THE PORTABLE ENLIGHTENMENT READER

EDITED BY

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PART I

THE ENLIGHTENMENT SPIRIT: AN OVERVIEW

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Immanuel Kant

In this short essay written in 1784, the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), whose writings are still central to any serious study of philosophy, declares the Enlightenment's creed: Sapere aude! *"Dare to know!"*

Enlightenment is man's release from his self-incurred tutelage. Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another. Self-incurred is this tutelage when its cause lies not in lack of reason but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another. *Sapere aude!* "Have courage to use your own reason!"—that is the motto of enlightenment.

Laziness and cowardice are the reasons why so great a portion of mankind, after nature has long since discharged them from external direction (*naturaliter maiorennes*), nevertheless remains under lifelong tutelage, and why it is so easy for others to set themselves up as their guardians. It is so easy not to be of age. If I have a book which understands for me, a pastor who has a conscience for me, a physician who decides my diet, and so forth, I need not trouble myself. I need not think, if I can only pay—others will readily undertake the irksome work for me.

That the step to competence is held to be very dangerous by the far greater portion of mankind (and by the entire fair sex)—quite apart from its being arduous—is seen to by those guardians who have so

kindly assumed superintendence over them. After the guardians have first made their domestic cattle dumb and have made sure that these placid creatures will not dare take a single step without the harness of the cart to which they are confined, the guardians then show them the danger which threatens if they try to go alone. Actually, however, this danger is not so great, for by falling a few times they would finally learn to walk alone. But an example of this failure makes them timid and ordinarily frightens them away from all further trials.

For any single individual to work himself out of the life under tutelage which has become almost his nature is very difficult. He has come to be fond of this state, and he is for the present really incapable of making use of his reason, for no one has ever let him try it out. Statutes and formulas, those mechanical tools of the rational employment or rather misemployment of his natural gifts, are the fetters of an everlasting tutelage. Whoever throws them off makes only an uncertain leap over the narrowest ditch because he is not accustomed to that kind of free motion. Therefore, there are only few who have succeeded by their own exercise of mind both in freeing themselves from incompetence and in achieving a steady pace.

But that the public should enlighten itself is more possible; indeed, if only freedom is granted, enlightenment is almost sure to follow. For there will always be some independent thinkers, even among the established guardians of the great masses, who, after throwing off the yoke of tutelage from their own shoulders, will disseminate the spirit of the rational appreciation of both their own worth and every man's vocation for thinking for himself. But be it noted that the public, which has first been brought under this yoke by their guardians, forces the guardians themselves to remain bound when it is incited to do so by some of the guardians who are themselves capable of some enlightenment—so harmful is it to implant prejudices, for they later take vengeance on their cultivators or on their descendants. Thus the public can only slowly attain enlightenment. Perhaps a fall of personal despotism or of avaricious or tyrannical oppression may be accomplished by revolution, but never a true reform in ways of thinking. Rather, new prejudices will serve as well as old ones to harness the great unthinking masses.

For this enlightenment, however, nothing is required but freedom, and indeed the most harmless among all the things to which this term can properly be applied. It is the freedom to make public use of one's reason at every point. But I hear on all sides, "Do not argue!" The

officer says: "Do not argue but drill!" The tax collector: "Do not argue but pay!" The cleric: "Do not argue but believe!" Only one prince in the world says, "Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, but obey!" Everywhere there is restriction on freedom.

Which restriction is an obstacle to enlightenment, and which is not an obstacle but a promoter of it? I answer: The public use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men. The private use of reason, on the other hand, may often be very narrowly restricted without particularly hindering the progress of enlightenment. By the public use of one's reason I understand the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the reading public. Private use I call that which one may make of it in a particular civil post or office which is intrusted to him. Many affairs which are conducted in the interest of the community require a certain mechanism through which some members of the community must passively conduct themselves with an artificial unanimity, so that the government may direct them to public ends, or at least prevent them from destroying those ends. Here argument is certainly not allowed—one must obey. But so far as a part of the mechanism regards himself at the same time as a member of the whole community or of a society of world citizens, and thus in the role of a scholar who addresses the public (in the proper sense of the word) through his writings, he certainly can argue without hurting the affairs for which he is in part responsible as a passive member. Thus it would be ruinous for an officer in service to debate about the suitability or utility of a command given to him by his superior; he must obey. But the right to make remarks on errors in the military service and to lay them before the public for judgment cannot equitably be refused him as a scholar. The citizen cannot refuse to pay the taxes imposed on him; indeed, an impudent complaint at those levied on him can be punished as a scandal (as it could occasion general refractoriness). But the same person nevertheless does not act contrary to his duty as a citizen when, as a scholar, he publicly expresses his thoughts on the inappropriateness or even the injustice of these levies. Similarly a clergyman is obligated to make his sermon to his pupils in catechism and his congregation conform to the symbol of the church which he serves, for he has been accepted on this condition. But as a scholar he has complete freedom, even the calling, to communicate to the public all his carefully tested and well-meaning thoughts on that which is erroneous in the symbol and to make suggestions for the better organization of the religious body

and church. In doing this, there is nothing that could be laid as a burden on his conscience. For what he teaches as a consequence of his office as a representative of the church, this he considers something about which he has no freedom to teach according to his own lights; it is something which he is appointed to propound at the dictation of and in the name of another. He will say, "Our church teaches this or that; those are the proofs which it adduces." He thus extracts all practical uses for his congregation from statutes to which he himself would not subscribe with full conviction but to the enunciation of which he can very well pledge himself because it is not impossible that truth lies hidden in them, and, in any case, there is at least nothing in them contradictory to inner religion. For if he believed he had found such in them, he could not conscientiously discharge the duties of his office; he would have to give it up. The use, therefore, which an appointed teacher makes of his reason before his congregation is merely private, because this congregation is only a domestic one (even if it be a large gathering); with respect to it, as a priest, he is not free, nor can he be free, because he carries out the orders of another. But as a scholar, whose writings speak to his public, the world, the clergyman in the public use of his reason enjoys an unlimited freedom to use his own reason and to speak in his own person. That the guardians of the people (in spiritual things) should themselves be incompetent is an absurdity which amounts to the eternalization of absurdities.

But would not a society of clergymen, perhaps a church conference or a venerable classis (as they call themselves among the Dutch), be justified in obligating itself by oath to a certain unchangeable symbol in order to enjoy an unceasing guardianship over each of its members and thereby over the people as a whole, and even to make it eternal? I answer that this is altogether impossible. Such a contract, made to shut off all further enlightenment from the human race, is absolutely null and void even if confirmed by the supreme power, by parliaments, and by the most ceremonious of peace treaties. An age cannot bind itself and ordain to put the succeeding one into such a condition that it cannot extend its (at best very occasional) knowledge, purify itself of errors, and progress in general enlightenment. That would be a crime against human nature, the proper destination of which lies precisely in this progress; and the descendants would be fully justified in rejecting those decrees as having been made in an unwarranted and malicious manner.

The touchstone of everything that can be concluded as a law for a

people lies in the question whether the people could have imposed such a law on itself. Now such a religious compact might be possible for a short and definitely limited time, as it were, in expectation of a better. One might let every citizen, and especially the clergyman, in the role of scholar, make his comments freely and publicly, i.e., through writing, on the erroneous aspects of the present institution. The newly introduced order might last until insight into the nature of these things had become so general and widely approved that through uniting their voices (even if not unanimously) they could bring a proposal to the throne to take those congregations under protection which had united into a changed religious organization according to their better ideas, without, however, hindering others who wish to remain in the order. But to unite in a permanent religious institution which is not to be subject to doubt before the public even in the lifetime of one man, and thereby to make a period of time fruitless in the progress of mankind toward improvement, thus working to the disadvantage of posterity—that is absolutely forbidden. For himself (and only for a short time) a man can postpone enlightenment in what he ought to know, but to renounce it for himself, and even more to renounce it for posterity, is to injure and trample on the rights of mankind.

And what a people may not decree for itself can even less be decreed for them by a monarch, for his lawgiving authority rests on his uniting the general public will in his own. If he only sees to it that all true or alleged improvement stands together with civil order, he can leave it to his subjects to do what they find necessary for their spiritual welfare. This is not his concern, though it is incumbent on him to prevent one of them from violently hindering another in determining and promoting this welfare to the best of his ability. To meddle in these matters lowers his own majesty, since by the writings in which his subjects seek to present their views he may evaluate his own governance. He can do this when, with deepest understanding, he lays upon himself the reproach. *Caesar non est supra grammaticos.* Far more does he injure his own majesty when he degrades his supreme power by supporting the ecclesiastical despotism of some tyrants in his state over his other subjects.

If we are asked, "Do we now live in an *enlightened age*?" the answer is, "No," but we do live in an *age of enlightenment.* As things now stand, much is lacking which prevents men from being, or easily becoming, capable of correctly using their own reason in religious matters with assurance and free from outside direction. But, on the other hand, we

have clear indications that the field has now been opened wherein men may freely deal with these things and that the obstacles to general enlightenment or the release from self-imposed tutelage are gradually being reduced. In this respect, this is the age of enlightenment, or the century of Frederick.

A prince who does not find it unworthy of himself to say that he holds it to be his duty to prescribe nothing to men in religious matters but to give them complete freedom while renouncing the haughty name of *tolerance*, is himself enlightened and deserves to be esteemed by the grateful world and posterity as the first, at least from the side of government, who divested the human race of its tutelage and left each man free to make use of his reason in matters of conscience. Under him venerable ecclesiastics are allowed, in the role of scholars, and without infringing on their official duties, freely to submit for public testing their judgments and views which here and there diverge from the established symbol. And an even greater freedom is enjoyed by those who are restricted by no official duties. This spirit of freedom spreads beyond this land, even to those in which it must struggle with external obstacles erected by a government which misunderstands its own interest. For an example gives evidence to such a government that in freedom there is not the least cause for concern about public peace and the stability of the community. Men work themselves gradually out of barbarity if only intentional artifices are not made to hold them in it.

I have placed the main point of enlightenment—the escape of men from their self-incurred tutelage—chiefly in matters of religion because our rulers have no interest in playing the guardian with respect to the arts and sciences and also because religious incompetence is not only the most harmful but also the most degrading of all. But the manner of thinking of the head of a state who favors religious enlightenment goes further, and he sees that there is no danger to his lawgiving in allowing his subjects to make public use of their reason and to publish their thoughts on a better formulation of his legislation and even their open-minded criticisms of the laws already made. Of this we have a shining example wherein no monarch is superior to him whom we honor.

But only one who is himself enlightened, is not afraid of shadows, and has a numerous and well-disciplined army to assure public peace can say: "Argue as much as you will, and about what you will, only obey!" A republic could not dare say such a thing. Here is shown a strange and unexpected trend in human affairs in which almost everything, looked

at in the large, is paradoxical. A greater degree of civil freedom appears advantageous to the freedom of mind of the people, and yet it places inescapable limitations upon it; a lower degree of civil freedom, on the contrary, provides the mind with room for each man to extend himself to his full capacity. As nature has uncovered from under this hard shell the seed for which she most tenderly cares—the propensity and vocation to free thinking—this gradually works back upon the character of the people, who thereby gradually become capable of managing freedom; finally, it affects the principles of government, which finds it to its advantage to treat men, who are now more than machines, in accordance with their dignity.

THE HUMAN MIND EMERGED FROM BARBARISM

JEAN LE ROND D'ALEMBERT

In these two selections d'Alembert (1717–1783), French mathematician, philosopher, and a principal editor of the Encyclopédie, *provides a splendid summary of Enlightenment attitudes. The first is from the introduction he wrote for the first volume of the* Encyclopédie, *and the second, a stirring defense of his fellow French* philosophes, *is a 1760 essay, "Reflections on the Present State of the Republic of Letters."*

When the human mind emerged from barbarism, it found itself in a kind of childhood, eager to accumulate ideas yet incapable at first of acquiring those of a certain order because the intellectual faculties had been for so long in a sluggish state. . . .

While certain adversaries, either men of small attainments or of evil intent, openly made war on philosophy, the philosophic spirit itself took refuge in the writings of some great men. Without desiring to tear the

blindfolds from the eyes of their contemporaries, they worked silently in the remote background to prepare the light of reason which gradually and by imperceptible degrees was to illuminate the world.

At the head of these illustrious personages must be placed the immortal Chancellor of England, Francis Bacon, whose works are so justly esteemed, and more esteemed than they are known, so that they deserve to be read even more than praised. If we consider the sound and extensive views of this great man, the multitude of subjects which his mind entertained, the boldness of his style which united everywhere the most sublime images with the most rigorous precision, we would be tempted to regard him as the greatest, the most universal, and the most eloquent of the philosophers. Bacon, who was born in the depths of dark night, felt that philosophy was not yet possible, although many people without a doubt flattered themselves that they excelled in it. For the coarser the century, the more men consider themselves learned in everything that can be known. He began, therefore, by considering with a general view the diverse objects of all the natural sciences. He divided these sciences into different branches of which he made the most exact enumeration possible. He investigated what was already known about each one of these subjects, and he made an immense catalogue of what remained to be discovered. This was the goal of his admirable work *De dignitate et augmentis scientiarum* [the final version of *The Advancement of Learning*]. In the *Novum Organum* he perfected the views that he had given in his first work, extending them even further, pointing out the necessity of scientific experimentation, a new idea at that time. An enemy of systems, he only considered philosophy as that part of our knowledge which must contribute to making us better and happier. He seems to have limited it to the science of useful things and at all times recommended the study of Nature. His other works were conceived with the same plan in mind. Everything, even the titles, announce the man of genius, the mind that sees things on a large scale. He collects facts, compares experiments, and indicates a great many that have to be performed. He invites men of learning to study and perfect the arts which he considers the most exalted and essential part of human knowledge. He states with noble simplicity *his conjectures and his thoughts* on the different subjects which are worthy of interesting mankind, and he could have said, like the venerable old Terence, that nothing concerning man was a matter of indifference to him: knowledge of economics, morality, nature, politics, in fact everything seemed to have fallen within the province of this luminous and

profound mind. We do not know what we should admire the most, his rich intuitive views on all subjects or the dignified tone of his style. His writings can be compared only with those of Hippocrates on medicine; and they would be neither less admired nor less read if the cultivation of the mind were as dear to the human race as the conservation of health. But only the writings of leading sectarians can achieve a certain vogue; Bacon was not one of them, and his philosophic method was opposed to this: it was too judicious to astonish anyone. Scholasticism, which prevailed at that time, could only be overthrown by bold and new opinions; and it was not likely that a philosopher satisfied with saying to men: "Here is the little bit that you have learned; this is what remains to be investigated," was destined to make a great stir with his contemporaries. We would even venture to reproach Chancellor Bacon for having been perhaps too timid, if we did not know that prudence and in a way even devotion must be exercised in judging such a sublime genius. Although he acknowledges that the scholastics emasculated the sciences with their trifling questions, and that the mind must sacrifice the study of general things for the investigation of particular objects, it nevertheless seems that by the frequent use he made of medieval terms, sometimes even of scholastic principles, as well as the divisions and subdivisions which were then quite fashionable, that he showed a little too much caution and deference to the dominant taste of his century. This great man, after having destroyed so many fetters, was still held back by chains which he was unable or did not dare to break.

We now declare that we owe our tree of knowledge mainly to Chancellor Bacon. You will find it at the end of the *Discourse.* We have already acknowledged this several times in the *Prospectus;* we will recall it to your attention again; and we would not miss any opportunity to repeat it. Despite the fact that we recognize this great man as our master, we did not feel obligated to follow him point by point. . . .

Chancellor Bacon was followed by the illustrious Descartes. This extraordinary man, whose fortunes have varied so much in less than a quarter of a century, had the wherewithal to change the general lines of philosophy: a powerful imagination, an extremely rational mind, knowledge derived from himself more than from books, a great deal of courage to combat the most widely held prejudices, and an independence which gave him the freedom to criticize. He therefore experienced, even in his own lifetime, what happens as a rule to all men whose influence is too conspicuous. He had some enthusiastic followers and many determined

enemies. Either because he knew his country or simply distrusted it, he took refuge in a completely free country in order to meditate in more favorable conditions. Although he thought much less of making disciples than of deserving them, persecution sought him out even in his retreat; and the secluded life which he led could not protect him. In spite of all the sagacity he employed to prove the existence of God, he was accused of denying it by clergymen who perhaps did not have any faith at all. Tormented and slandered by foreigners, shabbily treated by his compatriots, he went to die in Sweden without in any way presuming that his opinions would one day have such brilliant success.

Descartes can be considered either as a geometrician or as a philosopher. Although he seemed to have attached rather little value to mathematics, it is nevertheless the most solid and the least contested part of his reputation today. Algebra, created in a way by the Italians and prodigiously enlarged by our illustrious Vieta, was further developed at the hands of Descartes. One of the most notable contributions is his method for indeterminate equations, a rather ingenious and subtle device which has since been applied to a great number of subjects. But what has especially immortalized the name of this great man was his application of algebra to geometry, one of the most far-reaching and felicitous ideas which the human mind ever had, and which will always be the key to the most profound research, not only in sublime geometry but also in all the physico-mathematical sciences.

As a philosopher he was perhaps as great but not so fortunate. Geometry, which by the nature of the subject must always gain rather than lose ground, could not fail to make rather perceptible and evident progress when practiced by so great a genius. Philosophy, in a much different state, was just beginning: and how great is the effort required to make the first steps in any discipline? The merit of having taken small ones excuses people for not proceeding even further. If Descartes, who pointed the way for us, did not go as far as his followers would have us believe, it is, on the other hand, not true that the sciences owe him as little as his adversaries maintain. His method alone would have been sufficient to make him immortal; his *Dioptrics* is the greatest and most beautiful application yet made of geometry to physics. Finally we see in his works, even those least read today, the constant sparkle of inventive genius. If you judge without bias his solar vortex, which has become almost ridiculous today, you will agree, I dare say, that it was impossible to imagine anything better at the time. The astronomical observations

used to destroy this idea were still imperfect or hardly recorded. Nothing was more natural than to assume the existence of a fluid which transports the planets. Only a long stream of phenomena, reasonings, and calculations, therefore a long sequence of time, could force people to renounce such an attractive theory. Moreover it had the singular advantage of explaining the gravitation of bodies by the centrifugal force of the vortex itself. And I do not hesitate to maintain that this explanation of gravity is one of the most beautiful and ingenious hypotheses that philosophy has ever conceived. For physicists to abandon it they had to be tempted almost in spite of themselves by the theory of central forces and by experiments performed much later. Let us therefore admit that Descartes, forced to create a completely new physics, was not able to make it any better; that it was necessary, so to speak, to pass by means of the vortices to arrive at the true system of the earth; and that if he was mistaken about the laws of movement, he was at least the first to guess that there had to be some.

His metaphysics, as ingenious and new as his physics, had approximately the same fate; and it is with approximately the same reasons that we can justify it. For such is today the fortune of this great man that after having had countless followers he is practically reduced to a few apologists. He was without doubt mistaken in assuming the existence of innate ideas: but if he had retained from the peripatetic sect [the Aristotelians] the only truth that they taught about the origin of ideas in the senses, perhaps the errors, which would dishonor this truth because of its association with it, would have been much more difficult to eradicate. Descartes dared at least to teach good minds how to shake off the yoke of scholasticism, public opinion, and authority; in a word, certain prejudices and barbaric attitudes. From this revolt, whose fruits we are now reaping, philosophy received from him a service much more difficult perhaps to render than all those which it owes to his illustrious successors. We can consider him as the head of a group of conspirators, the first to have the courage to rise against a despotic and arbitrary power, and while preparing a brilliant revolution, to have laid the foundations of a more just and valid government which he was unable to see established. If he finally believed that he had explained everything, at least he began by doubting everything; and the arms that we use to combat him do not belong to him any the less because we turn them against him. Moreover, when absurd opinions have become inveterate, we are sometimes forced to replace them with other errors (if we can do no better) in order to

disabuse the human race. The uncertainty and vanity of the mind are such that it must always entertain an opinion: it is a child that must be presented with a toy so that we can take away a dangerous weapon; he will lay aside the toy himself when the age of reason is attained. In putting philosophers, or those who believe they are, on a false scent, we teach them at least to mistrust their own understanding, and this disposition is the first step toward the truth. Consequently Descartes was persecuted in his lifetime as if he had come to bring the truth to mankind.

Newton, whose path had been prepared by Huygens, finally appeared and gave to philosophy a method it seems obliged to retain. This great genius saw that it was time to banish from physics all vague conjectures and hypotheses, or at least to attribute to them only what they were worth, and that this science had to be submitted exclusively to experiments and to geometry. It is perhaps with this point of view that he first invented the calculus and the method of infinite series, whose uses are so widespread in geometry itself and even more so in calculating the complex operations observed in nature, where everything seems to comply with a kind of infinite progression. The experiments with gravity and the observations of Kepler made this English philosopher discover the force which holds the planets in their orbits. At the same time he taught how to distinguish the various causes of their movements and how to calculate them with an accuracy that could only be demanded of work which had been carried on for several centuries. Creator of a completely new system of optics, he made light known to mankind by decomposing it. What we would be able to add to the praise of this great philosopher would be far beneath the universal testimony that is given today to his almost innumerable discoveries and to his genius, which was at the same time expansive, judicious, and profound. In enriching philosophy with a great quantity of real assets, he deserved without doubt all of its gratitude. But perhaps he did more than that by teaching it to be prudent, to restrict into the proper limits that sort of audacity which circumstances had forced upon Descartes. His Theory of the World (for I do not mean his System) is so generally accepted today that people are beginning to dispute the author's right to this discovery, because they begin by accusing great men of being mistaken and finally treat them as plagiarists. . . .

Some scientists thought that they reproached Newton in a much more justifiable manner when they accused him of having brought back

into physics the *occult qualities* of the scholastic and ancient philosophers. These two words, devoid of meaning in medieval works, were intended by the scholastics to designate something which they believed they understood. But are the scientists just mentioned really sure that the *occult qualities* of the ancient philosophers denoted anything more than the modest expression of their ignorance? Newton, who had studied Nature, did not imagine that he knew more than they about the first cause which produced the phenomena of Nature; but he did not use the same language for fear of shocking some contemporaries who would not have failed to misinterpret him. He was content to prove that Descartes' vortices could not explain the movements of the planets; that phenomena as well as the laws of mechanics united in overthrowing them; and that there is a force which induces the planets mutually to attract one another and whose principle is entirely unknown to us. He did not reject the theory of momentum; he merely asked scientists to use it more profitably than they had done in the past to explain planetary motion: his desires have not yet been fulfilled and perhaps will not be for a long time. After all, what harm did he do philosophy when he led us to think that matter could have certain properties which we did not suspect, and also when he disabused us of our ridiculous faith in the assumption that we already knew all of its properties?

In addition, Newton seems not to have entirely neglected the study of metaphysics. He was too great a philosopher not to feel that it is the foundation of our knowledge and that we must search in it for clear and exact notions of everything. From the works of this profound geometrician it even appears that he succeeded in creating such notions about the principal subjects which preoccupied him. Nevertheless, he was either not very happy with his progress in other aspects of metaphysics, or he believed it difficult to give to the human race satisfactory or extensive knowledge about a science which is contentious and very often unreliable. Finally, he might have feared that within the shadow of his authority people might abuse his metaphysics as they had abused Descartes' in order to maintain dangerous and mistaken opinions. In any case, he refrained almost entirely from discussing it in those of his works which are most well-known; and we barely learn what he thought about different subjects of that area of learning save through the works of his disciples. Because he did not cause any revolution on this question, we shall therefore refrain from considering this aspect of his work.

What Newton had not dared or would not perhaps have been able

to do, Locke undertook and executed with success. We can say that he created metaphysics almost as Newton had created physics. He understood that abstractions and ridiculous questions that had until then been debated, and even comprised the very essence of philosophy, had to be especially forbidden in its practice. He looked for the principal causes of our errors in these abstractions and in the abuse of symbols, and found them there in abundance. In order to know our mind, its ideas and affections, he did not study books, because they would have instructed him poorly: he was satisfied with examining himself intently; and after having contemplated himself for a long time, he merely offered to mankind in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* the mirror in which he had seen himself. In a word, he reduced metaphysics to what it must as a matter of fact be, the experimental science of the mind, a kind of science which is rather different from that of natural bodies, not only because of the subject, but also because of the manner in which it is considered. In the latter field unknown phenomena can be and often are discovered; in the former the facts, which are as ancient as the world, exist to the same extent in all men: so much the worse for anyone who believes that he has seen new ones. Rational metaphysics, like experimental science, can only consist of collecting all of the facts with great care, of arranging them into a body of knowledge, of explaining certain ones by others, and of distinguishing those of primary importance which serve as a foundation. In a word, the principles of metaphysics, as simple as axioms, are the same for philosophers and laymen. But the small amount of progress which this realm of knowledge has accomplished in such a long period of time demonstrates how rare is the successful application of these principles, either because of the difficulty which such work entails or perhaps because of the natural impatience which prevents people from exercising self-restraint. Nevertheless, the title of metaphysician or even of great metaphysician is still rather common in our century; for we love to lavish praise on everything: but few people are truly worthy of this name! How many are there who earn it only because of their unfortunate talents in obscuring clear ideas with a great deal of subtlety and in preferring the extraordinary to the true, which is always simple? We must not be astonished now when most of those who are called "metaphysicians" set little value on each other. I do not doubt that this title will soon become an insult for our men of intelligence, just as the name sophist, which nevertheless means "sage," was debased in Greece by those who bore it and finally became rejected by true philosophers.

Let us conclude from all this history that England owes to us the origins of that philosophy which we received back from her. There is perhaps a greater distance from substantial forms to vortices than from vortices to universal gravitation; as there is perhaps a greater interval between pure algebra and the idea of applying it to geometry than between Barrow's small triangle and differential calculus.

These are the principal geniuses that the human mind must regard as its masters and for whom the Greeks would have erected statues, even if they were obliged to make more space by demolishing the monuments of some conquerors.

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Moral philosophers are fond of asking how men lived in what is called a state of *pure nature*, before there were organized societies and laws, and whether such a state was one of peace or war. They have written on this question endlessly, as on all questions where the pros or the cons can be maintained at will, without danger of being contradicted by actual experience. From all these dissertations one can learn what one can usually learn from metaphysical discussions—that is, nothing.

Yet there is, it seems to me, a shorter way to decide the question; that is, to examine the way in which men of letters have behaved throughout the centuries. For the man of letters is in relation to other men of letters almost in that state of pure nature about which we talk so much without really knowing what we are talking about. They struggle for renown much as, it is maintained, men without laws and government struggled, or would have struggled, for their food acorns. But in society no one has the right to live to the complete detriment of his fellows; therefore the laws regulate, at least roughly, the distribution of acorns—that is, the bare necessities of life—among men. On the contrary, in the best regulated society it is possible to live without renown, and often, indeed, to live more happily without it. Those who made the laws, therefore, have left this phantom to be disputed over by those who prize it.

Literary renown is then the reward of the first to take it: the scepter belongs to him who seizes it, or who has the skill to have it offered him. Passed endlessly from hand to hand, it is the prize of the strongest or the cleverest. Usually the cleverest enjoys it but briefly, for it comes back to the strongest and stays in his possession.

To gain this scepter, or at least to snatch off a few ornaments from it, men of letters write and intrigue, praise or tear to pieces. Some of

them indeed protest that they scorn renown, all the while desiring it very much. But no one is the dupe of their protests, which do not prevent their getting renown if they deserve it, and which make them ridiculous only if they disdain it without deserving it.

Among men of letters there is one group against which the arbiters of taste, the important people, the rich people, are united: this is the pernicious, the damnable group of *philosophes*, who hold that it is possible to be a good Frenchman without courting those in power, a good citizen without flattering national prejudices, a good Christian without persecuting anybody. These *philosophes* believe it right to make more of an honest if little-known writer than of a well-known writer without enlightenment and without principles, to hold that foreigners are not inferior to us in every respect, and to prefer, for example, a government under which the people are not slaves to one under which they are.

This way of thinking is for many people an unpardonable crime. What shocks them most of all, they say, is the tone the *philosophes* use, the tone of dogmatism, the tone of the master who knows. I admit that those of the *philosophes* who do indeed deserve this reproach would have done well to avoid deserving it. When it is necessary to hurt with what is said, it is wrong to hurt still more by the tone in which it is said. The writer is always master of his tone, his way of saying things. Truth can hardly be too modest. Truth indeed, just by being truth, runs always a sufficiently great risk of being rejected. But after all, this truth, so feared, so hated, so insulted, is so rare and precious, it seems to me, that those who tell it may be pardoned a little excess of fervor. The writer who wants to write more than ephemerally has got to be right. Form is in itself of little importance—it is something for the moment, for the passing generation, but nothing for the next one, still less for distant posterity. If a dogmatic tone, one that tells the truth crudely, shocks our delicate judges, they will do well never to open geometry books; they won't find more insolent ones.

The *philosophes*, they say, are enemies of authority. This is a more serious reproach and deserves a serious reply. The *philosophes* respect authority in the monarch, to whom it belongs, and whose love of truth and justice they recognize. They would respect power in the hands of those to whom he confided it, even though it were abused. What would they gain by attacking such power? Who would guarantee them against oppression? Who would take their part? A thousand voices would be raised to overwhelm them, and not one to defend them. What resolution

can they take, save to obey and keep silent? What prerogative have they to claim to be dispensed from obedience? If they were persecuted, they would at most defend themselves. To protest is not to revolt. No, no, if legitimate authority has in these days been weakened under attack, it has not been from attacks by men of letters or *philosophes*, but rather by those who most openly declare themselves the enemies of the *philosophes*.

Let us speak without disguise or constraint. If those men we call *philosophes* haunted more often the antechambers of ministers, courted ladies of well-known piety, put themselves forward as advocates of persecution and intolerance, they would not be the targets for all the insults that are hurled at them. But they honor the great and flee them; they revere true piety and detest persecuting zeal; they believe the first of Christian duties is charity; and finally, as has been said elsewhere (for there are truths good to repeat for certain ears), they respect that which they ought to, and prize that which they can. This is their real crime.

"ENCYLOPÉDIE"

Denis Diderot

Along with d'Alembert, the major force behind the Encylopédie *was Denis Diderot (1713–1784), philosopher, scientist, and man of letters who in this entry for the word "encyclopédie" described the ambitions of its editors.*

ENCYCLOPÉDIE, f. n. (*Philosophy*). This word means the *interrelation of all knowledge;* it is made up of the Greek prefix *en*, in, and the nouns *kyklos*, circle, and *paideia*, instruction, science, knowledge. In truth, the aim of an *encyclopédie* is to collect all the knowledge scattered over the face of the earth, to present its general outlines and structure to the men with whom we live, and to transmit this to those who will come after us, so that the work of past centuries may be useful to the following

centuries, that our children, by becoming more educated, may at the same time become more virtuous and happier, and that we may not die without having deserved well of the human race. . . .

We have seen that our *Encyclopédie* could only have been the endeavor of a philosophical century; that this age has dawned, and that fame, while raising to immortality the names of those who will perfect man's knowledge in the future, will perhaps not disdain to remember our own names. We have been heartened by the ever so consoling and agreeable idea that people may speak to one another about us, too, when we shall no longer be alive; we have been encouraged by hearing from the mouths of a few of our contemporaries a certain voluptuous murmur that suggests what may be said of us by those happy and educated men in whose interests we have sacrificed ourselves, whom we esteem and whom we love, even though they have not yet been born. We have felt within ourselves the development of those seeds of emulation which have moved us to renounce the better part of ourselves to accomplish our task, and which have ravished away into the void the few moments of our existence of which we are genuinely proud. Indeed, man reveals himself to his contemporaries and is seen by them for what he is: a peculiar mixture of sublime attributes and shameful weaknesses. But our weaknesses follow our mortal remains into the tomb and disappear with them; the same earth covers them both, and there remains only the total result of our attributes immortalized in the monuments we raise to ourselves or in the memorials that we owe to public respect and gratitude—honors which a proper awareness of our own deserts enables us to enjoy in anticipation, an enjoyment that is as pure, as great, and as real as any other pleasure and in which there is nothing imaginary except, perhaps, the titles on which we base our pretensions. Our own claims are deposited in the pages of this work, and posterity will judge them.

I have said that it could only belong to a philosophical age to attempt an *encyclopédie;* and I have said this because such a work constantly demands more intellectual daring than is commonly found in ages of pusillanimous taste. All things must be examined, debated, investigated without exception and without regard for anyone's feelings. . . . We must ride roughshod over all these ancient puerilities, overturn the barriers that reason never erected, give back to the arts and sciences the liberty that is so precious to them. . . . We have for quite some time needed a reasoning age when men would no longer seek the rules in classical authors but in nature, when men would be conscious of what

is false and true about so many arbitrary treatises on aesthetics: and I take the term *treatise on aesthetics* in its most general meaning, that of a system of given rules to which it is claimed that one must conform in any genre whatsoever in order to succeed. . . .

It would be desirable for the government to authorize people to go into the factories and shops, to see the craftsmen at their work, to question them, to draw the tools, the machines, and even the premises.

There are special circumstances when craftsmen are so secretive about their techniques that the shortest way of learning about them would be to apprentice oneself to a master or to have some trustworthy person do this. There would be few secrets that one would fail to bring to light by this method, and all these secrets would have to be divulged without any exception.

I know that this feeling is not shared by everyone. These are narrow minds, deformed souls, who are indifferent to the fate of the human race and who are so enclosed in their little group that they see nothing beyond its special interest. These men insist on being called good citizens, and I consent to this, provided that they permit me to call them *bad men*. To listen to them talk, one would say that a successful *encyclopédie*, that a general history of the mechanical arts, should only take the form of an enormous manuscript that would be carefully locked up in the king's library, inaccessible to all other eyes but his, an official document of the state, not meant to be consulted by the people. What is the good of divulging the knowledge a nation possesses, its private transactions, its inventions, its industrial processes, its resources, its trade secrets, its enlightenment, its arts, and all its wisdom? Are not these the things to which it owes a part of its superiority over the rival nations that surround it? This is what they say; and this is what they might add: would it not be desirable if, instead of enlightening the foreigner, we could spread darkness over him or even plunge all the rest of the world into barbarism so that we could dominate more securely over everyone? These people do not realize that they occupy only a single point on our globe and that they will endure only a moment in its existence. To this point and to this moment they would sacrifice the happiness of future ages and that of the entire human race.

They know as well as anyone that the average duration of empires is not more than two thousand years and that in less time, perhaps, the name *Frenchman*, a name that will endure forever in history, will be sought after in vain over the surface of the earth. These considerations

do not broaden their point of view; for it seems that the word *humanity* is for them a word without meaning. All the same, they should be consistent! For they also fulminate against the impenetrability of the Egyptian sanctuaries; they deplore the loss of the knowledge of the ancients; they accuse the writers of the past for having been silent or negligent in writing so badly on an infinite number of important subjects; and these illogical critics do not see that they demand of the writers of earlier ages something they call a crime when it is committed by a contemporary, that they are blaming others for having done what they think it honorable to do.

These *good citizens* are the most dangerous enemies that we have had. In general we have tried to profit from just criticism without defending ourselves, while we have simply ignored all unfounded attacks. Is it not a rather pleasant prospect for those who have persisted stubbornly in blackening paper with their censure of us that if ten years from now the *Encyclopédie* has retained the reputation it enjoys today, no one will read or even remember their opinions; and if by chance our work is forgotten, their abusive remarks will fall into total oblivion!

I have heard it said that M. de Fontenelle's rooms were not large enough to hold all the works that had been published against him. Who knows the title of a single one of them? Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws* and Buffon's *Natural History* have only just appeared, and the harsh criticism against them has been entirely forgotten. We have already remarked that among those who have set themselves up as censors of the *Encyclopédie* there is hardly a single one who had enough talent to enrich it by even one good article. I do not think I would be exaggerating if I should add that it is a work the greater part of which is about subjects that these people have yet to study. It has been composed with a philosophical spirit, and in this respect most of those who pass adverse judgment on us fall far short of the level of their own century. I call their works in evidence. It is for this reason that they will not endure and that we venture to say that our *Encyclopédie* will be more widely read and more highly appreciated in a few years' time than it is today. It would not be difficult to cite other authors who have had, and will have, a similar fate. Some (as we have already said) were once praised to the skies because they wrote for the multitude, followed the prevailing ideas, and accommodated their standards to those of the average reader, but they have lost their reputations in proportion as the human mind has made progress, and they have finally been forgotten altogether. Others,

by contrast, too daring for the times in which their works appeared, have been little read, hardly understood, not appreciated, and have long remained in obscurity, until the day when the age they had outstripped had passed away and another century, to which they really belonged in spirit, overtook them at last and finally gave them the justice their merits deserved.

DEFINITION OF A *PHILOSOPHE*

CESAR CHESNEAU DUMARSAIS

This description of the philosophic spirit is attributed to Cesar Chesneau Dumarsais (1676–1756), French grammarian and philosopher who provided this entry for "philosopher" in the Encyclopédie.

Reason is to the philosopher what grace is to the Christian.

Grace causes the Christian to act, reason the philosopher.

Other men are carried away by their passions, their actions not being preceded by reflection: these are the men who walk in darkness. On the other hand, the philosopher, even in his passions, acts only after reflection; he walks in the dark, but by a torch.

The philosopher forms his principles from an infinity of particular observations. Most people adopt principles without thinking of the observations that have produced them: they believe that maxims exist, so to speak, by themselves. But the philosopher takes maxims from their source; he examines their origin; he knows their proper value, and he makes use of them only in so far as they suit him.

Truth is not for the philosopher a mistress who corrupts his imagination and whom he believes is to be found everywhere; he contents himself with being able to unravel it where he can perceive it. He does not confound it with probability; he takes for true what is true, for false

what is false, for doubtful what is doubtful, and for probable what is only probable. He does more, and here you have a great perfection of the philosopher: when he has no reason by which to judge, he knows how to live in suspension of judgment. . . .

The philosophic spirit is, then, a spirit of observation and exactness, which relates everything to true principles; but the philosopher does not cultivate the mind alone, he carries his attention and needs further. . . .

Our philosopher does not believe in exiling himself from this world, he does not believe that he is in enemy country; he wishes to enjoy with wise economy the goods which nature offers him; he wishes to find pleasure with others, and in order to find it, he must make it: thus he tries to be agreeable to those with whom chance and his choice have thrown him, and at the same time he finds what is agreeable to him. He is an honest man who wishes to please and to make himself useful.

The majority of the great, whose dissipations do not leave enough time to meditate, are savage towards those whom they do not believe to be their equals. The ordinary philosophers who meditate too much, or rather who meditate badly, are savage towards everybody; they flee men, and men avoid them. But our philosopher who knows how to strike a balance between retreat from and commerce with men, is full of humanity. He is Terence's Chrémès who feels that he is a man, and that humanity alone is interested in the good and bad fortune of his neighbor. *Homo sum, humani a me nihil alienum puto.*

It would be useless to remark here how jealous the philosopher is of everything calling itself honor and probity. Civil society is, so to speak, a divinity for him on earth; he burns incense to it, he honors it by probity, by an exact attention to his duties, and by a sincere desire not to be a useless or embarrassing member of it. The sentiments of probity enter as much into the mechanical constitution of the philosopher as the illumination of the mind. The more you find reason in a man, the more you find in him probity. On the other hand, where fanaticism and superstition reign, there reign the passions and anger. The temperament of the philosopher is to act according to the spirit of order or reason; as he loves society extremely, it is more important to him than to other men to bend every effort to produce only effects conformable to the idea of the honest man. . . .

This love of society, so essential to the philosopher, makes us see how very true was the remark of Marcus Aurelius: "How happy will the people be when kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings!"

LE MARIAGE DE FIGARO

PIERRE AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS

Mozart's opera of the same name was based on the play written in 1778 by the Frenchman Beaumarchais (1732–1799). This selection is the famous denunciation in Act V by the self-made valet, Figaro, of his aristocratic employer and tormentor, Almaviva, with whom Figaro is vying for the affections of Susanah.

FIGARO *(Alone, walking in the darkness, speaks in somber tones):* . . . No, Monsieur le Comte, you shan't have her! You shan't have her. Because you are a great noble, you think you are a great genius! Nobility, a fortune, a rank, appointments to office: all this makes a man so proud! What did you do to earn all this? You took the trouble to get born—nothing more. Moreover, you're really a pretty ordinary fellow! While as for me, lost in the crowd, I've had to use more knowledge, more brains, just to keep alive than your likes have had to spend on governing Spain and the Empire for a century. And you want to contest with me— Someone's coming, it's she—no, nobody— The night is black as the devil, and here I am plying the silly trade of husband, though I'm only half a husband. *(He sits down on a bench)* Is there anything stranger than my fate? Son of I don't know whom, kidnapped by robbers, brought up in their ways, I got disgusted with them, and tried to follow an honest career; and everywhere I met with rebuffs. I learned chemistry, pharmacy, surgery, and all the credit of a great noble barely succeeded in putting a veterinary's lancet in my hand! Tired of making sick beasts sadder, I turned to a very different trade, and threw myself into the life of the theater. What a stone I hung around my neck that time! I sketched a comedy about harem life; being a Spanish writer, I assumed I could be irreverent towards Mohammed without any scruples: but at once an Envoy from somewhere complained that my verses offended the Sublime Porte, Persia, a part of India, all Egypt, the kingdoms of Barca, Tripoli, Tunis, Algiers and Morocco; and there was my comedy burned, to please some Mohammedan princes not one of whom I suppose knows how to

read, and who keep cursing away at us all as "Christian dogs"—not being able to degrade the human spirit, they take revenge by abusing it. A question came up about the nature of wealth: and since it isn't necessary to own a thing to reason about it, I, penniless, wrote on the value of money and the *produit net:* at once I saw, from the inside of a cab, the lowered drawbridge of a fortress prison at the entrance to which I left hope and liberty! *(He gets up)* How I'd love to get one of these powerful men of four days' standing, so ready with such penalties, just after some good disgrace had fermented his pride! I'd tell him—that printed foolishness has no importance, except for those who try to suppress it; that without freedom to blame, there can be no flattering eulogies; and that only little men fear little writings. *(He sits down again)* Tired of feeding an obscure boarder, they let me out of prison. I was told that during my economic retreat, there had been established in Madrid a system of free sale of products which included even the press. To profit by this sweet liberty, I announced a periodical, and, thinking to offend no one, I called it *The Useless Journal.* Whew! I had a thousand poor devils of scribblers rise up against me: I was suppressed; and there I was once more among the unemployed. I began almost to despair; I was thought of for a government post, but unfortunately I was qualified for it. They needed an accountant: a dancer got the job. All that was left for me was stealing; I set up a faro game; and now, good folk, I supped in society, and people known as *comme il faut* opened their houses to me politely, on condition they kept three-quarters of the profits. I might have gone pretty far, for I was beginning to understand that to gain wealth it is better to have know-how [*savoir-faire*] than to have knowledge [*savoir*]. But as everybody about me stole, while insisting I stay honest, I should have failed once more. I should have left this world and put a watery grave between me and it, but a kindly God recalled me to my first condition. I took up once more my barber's case and my English leather strop. I traveled about, shaving, from town to town, living at last a carefree life.

THE MAGIC FLUTE

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

In these two selections from The Magic Flute *by Mozart (1756–1791) he and his librettist, Emanuel Schikaneder (1751–1812), distill the intellectual spirit of the Enlightenment. In the first, Tamino has just arrived at the Temple of Wisdom, which is flanked by the Temple of Reason and the Temple of Nature. In the second, Sarastro and his fellow secular priests proclaim first from their holy pyramid and then from the Temple of the Sun their triumph over the Queen of the Night, the victory of light over darkness.*

TAMINO: Where am I now? What will happen to me?
Is this the domain of the Gods?
These portals, these columns prove
That skill, industry, art reside here;
Where action rules and idleness is banished
Vice cannot easily gain control.
I will boldly pass through that portal;
Its design is noble, straightforward, pure. . . .

CHORUS OF PRIESTS: O Isis and Osiris, what bliss!
Dark night retreats from the rays of the sun.
Soon the noble youth will feel a new life,
Soon he will be wholly dedicated to our order.
His spirit is bold, his heart is pure,
Soon he will be worthy of us. . . .

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SARASTRO: The rays of the sun
Drive away the night;
Destroyed is the hypocrite's
Surreptitious power.

CHORUS:
Hail to the initiates!
You have penetrated the night.
Thanks to thee, Osiris,
Thanks, Isis, be thine!
Vigor has overcome,
And crowns as reward
Beauty and wisdom
With its eternal diadem!

THE FUTURE PROGRESS OF THE HUMAN MIND

MARQUIS DE CONDORCET

No more vivid picture of the Enlightenment's utopian vision exists than this selection from Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicholas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet (1743–1794). It is the tenth and final stage of his Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Human Mind, *written shortly before his death.*

If man can, with almost complete assurance, predict phenomena when he knows their laws, and if, even when he does not, he can still, with great expectation of success, forecast the future on the basis of his experience of the past, why, then, should it be regarded as a fantastic undertaking to sketch, with some pretence to truth, the future destiny of man on the basis of his history? The sole foundation for belief in the natural sciences is this idea, that the general laws directing the phenomena of the universe, known or unknown, are necessary and constant. Why should this principle be any less true for the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of man than for the other operations of nature? Since beliefs founded on past experience of like conditions provide the only rule of conduct for the wisest of men, why should the

philosopher be forbidden to base his conjectures on these same foundations, so long as he does not attribute to them a certainty superior to that warranted by the number, the constancy, and the accuracy of his observations?

Our hopes for the future condition of the human race can be subsumed under three important heads: the abolition of inequality between nations, the progress of equality within each nation, and the true perfection of mankind. Will all nations one day attain that state of civilization which the most enlightened, the freest and the least burdened by prejudices, such as the French and the Anglo-Americans, have attained already? Will the vast gulf that separates these peoples from the slavery of nations under the rule of monarchs, from the barbarism of African tribes, from the ignorance of savages, little by little disappear?

Is there on the face of the earth a nation whose inhabitants have been debarred by nature herself from the enjoyment of freedom and the exercise of reason?

Are those differences which have hitherto been seen in every civilized country in respect of the enlightenment, the resources, and the wealth enjoyed by the different classes into which it is divided, is that inequality between men which was aggravated or perhaps produced by the earliest progress of society, are these part of civilization itself, or are they due to the present imperfections of the social art? Will they necessarily decrease and ultimately make way for a real equality, the final end of the social art, in which even the effects of the natural differences between men will be mitigated and the only kind of inequality to persist will be that which is in the interests of all and which favors the progress of civilization, of education, and of industry, without entailing either poverty, humiliation, or dependence? In other words, will men approach a condition in which everyone will have the knowledge necessary to conduct himself in the ordinary affairs of life, according to the light of his own reason, to preserve his mind free from prejudice, to understand his rights and to exercise them in accordance with his conscience and his creed; in which everyone will become able, through the development of his faculties, to find the means of providing for his needs; and in which at last misery and folly will be the exception, and no longer the habitual lot of a section of society?

Is the human race to better itself, either by discoveries in the sciences and the arts, and so in the means to individual welfare and general prosperity; or by progress in the principles of conduct or practical

morality; or by a true perfection of the intellectual, moral, or physical faculties of man, an improvement which may result from a perfection either of the instruments used to heighten the intensity of these faculties and to direct their use or of the natural constitution of man?

In answering these three questions we shall find in the experience of the past, in the observation of the progress that the sciences and civilization have already made, in the analysis of the progress of the human mind and of the development of its faculties, the strongest reasons for believing that nature has set no limit to the realization of our hopes.

If we glance at the state of the world today we see first of all that in Europe the principles of the French Constitution are already those of all enlightened men. We see them too widely propagated, too seriously professed, for priests and despots to prevent their gradual penetration even into the hovels of their slaves; there they will soon awaken in these slaves the remnants of their common sense and inspire them with that smoldering indignation which not even constant humiliation and fear can smother in the soul of the oppressed.

As we move from nation to nation, we can see in each what special obstacles impede this revolution and what attitudes of mind favor it. We can distinguish the nations where we may expect it to be introduced gently by the perhaps belated wisdom of their governments, and those nations where its violence intensified by their resistance must involve all alike in a swift and terrible convulsion.

Can we doubt that either common sense or the senseless discords of European nations will add to the effects of the slow but inexorable progress of their colonies, and will soon bring about the independence of the New World? And then will not the European population in these colonies, spreading rapidly over that enormous land, either civilize or peacefully remove the savage nations who still inhabit vast tracts of its land?

Survey the history of our settlements and commercial undertakings in Africa or in Asia, and you will see how our trade monopolies, our treachery, our murderous contempt for men of another color or creed, the insolence of our usurpations, the intrigues or the exaggerated proselytic zeal of our priests, have destroyed the respect and goodwill that the superiority of our knowledge and the benefits of our commerce at first won for us in the eyes of the inhabitants. But doubtless the moment approaches when, no longer presenting ourselves as always either tyrants or corrupters, we shall become for them the beneficent instruments of their freedom.

The sugar industry, establishing itself throughout the immense continent of Africa, will destroy the shameful exploitation which has corrupted and depopulated that continent for the last two centuries.

Already in Great Britain, friends of humanity have set us an example; and if the Machiavellian government of that country has been restrained by public opinion from offering any opposition, what may we not expect of this same spirit, once the reform of a servile and venal constitution has led to a government worthy of a humane and generous nation? Will not France hasten to imitate such undertakings dictated by philanthropy and the true self-interest of Europe alike? Trading stations have been set up in the French islands, in Guiana and in some English possessions, and soon we shall see the downfall of the monopoly that the Dutch have sustained with so much treachery, persecution and crime. The nations of Europe will finally learn that monopolistic companies are nothing more than a tax imposed upon them in order to provide their governments with a new instrument of tyranny.

So the peoples of Europe, confining themselves to free trade, understanding their own rights too well to show contempt for those of other peoples, will respect this independence, which until now they have so insolently violated. Their settlements, no longer filled with government hirelings hastening, under the cloak of place or privilege, to amass treasure by brigandry and deceit, so as to be able to return to Europe and purchase titles and honor, will now be peopled with men of industrious habit, seeking in these propitious climates the wealth that eluded them at home. The love of freedom will retain them there, ambition will no longer recall them, and what have been no better than the counting houses of brigands will become colonies of citizens propagating throughout Africa and Asia the principles and the practice of liberty, knowledge and reason, that they have brought from Europe. We shall see the monks who brought only shameful superstition to these peoples, and aroused their antagonism by the threat of yet another tyranny, replaced by men occupied in propagating amongst them the truths that will promote their happiness and in teaching them about their interests and their rights. Zeal for the truth is also one of the passions, and it will turn its efforts to distant lands, once there are no longer at home any crass prejudices to combat, any shameful errors to dissipate. . . .

The progress of these peoples is likely to be more rapid and certain than our own because they can receive from us everything that we have had to find out for ourselves, and in order to understand those simple truths and infallible methods which we have acquired only after long

THE PORTABLE
ENLIGHTENMENT READER

The Age of Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, also called the Age of Reason, was so named for an exultant intellectual movement that shook the foundations of Western civilization. In championing radical ideas such as individual liberty and an empirical appraisal of the universe through rational inquiry and natural experience, Enlightenment philosophers in Europe and America planted the seeds for modern liberalism, cultural humanism, science and technology, and laissez-faire capitalism.

This volume brings together the era's classic works, with more than a hundred selections from a broad range of sources—including works by Kant, Diderot, Voltaire, Newton, Rousseau, Locke, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and Paine—that demonstrate the pervasive impact of Enlightenment views on philosophy and epistemology as well as on political, social, and economic institutions. Included are seminal discourses on science and religion, on the social contract, on the equality (and inequality) of the sexes and the races, and on economics and markets, as well as homages to nature and sexual pleasure, and poetry and opera librettos that embody the movement's social ideals.

Cover design by Melissa Jacoby

Cover painting: Benjamin West, *Benjamin Franklin Drawing Electricity from the Sky*, ca. 1805, Philadelphia Museum of Art: Mr. and Mrs. Wharton Sinkler Collection.

A PENGUIN BOOK
History/Philosophy
penguinrandomhouse.com

ISBN 978-0-14-024566-0

U.S.A. $24.00
CAN. $32.00
U.K. £12.99