

IRA O. WADE

The Structure and Form of the French Enlightenment, Volume 1

Esprit Philosophique



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THE
STRUCTURE AND FORM
OF THE
FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT

Volume I

The
Structure and Form
of the
French Enlightenment

VOLUME I: *Esprit Philosophique*

Ira O. Wade

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To Mabel . . .

*Entre le vide et l'Événement pur,
J'attends l'écho de ma grandeur interne,
Amère, sombre et sonore citerne,
Sonnant dans l'âme un creux toujours futur!*

Le Cimetière Marin
Paul Valéry

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ABBREVIATIONS

The Cabeen Bibliography contains a rather full list of abbreviations generally used. I have adopted the following:

<i>Annales</i>	<i>Annales, Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations</i>
<i>Annales JJR</i>	<i>Annales Jean-Jacques Rousseau</i>
<i>APSP</i>	<i>American Philosophical Society, Proceedings</i>
<i>APSR</i>	<i>American Political Science Review</i>
Archiv	Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und literaturen (Herrig)
<i>ASP</i>	<i>Annales des sciences politiques</i>
<i>AUP</i>	<i>Annales de l'Université de Paris</i>
B or Best	Theodore Besterman, <i>Voltaire's Correspondence</i> , Geneva, 1953-. 108 vols.
BM	British Museum
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale
<i>CAIEF</i>	<i>Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises</i>
CDU	Centre de documentation universitaire
<i>DS</i>	<i>Diderot Studies</i>
<i>FAR</i>	<i>Franco-American Review</i>
<i>FQ</i>	<i>French Quarterly</i>
<i>FR</i>	<i>French Review</i>
<i>FS</i>	<i>French Studies</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
LC	Library of Congress
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLQ</i>	<i>Modern Language Quarterly</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Modern Philology</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>PSQ</i>	<i>Political Science Quarterly</i>
PUF	Presses universitaires de France
<i>RCC</i>	<i>Revue des cours et des conférences</i>
<i>RDP</i>	<i>Revue du droit public</i>

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>RDS</i>	<i>Revue du dix-huitième Siècle</i>
<i>Rfr</i>	<i>Révolution française, revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine</i>
<i>RHL</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France</i>
<i>RHM</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire moderne</i>
<i>RHRF</i>	<i>Revue historique de la révolution française</i>
<i>R. Int. Phil</i>	<i>Revue internationale de philosophie</i>
<i>RLC</i>	<i>Revue de littérature comparée</i>
<i>RMM</i>	<i>Revue de métaphysique et de morale</i>
<i>RR</i>	<i>Romanic Review</i>
<i>RSH</i>	<i>Revue des sciences humaines</i>
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studies in Philology</i>
<i>Symp</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>SVEC</i>	<i>Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century</i>
<i>YR</i>	<i>Yale Review</i>
<i>YRS</i>	<i>Yale Romanic Studies</i>

INTRODUCTION: FROM ART TO THE MAKING OF THE "ESPRIT PHILOSOPHIQUE"

FROM among those who, during the twentieth century, have undertaken to seek the origins of the French Enlightenment, two rather strong and somewhat contradictory tendencies have emerged. On the one hand, many such as Lanson, Brunetière, Hazard, Pintard, Lenoble, and Busson have increasingly insisted that the history of the Enlightenment extends at least from the early days of the Renaissance (1492). At the same time, some of these same critics—Lanson, Brunetière, Hazard, and Busson—are inclined to present the Enlightenment as a sudden break which occurred at the beginning of the last half of Louis XIV's reign, around 1675-1685. It can doubtless be argued and very profitably, I suspect, that the roots of every era originated in the distant past. Indeed, the most recent synthesis of the Enlightenment we have in English has endeavored "to interpret" the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment in the light of a Greek Enlightenment and a Roman Enlightenment. An undertaking of this sort, if well-executed, is a laudable enterprise. However, I would experience much difficulty in being consistent and coherent in so vast a perspective.

In this present study I have continued the point of view, outlined in my *Intellectual Origins of the French Enlightenment*, which holds that it is possible to trace the roots of the Enlightenment from the early Renaissance (1492) to the beginnings of the eighteenth century. In that previous study I scrupulously assembled the significant phenomena which contributed to the structuring of the French Enlightenment. I followed those phenomena as they manifested themselves in the normal categories of life which every man must live. I observed as carefully as I could these categories as they were modified by the general directions of the thought of the period. I tried to assess the results as one changing category modified another, or as one merged into or separated from another. I accepted two principles as my guide. First, every man lives constantly seven kinds of life: religious, esthetic, political, economic, ethical, scientific, and the life of the self. A change in one kind renders necessary some adjustments in all the others. Second, every man is shaped by his thought to the extent that one may say that he actually is what he

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thinks, he acts in accordance with what he is and thinks; existence is thus only a penetration (an awareness) of reality with reflective consciousness. With the results of a previous enquiry plus these simple guide-lines in mind, I have set myself the task of exploring in this work two particular questions. How did the structuring process of the previous two centuries evolve into the form of the Enlightenment, and what is the inner unity of that form? If possible, I would like to see what can be found out about the relationship between that form and the Revolution which was either its climax, its continuity, or its aftermath.

In this volume, I have returned to the view that the death of Louis XIV did constitute a turning-point, though not a break, with what had gone before. Many Enlightenment characteristics had been introduced into the stream of history before the death of the Grand Monarque, or even before his birth. But the Enlightenment was not a coherent, organic entity until long after his death.

There is a close relationship between my previous two studies and this present volume. In the previous ones, I have emphasized the idea of organic unity and have insisted upon the necessity of showing as smooth a continuity, a consistency, and a coherence as is possible between the structuring forces and the organic form. Thus, it is rather imperative, to review briefly these structuring forces. The Enlightenment is the final result of three initial primary forces and three historical events. The forces were (1) the Paduan movement which brought about the creation of the modern university, (2) the ripening of humanism, and (3) the reform. The events were: (1) the breakdown of the Byzantine Empire, (2) the discovery of new lands, and (3) new technological inventions, such as printing, the compass, the astrolabe. These things transformed the conditions of European life, chiefly by upsetting the stability of the religious life, which in turn modified all the other aspects of living. The challenge was first laid down in Renaissance Italy, which responded by a magnificent outburst of thought and art. As the challenge broadened and deepened, all Europeans answered it by reconstructing, each in his own way, the shattered aspects of his being. Science, philosophy, art, morality, the state, religion, and that magnificent making of the *moi* in which Montaigne was so marvellously adept, were all renewed. Adjustments were made, of course, and often remade,

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but stability and organic continuity since that day have yielded to dynamism and disintegration and consequent reintegration. It is as if life of the spirit requires the release of some kind of human energy as a means of proving the possibility of being something just before it is something else.

Although we don't know much about the inner meaning of these changes and practically nothing about their purpose, we are fairly well aware of the factors which enter into their composition and decomposition, and sometimes we understand fairly clearly the general nature of the recomposition.

From the six major conditions of the Italian Renaissance, and subsequently from a more general European Renaissance, a reorganization of life was derived. I have made no effort to characterize that reorganization, which is usually presented by Renaissance scholars as predominantly based upon the development of humanism and religious reform. These two movements were supremely important in the making of Renaissance life, but so were the new discoveries, the new inventions, the new universities which replaced the learning of the monasteries with a more flexible, less clerical scholarship. What seems to have happened is that the institutions of the Middle Ages (the Church, the state, the social order) began a reorganization and a realignment. The hitherto unquestioned supremacy of the Church over the other institutions of man was now put in question and when hesitations became apparent the other institutions became involved and modified also. With the expansion of the geographical milieu and the introduction of more diverse manners and customs came a modification in the individual's manner of living, which was characterized by a greater mobility and flexibility. Even when communities did not yield to the social change, they often were at least cognizant of it. The greatest change seems to have taken place in the minds of men, certainly not as widespread as it was destined to become, but rather extensive notwithstanding.

It is not easy to characterize the exact nature of the phenomenon that led to this reorganization. Sometimes we interpret it as a change-over from faith to reason, a decline of religious feeling and a rise of philosophic thinking. Often we refer to the whole period as the age of rationalism and the metaphors used refer to light and darkness, sight and blindness. Fundamentally, man was faced with the prob-

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lem of identifying himself with reality, "to be" could only be known by an inner consciousness, an awareness of being *in*. No one seemed inclined to question Hamlet's remark about being and nonbeing; everyone found great difficulty in expressing just what this awareness amounted to. Of course, from experience man could affirm his comprehension of small bits of phenomena concerned with "living." He now suspected that these known things were an important part of himself; in fact, they constituted his inner reality. He could not be a "self" without distilling his apprehension, his awareness of these things.

He turned back to the oldest myth which man has ever known: the myth of sight, best expressed for Western man in the Oedipus legend. But sight is something far greater than the ability to see in ordinary terms. It involves not only eyes, but light, capacity to absorb light and give it a meaning, capacity to transform that meaning into the "self" because of a power to transmute the "self" into that meaning. One not only sees, one sees himself in, he sees the thing in himself; he not only sees, he is aware that he is a part of what he sees, and it is a part of him. The seeing has now become a knowing and the knowing a "being." This knowing was assembled in the human mind and heart, it drew its strength from the powers of knowledge and the possibilities of being.

Consequently, the factors involved in knowing and being were eyes turned outwardly to nature and inwardly to man. Nature could be apprehended and absorbed by observation. But observation was not an indiscriminate thing. There was a right way to do it and a wrong way. Eventually, it was decided that the right way required measuring, weighing, and calculation, which in turn were aided by instruments such as the telescope and the microscope—extensions of the eye. The usefulness of the observation to the observer was also sought: it was decided that a phenomenon could have an aesthetic, a religious, a social, moral, and even a human value. What determined the value was the transformation of the phenomenon, observed and weighed, into an image of that object in nature, which was then transferred into the "dark chamber of the mind." The catalyst which makes an image a perception is attention, a concentration of energy, an awareness that the phenomenon awaits a response. The mind, however, can respond, can assess the value of the object only if the darkness of the inner chamber is flooded by the

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light of outer nature. The image is stored in the mind; the mind uses the image in speculating upon the worth of the object and has the capacity of calling up the image in order to reconsider it. Literally, "reconsidering it" means seeing it in a new light. Thus the human mind can change the image by changing the light. Reason with its three faculties of imagination, reflection, and memory can go through a series of operations such as perceiving, evaluating, comparing, and judging. All of these procedures bring a part of the external world into the observer who uses it in accord with the faculties of his mind, and in so doing makes it a part of himself. But he makes it a part of himself only by making himself a part of it, and he does these two things only to the extent that he is aided by the *light of nature and the faculties of reason*.

This new consciousness of self seems to justify any attempt to regard the Enlightenment as an age of reason, a century of ideas, or merely as an Enlightenment. Its zenith could be presented as the glorification of the human mind as the instrument of man's becoming, in which case man's intellectual powers would be accorded the position of priority which had formerly been accorded the power of God. It would seem perfectly reasonable to read the eighteenth century primarily as a period of expanding knowledge, a scientific age that created a conflict between religious faith and scientific thought, a time when science finally triumphed over the Christian religion; or it could be read simply as the record of man's acceptance of responsibility for the making of his world through the power of the human mind. Many Frenchmen in the eighteenth century looked upon life in this way—Voltaire and his followers would probably be the outstanding examples. Many historians explain the era as man's struggle to be himself in the light of his newly acquired powers and say that the eventual failure to achieve the goal he set out to attain ended in a violent revolt against all those forces which were a handicap to his desires. However, there are those who feel that what actually happened was not a glorification of the human mind nor a condemnation of its ability to create the good life, but a death struggle between light and darkness, in which actually the Enlightenment, the age of light, "*l'âge des lumières*," was overwhelmed by the powers of darkness, condemning mankind to wander forever upon "a darkling plain."

It is not surprising that studies of the eighteenth century have re-

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sulted in two absolutely opposing interpretations as to the outcome, and two equally plausible, though contradictory, visions of the future. The ambiguity of the total situation has long been recognized. Critics of the period have often been struck by the fact that whatever trait has been emphasized as characteristic practically always must be complemented by its opposite. Realism must be seen in connection with idealism, facts must always be contrasted with ideas, the concrete must frequently be supplemented with the abstract, prejudices must be seen from the perspective of relationships, the appearance of things must always be contrasted with the reality of their existence, the clandestine must always be seen in the light of the facts. Truth is often shown to be only the appearance of truth, the mask conceals a hidden personality and paradox. Irony offers a choice of opposites; to be understood, truth must be balanced with error; optimism must be reconciled with pessimism; and light needs darkness to justify its existence.

There is now a definite move to see the French Enlightenment basically as a struggle between light and darkness; "lumière" and "ténèbres" are the two poles between which the whole drama of man plays out its role. In the history of Western Europe's ideas, the struggle was first a Judeo-Greek concept, religious and philosophical in its original conception and hence both Christian and pagan in its origins. It appears in the first chapter of *Genesis* and the first chapter of *John*, but it may also be found in the humanism of antiquity. In both expressions of life, its role is primary; there is really nothing unexpected in its preservation down to the eighteenth century. If, as I suspect, Phèdre is the greatest expression of neo-classicism, it is fitting and proper that the name means "The Shining One," that all the symbolism should be built around the sun and light, and that its cosmic tragedy should arise in everlasting nothingness. The rest is not total "silence" as in Shakespeare's *Lear*, it is total "darkness."

Nonetheless, with the new mobility, the new alertness, the new changes and inventions, the new awareness, and some readiness on the part of a limited society to profit from all these things, everyone could have observed how "merveilleusement vain, divers et on-doyant" man had become, although it remained for Montaigne and his followers to establish, to clarify, and to broaden the observation.

In the two centuries following the early Renaissance, an intellec-

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tual movement of gigantic proportions developed in Europe. To record the development of political, economic, esthetic, scientific, religious, moral or philosophic thought in one of the European countries during these years would demand superhuman efforts. Even to sketch the interrelation between religion and the state, or between science and religion, or religion and esthetics, or esthetics and ethics would be a vast enterprise. Suffice it to state that the dominating idea of my study of the origins of the French Enlightenment involves especially the relationship between thought and esthetics. What I have tried to keep ever in the foreground is the conviction that the capacity to think, no matter how restricted, should always lead to the creation of something which is original and capable of lasting. This capacity is itself a creation and it must be regarded with some human interest, no matter how small or how great its beauty or its value. It must always be seen, however, in context. For eighteenth-century man, every man was his own creator—after having been accorded a chance to be. He could not create his initial existence as a man, but he could shape his life. For the two hundred years in Europe from 1500 to 1700, he pinned his chances to succeed upon thought and art; consequently living those two centuries was preeminently an intellectual act which expressed itself always as a creative act in any sphere of life.

Three intellectual developments are of supreme importance throughout the three centuries: humanism, science, and religion. Each has outstanding representatives: Erasmus, for instance, and Montaigne, Galileo, and Saint Francis. More specifically, the various movements can be listed summarily, starting with (1) the development of Horatian poetry from Théophile de Viau to Voltaire. At first glance this Horatian influence could be discounted as really not that important. Its significance becomes clear, however, when one considers that it extended throughout the seventeenth century from De Viau to Desbarreaux, Blot, Dehaynaut, Mme Deshoulières, La Fontaine, Chaulieu, and La Fare down to Voltaire, who began his poetic career as a Horatian poet. (2) Travel literature was even more important. Well over 550 travel books were printed in the Renaissance proper, and such works continued to be popular throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They raised a most crucial question: what is the correct way of analyzing the man-

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ners and customs, the political and social institutions, and the arts and letters as a means of understanding the civilization of a people? They led to the imaginary, utopian fiction which, by satire, by idealism, or by the simple, human habit of mythmaking, also made its contribution to the analysis of a people. (3) There were continuing movements of Epicureanism, stoicism, and skepticism, which being normal, human, intellectual attitudes toward life, took their origin in humanism but came from antiquity through Montaigne. (4) The rise and development of free-thinking was a broad movement which expressed itself in religious, political, moral, and social skepticism and always tended toward some kind of unorthodoxy. The free-thinkers were of all sorts: the Horatian poets, the travel writers, the utopian writers of imaginary fiction, and the humanist scholars. The historians were interested in all kinds of erudition: Charron, Naudé, Guy Patin, Samuel Sorbière, La Mothe le Vayer were all free-thinkers, all of them in some way or other descendants of Montaigne; and their own direct descendants were Saint-Evremond, Fontenelle, and Voltaire. (5) Finally, a magnificent line of philosophers extended from Montaigne to Bayle and Fontenelle and thence to Montesquieu and Voltaire, and embraced all the new scientists from Copernicus to Galileo to Newton, but more particularly Bacon, Descartes, Pascal, Gassendi, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Malebranche, Locke, and Newton. Indeed, never has there been an age so rich in philosophy as seventeenth-century Europe where a dozen superb philosophers stand out. When they are considered with the countless free-thinkers in all their diversity, one begins to get a glimpse of that "esprit philosophique" long judged the hallmark of the Enlightenment.

It has now become rather common to see in French classicism a high combination of philosophic thought and artistic expression, particularly after Boileau's definition of classicism as consisting in "vraies pensées" and "expressions justes." This merging of philosophy and art in the classical era seems to us to bring together strange bedfellows. The combination held nothing strange, however, for the contemporaries of Boileau. Even in the early days of his literary career, Voltaire often asserted that what he admired greatly in both Boileau and Racine was that each could say precisely what he wanted to say. It was not so much cleverness in the precise choice of words, but rather an exact harmony between thought and expression. In-

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deed, one of the characteristic ways of writing was in "pensées" and "maximes." Even the drama, the essays, and the fables were crammed with them. I would readily believe that the merging of the philosophy and the art was a function of the salons, the coffee-houses, and the literary periodicals. They were places where philosopher, free-thinker, and artist could meet and naturally they became the very core of an elite civilization.

Still, we have long since known that the last half of Louis XIV's reign (1685-1715) was interpreted as a "decline." (See A. Tilley, *The Decline of the Age of Louis XIV.*) Little by little, the great writers disappeared from the scene: Molière in 1673, Corneille in 1684, La Fontaine in 1695, Racine in 1699. Of that great generation of giants only Boileau and Bossuet still remained after 1700. The second generation of classicists—Fénelon, La Bruyère, Bayle, Fontenelle, and Le Sage—did not provide fitting replacements for Molière's comedies, Racine's tragedies, or for Boileau's *Satires* or La Fontaine's *Contes* and *Fables*. All of these genres continued into the Enlightenment, but none of them was more than mediocre. On the other hand, there was around 1680 in France a revival of Descartes's philosophy; Gassendi's philosophy was also renewed through Bernier's pseudo-translations. Pascal, though long since dead, was so strong that an anti-Pascal movement emerged and it continued to 1734; Malebranche was hardly beginning his career. Leibniz, only recently launched upon his career, had just visited Paris while Spinoza, now dead, was being translated clandestinely into French. Bayle was also just beginning his career, so was Fontenelle as far as the Academy of Sciences and his philosophical work was concerned. Locke and Newton would not yet enter the field of philosophy for almost another decade. Thus, while literature was obviously declining in the genres which had hitherto been predominant, philosophy was assuming an ever-increasing importance.

The same ideas and movements which shaped the Enlightenment's intellectual destiny contributed also to the formation of Voltaire, its most representative man. In fact, so closely does Voltaire's development resemble that of France in the eighteenth century that it may be said without too much exaggeration that his formation

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coincided in every respect to that of his time. Briefly stated, the underlying foundation of his intellectual life was a modest contact with antiquity. It was not a widespread acquaintance. It seems to be characterized by a close connection with Horace and other satiric Roman poets: Perseus, Juvenal, Lucretius's *De Natura rerum*, Virgil, and Cicero, especially the *De Natura deorum*, and probably other moral treatises. Horace, Virgil, Lucretius and Cicero represent the basic classical impact upon the French poet. They left him with a respect for poetic expression, an interest in thoughtful content, and a liking for satire. Their contribution to Voltaire was much the same as it was to the formation of French classicism, the one great exception being Racine, in whose formation Greek played a far greater role.

Indeed, Voltaire had taken the stand that extensive knowledge of antiquity is not an essential element in a modern man's intellectual development. He expressed the view in his *Notebooks* that ancient history was neither essential nor relevant to a young man of his time, who was urged to seriously study history from the fifteenth century on. This advice, which Voltaire himself practiced, was commonly accepted by his contemporaries.

The movement of ideas which inaugurated modern times thus stemmed from the Paduan School and spread throughout Europe. It was characterized by a fundamental rationalist outlook, an interest in humanism, and a deep regard for science. This reformation in education was at the root of the whole epistemological revolution which led both to Voltaire and to the eighteenth century in general. In the Renaissance it was best represented by such artists as Boccaccio and Petrarch, such scholars as Pomponnazzi and Lorenzo Valla, such moralists as Erasmus, Rabelais, and Montaigne, and such religious reformers as Luther and Calvin. Recent critics have often said that it constituted a crisis in man's mind. It has been shown that the movements and the dynamic people who played a role in them led to some instability which threatened the coherence and continuity of religion and the state, the organization of knowledge, and the concept of moral man. In the face of this threat, there arose Rabelais, who offered as a remedy for the feeling of instability the reconstruction of humanism; Montaigne, who strongly urged the reconstruction of moral man; Jean Bodin, who advised a reconstruction of the

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state; and Bacon, who devised a whole program in learning. These activities opened the way for the seventeenth century, in which the paramount issues were fostered by a further breakdown in religion, the rise of skepticism, the reintroduction of stoicism and Epicureanism, the activities of the free-thinkers, and the development of a modern philosophy. Voltaire and the eighteenth century were heirs to all these movements of ideas, many of which were inherited through French classicism.

However, the specific groups which contributed to the uneasiness also played a role in this renewal. The mere enumeration of these groups—the Horatian poets, the erudite free-thinkers, the natural scientists, the political theorists, the libertines, the moralists, the writers of travel literature, the utopian novelists, the makers of classical art, the reformers, and above all the philosophers—offers mute evidence of the tremendous variety which existed in the intellectual life of the seventeenth century. The picture, though certainly complicated, does not even begin to suggest the inner vitality of the time. For if it is difficult to bring together science, religion, and humanism, it is just as hard to merge stoicism, Epicureanism, skepticism, and Augustinianism. From 1660 to 1685, hardly more than a generation, there actually developed three moralities which existed side by side—the Cartesian, the Jansenist, the libertine—as Benichou has so amply demonstrated. In all of the disorder and confusion, the tendency is, nonetheless, toward order and clarity of purpose. As a matter of fact, the groups which dominated the time were the free-thinkers, the thinkers, that is to say, the philosophers and the scientists, and the superior literary artists.

This condition should be stressed since ultimately a way was found to bring together the groups into some coherent pattern. What should be noted, though, is that there is not a particularly clear line of demarcation between the four outstanding groups nor even in the sub-groups within each one. This lack of a clear separation can be seen by comparing the free-thinkers and the philosophers. The free-thinkers could be found in all the groups we have mentioned, even at times among the philosophers. Moreover, there are philosophers who qualify without difficulty—Montaigne, Gassendi, Spinoza, Bayle and Fontenelle, for instance—as eminent free-thinkers. I have shown in a previous volume that all the philosophers of the seven-

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teenth century derive in one way or another from that greatest of all free-thinkers, Montaigne. Some of them, however—Descartes, Pascal, Bacon, Hobbes, for instance—despite their debt to Montaigne, believed their philosophical mission to be the restoration of philosophy to some orderliness in the fields of religion, science, and morality. Hence, each of the systematic philosophers is distinguished by a special interest which each displays in one or more of the normal categories of life—religion, politics, economics, morality, esthetics, science, and individualism. Descartes, for instance, interested in metaphysics, science, morality, hesitated continually between according priority to science or to metaphysics. Bacon gave priority to science; Hobbes, to politics; Pascal, to theology; Gassendi, to theology and to science; Spinoza, to ethics. Each devoted himself to that section of philosophy which most attracted him, but each attempted to develop that interest in a systematic, orderly way, and each drew conclusions calculated to give organic unity to philosophy. Their followers, many of whom were the free-thinkers, were much less consistent and coherent in approach. They joined forces with all the free-thinkers of the other groups—the Horatians, the Utopians, the Epicureans, stoics, skeptics—to form a vast body of intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals whose interest was undoubtedly genuine, but whose consistency and coherence left much to be desired. Each used his own medium of expression, each devoted himself to his special category, each adopted a special institution of society—the academy, the salon, the club—to exchange views, to circulate ideas, and to compose works. These free-thinkers held the same intellectual relationship to the thinkers as the secondary writers held to the great classicists. Their program contained two impossible points. They rejected as forcibly as possible all attempts to put order into their activities: they introduced the greatest variety and mobility into their opinions and their ideas, and they made claims to modernity. But they never formed a coherent group, nor expressed themselves in a consistent way, nor actually held to a body of doctrine, although they often had preferences among those who were both consistent and coherent. And just as there were classicists who were orderly and systematic and others who showed tendencies of free-thinking, so there were philosophers who were also orderly and systematic, while others were apt to fall into free-thinking (Spinoza, for instance).

INTRODUCTION

Eventually, free-thinkers and thinkers alike found a place in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*. But, by that time (1697), they had become the *philosophes*.

The key word for all these phenomena is movement. The key notion is that ideas, facts, opinions, and beliefs generate motion. The key concept is that thought is the source of action. Clearly expressed, the formula states that what one thinks is what one is, what one says, what one does. There is an absolute connection between thinking, being, saying, and doing. The movement is generated by sheer dynamism and the terrific possibilities of action. One moves from stability to change, from past to present, but ultimately toward the future; one moves also from the moral south to the scientific north, but ultimately toward the integration of science and morality. Hence, all the abstract notions of relativity, utility, good and evil, right and wrong, reality and appearance, the "esprit" and the "cœur" played important roles in the establishment of the Enlightenment climate of opinion. Underlying this abstract dualism was the conviction that the power to create change—limited though it is—lies within man himself and the further conviction that mobility is a mechanical act which, properly directed, releases human power for the creation of those things that satisfy human aspirations and needs. However, it must be recognized that power can be as destructive as it is constructive, and it must be used to further both ends. One then destroys "préjugés" that are judged detrimental to the right release of creative energy; one always seeks new "rapports" which are deemed the correct way of creating ever new possibilities. In some peculiar way, the Enlightenment was confident that it held the secret for the destruction of past erroneous ideas, and for the structuring of modern thought. The whole age entrusted this process to the *philosophes*.

PART I
Transition and Change

FROM PHILOSOPHER TO PHILOSOPHE

DESPITE the many eighteenth-century attempts to define the philosophe, modern criticism has experienced some difficulty in marking out his nature and even in coming to some agreement as to his origin. The most recent attempt at definition has been Professor Gay's opening chapter in *The Enlightenment* (1966) entitled "The Little Flock of Philosophes." Mr. Gay presents them as "a loose, informal wholly unorganized coalition of cultural critics, religious skeptics, and political reformers." They were, he says, a "clamorous chorus," consisting partly of "discordant voices," but also of a "general harmony." And they united in "a program of secularism, humanity, cosmopolitanism, and freedom." They composed "a family—a noisy family." They were a "party" but without a "party line," although Mr. Gay has just accorded them "an ambitious program." When threatened with censure, they closed ranks, says Gay, who gives as example Helvétius's *De l'esprit*. It is not precisely a good example, since Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot penned refutations, which is not exactly a good way to close ranks. Still, Gay insists, they formed a "single army with a single banner," they constructed a coherent philosophy which turns out not to be so coherent after all as he presents it. This philosophy—"a dialectic interplay of their appeal to antiquity, their tension with Christianity, and their pursuit of modernity"—defines the philosophes and distinguishes them from other enlightened men of their age. The former were "modern pagans." Mr. Gay forgets to tell us what the other enlightened men were. And we are still in the dark as to their origin.

Of more help are the suggestions of Professor Spink (*Free-thought from Gassendi to Voltaire*, London, 1960) and Professor Pintard (*Le Libertinage érudit*, Paris, 1943). These two critics state rather categorically that the philosophes are the direct descendants of the free-thinkers of the previous century. In the opinion of Busson (*La Religion des classiques*, Paris, 1948), the philosophes, or rather the free-thinkers, are derived from the Italian naturalists of the sixteenth century. There is thus, if one accepts these views, from the early Renaissance to the Enlightenment a consistent development of a free-thinking, naturalistic philosopher into the philosophe.

These three scholars have, however, done very little to trace the

evolution of the Italian naturalists into the free-thinkers and thence into the philosophes. Indeed, they are not in full agreement with each other on this matter. Pintard, for instance, rejects Busson's explanation that the seventeenth-century free-thinkers are derived from the Italian naturalists of the Renaissance, although he makes a fairly strong case for the continuity of thought from the free-thinkers to Bayle and Fontenelle. Busson, for his part, states that this development was neither continuous nor consistent. Professor Dieckmann, who has given much thought to the definition of the philosophe, has explicitly stated that "it is thus very probable that the *libertin* had little influence on the philosophic movement and that the apparent common traits can be explained by the use of the same sources." (See H. Dieckmann, *Le Philosophe*. Texts and Interpretation, St. Louis, 1948, p. 95.) But what are these sources? Could they be the seventeenth-century philosophers? That would be a novel suggestion, since Lanson explicitly ruled out any interpretation which saw in the philosophic movement of the eighteenth century a continuation of the systematic philosophy of the seventeenth. (See G. Lanson, "Origines et premières manifestations de l'esprit philosophique dans la littérature française de 1675 à 1748," in *RCC.*, 1910.) For his part, Brunetière saw the philosophy of the eighteenth century as a merging of libertinism and Cartesianism, while Professor Beyer rejected all notion of a merger and insisted that the philosophy of the Enlightenment was derived solely from the free-thinkers.

The effort to overthrow Aristotle's influence in philosophy began in the seventeenth century, but it was by no means a consistent revolt against the philosophers of antiquity, since Gassendi and his followers used the writings of Epicurus to overthrow the basic doctrine of Aristotle, whereas Descartes attempted to do the same through his own inventive genius, with much aid from St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure. The Aristotelian philosophy of qualities, the "formes substantielles," was sacrificed to a purely mechanical philosophy of movement. The emphasis tended to a more precise definition of the phenomena and more accurate measurements. The methods employed ranged from mathematics and the a priori to mathematics and the empirical. In a curious way, the revolt against Aristotle was not extended to the Greek atomists such as Leucippus and Democri-

tus. The supreme problem was the nature of matter, that is, a definition of substance, and its relationship to thought, although everyone agreed that neither matter nor thought could be defined. Whether they could or not, every seventeenth-century philosopher from Montaigne to Bayle focused his attention upon some aspect of this central problem.

We must not fail to take into consideration the complex situation in philosophy during the whole seventeenth century. Between Montaigne and Bayle, it had been transformed completely. The major elements of this transformation are clear. By the end of the Renaissance, philosophy was no longer the hand-maiden of theology, particularly orthodox Christian theology. The human mind could not prove, interpret, or justify by reason the perennial philosophical problems. Therefore, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the existence of free-will, the nature of Providence, the nature of matter and of good and evil had to be accepted on faith or on revelation, or rejected as valid philosophical problems. Henceforth, theological dogma could no longer depend upon philosophical reasoning for support. When, for instance, Montaigne was told that Sebond's reasons for the defense of religion were weak, he replied that of course they were and thereafter he did not counsel according any great importance to the proofs of reason in religion. When Descartes offered his rational proofs for immortality, he still advised that belief in immortality be accepted on faith. This disclaimer of any efficacy in proving major problems of religion by the use of reason is present in every philosopher from Montaigne to Bayle. Yet, every philosopher used as best he could rational arguments to explain his position in metaphysical matters. The conclusions deduced can be so ambiguous that present-day criticism cannot tell exactly whether the position taken by these philosophers is genuine faith or a stragem. But the result is not debatable. If the purpose of philosophy is not to prove theological points because it cannot do so, then it must have other purposes. Ultimately, such reasoning served to discredit the old metaphysics and also to shift the emphasis of philosophy to physics, natural science, and ethics. Only Pascal seems to have rejected this attitude, but we are none too sure that his rejection did not prevent him from completing his apology.

Some of our difficulties stem from the inadequate and strange

notions we have as to the way ideas develop into philosophies and the way one system of philosophy merges with another, or even provokes another, or causes even numerous systems simultaneously to appear. Least of all do we know how ideas form themselves and communicate themselves to those who deduce from them other, more pertinent ideas. Finally, we cannot always distinguish between an author's system and what a disciple or disciples have made of it.

Some examples taken from the history of seventeenth-century philosophy will illustrate our dilemma. First, it is well known that while Descartes was busily engaged in elaborating his system, Hobbes published his *De cive* in Paris. One could hardly conceive of two philosophies more diametrically opposed. Moreover, after the *Méditations* appeared, Hobbes made objections to the work (as did others) to which Descartes made replies. Did these discussions modify Descartes's own thinking? Or the thinking of the Mersenne group? More important still, to what extent did Cartesianism merge with Hobbism in the first moment of the rise of modern philosophy to give a wholly new set of conditions for the development of modern philosophy? The objections and replies were translated and published in London in 1680 by William Molyneux. How did they affect the transmitters of Cartesianism to the eighteenth century, Bayle and Fontenelle? What influence did they have upon a Voltaire eager to forge a philosophy from his French antecedents and his new English acquaintances?

Our second example is even more curious. Historians of seventeenth-century ideas have always noted the opposition of Pascal to Descartes; indeed, the former's *Pensées* have practically always been considered as much of an attack upon Cartesianism as upon libertinism. So strong was the attack that Lanson offered Pascal as the main reason for the lack of success of Descartes in seventeenth-century France, and others, including Brunetière, have noted that as long as Pascal checked Cartesianism, eighteenth-century philosophy could not develop with any assurance. In 1670, the same year in which the Jansenists who were supposedly favorable to Descartes brought out a version of the *Pensées*, Spinoza brought out the *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, which also had some obvious relationship to Descartes's philosophy and which gave rise to over a hundred treatises of like nature from 1670 and 1730. Thus it is the prime

work in the whole anti-Pascal movement. How can we measure its importance in relation to Descartes? Did it eventually eliminate Pascal as an opponent of Descartes and thereby make way for eighteenth-century philosophy? What effect could this situation have had upon a compiler of philosophical ideas such as Bayle, who wrote a treatise on Descartes, who is thought (at least by Professor Schinz) to have had a great affinity with Pascal, and whose violent objection to Spinoza is fully the equal of Pascal's assumed rejection of Descartes?

A third example concerns Leibnizianism, which in the eighteenth century was often equated with Spinozism as a fatalistic philosophy. But more important was its relationship with Malebranche, the spiritual descendant of Descartes. Leibniz questions the integrity of Cartesianism and also opposes Newton. Thus a new situation arises in which Cartesianism refined with Malebranchism is in disaccord with Leibnizianism, which is likewise in disaccord with Newtonianism. What happens to Malebranche's philosophy in the public mind when it merges with Newtonianism? What happens when this Leibnizianism and Newtonianism have to merge with a revived form of Cartesianism, an opposing form of Pascalism now locked in a death struggle with one aspect of Spinozism? This is Professor Hazard's crisis in another frame of reference, I suspect, but it is no less real for being philosophical.

These considerations are perhaps more important for their practical than for their theoretical effect, particularly in an age of philosophy. Involved in their comprehension is the nature of the thinking process, the relationship of thought and thinking to the external world and above all to the internal world. A preeminent problem is the relationship between "connaissance" and "conscience," and between these two factors and "being" and "doing." This was the central point of seventeenth-century philosophy, as Boutroux has shown. It is not enough to describe the aspects of the various philosophies, although to be sure if we do not describe them we can hardly expect to reach our ultimate goal of discovering their vital inner content.

Essentially, the problem is one of structuring; only insofar as we learn how to flow into the movement can we succeed in grasping this inner content, seizing the "passage" rather than the "être," as

Montaigne said. Every system of philosophy seems to create within itself or from itself a contradictory "system" to itself. A Descartes is opposed by a Pascal, a Pascal by a Spinoza, a Spinoza by a Bayle, a Voltaire by a Rousseau. It is in this opposition that the "passage" moves; a sloughing off, a reform, a "new" structure, in turn create a "new" form. One movement has to conform to the influences of innumerable other movements. Cartesianism has to conform to Newtonianism, Jansenism has to conform to Lockean psychology, Newtonianism has to adjust to Leibnizianism. The philosophers of the seventeenth century have to "reform" themselves into the philosophes of the eighteenth.

Complex as it was, the shift in philosophical inquiry from metaphysics to the physical and moral world could find favor with all the groups we have listed as free-thinkers—the Horatian poets, the utopian novelists, the deists, the erudite humanists, the followers of Lucretius, Seneca, Cicero, the stoics and the Epicureans, the political thinkers, the moralists. When Bayle, for instance, in the article "Pyrrhon," said that science could work well in a world of appearances, he was merely stating a truism. The human mind was deemed by him quite capable of understanding problems which concerned the individual and his world, and Locke was of the same opinion.

We practically always assume, though for the most part tacitly, that the philosophe represents a change in the nature of the man rather than in the conception of philosophy. This, of course, is a mistake since it is a simple fact that a very important change in the study of philosophy began in the sixteenth and continued throughout the seventeenth century. Indeed, the inner mobility of the subject-matter of philosophy explains in part the unusually large number of first-class philosophers and the fierceness with which they debated one another. Consequently, it would not be amiss to shift briefly from the problem of the definition of a philosophe to the more relevant problem of what had philosophy become. However, it is difficult to arrive at a true perspective in matters of this sort by trying to define them while they are in a state of becoming because of our inability to isolate the truly relevant from our own private opinion as to what is important. Thus, when we begin to talk about the philosophe, we can easily slip into the trap of defining him, not as he was, but as we would like him to be. This is a natural and

human tendency, but we must resist it because the philosophe is probably the most important factor in the Enlightenment and if we are not careful we can distort the definition of this essential character without even realizing what we are doing. I have tried to avoid that difficulty here by placing responsibility for the definition upon the *Encyclopédie*. I have also taken the further precaution of stressing two ideas. First, the circumstances surrounding the making of the *Encyclopédie* made necessary a character such as the philosophe. Second, these same circumstances also shaped the character of the philosophe.

We are now ready to look at what philosophy had become by the beginning of the seventeenth century, when it began to exhibit an autonomy of its own in many respects. No longer a subordinate ally of theology, it was a science in its own right. Metaphysics had become a special subject, while the natural sciences were now preoccupied with exploring nature in the interest of developing "les commodités de la vie"—those things which could be useful in enriching present-day life. The techniques used in the natural sciences have begun to be utilized in the human sciences also for the simple reason that these preoccupations are judged useful to human life in the here and now. These changes had wrought some significant modifications in other aspects of living: morality was being separated from the hegemony of religion, history was being freed from the domination of Providentialism, and politics was becoming a subject in its own right. These innovations, though far from being definitive between 1600-1680, were sufficiently great to bring about eventually a total reorganization of epistemology.

The article "philosophie" of the *Encyclopédie* records these changes. It notes first that philosophy was originally defined as "wisdom" and philosophers were called "sages." "Ce nom," the author adds, "a été dans les premiers temps ce que le nom de bel esprit est dans le nôtre." The attribution of wisdom was extended to those engaged in all arts practiced with genius, and from which society derived some positive value. The result was that "wisdom" and erudition were confused and it was understood eventually that to be immersed in wisdom was to possess an encyclopedic knowledge of all those things which were known in the present. From ideas and principles which reason and nature furnished, a certain number of

geniuses began to deduce a firm and solid wisdom that was capable of destroying vulgar superstitions but still unable to construct positive foundations for the future. Philosophy became first, whatever human understanding had discovered concerning the nature of God and second, everything it had discovered as contributing to the happiness of man. A third result was not so commendable: philosophy broke into innumerable sects, and the subject-matter broke into numerous branches, with various methods of philosophizing. The article states that at present "son but est la certitude et tous ses pas tendent par la voie de la démonstration"—in other words its job is "rendre raison des choses." It is the science of facts which if correctly handled can become a set of principles. This section ends with the statement that only a philosophical age can attempt an *Encyclopédie*; to do so one must be prepared to dare to examine everything and to stir up everything. We must infer from this presentation that an age which is "philosophical" has to become "encyclopedic," the two qualities necessarily go together. The author concludes aphoristically that in morality, only God serves as a model for man; in the arts, only nature.

The philosophy of the Enlightenment, which grew out of this seventeenth-century scientific, encyclopedic orientation, aspired to be formal and scientific; but it also strove to broaden the field of philosophy to include all human thought and action and to humanize rather than systematize that thought. Emphasis was gradually shifted from metaphysics to physics, from abstract principles of ethics to social activity. It is an error to think that the formal philosophers were uncommitted to these free-thinking tendencies toward the socialization and democratization of thought. Some of the seventeenth-century philosophers were as much free-thinkers as all those whom we now extol as the followers of Montaigne. It could be argued, in fact, that since the whole group of philosophers from Bacon to Bayle are connected with Montaigne either directly or indirectly, they all must be free-thinkers in some way or another. But no matter how we analyze the philosophers of the time, there is no way we can ignore that Gassendi, Spinoza, Bayle, Fontenelle, and even Locke are predominantly free-thinkers. Indeed, the characteristics which we have attributed to the free-thinkers of the seventeenth century were equally to be found among this bevy of formal philosophers. Anyone

engaged in this sort of enterprise after these philosophers apparently claimed the title "philosophe," which we at a later date have always thought different from the term "philosopher." The English and the Continentals used the English concept "philosopher" for the old-line systematic thinker and the French term "philosophe" (which, of course, meant "philosopher" in French) for the new breed. The French, who could not distinguish in this way often qualified the term "philosophe" by such expressions as "de ce temps," or "soi-disant," or "vrai," or by using some printing device. We have constantly explained that the changing meaning of the word reflected the democratization of knowledge. And indeed there was between 1543 and 1743 an expansion of the fields of knowledge and of the groups involved in them.

Moreover, a desire arose to distinguish between that philosophy which was metaphysics, physics, ethics, esthetics, methodological and logical, and that which represented an attitude toward the problems of life. Epicureanism, stoicism, skepticism represented the latter variety. Science, which meant natural science at first, along with "la morale," and politics and economics as they derived from jurisprudence, represented new developments in philosophy. Since the word "philosophy," by definition, contained the concept of "wisdom," and there had always been a certain identification of "wisdom" with the "good" life. In fact, all of these developments took place in the larger context of theology, philosophy, science and humanism and since there now was much tension in the elements of this larger context, there naturally arose the question of approval or disapproval of those who participated. To find ways of using for man's happiness all the newly-discovered facts, relationships, ideas, and theories was the task of the Enlightenment. There was tacit agreement among both systematic, formal thinkers and free-thinkers that knowledge could enhance the powers of man and thus produce a greater happiness. Notwithstanding these remarks, we seem often to overlook that if the Enlightenment is "par excellence philosophique," much of the reason stems from the fact that it sprang from the marvelous line of seventeenth-century philosophers, as well as from an innumerable number of free-thinkers of all sorts.

Consequently we have now to take a closer look at the relationship of thinking and free-thinking if we would wish to appraise the

free-thinking's contribution to the thought of the time. Since it was unrestricted in content, method, and manner of expression, it could be both dispersed and thin, but in a few cases it was concentrated and profound. Free-thinkers were often poets, essayists, or novelists, both realistic and utopian; they undoubtedly had access to a more diverse and larger public than the philosopher. It is not easy, however, to state specifically how they took advantage of this, nor to trace the general characteristics which all groups shared in common. They all seemed to partake of a general satiric spirit and to identify themselves with a certain protest and a tendency toward reform. They were often reputed to be undogmatic in their thinking and unconventional in their morality. Everyone agreed that there was some connection between their thinking and their action. This reputation led to the belief that the world of thought was always divided between the dogmatists and the free-thinkers. While free-thinking could prevail in a philosopher as readily as in a poet, a novelist, or an essayist, the latter appeared to express more freely philosophical attitudes such as stoicism, skepticism, Epicureanism, naturalism, and even idealism.

They were, indeed, apt to give these attitudes a more social, historical meaning than the dogmatic philosophers of the time who devoted themselves to the intricacies of formal philosophical thought. They were consequently credited with fostering those attitudes in the general public: especially Epicureanism and skepticism, and therefore their influence was wielded particularly in transforming the normal categories of life dealing with ethics: religion, politics, economics, social morality. Seen from one point of view they were preservers of pagan humanism, modest heirs of Lucretius and Cicero, but more particularly they were defenders of an open-ended morality. Hence, the libertine nature of their thought and action offered some confirmation to the belief that they were antireligious in the sense of being anti-Christian, and antipolitical in the sense of arguing for reforms in economics, politics, the social order, and religion. Increasingly regarded as subversive, they were condemned by the dogmatic philosophers, who thought of themselves as building a philosophy which would support more normal attitudes toward the current categories. The goal of such philosophers was to establish some order in all this free-thinking. However, the rules of the separa-

tion of dogmatists and free-thinkers were never very explicit, and often a philosopher who interpreted very strictly one attitude toward life (Pascal, for instance, or Gassendi) could give a very free interpretation to another.

Many were the efforts during the eighteenth century to define the *philosophe*. The definitions differed widely, according to whether they expressed approval or disapproval. The *Dictionary of the French Academy* (1786) categorized the *philosophe* as a "wise man, who lives a quiet, secluded life, far from the troubles of business." In many respects it was the traditional picture of the philosopher which derived from the semantic meaning of the word and the idealized portrait of the character. On the other hand, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, a Jesuit publication, assigned the term to "'free-thinkers' who place themselves above the obligations of a Christian existence, and the life of a citizen and who, pretending to be free from all prejudices, mock those who respect established laws." Needless to say, the Jesuits regarded these individuals with hearty disapproval. Voltaire, on the other hand, declared at one time that he understood by the term the practical philosopher while his good friend Mme. du Deffand, who had a healthy dislike of the tribe in general, dubbed those who aspired to the title as so-called *philosophes*. Voltaire, in his letter to Helvétius (1758) presents a more favorable portrait. "The true *philosophe*," he wrote, "tills the uncultivated fields, increases the number of ploughs, and consequently of inhabitants, gives work and money to the poor, encourages marriages, provides for the orphan, does not protest against necessary taxes and offers the farmer means whereby to pay them with joy. He expects nothing from men, and he aids them as much as he can. He holds in horror the hypocrite, pities the unenlightened; in short he knows how to be a true friend." This idealized portrait of the philosopher as a public-spirited citizen, a benefactor of society, and man of virtue, was penned by Voltaire at a time when Helvétius was under fire for the publication of *De l'esprit* and Voltaire was busied with the writing of *Candide*. We should perhaps note here that in these contemporary definitions of the *philosophe*, the author is practically always swayed by his personal attitude to the type. Curiously, that trait still prevails in those of later times who attempt a definition.

Literary historians of the eighteenth century have shown that there

were attempts in the theatre of the time to depict the philosophe as an interesting dramatic type. The depiction, of course, varies, according to the favor or disfavor with which he was regarded. Consequently, as could be expected, there was no conformity in the presentation of the philosophe upon the stage. Some playwrights satirized him bitingly as a dangerous member of society. Palissot, for instance, whose *Les Philosophes* was patterned after Molière's *Femmes savantes*, actually put upon the stage recognizable philosophes of the time, such as Mme. Geoffrin, Diderot, Helvétius, and Rousseau. Other playwrights endeavored to stress that despite his pretense of being stoically above the human passions, the philosophe was, as everybody else, subject to those passions particularly that of love. Destouches, for instance, who wrote several comedies satirizing the philosophe—among them *Le Philosophe amoureux*—often took this point of view. Still others, such as Sedaine whose *Philosophe sans le savoir* was one of the outstanding plays of the century, tried to show that the philosophe was in reality a character endowed with common-sense and bourgeois virtues, a good citizen free from prejudices, and a practical philosopher divorced from the systematic problems of perennial philosophy but genuinely human and tolerant of the weaknesses of others. All told, there are about 225 plays in which a philosopher appears. In forty of them, a philosopher of antiquity became a leading character, such as in *Aristote amoureux*, or *Socrate*, who was the protagonist of a number of these plays. In about thirty of these plays, the philosophe was depicted as being in love; about twenty, of the order of Sedaine's *Philosophe sans le savoir*, depict the philosophe as a bourgeois character, an "honnête homme," filled with probity and virtue. The philosophe who, after suffering the vicissitudes of life, had withdrawn to the country to devote himself to solitude, reading, and meditating, appeared in about twenty-five of these plays. However, the largest group (about fifty), of which Palissot is representative, portrayed the philosophe as a cheat and a fake. Long before Palissot's *Philosophes*, though, there were plays of this kind (*Le Philosophe à la mode*, for instance, in 1720).

Various portrayals of philosophes can be found also in the fiction of the time. In *Manon Lescaut* the protagonist is portrayed at a certain moment as a "philosophe amoureux" and a "philosophe champêtre"; the protagonist of *Gil Blas* is portrayed in the same way at

the end of Le Sage's novel. The philosophe also appears in *Le Neveu de Rameau*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, *Zadig*, *Candide*, and *L'Ingénu*, some of the very best literature of the time.

There circulated in Paris around the decade of the 1730s a small treatise entitled *Le Philosophe* which endeavored to define that individual. Often attributed to Dumarsais (whose authorship has been questioned by some present-day scholars), it was published in 1743 in the *Nouvelles libertés de penser*. Thereafter, it appeared in a revised version in the *Encyclopédie*, thought to have been by Diderot, and was also included by Naigeon in a collection of essays entitled *Recueil philosophique* (1770). Naigeon's version was similar to that of the *Nouvelles libertés de penser*, but those given by Voltaire, in his edition of *Les Lois de Minos* (1773), and by Diderot were severely abridged in places and thus the emphasis was modified somewhat. We do not know whether the modifications were introduced because Diderot and Voltaire thought that the conception of the philosophe had changed between the 1730s and the 1770s or whether the changes represented the personal opinions of the two concerning the nature of the philosophe. At all events, there can be no doubt about its widespread circulation throughout a large part of the century.

The little essay stresses the ability of the philosophe to reflect upon himself, to know the world around him, to form his principles upon an infinite number of personal observations, to pay proper respect to facts, to recognize that the source of our knowledge lies outside ourselves, and to realize that this knowledge, though limited, leads to fruitful ideas. Nonetheless, the philosophe is not only a man of reflection, a gatherer of facts, a builder of ideas. He is also a social man; he must enjoy the comforts of life, he must like people. He is an "honnête homme" who wants to please and to be useful to others. He knows how to apportion his time between withdrawal from society and commerce with society. He is full of probity, honor, love of humanity, and he is devoted to the welfare of civil society. The article summarizes all these tendencies of the philosophe in a concise way: "The philosophe is indeed an 'honnête homme' who acts reasonably in all things, and who unites to a spirit of reflection and precision, good breeding and social attainment."

Some emphasis is placed upon rather specific details. The author

notes, for instance, that some philosophes are "those in whom the freedom of thought replaces reason, that they have attacked religion, and that they treat with contempt religious people." The author makes clear that he entirely dissociates himself from this kind of philosophe and actually disapproves of this religious stance. The philosophe about whom he is speaking reflects carefully upon the motives of his action and follows reason "as the Christian follows Grace." He establishes a judicial set of principles whereby he acts. He does not confuse truth with verisimilitude, knows when to doubt, acknowledges that the human mind is limited, and admits that judgment lies in discrimination, and "justesse d'esprit." He thus develops an "esprit philosophique." "L'esprit philosophique est donc un esprit d'observation et de justesse, qui rapporte tout à ses véritables principes." The author goes on to note that nobles have no time to meditate, while dogmatic philosophers meditate too much. On the contrary, the philosophe knows how to divide his time between meditation and social life. He is full of humanity, and yearns to qualify as a thorough human being as defined in Terence's *Self-tormentor*: "I am a man, and I consider nothing human foreign to me." He is jealous of honor and probity, exact in his civic obligations, a man of order. He refuses the life of the stoic because it is unnatural, he accepts the passions of the Epicureans but wants them under control. Finally, while not tormented by ambition, he wants to enjoy "les commodités de la vie."

The author of the article does not think of the philosophe as the creator of a system or even as possessing a world view. For him, the philosophe is not necessarily a writer, and it is possible that he never may become one. The impression is clear that he is not a professional philosopher, that he has no particular knowledge of previous philosophers and no interest in what they have thought and said. Of the twelve or thirteen superb philosophers of the seventeenth century, only one is mentioned in the treatise, and at that only by implication and unfavorably. Philosophy for this philosophe is a way of thinking, a way of life, an attitude, not a profession. As a matter of fact, he may be of any profession, a doctor, a lawyer, or he may engage in any other legitimate activity. Indeed, these professions have no close bearing upon his being a philosophe. His most outstanding characteristic is that he is a *person* who has adopted a way of life and who

lives this life, which is an ideal rather than an actual reality. Almost every time the author has attempted to find a type to whom the philosophe is likened, he calls him an "honnête homme"; an "honnête homme" who is intellectual, social, public-spirited, a lover of his fellow-man, ambitious to enjoy the good things of life, eager to share these things with his fellow-men. The fact stressed is that he is a citizen of this world, not of some future paradise; that his activity consists in making the present life as rich and full as possible. His confidence in his ability to achieve these ends is firm, but not limitless. He grants without hesitation that man is limited, but he assumes that man possesses the intelligence to work out his destiny. The philosophe is contrasted with the "dévot," the "superstitieux," and the stoic. He is not necessarily opposed to religion, though, nor to a modest luxury, he is not at all opposed to enjoyment of the good things of life, and though he condemns those who establish their judgments upon passions, he is far from condemning those who make a moderate use of them.

All told, Dumarsais's characterization actually fits the seventeenth-century "honnête homme" better than it does the eighteenth-century philosophe as we see him in Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot, but it fits more closely still the seventeenth-century free-thinker—Guy Patin, La Mothe le Vayer, and Naudé. Yet even among these erudite free-thinkers there is a big difference—their erudition. The erudite Dumarsais says practically nothing about the intellectual preoccupations and capacities of his philosophe, which certainly seem to be overshadowed by his social qualities. One might almost say that this is a Regency, not a Louis XV, philosophe.

The delineation of the philosophe in the essay is so reasonable that one wonders how the character could ever be considered dangerous either to society or to the institutions of the time. His qualities are so constituted as to make him personally attractive, culturally endowed, a good citizen, a reasonable member of the social order. Indeed, his outstanding virtue is a regard for order. There seems no possible way to condemn either his views, his attitudes, or his manner of living. Among these qualities there are even some which are consistent with Christian virtues: the love of one's neighbor, for instance. It seems inconceivable that any of these attributes could constitute a danger for society, or that the philosophe as presented

here could be considered a menace. Could it be that the little essay does not tell the whole story, that the portrait of the philosophe has here been idealized beyond recognition?

It seems to me that the only test which we could apply at this late date would be to study its popularity throughout the century or examine to what extent the portrait which we have here conforms to what we know about the outstanding philosophes of the time. Though obviously written in the early thirties, Dumarsais's essay was revised by Voltaire and published by him in the sixties and the seventies, it was incorporated by Naigeon in 1770 in a *Recueil philosophique*, and it ultimately found its way into the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, the *Encyclopédie*, and the *Encyclopédie méthodique*. Thus we have ample evidence that it was widely circulated throughout the century and that Voltaire and Diderot thought that the essay was either a good delineation of, or a good apology for, the philosophe. But to test whether the portrait is indeed a true one, we must inquire whether the four outstanding philosophes of the Enlightenment would measure up to the specifications which are laid down in the essay. Has the author well characterized Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot? Certainly in many respects: love of and a search for knowledge in the external world, along with a sense of its limits, and love of one's fellow-man loomed large for all four of them. Desire for material comforts, sociability, and love of humanity, also seem to apply, though there is much variation here and for Rousseau, some reservation is necessary. Nonetheless, while the definition applies to all four more or less in things not pertinently philosophical, the article is strangely silent about the intent of the philosophe, and these men were strong-willed individuals definitely intent upon shaping a new world. They were fully aware that what needed to be done was to release within each individual all the hidden powers which drive forward in ever-new creation. Neither the limits of these creative forces nor the realms in which they can best operate were specifically delineated by any of the four. But they all were certain that the possibility of creation lies within man and confident that man could use it in the moral, social, and political spheres. About the religious and esthetic spheres they were seemingly hesitant.

Bayle used his *Dictionnaire* to bring together the thought of the

ancient philosophers and the "new" philosophy, which he obviously understood to be the corps of ideas that had been developed by seventeenth-century philosophers and free-thinkers. Therefore, it would be reasonable to expect him to record the changes taking place and to show the consequent modification of the term "philosophe." This he does not seem to have done, however. He generally tended to point out how similar the ideas of the "new" philosophers were to those of the ancient philosophers, thus giving the impression that the problems of philosophy are always the same. Even on the rare occasions when he had ample opportunity to present his definition—as when (in I, 269^b) he refers to a "Portrait véritable d'un philosophe parfait," instead of an actual portrait—he called Apollonius of Tyana the model philosopher. In addition, he often stops to record an idea or a thought as a characteristic philosophical remark. Anaxagoras, for instance, insisted that everything is full of darkness, and Bayle adds that other philosophers make the same complaint. Bayle notes further that no philosopher can affirm that God has created the best possible world, because he knows but a very small portion of it and therefore he fails to comprehend God's plan, His views, His aim, and the interrelations of all the pieces. Bayle insists that God has the ideas of an infinite number of different worlds, all of them differing from each other. He notes that ancient philosophers were of two sorts. Those whom he called the advocates concealed their own weak spots and the strong points of their adversaries. The skeptics and the Academicians presented equally the strong and weak sides of both parties. Bayle insinuates that any philosopher who stays within the bounds of history ought to present scrupulously everything which deviant sects have proposed. If you were a professor of theology, he argues, presenting the doctrine of the Trinity, you would not stop at gathering the opinions of the orthodox, but take fully into account those which the heretics have offered, and you would develop whatever other objections you can find in your own meditation. This was the fairest description of Bayle's own dialectical method and it became the accepted historical method of the Enlightenment, at least in theory, although Bayle recorded that the theologian to whom he had been speaking replied: "Je m'en garderais bien." The description of the impartiality of the philosopher is nonetheless so characteristic of Bayle's procedures that one

can with difficulty avoid the belief that he sincerely thought this a recommendable method of every philosopher. The strongest statement which he made about the philosophy of the "new" philosophers was offered in connection with his remark that all philosophers have been thought irreligious. Bayle added this very significant remark (IV, 315^a):

Vous ne sauriez ôter de l'esprit d'une infinité de gens, que Descartes et Gassendi croyaient aussi peu la réalité que les fables de la Grèce. Vous auriez la même peine de persuader le monde que les sectateurs de ces deux grands philosophes sont bons Catholiques et que s'ils avaient la permission d'enseigner publiquement leurs principes, ils ne saperoient pas bientôt tous les fondements de la religion romaine. Les Protestants n'ont pas une meilleure opinion des dogmes de M. Descartes. Généralement parlant on soupçonne d'irréligion les Cartésiens, et l'on croit que leur philosophie est très dangereuse.

This was also Voltaire's opinion around 1738.

The *Dictionnaire* has a large number of these general observations which, digested slowly, always leave in the mind of the reader conclusions that he can ill avoid. In the article "Acosta," for instance, Bayle remarks that the mind of man is so contrived that, as a first impression, a neutrality in the worship of God is more shocking than a false worship. He disagrees (II, 25) with those who imagine that no one dares speak his mind in France—it is evident that the French speak and write very freely, he says. How could our news-writers know, inquires Bayle, what they publish about France, if the inhabitants of that country did not write their thoughts with the greatest freedom? He adds that they talk more freely than they write. In speaking of Elien, Bayle remarks that instead of limiting himself to abstract metaphysical statements understandable only to philosophers, he restricted himself to historical events, deducing from human actions the role of a wise Divinity who leads His people, punishes and rewards them. Bayle concludes that the philosophers did more to preserve religion in antiquity than the priests. The philosophers were the only theologians of the time who wrote upon religious and moral matters. When speaking of the Arnauld-Malebranche quarrel over "le souverain bien," Bayle suggests that philosophers often use technical, philosophical terms in a popular sense rather than in their philosophical meaning. In his review of Fonte-

nelle's *Entretiens*, he shows that "la vraie philosophie est une espèce d'enchère où ceux qui offrent de faire les choses à moins de frais, l'emportent sur les autres; que, par là, qu'on peut attraper le plan sur lequel la nature a fait son ouvrage, et qu'elle est d'une épargne extraordinaire dans l'exécution." Bayle adds that Fontenelle follows this method scrupulously in ruining the Ptolemaic system. Few people could conceive that problems of astronomy could be resolved so gaily, he says, and so imaginatively (I, 548). In speaking of Thomas-sin's *Méthode d'étudier et d'enseigner Chrétieunement la philosophie*, Bayle details three conclusions: (1) philosophers have always acknowledged that religion is the foundation of all societies; (2) they have directed all their philosophy to God; (3) for this reason, humanity owes to them its ideas concerning God and His eternal laws, which, but for them, would have been buried under the superstitions of ancient nations. Bayle also discloses other merits in philosophy. It can, for example, perfect the study of the humanities. In natural philosophy, the "new" philosophers have used simple, homely terms to explain the phenomena rather than the confused notions of qualities and faculties.

Keeping in mind this exposition of the *Encyclopédie's* specific remarks upon the nature of philosophy and Bayle's understanding of the meaning of the term, we should now turn back to the problem of the philosophe. It is obvious that from the point of view of the *Encyclopédie*, the philosophe could be expected to be interested in ideas, and particularly those ideas which concern morality, science, knowledge in general. Although the philosophe does not necessarily have an extensive knowledge in any of the scientific areas, he must be a seeker after wisdom in some way or other, or he does not qualify. It seems that first of all, he assembles facts. Indeed, Diderot made the remark that facts are the real riches of the philosophe. He organizes them in order to build principles, and from these principles, he deduces ways of acting. This process leads to a continual examination of phenomena—"il faut tout examiner, tout remuer sans exception et sans ménagement, oser voir" (V, 644 c). It leads also to the destruction of puerilities—"renverser les barrières que la raison n'aura pas posées"—to the establishment of freedom in the arts and sciences—"rendre aux sciences et aux arts une liberté qui leur est précieuse." Moreover, these things have to be passed on to others. Knowledge

can never be accessible to everybody—"cependant, les connaissances ne . . . peuvent devenir communes que jusqu'à un certain point." No one knows, however, as yet where those limits are. Diderot wrote in his article "Encyclopédie" that revolutions are necessary, there have always been revolutions, there always will be—revolutions of the human mind, that is. The *Encyclopédie* concedes, though (VIII, 671 b): "L'on n'a jusqu'ici guère vu de philosophes qui aient excité des révoltes, renversé le gouvernement, changé la forme de l'état." The implication is clearly that these things are now at hand.

The philosophe is now identified with the genius. In the article "Génie" (VII, 583 b), the statement is made that the genius hurries up the progress of philosophy through his discoveries, that he rushes to the goal he has set, he draws very fruitful principles from the shadows, and rarely does he have to go through the more methodical procedures of more pedestrian workers: "Il imagine plus qu'il n'a vu; il produit plus qu'il ne découvre, il entraîne plus qu'il ne conduit . . ." He does not admit anything without careful examination. He has in his reason a supreme confidence. He knows from experience that the search for truth is painful, but he does not grant that it is impossible. Nature is his only book. An attempt is made to draw his portrait in miniature (XIV, 494 b):

Le sage est, comme dit Leibniz, citoyen de toutes les républiques, mais il n'est pas le prêtre de tous les dieux, il observe tous les devoirs de la société, que la raison lui présente . . . Il met à profit l'instant qu'il tient, sans trop regretter celui qui est passé, ni trop compter celui qui s'approche. Il cultive surtout son esprit, il s'attache au progrès des arts, il les tourne au bien public, et la palme de l'honneur est dans sa main.

Essentially this is Horace's definition. In fact this article ends with a translation of Horace.

However, Diderot's ideal of the philosophe is not the Horatian stoic but the eclectic. In the article "Eclectique," he has attempted to present the kind of philosophe who tramples under foot all prejudices, tradition, antiquity, universal consent, authority, in a word everything which enslaves the common mob. He dares think for himself, always goes back to first principles, examines them with care, discusses them, admits nothing except what has been witnessed by himself and scrutinized by his reason. He either accepts something

as true if it is evidently so, rejects it as false if it is obviously not true, or suspends his judgment if he hesitates. In all things he is moderate. In addition, if he would be thought "un grand philosophe," he must be filled with an infinite amount of knowledge, both useful and agreeable, and possess "de grandes vues." Finally, he spends his time gathering the materials of the universe in order to construct the new buildings of the future. The eclectic is above all creative (V, 270 ff). He must be careful, though, not to fall into unbridled skepticism. The *Encyclopédie* (XIII, 423 b) notes that too often these modern eclectics, though enlightened and perfected in wisdom are sometimes entirely too "décisifs": "Sous prétexte de ne se rendre qu'à l'évidence, ils ont cru nier l'existence de toutes les choses qu'ils avaient peine à concevoir, sans faire réflexion qu'ils ne devaient nier que ces faits dont l'impossibilité est évidemment démontrée, c'est-à-dire qui impliquent contradiction."

It was, however, not so much philosophy or a philosophy as "l'esprit philosophique" which seemed to the French of the eighteenth century characteristic of their time. Grimm in his *Correspondance littéraire* (III, 338) celebrated its widespread existence and traced its origins back to Fontenelle, who at almost one hundred years old had just died. "L'esprit philosophique, aujourd'hui si généralement répandu," wrote Grimm, "doit ses premiers progrès à M. de Fontenelle." It was this "esprit philosophique" explained Grimm, which had contributed to extend the limits of enlightenment, the love for truth, and reason's empire. The *Encyclopédie* (XII, 510 a) defined it as "un esprit d'observation et de justesse, qui rapporte tout à ses véritables principes." Further (III, 871 a), "il y a dans toutes les choses une unité qui devrait être la même pour tous les hommes." This unity is established upon experience, although it is not the same for any two men, or any two acts, or even for any two moments. To constitute the philosophical character of a phenomenon, one would need to have knowledge approximate to this true unity, and conformity of sentiments and action in life to the knowledge which one has of this unity. From these two essentials derive moral, speculative philosophy and practical moral philosophy. Above all, the *Encyclopédie* elaborated (VII, 585 a), the one necessity in philosophy is to seek the truth with vigor and hope to attain it with patience. One must also have the ability to arrange ideas

in an orderly fashion and follow the chain of ideas in order to arrive at valid conclusions, or interrupt it in order to doubt. Constantly, "il faut de la recherche, de la discussion, de la lenteur. Ce sont ces hommes qui vont d'observations en observations à de justes conséquences." They are always motivated by curiosity, driven to truth by passion. The study of geometry, in addition to its normal usefulness in physics, has a utility in preparing the way to an "esprit philosophique," and even can train a whole nation to adopt the advantages which this "esprit philosophique" offers (VII, 628 b). The remark is made that in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the literatures were subjected to much criticism, naturally of a grammatical or textual order, but now that type of criticism is no longer so necessary, and it has given way to the "esprit philosophique" (VII, 399 b), which has become the outstanding characteristic of literature. When it is united with good taste, it forms a very accomplished writer. As a matter of fact, Diderot in the article "Encyclopédie" (V, 647 c) maintains that the whole *Encyclopédie* has been composed in a philosophical spirit. He urges that the "esprit métaphysique" be not confused with this philosophical spirit (VI, 681 b):

. . . le premier veut voir ses idées toutes nues, le second n'exige de la fiction que de les vêtir décemment . . . L'usage de l'esprit philosophique dans la poésie et dans les beaux-arts, consiste à en bannir les disparates, les contraitetés, les dissonances, à vouloir que les peintres et les poètes ne bâtissent pas en l'air des palais de marbre avec des voûtes massives . . . En un mot l'esprit qui condamne ces fictions extravagantes, est, lui-même qui observe, pénètre, développe la nature, cet esprit lumineux et profond qui n'est que l'esprit philosophique, le seul capable d'apprécier l'imitation, puisqu'il connaît seul le modèle.

D'Alembert, however, admits (I, xxxi) that widespread and useful as it is and characterized as it is by a desire to see everything, and to take nothing for granted, the "esprit philosophique" has been suspected of having been harmful to belles-lettres, and he suggests that in all likelihood the accusation is correct. Finally, Chastellux, in his *De la Félicité publique*, defines the philosophic spirit that which, applying itself to politics and morality concerns itself particularly with the happiness of man.

It is clear from these almost random selections that the philosophe has become an important member of society; his influence is wide-

spread and consequently extends far beyond the confines of a restricted, happy, noisy family. In fact, from the definitions we have assembled, it is apparent that almost anyone who wishes to can qualify for the title provided he has qualified for the society. The only credentials required of him are that he live in society, that he take an active interest in it, and that he accept some sort of responsibility for its welfare, its coherence, and its continuity. There is a strong suggestion that the philosophe must also live with ideas and that these ideas take their origin from the contact of the philosophe with the outside world. The constant interaction between the philosophe and the outside world vitalizes these ideas—they become in every sense of the word “living” ideas and they can do anything a living person can do except possibly die. As they unite into a body, they form an “esprit philosophique” which enhances and gives livingness to existence.

FONTENELLE AND THE PHILOSOPHIC SPIRIT

GRIMM stated that one of the earliest exponents of the "esprit philosophique" in the Enlightenment was Fontenelle. Since he was actually one of its inaugurators, we shall examine his philosophy and determine in what respects he is representative of the philosophe. Fortunately, some good documents are available to this pursuit. Fontenelle (1657-1757) spanned two epochs. He lived through the reign of Louis XIV and could have known all the great classic writers of the seventeenth and all the outstanding philosophes of the eighteenth centuries. He could have known personally all the great philosophers of the seventeenth century, except for Bacon, Descartes, Gassendi, and Pascal who died when he was five years old. There are many resemblances between the free-thinker Saint-Evremond, who also had a long life, and the philosophe Fontenelle, and between them they spanned practically one hundred and fifty years of French intellectual history. Both were skeptically oriented. "Tout est possible et tout le monde a raison," Fontenelle is reported to have said. "Si je tenais la vérité dans la main, je me garderais bien de l'ouvrir." Both men were highly rational. "Ne rien croire que par raison, savoir douter, savoir ignorer," wrote Fontenelle. Both were interested in writing, particularly poetry and drama, and they were not very good at either. They satisfied their literary urge by writing essays or sometimes dialogues, and in this area both were extremely successful. Their curiosity, their tendency toward moralizations, their skeptical interest in history, and their rather passive resignation to the foibles of their fellow men were fully appreciated by their aristocratic salon audience. There was though, some modest difference in their intellectual interests. Saint-Evremond was more interested in history and problems of causation, while Fontenelle was more committed to natural science, but the difference is not of great importance. Fundamentally, they both aspired to be modern—that is, they examined the past with a mildly critical eye in order to understand the present, and they tried to believe that they looked upon the sciences of the present in an effort to comprehend the possibilities of the future. In truth they were not very enthusiastic about change and not very hopeful about the future. Still, although Saint-Evremond found it hard to shift from Descartes

to Locke, he did journey to Holland to visit Spinoza, and although Fontenelle could enthusiastically proclaim the new over the old astronomy, he still clung obstinately to Cartesian vortices rather than turn to Newtonian attraction. Finally, both were closely identified with salon life, with the life of the academies, and with that society which was now predominantly feminine and aristocratic.

While these characteristics are not necessarily those of a bona fide philosopher, they are the traits of an intellectual attitude and the expression of a spirit. One who possessed them was often called a "bel esprit." He advocated modernity and intellectualism, but had also become critical, skeptical, negative and insisted that these three qualities are the mark of a reasonable man. In reality, this "bel esprit" was the merging of two attitudes, one of which was the affirmation of doubt; the other, the declaration of man's potentialities. But there was nothing active, positive, nor, surely, excessive about this way of life. Fontenelle was notoriously negative, totally divorced from any real human reaction, and free from sentiment, except perhaps for a mild overdose of Normand vanity. Mme. Geoffrin was said to have asked him one day if he had ever laughed, and he answered: "Non, Mme., je n'ai jamais fait ah! ah!" The buxom, jolly, good-natured Mme. Geoffrin was overcome, and she added: "He has never wept, he has never become angry, he has never even run." He did have emotions, though, and a rather large amount of vanity, which his audience of the salons, and many of his fellow academicians nurtured. There were those, such as Grimm, who maintained that although his essays and entretiens—*Dialogues des morts* (1683), *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686), *Histoire des oracles* (1687), *Digression sur les anciens et les modernes* (1688), *Eloges des académiciens* (1708), and *De l'Origine des fables* (1724)—were highly successful with their content, he came near wrecking good taste with his bel esprit. Fontenelle would not have conceded this point. On the contrary, he thought that his style, which had much in common with an earlier "préciosité," was precisely what added enjoyment to his material. It must be admitted that despite Voltaire's jealousy of Fontenelle's widespread renown and a consequent malicious attack upon him in *Micromégas*, he could not deny the service Fontenelle had rendered his time as a popularizer of scientific matters. Voltaire probably irritated his colleague, but even

he could not upset Fontenelle's built-in serenity. Nonetheless, Voltaire's witty parody of *bel esprit* and his references to the "Secrétaire perpétuel de l'Académie de Saturne" have stuck. He should have been more grateful: without being too aware of it, he had shaped his own career to 1734, but certainly not his style, upon Fontenelle's.

The result of all this serene intellectual inactivity, skeptically elaborated, is that Fontenelle is not only the transition between the seventeenth-century free-thinker and the eighteenth-century philosophe, he supplies the necessary liaison between the world of science and the world of literature, as well as that between the French Academy and the Académie des Sciences. From 1699 until 1711 it was his task to write the annual summaries of the scientific contributions made to the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences*, as well as the *Eloges* of the Academicians. He also united the scientific world with the world of society. The salons lionized him because he had taught them the joys of the intellectual life in a way which was not too painful. Yet he was not superficial. It is true that he announced his intention to "traiter la philosophie d'une manière qui ne fût pas philosophique." His respect for clear thinking, for clarity of expression, his ready analogies as a means of interpreting difficult scientific problems, his broad intellectual interests, and above all his constant but quietly expressed faith in logic, in science, and in a modest progress was a real incentive to an age which had been alternately supremely great, and discouragingly weak. And he was not a simpleton; his judgment, in matters of science, morality, and religion were often uncanny.

The Abbé Trublet, Fontenelle's self-constituted biographer, once said that having studied law to please his father who was a barrister, and having pled one case which he lost, Fontenelle devoted the rest of his life to philosophy and literature. The implication was, I suppose, that he practiced these two vocations alternately, and to some extent he did, but his important contribution, which gained for him a great reputation, was his ability to be literary and philosophical at the same time. Philosophically, he was distinguished by being moral, religious, scientific, and even at times by a touch of metaphysics—as in his essay on "Liberté," for instance. The concept which bound these elements together was the play between ancient and modern, appearances and reality, folly and reason, falsehood and

truth. His manner of presentation is practically always paradoxical, the best case being the *Dialogues des morts*, where the protagonists have a tendency to take the least likely side of an argument (the ancient will defend the point of view favorable to the modern while the modern will do the opposite). This paradox, which became a fixed principle of Enlightenment thought, was a type of irony discreetly manipulated by Fontenelle, but often used thereafter by many who were unaware they were doing so. With Fontenelle, it becomes a mask which reveals his discretion and his tact, while concealing his involvement and his intention. Voltaire used the paradox beautifully in *Micromégas* where he exploited and parodied it simultaneously, but the Jesuit Malagrida was even better when he said that "God gave man speech to conceal his thoughts."

The *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686) combined a description of the new astronomy with a traditional myth: the plurality of inhabited worlds. The new astronomy had been inaugurated in 1543 when Copernicus published his *De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, challenging the Ptolemaic system. From 1543 on, there emerged a long line of remarkable astronomers: Giordano Bruno, Kepler, Tycho Brahé, Kircher, Galileo, and Descartes. Curiously, in this group of European scholars, there was a steady progression toward the adoption of the Copernican system, which previously had been discounted. (See Wade, *Intellectual Origins of the French Enlightenment*.) The progression from Copernicus to Newton can be traced through G. Bruno (*La Cena delle ceneri*), Kepler, Tycho Brahé, and Kircher to Galileo (*Diálogo dei massimi sistema*) and Descartes (*Monde*). Curiously, the myth of inhabited worlds, which went back to Lucian (*Vera historia*) and Plutarch (*De Facie in orbe lunae*), had been picked up again by Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) in his *De Docta ignorantia*. Bruno and Campanella were disciples of Cusanus. Kepler, who was immensely important with Tycho Brahé because of the three essential laws of movement so necessary to Newton, actually wrote an imaginary novel, *Iter exstatica*, which related a journey through the heavens. Kircher also related another journey, while Galileo and Descartes stuck more closely to detailing the formation and order of the universe. Nonetheless, the Abbé Daniel, using Descartes's material, created a fictional world in *Voyage au monde de Descartes*, while Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre*

monde appeared in 1657, the very year of Fontenelle's birth. Huyghens's *Cosmotheoros*, which in many respects was the best written of the lot, did not appear until after the *Entretiens*. Godwin's *The Man in the Moon* and John Wilkens's *Discovery of a New World* both were published in English in 1638. French translations of these works were published at Rouen in 1656.

The *Entretiens*, a work of scientific vulgarization that could only have a historical and literary interest now, were published in 1686, the year preceding the appearance of Newton's *Principia*. Fontenelle's treatise was a model for similar works of vulgarization in the Enlightenment. Algarotti, in the *Newtonismo per le dame*, adopted its format and style and, indeed, dedicated his work to Fontenelle. Helvétius has pointed out the necessity of works of this sort as a means of establishing some communication between the scientist and the general public. I think, though, that it is more important as marking a moment when literature gave value to scientific thought but only to a literature-oriented audience. Fontenelle was actually experimenting with a technique derived from the "esprit de conversation" prevalent in the drawing-rooms. The literary aspect of the work which was perfectly natural in a literary man now turning to general science was more or less familiar to the ladies of the salons who would want to know something, but not too much, about the new astronomy. Nonetheless, the setting is really more important for Fontenelle's design than the content and its conformity with the conversational style of the salon. The opening dialogue about "blondes" and "brunes" and the gallantries which pass between Fontenelle and the Marquise appear to us insipid. To the audience to which they were addressed, they must have added another attraction.

This was only one of Fontenelle's many approaches, however. In the *Histoire des oracles*, he presents his material in an entirely different way. Composed (in Latin) by Van Dale before Fontenelle undertook his revision and translation, it was a work of solid historical erudition which was to be transformed into a popular attack against a "préjugé." One has only to read the preface to see that the whole orientation has changed and yet the fundamental goal has remained the same: to broaden the base of those who are better informed about intellectual matters. Fontenelle intends to prove that what is generally believed about the rendering of oracles by demons is false and

that what is thought about their cessation with the coming of Christ is incorrect. He states that he had at first decided to translate Van Dale's work into French for the benefit of those men and women who do not read Latin fluently, because it is both agreeable and profitable. On second thought, however, he had decided that it was too erudite. Consequently, he confesses that he has revised the treatise, using Van Dale's science, but adding his own "esprit."

In the *Digression sur les anciens et les modernes*, which was printed as the preface to a book of eclogues, the preface is the book. Here Fontenelle seems to have laid aside the external trappings of the two previous works. He appears less interested in the "agréments" of his style, less interested in smoothing the intellectual development of his audience's curiosity. In the *Digression* one problem is presented: On what grounds can one say that antiquity is superior to modern times? Fontenelle bent all his intellectual energies to prove that on no grounds can one sustain that assertion, and he did so with remarkable succinctness and brilliance, building his argument upon a paradox, as always, and developing it with magnificent clarity. While the same suave, logical, skeptical, superficial Fontenelle emerges, he somehow seems enlarged, tougher, less urbane, more Normand, and intellectually unyielding. Carré in his voluminous volume upon Fontenelle entitled it "Le Sourire de la raison." Rather than a smile, I see an almost deadly rationalism in the *Digression*. It was Fontenelle's masterful way of handling a philosophical point from which can be deduced a subsequent philosophy—in this case the philosophy of progress. The Enlightenment's whole intellectual image of itself derives from that philosophy.

On the other hand, *De l'Origine des fables* is a general historical theory, a sort of philosophy of history, which as Carré has said (Introduction, p. 2) "comporte des applications polémiques." In Fontenelle's opinion, fables were employed in the beginning of all history. Before the community had any means for transcribing these fables, they were currently passed around because it lies in human nature to want to relate (and to exaggerate) stories, particularly those that appear miraculous. Thus the earliest history of ancient times will be a collection of fabulous occurrences which will be given a religious meaning. The phenomena of nature will be explained as

actions of the Gods, said Fontenelle, and the Gods will be endowed not with superior wisdom and justice, but with extraordinary physical strength. This attribution of superhuman brutality to the gods comes from the perfectly human tendency of thinking of them as more powerful humans. However, as time passes and the ability to transcribe events develops, the fabulous, miraculous activities of man and the gods are modified into more believable ones. The false miracle of earliest times is transformed into a more acceptable miracle for later centuries, but not until peoples have transmitted their earliest fables to others and not until those others have been affected by these foreign fables. Fontenelle seems to think that human folly is universal, that human nature has the same common foundation and the same errors. Each human being has the same kind of imagination which creates these fables and, though a weak and imperfect instrument, this imagination is still much stronger than the human mind. Fontenelle asserts that in the early ages both religion and crude philosophy were built upon the imagination: "On explique par une philosophie chimérique ce qu'il y avait de surprenant dans l'histoire des faits." Another change took place when people discovered that there were two advantages in keeping the record of history straight: the prestige of the community was enhanced and the demands of a more enlightened reason were satisfied. Fontenelle's main point is that all history is fundamentally the history of the human mind and the way it operates with the phenomena of this universe. This point unites the *Origine des fables* with *Sur l'histoire*. Much of the *Origine* is built from selected passages of *Sur l'histoire*, with the result that both works have merged, to some extent. Fontenelle's main ideas must be carefully separated. First, all early histories are false, fabulous, miraculous and bound by a false theogony, a false philosophy, and a false concept of moral action. Second, all true history is the history of the human mind in its efforts to free itself from its own erroneous tendencies, to express itself in its own human aspirations. It is simply the history of reason.

Fontenelle endeavored to define this history of the human mind in comprehensible terms in this little essay *Sur l'histoire*. Two of his statements merit careful attention, since they underlie the whole process. Fontenelle insists that the history he has in mind is the history of reason. Shortly thereafter, he calls it the history of history.

The first statement indicates that what definitely does not interest him are the factual events—dynasties, wars, treaties, negotiations, and even disasters. Not that he excludes them from his history. He uses them to emphasize some trait of human nature, demonstrate wherein lies the error of action, or explain how the event led to a certain result. But his goal is to move from the factual event to the motive or motives. And here the human mind—man's reason—enters into the picture. In passing from the event (which is a fact) to the reason for its occurrence (which is a motion, a movement), the historian himself moves from fact to principle (that is, the principle of the action, the motive force). What reveals the motive force of an action is the human mind. It does so in two ways: first by revealing the motives, and second by the reasons producing the actual event. But the mind not only reveals the extent to which it is aware of the possibilities, it also sees itself in the midst of its own possibilities. This particular revelation of the mind to itself in the producing of an act is what the Enlightenment will come to define as "seeing one's self in." The passions and the imagination urge the mind to do something about the possibilities. The underlying motives of the passions are acquired manners and customs—*mœurs*—which the mind has already learned from previous experiences and which will now be enlarged by this new experience. History for Fontenelle is tracing the ramifications of the human mind as it shuttles back and forth from awareness of being to awareness of being "in," to awareness of possible moves, to passionate determination to take a particular move, to creating thereby a new event. It literally is a demonstration of what you think is what you are, and what you are is what history will be. But Fontenelle did not dare to venture so far; he merely started the Enlightenment in motion. It should be noted, however, that Fontenelle does not explain his work as the history of one man, but rather as the history of a people. Hence, the passions, the manners and customs, the movement, the motives, the possibilities, the action, the events occur in the collective group, but only because these things take their origin in one individual mind. Thus the "*esprit humain*" in its progression is constantly becoming "*l'esprit du peuple*." That is why Fontenelle wrote in the *Sur l'histoire*: "*Il vaudrait mieux que l'on me fît entrer dans les vrais caractères des peuples que de m'apprendre quelles provinces ils ont usurpées les uns sur les autres. Je*

serais bien aise de voir au lieu de ce mouvement qui ne se fait que sur la surface de la terre, celui qui se fait continuellement dans les esprits des peuples." That is why in his *Eloge de Gallois*, he said: "Une des plus agréables histoires, et sans doute la plus philosophique, est celle des progrès de l'esprit humain." However, the synthesis of the whole historical procedure as Fontenelle glimpsed it was contained in a paragraph in the *Eloge de Leibniz*:

Un homme de la trempe de M. Leibniz, qui est dans l'étude de l'histoire, en sait tirer de certaines réflexions générales élevées au-dessus de l'histoire même, et, dans cet amas confus et immense de faits, il démêle un ordre et des liaisons délicates qui n'y sont que pour lui. Ce qui l'intéresse le plus ce sont les origines des nations, de leurs langues, de leurs mœurs, de leurs opinions, surtout l'histoire de l'esprit humain, et une succession de pensées qui naissent dans les peuples les unes après les autres, ou plutôt les unes des autres, et dont l'enchaînement bien observé pourrait donner lieu à des espèces de prophéties.

The circle is now complete: man starts with false fables, but thanks to the power of the human mind, he can arrive at true prophecy.

Despite all of Fontenelle's originality and richness in regard to the "new" kind of history, he was prevented by his own inherent temperament from seeing entirely the advantages of his discovery. His conclusions tend to negative results and he seems to celebrate that this "new" history brings out "the errors and passions of men." When in the *Sur l'histoire*, he discusses the utility of this kind of history, he has the astuteness to note that in things which concern the human mind, the useful is "tout ce qui nous conduit ou à nous connaître ou à connaître les autres." He adds further: "Quelqu'un qui aurait bien de l'esprit, en considérant simplement la nature humaine, devinerait toute l'histoire." But after noting this positive utility, he reverts to the idea that what mankind derives ultimately from the vision of his prophecy is that "elle fournit des matériaux de pensées, elle fait connaître les principaux écueils de la raison humaine, marque les routes les plus sûres et, ce qui est le plus considérable, elle apprend aux plus grands génies qu'ils ont eu des pareils, et que leurs pareils se sont trompés." If he wanted to be completely consistent, he should have said, "et que leurs pareils se sont ainsi créés." At all events, that is what his contemporaries learned from him, despite him.

THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHERS AS SEEN BY THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THROUGHOUT the eighteenth century, repeated efforts were made to synthesize seventeenth-century thought. The first clear effort was made by Bayle in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697) where he gathered together in alphabetical order the material to build a history of ideas from earliest times to his own day. Bayle presented the outstanding philosophical schools and the superior representatives of each school. In the notes he endeavored to show the affiliation among the schools, and often compared the basic philosophical position of each with that of a modern philosopher. He included free-thinkers of the seventeenth century, such as Charron, Naudé, La Mothe le Vayer, and Patin. To give continuity to the development of philosophy from antiquity to the present he selected a few representative philosophers of the Schoolmen and the Paduans. Special articles were devoted to some seventeenth-century philosophers—Bacon, Pascal, Hobbes, and Spinoza. Others—Gassendi, Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz—were assigned places in subject articles. Bayle's *Dictionnaire* was not only the first, it was an excellent history of ideas. Moreover, the tendency to abridge the *Dictionnaire* often resulted in collections of the articles on philosophers under special rubrics (De Marsy's, for instance). There can be no doubt that Bayle is the most important medium whereby the ancestors of eighteenth-century thought, both ancient and modern, entered into the Enlightenment.

A second work devised to give a history of philosophy from earliest times to the Enlightenment was Deslandes's *Histoire de la philosophie* (Amsterdam, 1756, 4 vols., in-12°; an earlier edition was published in 1737, in three volumes). Although the work covered the development of philosophy from antiquity to contemporary times, only volume four treated modern times, that is, the Renaissance, with some generalizations concerning the difference between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It also contained a fifty-page essay concerning what antiquity thought about the nature of the Deity. At the very end of the volume, however, Deslandes promised two additional volumes which would contain a history of the "heart and

mind" of man, treated in his own way of seeing life. It would, he said, provide the specific details of the virtues and vices, the cruelties and injustices which have triumphed in each century, the small list of virtuous kings and the long list of tyrants. In addition, the progress of the human mind and the efforts made toward it by the great philosophers and the outstanding legislators would be demonstrated; the establishment of religion in each country, the changes which have taken place either by chance or by design, and, above all, "les différents goûts qui ont succédé le uns aux autres, soit dans les mœurs, soit dans les sentiments, soit par rapport au commerce ordinaire de la vie" would be discussed. This project seems to have similarities to Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs*, though Deslandes seems never to have composed it.

What emerges from the fourth volume is a set of principles and definitions. Deslandes stresses the great extent of philosophy which includes so many different parts, each so different from the other that it is impossible to embrace them all. He insists, likewise, that philosophy cannot be judged by simple extracts which often are in contradiction with each other and which always are lacking in continuity. However, more important than these two rules of prudence are three definitions which he gives:

(1) *La vraie science* consists in using one's mind in choosing the best authors who have a reputation for honesty, wisdom, and sincerity, and in judging their works according to the lights of the reader, not according to the views of the authors. It consists in seizing the spirit of each thing, in discerning the essential from the transitory, and in using one's judgment to enlarge knowledge.

(2) *Croire* means to examine seriously, according to one's lights, the degree of credibility in what has been proposed and the strength of the reasons given. It consists in the ability to separate truth from the appearance of truth, certainty from probability, evidence from falsity. It carries within itself the conviction that one can draw no reasonable conclusion other than that one has drawn along with a firm resolve to abide by it.

(3) *Philosophes* are those who love truth or rather those few truths to which the human being is restricted. They are those who dare enter into the heart of religion, to distinguish in detail both the morality common to mankind and the politics which is the common morality of rulers. They are those who seek the essential rather than the accidental, the useful rather than the frivolous "dans cet amas d'opinions, de préjugés, de

mœurs, d'usages, de loix et de coutumes répandus sur la face de la terre." Deslandes concludes his definitions with a plea for that natural religion which consists in the adoration of God and the love of one's fellow-man.

Deslandes divides the ancients into two groups: those who affirm the coexistence and interrelationship of God and matter, and those who maintain the existence of a single substance. The second group is also of two sorts: those who establish a "subtle" naturalism and those who propose a "coarse" naturalism. These latter he defines as believers in the sole efficacy of natural law. They deny all revelation, assert that the Christ is a sublime prophet who has taught humanity an excellent morality. But they reject the divinity of Christ and hold that the Gospel is but a restatement of natural law. Deslandes finds that these views are very common among the Socinians, the English Latitudinarians, free-thinkers in general, and Spinoza, whom he does not regard very favorably, despite his own evident dependence upon him. Deslandes himself accepts the existence of God as fundamental—that is, he is a deist—and declares that the ontological proofs of His existence appeal to the more intelligent, while the proofs from final causes are more commonly accepted by the masses. He notes that these latter proofs are understandable to everybody, especially since great progress has been made in physics, astronomy, and natural history. He adds that moral proofs which show either that God is infinite or that He possesses infinite perfections are lacking, although these statements invalidate to some extent the ontological proofs.

Deslandes's sketch of the historical development of the Enlightenment is summary, but not devoid of interest. In one sentence he hails the rise of "temps sereins et claires," "temps heureux qui virent renaître et refleurir les sciences, les arts, les talens," first in Italy, then throughout Europe. He attributes the movement to the rise of talented men—such as Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio—to increased royal patronage and to the arrival of Greek refugees from Constantinople. He mentions also the invention of printing and the rise of humanism. The latter movement he condemns for its slavish imitation of antiquity, but he notes that it gave rise to many treatises on the manners and customs of the Greeks and Romans: "les loix, leurs mœurs, les coutumes, leurs usages, leurs habillemens, leurs repas, leur

milice." From this penetration of ancient civilization rose an interest in the sciences and the arts; first to be developed were those sciences which depended upon memory and the imagination. Then came an interest in philosophy—especially Aristotle and Plato. From enthusiasm for philosophy came confidence in the rise of reason: "l'esprit philosophique commençait à s'établir sur leurs ruines." Deslandes notes the importance of the Universities of Padua and Pisa in the movement. He devotes a chapter to Lorenzo Valla, another to Leo X, under whose pontificate "la liberté de philosopher fut poussée à l'extrême." Some claimed that the human mind could not prove the immortality of the soul, others asserted that the human understanding is but a part of a simple substance called the World Soul. Nor does he forget to mention the "double truth" of Pomponazzi.

He sums up his presentation by comparing the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The former, he said, produced a greater number of scholars but it cannot compare with the latter in enlightenment. Its learning was chiefly limited to philology, not to a profound study of phenomena, nor did sixteenth-century scholars manifest more than an ambition to gain renown. In contrast, the seventeenth century saw the development of exquisite taste accompanied by solid discernment. Sixteenth-century scholars boasted of a vast, profound erudition, which was also tedious, factual, detailed, while that of the seventeenth, though less extensive, was more judicious and led to the new philosophy of Descartes. As a result, great changes took place: reason entered into its rights, the spirit of free inquiry and discussion spread, mathematics made great strides, many modern machines were invented, and finally, the new philosophy gave a unity to all the sciences.

In the same year in which Deslandes brought out his four-volume history of philosophy, a *Concise History of Philosophy* (London, 1756) was published in England. Formey, its author, endeavored to define philosophy in the Introduction as "the science which teaches the improvement of human reason." It is a universal art of which all the other sciences are parts. Its goal is happiness. Formey adds words of praise for both Beausobre's *Histoire du manichéisme* and Brucker's *History of Philosophy* ("one of those works which will do most honor to this age"). Formey notes that the spread of philosophy always coincided with the rise of empire. He divides his history into

three sections: from the flood to the founding of Rome, from the Roman Empire to the revival of learning, and from the Renaissance to 1750.

His section on the Greeks did in abridged fashion what Bayle's *Dictionnaire* did more extensively. The section on Rome gave an adequate account of eclectic philosophy and, after some attention to Seneca, traced very briefly the philosophical groups—peripatetics, eclectics, stoics, cynics, Epicureans, skeptics. His final section was divided into two parts, the first according to sects, the second according to philosophers—all of whom he treated as eclectics. The two sects he emphasized were the Gassendists ("who were held in some degree of reputation") and the skeptics, especially Montaigne ("one of the most pleasing and ingenious defenders of skepticism, and consequently more dangerous and more seductive. His *Essays* are an immortal performance"). Formey adds La Mothe and Bayle ("by most scholars considered as the greatest genius that ever existed, yet he is for this only the more culpable, as having turned that genius to the most unprofitable purpose"). He sees Bayle as a genius with evil intentions: "His whole view is equally to establish both sides of an argument, and so by balancing forces oppose them to each other, till both are entirely destroyed. He contrasts without end the truths of reason, and those of revelation, and while he gives the preference to the latter, it is generally in a manner the most cruelly ironical." Formey, under the title "Eclectics," devoted thorough sketches to Bruno, Cardano, and Bacon, whom he called the father of modern eclectic philosophy: "all the modern improvements in philosophy are in a great measure to be ascribed to him." He also wrote about Campanella and Hobbes, whose ideas are detailed with some care. He assured his readers that Descartes will ever be reckoned an extraordinary man. Although he seemed to destroy the errors of the ancient philosophers in order to establish new errors of his own, Descartes steered men in the right pursuit of truth by his example, thus ensuring his reputation for posterity. Formey adds that Descartes ultimately had a conference of reconciliation with Gassendi: "these two extraordinary men in some measure compromised their differences on philosophical subjects, and united their systems into one." Although his treatment of Descartes and Wolff is relatively full, Formey makes small mention of Leibniz, Locke, and Newton.

He switches his method of discussion from individual philosophers to specific subjects which illustrate particular aspects of philosophy—logic, natural philosophy, metaphysics, morality, and politics. These treatments are the most elementary of the book. He concludes with the remark that skepticism is more widespread than ever.

Though apparently nothing more than an elementary text upon the history of philosophy, Formey's book should not be treated casually; his papers had been procured by the publishers of the *Encyclopédie*, even before Diderot and D'Alembert were appointed to head the enterprise. I do not know to what use these papers were put nor do I know anything about their contents. Nonetheless, the importance that Formey, in his little manual, attributed to the "eclectics" and the way he characterized their activities is interesting in relation to the fact that only shortly before his work appeared (1756), Diderot's article on eclecticism was published in the *Encyclopédie*. Since Diderot also found that the active philosophical role of the time was performed by the eclectics, there are certainly reasons to infer that Diderot and Formey are closer together in their interpretation of the philosophy of the time than has been thought possible in the past.

In 1762, Savérien began to bring out an eight-volume *Histoire de la Philosophie moderne* with a general preface that was an apology for philosophy. Savérien agreed fully with Formey that the goal of philosophy is the felicity of mankind. This goal is attained by keeping the human mind busy with knowledge and engaged in calming the passions. Savérien also asserted that human reason is the one great possession of man, who acquires a perfect use of it only by a profound study of its possible effects. This he does by a continual inquiry into man and nature. To this relationship, Savérien assigned the term *Ethice*, and "Ethyiciens" are metaphysicians, moralists, and legislators. Ultimately, Savérien calls them all metaphysicians and assigns to them the position of prime importance. They are represented by those who have had the genius to analyze all the activities of man and the phenomena of nature—"restorers of science," Savérien calls them. They are followed by the mathematicians, the physicists, and the historians of nature, called naturalists. Savérien insists that the best way to treat these special subjects of philosophy

is first to write the history of each branch separately and then to bring them together into a composite history of philosophy.

This is not precisely what he has done, however. Book I is devoted to those who have made their contribution in metaphysics: Erasmus, Hobbes, Nicole, Locke, Spinoza, Malebranche, Bayle, Abbadie, Clarke and Collins. Book II is devoted to the moralists and the political theorists: Montaigne, Charron, Grotius, La Rochefoucauld, Pufendorf, Cumberland, La Bruyère, Duquet, Wollaston, Shaftesbury. Books III and IV discuss those whom Savérien called the restorers of the sciences: Ramus, Bacon, Gassendi, Descartes, Pascal, Newton, Leibniz, Halley, Bernouilly, Wolff. Book V treats the mathematicians: Copernicus, Viète, Tycho Brahé, Galileo, Kepler, Fermat, Cassini, Huyghens, La Hire, and Varignon. Book VI presents the physicists: Rohault, Boyle, Hartsoeker, Polinière, Molières, Désaguliers, 'Sgravesande, and Musschenbrœck. Book VII brings together the chemists and the cosmologists: Paracelse, Lefèvre, Kunkel, Burnet, Lémery, Homberg, Maillet, Woodward, and Bœrhaave. Book VIII includes the naturalists: Agricola, Gessner, Aldrovande, Belon, Jonston, Lister, Plumier, Tournefort, Hales, and Réaumur. Each philosopher is accorded an essay ranging from modest size to full-length treatise, according to his presumed importance. Each volume is introduced by a seventy-five page *Discours préliminaire* which endeavors to give the essential characteristics of the philosophers discussed and the importance of each subject to the full picture of philosophy.

Savérien insists that the principal preoccupation of the metaphysicians is the nature of the human reason, which the philosopher uses constantly to decompose the affections of the soul, its perceptions, its passions, its freedom, and to discover the source of its errors, its prejudices, its illusions, and its perfections. The metaphysician wants to know one's self, but he understands that to achieve this end he must be aware of the workings, the limits, and the power of human understanding. Once he has gained some insight into these problems, he can then address himself to the nature of the Deity, and to the objects of this universe. It is astonishing to what extent Savérien's analysis represents the position of Locke. This tendency to make the study of the human mind's capabilities the ultimate prob-

lem of philosophy is what leads the author to emphasize that the art of thinking is really the core of metaphysics. Only after one is aware of the powers of reason, and the operation of the instrument, should he turn to the three subjects of greatest interest: God, the understanding, and ontology. Savérien insists, as did his whole century, that the problems of the understanding are crucial, since the human mind is the one force which guides man in all his actions.

In this way, metaphysics and morality go together, the former analyzing the powers of the mind; the latter, the actions derived therefrom. This combination is at the source of the theory, "know thyself"; once achieved, one can then proceed to the knowledge of God and the knowledge of nature. Logic, discernment, ability to distinguish between the true and the false and to analyze ideas—these are the essentials for the advancement of knowledge. He who knows the faculties of the understanding, and how to use them sagely, can readily judge man and enter into the study of the sciences, since he now has at his command the principles of all science.

Savérien now explains how he has reduced all metaphysics to its principal objectives which are: (1) the analysis of man, his passions and his deviations, both personal and social—in short a "tableau de l'humanité," in which can be found the foundation of all law; (2) the nature and the faculties of the human mind: its origin, its progress, and its limits; (3) the art of thinking: its procedures and its capacity to direct the operations of the mind; (4) the use to which thought can be put in living; (5) the art of separating truth from falsehood, illusion, and error to which man is often subject; and (6) the nature of God and His attributes and those of beings in general.

Savérien selects metaphysicians who represent each of these processes. Erasmus, he finds, has depicted man best. Hobbes has best analyzed those principles which bind men together and maintain them in a society. Nicole and Bayle have developed superbly well rules for the conduct of thought, which, in general, serve to direct all the operations of the mind. Locke has given the keenest analysis of the understanding, its faculties, origin, progress, and extent of its knowledge. Malebranche has given the best analysis of the causes of our errors, our illusions, our prejudices. He has pointed out the surest means of avoiding them in our search for truth and established an excellent method for pursuing this research. Abbadie has written

upon how to know one's self and others. Collins has published a treatise on the use of reason, and its relation to freedom and necessity. Spinoza's system on the nature of being is the subtlest philosophical work which has ever appeared, while Clarke's demonstration of the existence and attributes of God is the fullest.

Savérien distinguishes four ages in the history of philosophy: before the Greeks entered Egypt, the age of the Greeks, the age of the commentaries on the Greeks, and the Renaissance. It is the history of the fourth epoch which he proposes to write. Begun in Italy, the revival passed into Germany and from there spread throughout Europe. It is distinguished by "tout ce que la métaphysique a de plus sublime et de plus sensé, la morale a de plus vertueux, les mathématiques de plus utile, la physique de plus curieux, et l'histoire naturelle de plus rare." Savérien confesses that he holds the ambition to merge elegance of expression with clarity of presentation, and these two with erudition and criticism. He boasts that he has consulted all the works—such as memoirs, éloges, and notices—which have been written on the modern philosophers (indeed, for each, he has included a short bibliography). He asserts that he has made every effort to extract their morality, their systems, and their discoveries from their works. He ends by recommending Jacob Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* in five volumes. He ventures to select Gassendi, Bacon, Descartes, Leibniz, Newton and Wolff as the most extraordinary philosophers, adding that "ce sont à eux que toutes les sciences sont redevables." He concedes that despite their brilliance, Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, and Collins have each fallen into serious errors.

The three philosophers who, in his opinion, stand out above all the others are Descartes, Newton, and Leibniz. Descartes began by rejecting Aristotle, but his real achievement was teaching men the art of thinking and the use of their reason. He established a methodical doubt, brought back evidence as the criterion of truth, and applied mathematics to natural philosophy. In this way he opened the eyes of almost everybody. Descartes's great mistake was trying to transport himself to the beginning of creation and deducing from the events the phenomena he had observed. Newton, on the contrary, began with the phenomena itself and adduced the principles, whatever they might be. Descartes was handicapped because phenomena were en-

tirely too complicated and the knowledge of them was not far advanced. Therefore he failed where Newton succeeded. Refusing to be concerned with the world's creation, Newton wanted to know not how it might have been formed, but in what way it had been formed. "Il établit deux forces, en fait voir les loix, les combine, et démontre les effets de cette combinaison." Savérien presents the normal objections made to Newton's system: the accusation of occultism, the fact that it does not account for certain phenomena (why planets move from west to east, for instance, or why they describe an ellipsis). Moreover, while Newton was organizing his system, Leibniz, using Descartes's principles, was offering a third explanation. He retained the concept of subtle matter, the plenum, and the vortices, to bring out the mechanical universe, created in a perfect way by an absolute, inviolable necessity.

Savérien's eight volumes have an importance in the development of philosophy which has never been accorded them. The very fact that they were not profound, but that they were as clear, as factually correct, and as inclusive in content as the author could make them, gave them a significance in the development of ideas which should be recognized. They were in all probability less meaningful than Brucker's five-volume history of philosophy, which Professor Proust has shown to have been so essential to Diderot's articles in the *Encyclopédie* upon the philosophers. But, as supplementary material to Brucker and Diderot, as well as a synthesis of philosophical thought in the 1760s, they were extremely useful. I should perhaps add here that if one wished to take the trouble to collect Voltaire's views on the history of philosophy from his *Traité de métaphysique* (1734) to his *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* (9 vols., in-8°, 1772), those views would resemble those of Savérien more than of any other historian of philosophy of the time.

Among the outstanding French representatives of Enlightenment, the most influential philosophe was Voltaire. It was he who made the decision to make the changeover from poetry to philosophy, and having made that decision, he devoted some fifteen years to prepare himself in the field of philosophy. We are fortunate in being able to follow exactly the crucial steps he took in that preparation, and

the means whereby he conducted his investigations. We can trace how he assembled the ideas of each of the twelve leading European philosophers from Montaigne to Bayle and Fontenelle. We even know what his considered opinion was concerning the validity of each of these ideas. We can in many cases mark out his personal reaction to each. It is now essential to show how this whole massive aggregate of philosophical ideas eventually became his Voltaireanism because the solution to this problem lies, in my opinion, at the dead center of the Enlightenment's reality. Voltaire is the one person absolutely essential to the transformation of the seventeenth-century age of arts and letters into the eighteenth-century age of thought and action, the person who thereby created the conditions for modern times. It was he who gathered together all the developments in art and thought and organized them, first for himself, then for his time. This is why he stands at the dead center of the Enlightenment's reality, although his position there seems largely a closely guarded secret.

Thanks to people such as Lanson, we can follow in fairly abundant detail how Voltaire, having devoted twenty-five years to being the poet of his time was persuaded by circumstances to become the philosopher of his age. It was really he (not Diderot) who deserved the title *Le Philosophe*, but it was (if I see things correctly) Diderot—really Voltaire's most admiring and most recalcitrant student—who carried this new philosophy into the following age.

Voltaire decided to become a poet after his training in *belles-lettres* at Louis-le-Grand with the Jesuits and his experience with the salons and social centers of the Regency and post-Regency. His definition of the poet, to be sure, was the Boileau definition: "*vraies pensées et expressions justes.*" The poetry he knew contained thought in a polished form. He decided that his best chance of success lay in imitating the poetry of Horace, which at that time was reputed to best fit the definition of excellent poetry. Because of this myth, Boileau was known as the *Horace français*. Horace, however, was reputed to be, in addition to his ability to say in poetry anything he wished, satiric, conversational, and philosophical. The latter quality meant mainly that he could express the phenomena of life in different moods—particularly Epicurean, stoic, and skeptical. A number of seventeenth-century French poets shared these qualities with Horace

and transmitted them to Voltaire, who particularly adopted as models Chaulieu and La Fare. Hence, Voltaire's early poetry was Horatian in manner in that it was technically refined, satiric in intent, conversational in style, and stoical, Epicurean, or skeptical in mood. But the genre in which these poetic qualities were cast (drama, lyric, épître or epic) really did not matter. It merely gave Voltaire the satisfaction of boasting that he was past master in all poetry—something that no French poet had ever been. Thus from the very first, if one didn't look too closely beneath the surface, one could accept Voltaire's categorization of himself as poet and thinker, without drawing too taut a line between the two.

The first event that turned Voltaire to a consideration of this possibility was Bolingbroke's letter of June 1724. Voltaire's poetic career had been launched only recently with *Œdipe*, *L'Épître à Uranie*, and *La Ligue* (1719-1723). Bolingbroke, who reveled in the task of advising friends what to do, urged Voltaire to lay aside his newfound interest in Descartes and Malebranche and to look more carefully into the philosophical worth of Newton and Locke; that is, to compare the merits of French and English contemporary philosophy. There is every indication that this is just what Voltaire did while in England, but I am not sure philosophy displaced poetry as a major interest during the English sojourn. It did intrigue Voltaire, who, in his natural desire to admire things patently English, possibly beguiled himself into believing, as many of his contemporaries did, that thought was more characteristically English and art more typically French. But Voltaire's interest was captivated at the time by a new kind of history, which drove him to ponder how to analyze a civilization. The *Lettres philosophiques* was Voltaire's early solution of this problem, produced after he withdrew to Cirey to reeducate himself. However, not until his intellectual revolution of 1738 was he capable of fully using the broadened encyclopedic material he had accumulated. In the meantime, another experience jolted him. In a trip to Paris, on 16 April 1735, he had noticed a widespread move away from poetry toward natural science. He recorded his awareness of it in a letter to Thiériot and announced his intention of entering upon the double task of "poétiser et philosopher":

Les vers ne sont plus guère à la mode à Paris. Tout le monde commence à faire le géomètre et le physicien. On se mêle de raisonner . . . Ce n'est pas

que je sois fâché que la philosophie soit cultivée, mais je ne voudrais pas qu'elle devînt un tiran qui exclût tout le reste.

From that point on, everything which Voltaire touched gradually became more and more "philosophique." Right away he acquired a tendency to break up his "new" learning into natural science, history, metaphysics, morale, religion, politics, economics. The pseudo-critical method which he assumed was, he thought, philosophical. He moved very swiftly into literary, moral, historical, political and religious criticism. He also moved from the philosophical Horatian poem via La Fontaine and the oriental tale, gradually to the "conte philosophique." He developed speedily the philosophical letter which he adapted to dialogue, entretien, essay. In his hands, even drama, epic, ode, or conte became analytic, philosophical, propagandistic, encyclopedic.

All of this entailed a totally new orientation of his thought, and he was no more qualified to undertake it than you and I, but undertake it he did. The evidence can be found in the correspondence, in the philosopher's works which he accumulated in his library, in the *Mélanges* he produced in seventeen volumes. It was indeed from the study of these philosophies that he ultimately forged his Voltaireanism. It is not that Voltaireanism that we will consider here but rather the way he regarded each of the twelve outstanding Enlightenment philosophers of the seventeenth century. (See Wade, *Intellectual Development of Voltaire*, Part IV, "Voltaire and the Philosophers," pp. 573-719.)

It should be noted that even before the Bolingbroke letter of 1724, Voltaire had made some move to get acquainted with Descartes and Malebranche. The evidence for that is in the letter itself. There is not the faintest suggestion, however, that he had formulated the plan of turning to the whole group of seventeenth-century philosophers. Bolingbroke merely suggested that Newton and Locke were superior to Descartes and Malebranche. Apparently, Voltaire made a rather hurried investigation into Descartes and Malebranche (1723-1726) and found time during the English sojourn to get acquainted superficially with Newton. It seems hardly possible that he found time to give serious attention to Locke much before the second English notebook, which was written after his return from England (1729 or 1730). The really serious attention to Locke probably dated from