions, wars and anarchy.

To Poyntz, changes in religion in England went "in an orderly and quiet passage, under the conduct of a Royal power, and a prudent Council of State. Religion changed as it were by degrees and insensibly, all things seeming to remain in the same course and state as before", unlike Germany, France, the low countries and Scotland (p. 31). But "Those **innovators** who try experiments upon a State, and upon the peoples disaffection to the present government, and thereupon lay the chief foundation of their designs, without some other stronger assurance, have often failed, and have found themselves and others with them utterly ruined, through the suddain and violent ebbing and flowing of the Peoples passions and affections" (p. 18). As we have seen above, Poyntz argues for a reform, not innovation; a reform that takes time and circumstances into account, rather than being discussed in the abstract; a reform by degree and order, not by violence. As seen above too, to the anonymous writer, innovation is sudden and violent, but at the same time it often arrives imperceptibly, little by little, by degrees.

A third characteristic of innovation needs consideration. A term that recurs among all three royalists (and King Charles' *Eikon basilike*) is "design". The innovator has a design in mind. The meaning of design is project, a suspicious project – another term that suffered from bad press ("projectors" were the untrusted innovators-entrepreneurs of the time). There is no reference to creativity here, but rather a machination, a subversion, a conspiracy. Poyntz, as we saw above, talks in terms of (dangerous) "experiment".

Design, a key word of the political world in England and America

in the 1760-70s (Bailyn, 1967: 94-159), would continue to characterize innovation in the next century, and then the notion of "scheme" would be added, as in Thomas Bancroft's *The Danger of Political Innovation and the Evil of Anarchy*, 1792. "I trust it may be expected from the good sense of Englishmen that they will reject their suspicious schemes of Reform and **Innovation**" (p. 14).

As much as it may represent a dangerous design, innovation is at the same time reduced (minimized) to a mere popular fashion – "Itch of innovation" (anonymous writer), "Plague of innovation" (Goddard), "love of novelties" (Poyntz) – or to a matter of "eutopia". To the anonymous author:

> There are a Generation of Men (fitter in being Factious to Disorder, than Sober to settle Affairs of State) who make it their Master-piece; to Subvert the best Government (...) and then to present unto the People some *Eutopia*, or imaginary Model of Government (p. 173).
>
> I cannot see but the King and his Privy Council may manage all the Affairs of State, with much more advantage to the Publick (...) than if the Administration thereof were by these *Eutopian* and Popular Councils (p. 217).

For his part, Goddard refers to phantasy and enthusiasm: "phantastical Commonwealth" (p. 18), "Fantastical cure for an imaginary disease" (p. 233), "Enthusiastical follies" (p. 321).

Alteration Yes, Innovation No

Antimonarchy, violence and design: these are the three elements of innovation that make of it a negative concept. It also explains Nelville's relation to innovation. Like Poyntz, Neville agrees with change but, unlike Poyntz, says "considerable alterations in the administration we have need of". Yet Neville does not seek to abolish the monarchy, as revolutionaries do. He would also keep the House of Lords – although one nominated by Parliament and with no control over the House of Commons – rather than suggesting an elected Senate. Neville really of-

fers a "reformation", not an innovation. On one hand, Neville suggests a great innovation (without using the word): "I believe there can be no Expedients proposed in Parliament that will not take up as much time and trouble, find as much difficulty in passing with the King and Lords, and seems as great a change of Government, as the true remedy would appear" (p. 183). On the other hand, he says, "The less change the better (...) great alterations fright Men" (p. 272). In sum, Neville was "not making a [new] kind of Government [like that which exists in Italy], but rectifying an ancient Monarchy, and giving the Prince some help in the Administration" (p. 278).

Why no innovation in Neville? Because of resistance – and therefore a lack of supporters. "We are not Ripe for any great Reform", he says (p. 282), firstly, because we have "a Politique Debauch, which is a neglect of all things that concern the Publick welfare" (p. 282); secondly, because "most Wise and Grave Men of this Kingdom are very silent" (p. 283); and thirdly:

> There is a great distrust [in Parliament] of venturing at such matters, which being very new, at the first motion are not perfectly understood, at least to such as have written of the Politicks; and therefore the Mover may be suspected of having been set on by the Court-party to puzzle them, and so to divert (...). It is the nature of all Popular Councels (...) to like discourses that highten their passions, and blow up their Indignation, better than them that endeavour to rectifie their Judgments (p. 288).

Yet, Neville continues:

> We have one Consideration, which does encourage us (...). And that is the Infaillible Certainty that we cannot long Continue as we are, and that we can never Meliorate, but by some such Principles, as we have been here all this while discoursing (p. 290-91). If you ask me whether I could have offer'd any thing that I thought better than this, I will answer (...) Yes, but that [what I have suggested is] the best, that the People would or could receive (p. 291-92).

Neville's rationale would not pacify his opponents, who would accuse him of innovating. "Our author", as Goddard put it in his Epistle dedication, makes "us believe that he is supporting Our Government, whilst he endeavours utterly to destroy it". At the end of this tract, Goddard repeats his belief as follows, "Our Author augments, or diminisheth, changeth or disguiseth the truth of things, as they make most convenient for his purpose" (p. 273).

Conclusion

It was during the Reformation that innovation became widely used in the Western world, essentially in a pejorative sense (Godin, 2012a; 2012b). The present paper suggests that politics contributed to this pejorative connotation too. The early writers on and theorists of the Republic made no use of the concept. In fact, if the Republicans wanted to make a positive case for their cause, they had to avoid a negative concept. When they use the concept they adhere to its common pejorative representation – the same use (or non use) characterizes every political theorists of the time, including John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. On the other hand, critics of the Republic used the concept widely. Precisely because the concept had a morally-charged tone, they made use of innovation to make a case against Republicans as "innovators of State", adding a new connotation to the concept: innovation is violent, or revolutionary. 'Alteration perhaps, Innovation no' was the commonplace theme among writers on both sides of the debate (Royalists and Republicans).

In this paper I have called innovation a concept. Yet, there was no definition of what innovation is among writers of the time. Neither was there any study or analysis of innovation, particularly regarding how the concept is distinct from other concepts like change, reformation and revolution (Godin, 2013). Finally, there existed no theory of innovation. Innovation was a mere word, a derogatory label used for rhetorical purposes. By casting the Republicans as innovators, their enemies were attempting to undermine their entire argument.

Innovation gradually acquired a positive representation over the nineteenth century, following the French Revolution. That representation as being revolutionary, which had been negative until then, in turn gave innovation a positive meaning and gave a new life to the word. Innovation has acquired real political significance. While until then innovation had not been part of the vocabulary of politics, but rather a derogatory label and a linguistic weapon, it became a catchword in political discourse and an instrument of economic policy in the Twentieth Century.

The changing fortunes of innovation shed light on the values of the times. In the Seventeenth Century the uses of innovation were essentially polemical. It served as a weapon against 'deviants', including the republicans, attaching to the views of innovators a pejorative label. However, from the Nineteenth century, innovation started to refer to a central value of modern times: utility. From then on, innovation got into every discourse, including the political.

The route through which innovation shifted in meaning and use has scarcely been studied. To be sure, there are hundreds of studies on technological innovation, particularly after 1970. Yet this literature takes the meaning of innovation for granted (innovation is spontaneously understood as technological innovation), and it attributes the origin of the concept to Josef A. Schumpeter. In this paper, I have gone further back in time and documented some eminently political connotations and uses of the concept which may, if taken seriously, lead to more reflexive studies of innovation, a concept that has become "naturalized" and "legitimized" over the last sixty years.

It remains to be documented to what extent Machiavelli, the first to talk of innovation as an instrument of the Prince's power and an author greatly esteemed by the Republicans, is responsible for the bad press innovation has had for centuries. As Machiavelli explains in chapter 6 of *The Prince*, a Prince must innovate to establish his power. However, because of the resistance of people to innovation, the Prince as "innovator" (*innovatori*) needs to use force in order to persuade his subjects. Be that as it may, politics (together with religion) made innovation a contested concept. The irony is that the same governments that contested innovation have contributed to de-contesting and legitimizing

the concept: in the twentieth century, innovation became instrumental in economic policy.[7]

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7 Special thanks for Markku Peltonen and Jonathan Scott for commenting on a first draft of this paper. Thanks also to two anonymous reviewers.

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