Andrea Acle-Kreysing

Taming the Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Spain

Jaime Balmes and Juan Donoso Cortés

campus

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Andrea Acle-Kreysing graduated from El Colegio de México, and obtained her master and PhD degrees from the University of Cambridge, UK. She has been awarded with a fellowship from the Humboldt Foundation for her Habilitation project at the universities of Munich and Leipzig.

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The lives of most men are a web of contradictions that are simply impossible to explain; if one were to give any importance to this fact, nothing less would follow than that we would need to demand that all men should adjust their conduct to their ideas, and that whoever held a conviction should always act in accordance with it. But when and where has this ever been a common practice?

Jaime Balmes, Letters to a Sceptic in Religious Matters (1846).

Contents

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This book is the revised version of my PhD dissertation, completed at the University of Cambridge (2012). While incorporating the most recent publications in the field, I have at the same time sought to preserve the youthful tone of the original. The art of finding one's own voice amidst a vast sea of scholarship remains the most valuable lesson I learned from Alison Sinclair, my PhD supervisor at the Department of Spanish & Portuguese in the Faculty of Modern & Medieval Languages. Ten years later, she continues to be an unwavering source of help, inspiration and encouragement. During my years as a graduate student from 2006 to 2011, I profited immensely from meeting leading experts in both European and intellectual history. I would thus like to express my profound gratitude to Christopher Clark, David Brading, Gareth Stedman Jones, Javier Herrero, Javier Fernández Sebastián, Josep Fradera, María del Carmen Sáenz, Michael Costeloe, Emile Perreau-Saussine † and, last but not least, Gregorio Alonso – to whom I owe the title of this book. Furthermore, I would like to thank my PhD thesis examiners, Andrew Ginger and Guy Thomson, whose comments proved invaluable when drafting this book. Additionally, I am indebted to Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas for helping me to make the transition from British to German academia.

Even if taking the road less travelled has presented its challenges, it has also brought a reward: the ability to feel at home in several countries and their respective scholarly traditions. The seeds of intellectual curiosity sown by my former professors at El Colegio de México (Francisco Gil Villegas, Anne Staples, Andrés Lira, Ilán Bizberg and Rafael Segovia †) have gone on to bear fruit.

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Introduction[1]

Writing a book about the political thought of Jaime Balmes and Juan Donoso Cortés is an ideal opportunity to reflect upon the uses and abuses of intellectual history. Regarded as the two major Catholic thinkers in Spain between the 1830s and 1850s, Balmes and Donoso have continued to be influential on subsequent generations of conservative and right-wing thinkers. Adapted to new scenarios, their ideas have often been simplified and subjected to misappropriations, in order either to suit them to the needs of a given political agenda, or to affirm the belonging of Balmes and Donoso to an allegedly timeless Catholic tradition. For example, in the context of Francoist Spain (1939–1975), Balmes and Donoso became incorporated into the narrative of the Two Spains, the liberal and the conservative, whose allegedly irreconcilable differences were seen as leading to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939). Seen from outside Spain, Balmes and Donoso possess a steady reputation as traditionalists who, seeking to reverse the revolutionary tide that swept through both Spain and Europe, raised what sympathetic commentators referred to as the timely banners of order and authority. To put it shortly, it is in their guise as conservatives, traditionalists, Catholic apologists and even as counter-revolutionaries that Balmes and Donoso persist in the historical imagination. It might be added that, in the twentieth century, the thought of Donoso experienced a revival, as the anti-liberal views of his later years were (in)famously revived by the German political theorist and Nazi sympathiser Carl Schmitt (1888–1985).

The problem is that, when deployed in the actual historical period in which Balmes and Donoso lived and wrote, these categories are ill-fitting and inaccurate. Instead of the clear-cut conflict between a liberal and a

1 All translations from Spanish, German and French sources are, otherwise indicated, mine.

conservative Spain, what then existed was an heterogeneous liberal party divided – at least – into two main branches, as well as a relatively diverse traditionalist and monarchic opinion, deeply affected by the division of the royal family into two competing branches. Moreover, when entering into biographical details, the idea that Balmes and Donoso struggled for an identical cause does not wholly match reality. Whereas the worldly lawyer Donoso remained close to the *moderados* (moderate liberals) for most of his life, the secular priest Balmes eschewed political labels altogether. Despite sharing a similar goal, that of maintaining the centrality of Spain's traditional institutions, the Church and the monarchy, they applied dissimilar means to its attainment. Last but not least, while the writings of Balmes prefigured a relatively open-minded and socially-oriented Catholicism, Donoso ended up positing Christianity as the highest social good, yet one incompatible with both liberalism and socialism. Nevertheless, despite the many differences between them, the trajectories of Balmes and Donoso did run parallel to each other, so that it is possible to see their works as variations on a same theme (Koch 1993: 108–109). However, if an accurate sense of the actual (i.e. historical, contextual and even comparative) significance of Balmes and Donoso in mid-nineteenth century Spain is to be gained, it makes sense to focus upon their lives, rather than just in their afterlives as Catholic or conservative icons.

My intention in this book is thus twofold: first, to reconstruct the trajectories of Balmes and Donoso, highlighting the nuances and unresolved tensions within their work. Therefore, instead of presenting them as brothers-in-arms (who, it might be added, avoided any personal acquaintance during their lives), my aim is to show the complexity of contemporary Spanish political thought. This aim matches the latest developments in the study of nineteenth-century Spanish political and intellectual history. A deliberate effort has been made to escape dualistic interpretations of this period, that is, seen as torn between extremes: tradition *versus* modernity, reaction *versus* revolution, etc. In this sense, what the study of thinkers such as Balmes and Donoso shows, is that the very act of defending tradition was an essentially modern endeavour. It also becomes clear that tradition is not perennial but contingent upon time and place, and thus often tailored (i.e. modernised) to suit a variety of political agendas. Hence the need to insist upon how Balmes and Donoso engaged in a political as well as a semantic struggle, as they sought to endow key concepts – such as revolution, civilisation or people – with a specific content, that is, one among many other competing ones. In doing

so, they were well aware of wider European developments, and sought actively to discredit the stereotypical view of Spain as a backward and isolated country.

The title of this book – *Taming the Revolution in Spain* – serves as an apt description of the leitmotiv behind the ideas of Balmes and Donoso. They saw themselves not as merely as thinkers but rather as actors capable of channelling and tempering Spain's social and political development. In doing so, they followed a key imperative: that of keeping revolution at bay. In the writings of Balmes and Donoso, revolution acquired a variety of meanings. At the most basic level, it conjured up the spectre of anarchy, that is, a situation in which consecrated rights and properties would no longer be respected. Due to its sudden and disruptive character, a revolution was also seen as antithetic to the gradual and orderly development that, it was claimed, could only be achieved by long-standing institutions. However, for Balmes and Donoso, the revolution was much more than an imminent threat, deployed either to chastise political opponents or to cast predictions upon future developments. Ascertaining the meaning of revolution also meant looking back to past events, such as the French Revolution (1789), but mostly to Spain's own revolution – what historians mostly refer to as the liberal revolution – at the turn of the nineteenth century. This had hailed the advent of a new institutional framework in Spain, as well as novel discourses of justifying and exercising political power. In this book, I deliberately focus upon the character of Balmes and Donoso as conservative (re)interpreters of *this* revolution, yet without assuming that such outlook would inexorably lead to a negation of Spain's basic liberal (i.e. constitutional) order. The actual story, as I hope to show, was much more complicated.

I. Historical and biographical overview

When Balmes and Donoso were born, Spain was largely occupied by Napoleonic troops. The so-called War of Independence (1808–1814) against France was driven by an incipient nationalism which brought together, albeit temporarily, a series of divergent visions on the future of Spain. On the one hand, there was a conservative majority of the clergy who identified the French invader with the 'impious' ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, as these threatened the values of the *ancien régime* and the privileged position of the Church. On the other, there were the *liberales*

who sought not only to set Spain free from French rule, but also to endow it with new institutions. This group effectively continued the reforming spirit of the eighteenth-century Bourbon monarchs of Spain, while heralding the emergence of a new way of thinking and doing politics. The Cortes assembled at Cádiz elaborated a liberal-inspired constitution (1812) which created a constitutional monarchy that derived its legitimacy from the sovereignty of the nation. Though willing to uphold the traditional values of Spain (i.e. Catholicism was established as the official religion), the new constitution inaugurated a new era of Church-State relations, as the right to interfere in ecclesiastical matters, previously a prerogative of the monarch, came now under the control of the nation's representatives.

When Fernando VII was restored to the throne in 1814, Spain returned to absolutism and the liberal legislation was declared null and void. Except for the brief parenthesis of the Liberal Triennium (1821–1823), in which the Constitution of Cádiz was restored and a bolder legislation related to the Church put into practice, Fernando VII was the ruler of Spain until 1833. The last years of his reign were marked by conflicts among court factions: María Cristina, queen consort, managed to secure the succession to the throne for her daughter Isabel. In 1830, Fernando issued a Pragmatic Sanction which, by allowing female succession to the crown, implicitly excluded his brother Don Carlos from power (Canal 2000: 52–3). Following the king's death in 1833, the Bourbon family split into two branches which contended for the succession to the throne in what became known as the First Carlist War (1833–1840), allegedly 'the bloodiest civil war in nineteenth-century Europe' (Lawrence 2014: 20). Don Carlos resorted to war in order to oppose Isabel's right to succession. Carlism, as his movement came to be known, upheld a traditionalist and reactionary view of Catholicism, along with a patriarchal and hierarchical view of society. Although she was far from being a radical in politics, the threat represented by Carlism forced María Cristina – queen regent until the majority of age of Isabel II – to enter into an alliance of convenience with liberal political groups, ranging from *moderados* (moderates) to *progresistas* (radicals). In this context of turmoil and civil war, Balmes and Donoso made their first incursions into their country's political life.

Jaime Balmes, a secular priest, came from a fairly modest background. After finishing his studies at the University of Cervera, he returned to his native Vic in Catalonia, where he devoted himself to ambitious intellectual endeavours. Balmes emerged from this relative obscurity and acquired a national reputation with his *Observaciones sociales, políticas y económicas sobre*

los bienes del clero [Social, Political, and Economic Observations on Clerical Property] (1840). In this book, he expressed a deep concern about the standing of the Church as, under the rule of the *progresistas* (1835–1837), a massive disentailment and sale of ecclesiastical properties had taken place. During the 1840s, the Spanish Church was in a vulnerable position: it had lost a considerable amount of its riches and had to renegotiate its privileged position with the State. This situation of fragility brought about, as an unintended consequence, a significant degree of ideological flexibility among distinguished clergymen, with Balmes heading the list (Fradera 2003: 305). This flexibility would eventually disappear once the Church reassured its pre-eminence with the Concordat of 1851. In *El protestantismo comparado con el catolicismo en sus relaciones con la civilización europea* [*Protestantism compared to Catholicism in its Relation to European Civilisation*] (1842–1844), Balmes vindicated Catholicism as capable of promoting both intellectual enquiry and political liberty. By holding firm to the Catholic faith, Balmes argued, Spain was the European country which remained closest to what he believed was the essence of Europe, its 'Catholic civilisation'. Balmes' book, originally intended as a scholarly diatribe against the French Protestant writer François Guizot, had a long-lasting impact among successive generations of Catholic thinkers. By positing Spain as an essentially Catholic nation, Balmes consummated a symbolic marriage between traditional Catholicism and the liberal idea of the nation (Álvarez Junco 2007: 417; Villalonga 2012: 59–60).

The last years of his brief life – Balmes died at thirty-eight years of age – showed a growth in importance that was truly meteoric. He increasingly moved towards the epicentre of Spanish politics: in Barcelona, he edited the journals *La Civilización [The Civilisation]* (1841–1843) and *La Sociedad [The Society]* (1843–1844), reflecting a willingness to defend a Catholic stance and nevertheless engage with intellectual debates then taking place in Europe. Yet Balmes' most important project was *El Pensamiento de la Nación [The Thought of the Nation]*, published in Madrid from 1844 to 1846. In its pages, Balmes expressed his disaffection towards the prevalent political situation and presented his own ideas on how Spain could reach a long-desired stability. On the conclusion of the civil war, and after several years of arbitrary rule by the *progresista* strongman Baldomero Espartero (1840–1843), Spain began a period dominated by the moderate liberals: the *década moderada* (moderate decade) (1843–1854). Balmes criticised the elitist and oligarchic nature of the *moderado* regime, which he thought was based upon the consistent exclusion of what were the two extremes in Spanish politics: traditionalist Carlism and

revolutionary liberalism. He resented the exclusion of the Carlists, whose conservative views he believed were representative of the majority of Spain's – still rural – population. In addition, Balmes stated that this 'ancient Spain' had been unjustly neglected by the 'new Spain' which, despite being a minority, was active in the most important cities and controlled the government.

Between 1844 and 1846, precisely the years in which *El Pensamiento de la Nación* was published, the marriage of Isabel II occupied the centre of Spanish politics. It was a step taken by the *moderado* party rather than by the queen herself, under the assumption that the election of a king consort would influence the course of Spanish politics. On that occasion, Balmes put forward the project of marrying Isabel to Count Montemolín, the son of Don Carlos, in an effort to quell not only the divisions within the Spanish dynastic family but to bring together the traditional spirit of the 'ancient Spain' with the modern spirit of the 'new Spain'. What is interesting about Balmes' position is not only that he made full use of modern means (i.e. the periodical press) in order to pursuit conservative goals, but that he was able to maintain a relative independence from the political groups that could sympathise with his views – from the right-wing of the *moderados* to the Carlists. For a variety of reasons, Balmes failed in achieving what he called a marriage of conciliation, setting the basis for a truly national government (Balmes 1845 f, *OC* VII: 252). Nonetheless, Balmes' plea for the rapprochement between tradition and the 'modern spirit' would be revived on a more ambitious and significant way: it became a statement on the path that European Catholicism should take.

The papacy of Pius IX began with a note of hope and excitement, produced by his inclination towards political reform in the Papal States, along with his favourable views on Italian unification. The Pope thus raised a wave of expectations across Catholic Europe as regards the relation between Catholicism and modern ideas such as popular sovereignty and nationalism. In *Pío IX* (1847), Balmes welcomed the Pope's measures and stressed that Catholicism was not bound to absolutist and monarchical regimes, but could actually flourish in regimes that fostered higher degrees of political liberty. Yet the Pope's alleged liberalism was cut short by the European Revolutions of 1848, and was soon replaced by an intransigent stance. These were developments that Balmes did not have time to appreciate fully: he died in July 1848, and left a series of unfinished sketches on the revolutionary events which had just taken place in Paris. Though he was far from being a friend of both revolution and socialist doctrines, Balmes insisted upon the need to

address the social and economic roots of these upheavals: from an unequal distribution of wealth to the current organization of labour.

This emphasis upon the social questions was a distinctive feature of Balmes as a Catholic thinker – and a rather unique one (Koch 1993: 113). He had previously referred to the consequences of disentailment in rural Spain: once the Church properties passed into the hands of a small number of rich landlords, the situation of landless peasants would be worsened. Balmes also called attention to the incipient proletariat that was appearing in the industrial centres of Catalonia. Significantly, Balmes thus signalled the emergence of social Catholicism, which made a qualitative jump from the idea that social problems were the result of either a lack of morality or a deficient religiosity, to the conviction that institutional reform – and not only charity – was needed in order to address them. Yet Catholic social doctrine would only acquire a more definite shape during the pontificate of Leo XIII (1878–1903). It might be added that Balmes was also the author of several philosophical works. Many of the epistemological concerns that he had raised in *El criterio [On Discernment]* (1845), including the ability of human reason to discern truth, as well as the relationship between science and religion, were significantly expanded in *Filosofía fundamental [Fundamental Philosophy]* (1846) and *Filosofía elemental [Elemental Philosophy]* (1847).

Juan Donoso Cortés came from a well-to-do family from Extremadura, and completed his legal studies at the University of Seville. After a brief experience as lecturer in the Colegio de Humanidades of Cáceres, he moved to Madrid in 1832, where he joined a variety of literary and political *tertulias* (salons). Circumstances were about to change dramatically in Spain, and this was a moment in which the succession of Fernando VII was being hotly debated. Donoso made his first political move with a *Memoria sobre la situación actual de la monarquía [Statement on the current Situation of the Monarchy]* (1832), declaring himself to be a moderate and a supporter of Isabel's right to the throne. It is worth stressing that Donoso's allegiance to Isabel remained unaltered throughout his life, regardless of any variation in his political thought. At this point, however, Donoso's defence of the legitimate monarchy was underpinned by *doctrinaire* liberalism, as reflected in his first serious political writing, *Consideraciones sobre la diplomacia* [*Considerations on Diplomacy*] (1834), and in a series of *Lecciones sobre derecho político* [*Lectures on Constitutional Political Law*] (1836–1837) delivered in the Ateneo of Madrid.

Doctrinaire liberalism was a theory on government, devised in order to establish 'an eclectic synthesis between revolution and tradition' (Fernández

Sebastián 1997: 132). Its origins were in the French *doctrinaires* whose middle-of-the-ground position, conceived of as an alternative to the extremes represented by the ultra-royalists and the republicans, were particularly influential during the reign of Louis Philippe (1830–1848). Their ideas were echoed in Spain, where the moderate liberals (*moderados*) aimed at overcoming the divisions that had led to civil war (1833–1838), presenting themselves as a *juste milieu* between Carlists and radical liberals. In the case of Donoso, the influence of the doctrinaires was most felt in his views on the 'sovereignty of reason', in which there was no democratic intent but rather a justification of the upper middle classes' right to rule. Despite this attempt to escape from the Scylla and Charybdis of the Carlists' divine right of kings and the radical liberals' defence of national sovereignty, Donoso was an imperfect *doctrinaire*. The key preoccupation in his political thought was not conciliation but expediency, understood as the government's ability to overcome the political stalemate and to guarantee social order – especially in times of crisis. As he affirmed in his *Lecciones*, in exceptional moments, what would ensure the maintenance of order were not the *doctrinaires*' carefully crafted theories but rather the 'social omnipotence' as embodied in a dictator.

Donoso's career followed the vicissitudes of the *moderado* party. At the beginning of the 1840s, when Espartero was in power, Donoso joined in Paris the circle of *moderado* émigrés who followed the Queen Mother María Cristina into exile. On his return to Spain, Donoso joined the Cortes as deputy for Extremadura. However, during the *década moderada* (1843–1854), Donoso's influence in Spanish politics would be mostly exercised in a far less institutional way, following his appointment in 1844 as private secretary to Isabel II. As shown in a recent biography of Isabel II (Burdiel 2010), this allowed Donoso to mediate the relationship between the thirteen-year old queen and her mother. His manoeuvres within the Spanish royal family were crucial for the *moderados*' objective of controlling the institution of the monarchy according to their own interests. Moreover, as a secretary of the committee on constitutional reform, Donoso was a key figure in drafting the *moderado*-inspired Constitution of 1845. Sovereignty was then declared to rest with both Crown and Cortes, in an attempt to reach a 'conservative compromise' between the strong affirmation of royal authority put forward by the Estatuto Real of 1834, and the principle of full popular sovereignty consecrated by the *progresista* Constitution of 1837 (Payne 1984: 772). So, apart from establishing the basis of the *moderados*' instrumental relationship

with the Crown, the Constitution of 1845 consolidated a new aristocracy composed of upper middle class interests.

Donoso also played an important role in what became a marriage of convenience between the Church and the *moderados*. Desirous of using the Church as bulwark of stability and order, the *moderado* regime was willing to make concessions: the sales of ecclesiastical property were suspended and the first steps were taken to re-establish relations with the Papacy. Yet the *moderados* staunchly refused to regard the previous sales of ecclesiastical properties as anything other than a *fait accompli*; after all, many of those who had benefited by these sales were now supporters of the regime. From now onwards, the relations between Church and State would be reorganized on a completely new basis: deprived of a substantial part of its riches, the Church was no longer self-sufficient and would depend upon the State for its maintenance. Speaking in the Cortes in early 1845, Donoso referred to the sales of ecclesiastical property as an irreversible fact and affirmed the State's right to intervene in the Church's temporal affairs – that is, matters of governance and internal administration. Donoso's arguments were contested by Balmes who, writing in *El Pensamiento de la Nación*, regretted what he believed was not only a significant loss of independence for the Church but represented its subordination to the State. Interestingly, the marriage of Isabel II constituted another instance of disagreement between Balmes and Donoso. As a reward for his involvement in bringing about the marriage between Isabel and her cousin Francisco de Asís in 1846, Donoso was raised to the nobility with the title of Marquis of Valdegamas. Yet Donoso's support of someone who was a relatively uninteresting husband for Isabel ought to be interpreted taking into account both the heavy diplomatic pressure from Britain and France, and the relatively strong position of the *moderados*, which meant they did not have to seek the support of the Carlists – as Balmes proposed – in order to prevail.

1847 was a crucial year in Donoso's life: he underwent a religious conversion to a more committed and deeply-felt Catholicism. This had the effect of exacerbating, rather than producing *ex novo*, an already strong conservative strand in his thought. This had been reflected in a constant affirmation of order and authority over radical change (i.e. revolution), along with a definition of Spanish identity that rested on traditional institutions (i.e. Church and Crown). Nevertheless, following his conversion, Donoso would assert with increasing conviction what he thought to be the superiority of Catholicism as a guide in all areas of life: what he called the 'Catholic solution' in a series of

articles on Pius IX, and 'Catholic civilisation' in the early 1850s. The Revolutions of 1848 further radicalised Donoso's position, as reflected in a 'Discurso sobre la dictadura [Speech on dictatorship]' (1849) which made him famous across Europe. Speaking in the Cortes, Donoso defended the need to combat revolution and to maintain order at all costs – including that of resorting to a dictatorship. He predicted the advent of a socialist revolution in Europe, thus gaining the reputation among favourable commentators of being a prophet, and warned about the shortcomings of liberalism, beginning with its supposed inability to prevent the eventual outbreak of revolution.

This was the topic of his best-known work, *Ensayo sobre el catolicismo, el liberalismo y el socialismo [Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism]*, published in 1851. It is important to mention that the European projection of Donoso's ideas was partly facilitated by his appointments as ambassador in Berlin (1849) and Paris (1851–1853). At the end of his (also) brief life – he died at forty-three years of age –, he gradually moved towards the conviction that the only real alternative to either revolution or dictatorship was a religious reawakening among the peoples of Europe. Yet his tone became apocalyptic, and his stress upon Catholicism as the *only* solution excluded the possibility of reaching an understanding with any aspect of modern life or culture that diverged from the Church's teachings, including the liberalism that he professed in his youth.

This overview, however brief, justifies the need to study Balmes and Donoso *in parallel*, highlighting similarities but especially the differences among them. The latter include, in the first and most obvious place that, despite sharing the conviction that Catholicism ought to be the pillar of Spanish identity, their political projects diverged in several key aspects, including Church-State relations. Second, and most significantly, they did not share an identical religious ideal, given that they envisaged dissimilar ways of guaranteeing the pre-eminence of religion in society. It could be added that the differences go well beyond their contrasting literary styles, and are mainly philosophical, as illustrated by their contrasting epistemological stance. For example, Balmes affirmed that 'simplicity is the character of truth' (Balmes 1841, *OC* V: 465), whereas Donoso maintained that 'absolute clarity is always a symptom of error' (Donoso 1837, *OC* I: 382).

Yet emphasising the differences between Balmes and Donoso, however important, is just one first step in the direction of a critical reappraisal of their works. The question remains: are they nevertheless to be inscribed within a larger – and relatively coherent – category, that is, as belonging

to a larger tradition of conservative, Catholic or traditionalist thinkers? Starting from the assumption that their political thought was rooted in a given historical experience, how is one to account for their views on how Spain *should* be, as this seemingly reduced their field of vision – and maybe ours too – to what was normative and desirable, to the exclusion of what was deemed as 'foreign' or 'heterodox'? And how are we to avoid seeing Balmes and Donoso through the lens of myths that they contributed to create (i.e. the former as the true representative of Spain's necessarily Catholic spirit, the latter as a cogent proof of the alleged incompatibility between Catholicism and modern, secular values)? Answering these complex questions involves reflecting not only upon their lives, but their afterlives: that is, the reception of their works. In the next section, I will go on to give an overview of the most significant twentieth-century scholarship produced on Balmes and Donoso, highlighting the recent scholarship on Hispanic political thought. By revisiting fundamental research questions, as well as larger debates on nineteenth-century Spain, it is possible to critically rethink cult figures such as Balmes and Donoso and, more significantly, to show that Spanish political thought was a variation on – rather than an aberration of – contemporary European debates.

II. Catholic Spain: myths and realities

The debate about two or more Spains is *passé*. Yet it is worth analysing its core arguments, so as to better understand the claims of current scholarship. The passion elicited by the topos of the *two Spains*, the liberal and the conservative, can be explained by its being a crossroads between political conviction and religious belief. Broadly speaking, liberal Spain drew its arguments from the Black Legend, blaming the intolerance of the Catholic Church for having hindered in Spain those intellectual and scientific achievements which constituted the prosperity of more advanced countries. In turn, conservative Spain created its own White Legend, one of a traditional Spain in which Catholicism was both a sign of identity and the inspiration behind the country's greatest deeds (Menéndez Pidal 1991: 229–30; Carr 2001: 2; García Cárcel 2013: 357–358). Underlying the *two Spains*, was a process of 'rhetorical inflation' at work, one in which the 'enemy' was increasingly defined as the negation of one's own values, eventually leading to the creation of a 'virtual reality' (Clark 2003: 36–42).

This explains why, during the Franco years (1939–1975), many of the ideas of Balmes and Donoso were applied retrospectively in order to give a historical justification to the polarisation of Spanish society during and after the Civil War (1936–1939). Quite predictably, Donoso's prophecies about the dangers of socialism were then recalled, while stressing the superiority of his own Catholic doctrine (Larraz 1948: 20; Suárez Verdeguer 1964: 272–3). Balmes was invoked with the aim of demonstrating that the Spanish people had always been naturally religious, peace-loving and politically passive. The counterpart of this argument was that, in consequence, revolutionary or left-wing elements had always been a small fraction of society, so that their numerical inferiority prevented them from being truly representative of the Spanish people (Larraz 1948: 17; Martín Artajo 1962: 9–10). Significantly, José María García Escudero claimed that the failure of Balmes' attempt at reconciling the warring factions in Spanish society proved that there could be no 'third Spains' (1950: 86–7). According to García Escudero, the Spanish Civil War had been not only the culmination of the nineteenth-century struggle between the *two Spains*, but also an 'anachronistic reenactment' of the sixteenth-century European wars of religion (García Escudero 1980: 4–5).

Nowadays, however, the findings of recent scholarship have contributed to blur the lines between the *two Spains*, especially in relation to the liberal side of the equation. Many paradigms have been called into question, beginning with the idea that the end of the *ancien régime* in Spain – and the subsequent rise of liberalism as a political ideology – was the result of a bourgeois revolution, one that pitted the rising middle classes against a feudal oligarchy. As Cruz has demonstrated, liberalism did not advance the interests of a single social class, but those of a broad coalition composed of diverse social classes and interests (Cruz 2000: 12–13). It did have a radical impact in Spain's political institutions, but its effects reached only slowly the social and economic sphere, where the norm was much less revolution than adaptation and renovation (Cruz 2000: 259–260). In addition, the relationship between Spanish liberalism and the Church has been the subject of new studies that cast doubt on the claim that contemporary attempts at reducing the secular power of the Church were necessarily conducive to the eventual 'dechristianisation' of Spain (Escrig 2018: 146–7). It becomes clear that, in nineteenth-century Spain, the fundamental question to be asked was *not* if the nation should or should not be informed by religious values. The question to ask was, rather, whether the powerful and influential Spanish Catholic Church could hamper – or not – the construction of the new liberal State. After all,