Essay on the Study of Literature.
London, T. Becket & P. A. De Hondt, in the Strand.
MDCCLXI

To
EDWARD GIBBON, Esq;[1]

Dear Sir,

No performance is, in my opinion, more contemptible than a Dedication of the common sort; when some great man is presented with a book, which, if Science be the subject, he is incapable of understanding; if polite Literature, incapable of tasting: and this honor is done him, as a reward for virtues, which he neither does, nor desires to, possess. I know but two kinds of dedications, which can do honor either to the patron or author. The first is, when an unexperienced writer addresses himself to a master of the art, in which he endeavours to excel; whose example he is ambitious of imitating; by whose advice he has been directed, or whose approbation he is anxious to deserve.

The other sort is yet more honorable. It is dictated by the heart, and offered to some person who is dear to us, because he ought to be so. It is an opportunity we embrace with pleasure of making public those sentiments of esteem, of friendship, of gratitude, or of all together, which we really feel, and which therefore we desire should be known.

I hope, dear Sir, my past conduct will easily lead you to discover to what principle you should attribute this epistle; which, if it surprises, will, I hope, not displease you. If I am capable of producing any thing worthy the attention of the public, it is to you that I owe it; to that truly paternal care which, from the first dawnings of my reason, has always watched over my education, and afforded me every opportunity of improvement. Permit me here to express my grateful sense of your tenderness to me, and to assure you, that the study of my whole life shall be to acquit myself, in some measure, of obligations I can never fully repay.

I am,
dear Sir,
with the sincerest
affection and regard,
your most dutiful son,
and faithful servant,

May the 28th, 1761

E. GIBBON, Junior.

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1 [The dedication was written in English, and the spelling I have used here follows that of the 1761 London edition.]

A Note to The Reader

THE production that here sees the light is truly an essay. I should like to know myself. My own bias and that of several friends would inspire the most advantageous ideas of it, if my Apollo,[2] that secret voice which I cannot silence, did not often warn me to beware of their praise. Should I limit myself to gratefully collecting the achievements of my predecessors? May I hope to add something to the common treasury of truths or at least of ideas? I shall try to hear the judgment of the public and even its silence, and I shall hear it only to obey. There will be no philippics against the age, no appeals to posterity.

The desire to justify a favorite form of study, which is to say, a slightly disguised form of self-love, gave rise to the following reflections. I wished to liberate an estimable science from the contempt in which it presently languishes. It is true that the ancients are still read, but they are no longer studied. They are no longer given that attention and battery of learning that Cicero and Bossuet require of their readers. There are still men of taste, but there are few literary men; and anyone who knows that men of letters can forgo prizes more easily than they can public esteem will hardly be surprised.

I repeat once again that what you are about to read is an essay, not a complete treatise. I have considered literature from several points of view that struck me. Others, no doubt, escaped me. Others still I neglected. I have not at all penetrated into the immense quarry of the fine arts, the beauties which they borrow from literature and those which they repay. Would that I were a Caylus or a Spence![3] I would raise an eternal monument to their alliance. There we would see the image of Jupiter born in Homer's brain and taking shape under the chisel of Phidias. But I have not at all said with Correggio, "I too am a painter."

3 February 1759.

This short work, the entertainment of my country leisure, has been kept in waiting for two years. I at last take the risk of giving it to the public. I must beg indulgence for the content and for the language. My youth entitles me to the one, and the fact that I am a foreigner makes the other quite necessary.

26 April 1761.

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2 ---- Cynthius aurem
Vellit et admonuit.

3 Author of a work entitled *Polymetis*: The mythology of the poets is there combined with that of the sculptors. This work is full of taste and knowledge and deserves to be better known in France.

ESSAY ON
the Study of Literature

Idea of literary history.

I. The History of Empires is the history of human misery. The history of the Sciences is that of human greatness and happiness. The Philosopher must have a thousand different reasons to consider the study of the sciences as precious, but this one thought will endear it to any friend of humankind.

Sciences subject to fashion[4]

II. How I wish there were no exceptions to such a consoling truth! But alas! man intrudes all too often into the scholar's cabinet. Even in that asylum of wisdom he is misled by prejudice, torn by passions, and debased by weakness.

The Empire of fashion is built on human inconstancy. The origins of that Empire are as frivolous as its effects are baneful. The man of letters dares not shake off its yoke, and if his thoughts stave off the moment of defeat, they make it more shameful.

In every country and every age, some science has enjoyed a privilege that was often unjustified, while others languished under a no less unreasonable contempt. Metaphysics and Dialectic under Alexander's successors,[5] Politics and Eloquence during the Roman Republic, History and Poetry in the age of Augustus, Grammar and Jurisprudence in the late Empire, Scholastic Philosophy in the 13th century, and Belles-Lettres down through the time of our fathers: these have in turn been objects of admiration and contempt. At present Natural Philosophy and Mathematics are seated on the throne, from which they view their sisters prostrated before them, enchained to their chariot, or at best employed to decorate their triumphal procession. Perhaps their fall may not be far off.

It would be a worthy task for a man of clever talents to trace this revolution in Religions, Governments, and Manners, by which men have successively been led astray, disappointed, and corrupted. Let him beware of looking for a system, but let him beware even more of avoiding one.

Revival of Belles-Lettres. The taste then had for them.

III. If the Greeks had not been slaves, the Latins would still be barbarians. Constantinople fell to Mohammed's sword. The Medicis gave shelter to the bereaved Muses and encouraged the world of Letters. Erasmus did still more, by cultivating them. Homer and Cicero penetrated into lands

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4 [This heading is in the manuscript but not in the published version.]

5 This was the Age of Philosophical sects that fought for the Systems of their respective Masters with all the ferocity of theologians.

The Love of systems necessarily gives rise to the love of general principles, which usually leads to a contempt for detailed knowledge.

"The Love of systems (says M. Fréret) which took hold of the Greek mind after Aristotle, brought an end to the study of nature and to progress in philosophical discoveries: subtle reasoning replaced experiment; the exact sciences, Geometry, Astronomy, true Philosophy, almost entirely disappeared. Concern for acquiring new knowledge was given up in favor of classifying and forming relations within the knowledge believed already to exist, in order to form systems. This gave rise to all the different sects. The best minds evaporated in the abstractions of obscure Metaphysics, in which words most often took the place of things, and Dialectic, which Aristotle called the Mind's instrument, became the primary and almost the sole object of attention among his disciples. Whole lives were spent in studying the art of reasoning, but never in reasoning, or at least never in reasoning on objects that were not fantastical." *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. VI, p. 150.

unknown to Alexander and unconquered by the Romans. In this age the handsome thing was to study and admire the ancients;[6] our age thinks it easier to ignore and despise them. I believe both sides are right. The warrior read the ancients in his tent. The statesman studied them in his cabinet. And even the sex that is satisfied with grace, and leaves the lights of intellect to us, enhanced its beauty by Delia's example, and hoped for a lover like Tibullus. Elizabeth (a name that speaks volumes to a Sage) learned from Herodotus how to defend the rights of humankind against a new Xerxes, and when the conflict was over, she imagined herself celebrated by Aeschylus, as one of the victors of Salamis.[7,8]

If Christina preferred science to the government of a state, she may be despised by the Politician and blamed by the Philosopher. But the man of letters will cherish her memory. That Queen studied the ancients and respected their interpreters. She favored Salmasius, who deserved neither the admiration of his contemporaries nor the contempt that we insistently heap upon him.

The taste carried to excess.

IV. No doubt she carried her admiration for such scholars too far. I shall often defend them, but never shall I be zealous on their behalf; and I readily admit that their manners were crude and their work sometimes trifling; their minds loaded with pedantic erudition, they produced commentary on what they should have felt, and compiled when they should have reasoned. The world was enlightened enough to feel the utility of their work, but neither reasonable nor polite enough to realize that their investigations could have been guided by the torch of Philosophy.

When it became more reasonable.

V. Light was soon to appear. Descartes was no Literary man, but Belles-Lettres are quite indebted to him. An enlightened Philosopher[9] who inherited his method has fathomed the true principles of Criticism. Le Bossu, Boileau, Rapin, and Brumoy taught men better to appreciate the value of the treasures in their possession. One of those Societies which did more to immortalize Louis XIV than his ambitions, which were often dangerous to men, had already begun its investigations, in which just thinking, amenity, and erudition are united; and in which we find many discoveries and sometimes, too, what is hardly less valuable than the discoveries: a modest, learned ignorance.

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6 Leaf through the Latin Library of Fabricius, who was the best of those who were only compilers. You will find that within forty years after the start of printing, almost all the Latin authors had been printed, some of them more than once. It is true that the editors' taste was not equaled by their zeal. The authors of the Augustan History were published before Livy, and Aulus Gellius was brought out before any thought was given to Virgil.

7 Aeschylus produced a tragedy (The Persians) which paints in the liveliest colors the glory of the Greeks and the consternation of the Persians after the day at Salamis.

See P. Brumoy, *Le Théâtre des Grecs*, vol. II, p. 171, etc.

8 Let us listen to President Hénault. "This princess was learned. In the course of a discussion one day with Calignon, who later became the Chancellor of Navarre, she showed him a Latin translation she had made of several tragedies by Sophocles and two orations by Demosthenes. She allowed him to copy a Greek epigram of her own composition and also asked his opinion on some passages of Lycophron that she had at hand and wished to translate."

Abrégé chronologique in quarto, Paris 1752, p. 397.

9 M. Le Clerc, in his excellent *Ars critica* as well as several other of his books.

If men reasoned as much through their actions as in their talk, Belles-Lettres would be an object of admiration to the vulgar and of esteem to the wise.

Decadence of Belles-Lettres.

VI. The decadence of Belles-Lettres dates from this Epoch. Over sixty years ago, the complaint was already heard from Le Clerc, a man to whom the sciences and liberty owe praise. But the fatal blow was dealt in the course of the famous quarrel of the ancients and the moderns. Never was a battle so ill-matched. Terrasson's exacting Logic, Fontenelle's subtle Philosophy, La Motte's elegant felicity of style, and St. Hyacinthe's light banter combined to reduce Homer to the likes of Chapelain. Their opponents retorted only with an attachment to minute details, I know not what vague claims for the natural superiority of the ancients, and prejudice, insults, and citations. All the ridicule lay on their side. Some of it even tainted the ancients, on whose behalf they quarreled. And in that amiable nation, which had unthinkingly adopted the principles of Lord Shaftesbury, no distinction was made between wrong and ridiculous.

Since then, our Philosophers have been astonished that men could spend their whole lives collecting facts and words, loading up their memories instead of enlightening their minds. Today's Wits have understood how much they could gain by having ignorant readers. So they have heaped contempt on the ancients and on those who still study them.[10,11]

VII. I should like to follow this portrait with some thoughts that will fix a just value for the Belles-Lettres.

Great men Literary men.

The examples of great men prove nothing. Before Cassini had determined the situation of the Planets, he believed he could read men's fate in them.[12] However, when they are numerous, their examples predispose us prior to the test, and confirm us afterward. One feels at first that a genius capable of reasoning or a lively, brilliant imagination will never show taste for a science based on memory alone. Of all the men who have enlightened the world a number were engaged in the study of Belles-Lettres. Many cultivated them whereas none, or next to none, despised them. All of antiquity displayed itself to Grotius without a veil. Enlightened by its light, he unfolded the sacred oracles, fought against ignorance and superstition, and softened the horrors of war. Descartes was so entirely committed to Philosophy that he despised any branch of study that did

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[10] The name Belles-Lettres, which a long usage seemed to consecrate, was withdrawn from this practice in favor of the name of erudition (1). Our Literary men became *Erudits*.

In 1721 abbé Massieu decried that word as a Neologism (2). Would he change his tone today? It would ill become a foreigner to decide. I know the rights that great writers exercise over their language, but once they have recognized that men of erudition can have taste, broad views, and finesse (3), I should like them to stop using the term to designate a servile admirer of the ancients, who is all the blinder for having seen everything there is to see in them, except the grace and beauty (4).

(1) See La Motte and d'Alembert.

(2) Massieu in his preface to the works of Toureil.

(3) M. d'Alembert in the article on "Erudition" in the French *Encyclopédie*.

(4) M. d'Alembert in the preliminary discourse to the *Encyclopédie*, and elsewhere.

[11] Fontenelle, in his digression on the ancients and the moderns, and elsewhere.
Works of Gresset, vol. II, p. 45.

[12] Fontenelle, in his panegyric.
Voltaire, vol. XVII, p. 79.

not relate to it, but Newton[13] did not scorn to devise a system of Chronology that attracted partisans and many admirers. Gassendi, who was the best Philosopher among the Literary men and the best Literary man among the Philosophers, was a Critic when he expounded Epicurus and a Natural Philosopher in defending him. Leibniz moved from immensity, in his historical research, to the infinitesimal. Had he published his edition of Martianus Capella, his example would have justified Literary men and his lights would have enlightened them.[14] Bayle's Dictionary will be an eternal monument to the force and fecundity of erudition combined with genius.

Literary men great men.

VIII. If we confine our attention to men who devoted almost all their efforts to Literature, the true connoisseurs will always know how to apprehend and appreciate the delicate, vast mind of Erasmus, the precision of Casaubon and of Gerard Vossius, the liveliness of Justus Lipsius, the taste and finesse of Taneguy-le-Febvre, the resources and fecundity of Isaac Vossius, the bold penetration of Bentley, the amenity of Massieu and Fraguier, the solid, enlightened criticism of Sallier, the deep philosophical minds of Le Clerc and Fréret. These great men will not be confused with mere compilers, such as Gruter, Salmasius, Masson, and so many others. Although their works may truly be useful, these men never deserve our admiration, are rarely to our taste, and only occasionally win our esteem.

TASTE. Three sources of beauty.

IX. For those who will dare to follow in their steps, the ancient authors provide models; for others, they provide readings in the principles of good taste, precious productions which can fill their leisure hours with study, and in which truth only appears as embellished by the treasures of the imagination. Poets and Orators must paint nature. The entire Universe can supply them with colors, but in its immense variety the images they call upon can be divided into three classes: man, nature, and art. The images that most surely lead a writer to immortality are of the first kind, involving the portrait of man, his greatness and meanness, his passions and vicissitudes. Every time that we read Euripides and Terence we discover new beauties. But these Poets owe their fame neither to their plots, which are often faulty, nor to the hidden finesse of their happy simplicity. The heart recognizes itself in their true and naive portraits, and does so with pleasure.

Vast though it is, nature has supplied very few images to the Poets. Limited to an external view by their aims or by human prejudice, they have managed to paint only the successive variations of the seasons, the sea roused by storms, the Zephyrs of Spring exhaling love and pleasures. A small number of geniuses soon exhausted these images.

Artificial images.

X. Art remained. By art I mean everything with which men have adorned or disfigured nature, religions, governments, and customs. They have all made use of art, and it must be allowed that all were right to do so. Fellow citizens and contemporaries listened effortlessly, and read them with pleasure. In the works of the great men of their nation they were pleased to find everything

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13 In reforming the common chronology, Newton discovered errors of between five and six hundred years. See my critical remarks on this Chronology.

14 The Life of Leibniz, by de Neufville, which precedes his *Théodicée*.

that made their ancestors respectable, everything they held sacred, and every practice they considered useful.

Ancient Manners favorable to Poetry in the art of War.

XI. Ancient Manners were more favorable to Poetry than ours. It is highly probable that the Ancients surpassed us in this regard.

As the arts attained perfection, their workings were simplified. In war, in politics, in religion, greater effects were produced by simpler causes. There is no doubt that a Maurice and a Cumberland[15] understood the art of war better than an Achilles or an Ajax.

> On Scamander's banks the likes were never known
> When Pyrrhus ravaged those walls of high renown
> And on chariot the heroes of antiquity
> Fought pell-mell or marched in disarray.[16]

But are the battles of the French Poet as varied as those of the Greek? Are his heroes as interesting? The single battles of the warlords, the long speeches delivered to the dying, the unexpected encounters, all display the childhood of art while conferring on the Poet the means to acquaint us with his heroes and to interest us in their fates. Today's armies are vast machines animated by the breath of the General. The Muse refuses to describe their maneuvers and dares not penetrate the cloud of gunpowder and dust, in which the brave man and the coward, the officer and the soldier, are concealed from her view.

In Politics.

XII. The ancient Greek Republics ignored the first principles of good government. The people gathered in tumult to decide rather than deliberate. Their factions were furious and unending, sedition frequent and terrifying, their finest hours full of distrust, jealousy, and confusion.[17] The Citizens were unhappy; but the imagination of the Writers was so stirred by these terrible scenes that they painted them the way they felt them. The calm administration of the law, and the salutary decisions that issue from the cabinet of one man or of a small number, will spread happiness among an entire people but they will not move the Poet to more than admiration, the coldest of all passions.

In Religion.

XIII. Ancient Mythology animated all of nature and extended its influence to the Poet's pen. Inspired by the Muse he sang of the traits, adventures, and misfortunes of the Gods. The infinite Being whom we know through Religion and Philosophy is above such song. The sublime is

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15 I have nowise sought to pay a compliment to his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland, whose birth and rank I infinitely respect, without daring to measure his military talent. If it is remembered that the verses which follow are excerpted from a Poem on the battle of Fontenoy, the speaker will be understood to be M. de Voltaire rather than myself. I do not think this remark is superfluous. Some wits have been mistaken on this point.

16 *Voltaire's Works*, vol. II, p. 300 [translation RM].

17 See book III of Thucydides.
Diodorus Siculus, from book XI to XX, almost everywhere.
Abbé Terrasson's preface to vol. III of his translation of Diodorus, and Hume's Political Essays, p. 191.

puerile in his regard. We may be struck by Moses's *fiat*[18] but reason cannot fathom the works of the Deity, who effortlessly and immediately sets millions of worlds into motion; and the imagination cannot view Milton's Devils with pleasure, when they do battle with the armies of the Almighty for two days.[19]

The ancients understood their advantages and used them to success. The best proof is that we still admire their masterpieces today.

Means of feeling these beauties.

XIV. But we were born under a different Sky and another age. All these beauties would necessarily be lost if we could not adopt the same viewpoint as the Greeks and the Romans. A detailed knowledge of their age is the only means by which we may attain this. A few superficial ideas, and the lights borrowed from a commentary when we require help, will allow us to grasp only the most immediate, obvious sources of beauty. All the grace and finesse of their works will escape us, and we will have to accuse their contemporaries of being tasteless in lavishing praise on them, when it is our ignorance that prevents us from feeling its justness. A knowledge of antiquity is the true commentary. But what is even more necessary is a certain spirit that comes as a result, a spirit that enables us not only to know things but also to be familiar with them and to see them with the eyes of the ancients. The famous example of Perrault will convey what I mean. The crudeness of the heroic ages shocked the Parisian. Boileau showed him repeatedly, but in vain, that what Homer sought to do and had to do was paint Greeks, not Frenchmen. His mind remained convinced, without being persuaded.[20] An antique taste (I mean for conventional ideas) would have enlightened him more than all his opponent's lessons.

Artificial images derive from the love of glory.

XV. I said a moment ago that reason authorized artificial images, but I do not know that the same verdict would be handed down at the court of glory. We all love glory but nothing varies so much as the nature and degree of that love. Every man differs in his way of loving glory. One Writer loves the praise only of his Contemporaries. Death puts an end to all his hopes, and all his fears. The tomb that receives his body may also bury his name. A writer of this stamp need not hesitate in using images familiar to the only judges whose applause he seeks. Another writer bequeaths his name to the farthest posterity.[21] He is pleased to think that a thousand years after his death, his works will be read by an Indian on the banks of the Ganges and a Laplander locked in ice, who will envy the country and age of his birth.

Someone who writes for all men must draw only on sources common to all men, in their hearts and in the spectacle of nature. Pride alone can lead him to overstep these limits. He may

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18 See the pieces by Huet and Despréaux, in vol. iii of the latter's Works.

19 We are surprised in Milton by the golden compass with which the Creator measures the universe. It may be a puerile stroke in his work; in Homer it would have been sublime. Our philosophical ideas of the Deity are harmful to the Poet. The same ornaments that would enhance the Jupiter of the Greeks disfigure our Deity. Milton's fine Genius struggles against the system of his own Religion and never appears so great as when he is somewhat liberated from it. In contrast, though he is a cold and weak declaimer, Propertius is celebrated because of the cheerful spectacle of his Mythology.

20 See M. Despréaux's Remarks on Longinus.

21 Mallet's *Life of Bacon*, p. 27.

presume that the beauty of his writings will always earn him a Burman, who will labor to explain him, and who will admire him all the more for having explained him.

And from the nature of the Subject.

XVI. Not only the author's character but that of his work will have an influence on the way it is carried out. Elevated forms of poetry, epic, tragedy, and odes will borrow such images more rarely than comedy and satire, since the former paint passions where the latter sketch manners. Horace and Plautus are almost incomprehensible for readers who have not learned to live and think like the Roman people. Plautus's rival, the elegant Terence, is better understood since he sacrificed wit to good taste, where Plautus offered up propriety to wit. Terence dreamed that he was painting Athenians, and everything in his plays is Greek except the language.[22] Plautus knew he was speaking to Romans and whether at Thebes, Athens, or Calydon, the manners, laws, and even the buildings in his works are Roman.[23]

Contrast between the childhood and the greatness of Rome.

XVII. Among the Heroic Poets, though Manners are not the object of their paintings, they often adorn the background. It is impossible to be sensitive to the design, art, and details in Virgil without being fully informed of Roman history, law, and religion; the geography of Italy; the character of Augustus and the special, unique relation which that Prince maintained with the senate and people.[24] Nothing was more striking, and more interesting for this people, than the contrast between the thatched city with three thousand citizens inside its walls[25] and the same city of Rome now the capital of the universe, with houses that were palaces; citizens, princes; and provinces, empires. Since Florus grasped this contrast, Virgil may be trusted not to have missed it. He painted it with the brushstrokes of a grand master. Evander leads his guest to a village where everything has a rustic feel, including the Monarch. He explains its antiquities, and the Poet skillfully allows us to glimpse what awaits this village, the future Capitol buried in thorns.[26] How lively a painting! How eloquent a contrast for a man learned in antiquity! And how bland for a reader who brings to Virgil no more preparation than natural taste and a smattering of Latin!

Virgil's art.

XVIII. The better we possess antiquity, the more admirable we find this Poet's art. His subject was slender enough. The flight of a band of exiles, their combat with some villagers, a rude settlement: these are the vaunted deeds of pious Aeneas. But the Poet made them noble, and in doing so, he knew how to make them even more interesting. By means of an illusion that is too

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22 See Terence, "Eunuchus," II, ii; "Heauton," I, i.
The *Cupedinarii* mentioned by Terence in no way weaken this point. Even if we do not adopt Salmasius's conjecture, this word had evolved from a proper name to an appellation. Cf. "Eunuchus," II, ii.

23 "Amphitryon," I, i. "Quid faciam nunc, si Tresviri me in carcerem compegerint," etc.

24 See the Dissertations of M. de la Bleterie on the power of the Emperors. *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XIX, pp. 357–457; vol. XXI, pp. 299ff.; vol. XXIV, pp. 261ff., p. 279, etc.

25 Varron, *De Lingua latina*, book IV; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, book XI, p. 76; Plutarch on Romulus.

26 Virgil, *Aeneid*, book VIII, ll. 185–370.
Hinc ad Tarpeïam sedem, et Capitolia ducit
Aurea nunc, olim sylvestribus horrida dumis
---------- armenta videbant
Romanosque foro et lautis mugire carinis.

refined not to escape common readers, and too happy for judges to frown upon, he embellishes the manners of the heroic ages without disguising them.[27] The shepherd Latinus and the seditious Turnus are transformed into powerful Monarchs. All of Italy fears for its liberty. Aeneas triumphs over men and Gods. Virgil was still capable of reflecting the glory of the Romans back onto the Trojans. The founder of Rome eclipses the founder of Lavinium. A fire starts to life; soon it will blaze over the whole earth. Aeneas, if I dare venture an image, contains the seed of all his descendants. When he is besieged in his camp, he recalls Caesar and Alexia. We cannot divide our admiration.

Virgil never uses his art so well as when, on descending into the underworld with his hero, his imagination seems free of art. He has no need of new, fantastic beings. Romulus and Brutus, Scipio and Caesar, all appear in the way that the Romans admired or feared them.

The Georgics.

XIX. We read the Georgics with that keen taste which arises from beauty and that delicious pleasure which the charm of their subject inspires in every candid, sensitive soul. The reader may feel even greater admiration if he discovers that the goal of the author is as lofty as his execution is accomplished. I always draw my examples from Virgil. His beautiful verses, and the precepts of his friend Horace, fixed the taste of the Romans, and both will instruct to the farthest posterity. But to develop my ideas, I must go back a little.

The Veterans.

XX. The first Romans fought for glory and country. Since the siege at Veii,[28] they received a rather modest salary and occasional bounties after the triumphs.[29] But these were received as a favor, not as an obligation. When the war was over, every soldier became a citizen and returned to his home, hanging his idle weapons on the wall, ready to take them up again at the first alarm.

When Sulla restored peace to the republic, the situation was very different. Over three hundred thousand men had grown accustomed to carnage and luxury.[30] They had no goods, no country, no principles, and they demanded a bounty. If the Dictator had rewarded them in money, according to the rate that would later be fixed by Augustus, it would have cost him more than thirty-two million of our currency,[31] an immense sum in the most prosperous times and well beyond the reach of the republic at that time. Sulla chose a course dictated by necessity and his own private interest more than the well-being of the state: he gave the soldiers land. Forty-seven

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27 Nothing is more difficult for a writer raised in luxury than to paint simple manners without meanness. Read Penelope's epistle in Ovid and you will feel revolted by the same rusticity that in Homer enchants you. Read Mademoiselle de Scudéry and you will be unpleasantly surprised to find the pomp of the court of Louis XIV in that of Tomyris. One must be accustomed to these manners to capture their tone. Reflection replaced experience for Virgil and perhaps for Fénelon. They knew they needed some ornament to accommodate the delicacy of their fellow citizens, but also that too much paint would be offensive.

28 Livy, book IV, chaps. 59, 60.

29 Livy, book XXX, chap. 45, etc. Arbuthnot's *Tables*, p. 181, etc.

30 Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, p. 22 (ed. Thys).

31 The rate was three thousand drachmas or twelve thousand sesterces for a simple legionary (1), double that for a cavalry soldier or a centurion, and fourfold for a tribune (2). Since its enlargement under Marius (3), the Roman legion numbered six thousand infantrymen and three hundred horse. This large troop had only sixty-six officers, i.e., sixty centurions and six tribunes. Here is the calculation:

legions were dispersed across Italy. Twenty-four military colonies were established.[32] A ruinous expedient! If the soldiers were mixed into the population, they would leave their houses to regroup. If they were left together, the first rebel to come along found an army ready to hand.[33] These seasoned warriors had no use for rest, and feeling it beneath them to purchase anything by their sweat when it could be obtained merely at the cost of blood,[34] they dissipated their new wealth in debauch. As their only hope lay in a civil war, they were a powerful help to Catilina's designs.[35] Pressed by the same difficulties, Augustus followed the same plan and feared the same results. The smoke still rose from a sorrowful Italy.

> The fires rekindled by her dying liberty.[36]

The hardy veterans had purchased their possessions only through bloody war, and their frequent acts of violence showed well enough that they still believed themselves at arms.[37]

Virgil's aim.

XXI. What could better suit Augustus's mild policy than to employ his friend's harmonious songs to reconcile the soldiery to their new condition? So it was that he advised him to compose this work:

> Be thou propitious, Caesar! guide my course,
> And to my bold endeavours add thy force:
> Pity the poet's and the ploughman's cares;
> Int'rest thy greatness in our mean affairs,
> And use thyself betimes to hear and grant our prayers.[38]

282,000 legionaries at 3,000 drachmas or 12,000 sesterces or 105 pounds sterling each	£28,905,000
2,820 centurions and 14,100 cavalry at 6,000 drachmas or 210 pounds sterling each	£3,468,600
282 tribunes at 12,000 drachmas or 410 pounds sterling each	£115,620
	In all, £32,489,220

Following Arbuthnot's calculations, with the drachma at 7¾ English pence, this sum would amount to only £30,705,220 (4). But according to some investigations of my own, the Attic drachma of the later period was equal in both weight and value to a Roman denarius, and so equaled 8⅓ pence (5).

(1) Cassius Dio, book LIV. Lipsius's commentary C to book I of Tacitus's *Annals*.
(2) Wotton's *History of Rome*, p. 154.
(3) Rosinus, *Antiquitatum Romanorum*, p. 964.
(4) Arbuthnot, *Tables*, p. 15.
(5) See my ms. remarks on weights, etc. in antiquity. Hooper, p. 108, and Eissenschmidt, p. 23, etc.

32 Livy, book LXXXIX. Epitom. Freinsheim suppl. book LXXXIX, chap. 34.
33 Tacitus, *Annals*, ed. Lipsius, book XIV, p. 249.
34 Tacitus, *De Moribus Germanorum*, p. 441.
35 Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, p. 40. Cicero, *Catiline Orations*, II, chap. 9.
36 Racine, "Mithridates," III, i.
37 See Donatus in "Vita Virgilii." Virgil, "Eclogues," ix, l. 2, etc.
38 Virgil, "Georgics," book I, I.40 [I quote from the Dryden translation].

There were already more than fifty Greek writers on agriculture.[39] The books of Cato and Varro were much surer, more minute and exact guides than a Poet could be. But did the soldiers not need to be given a taste for country leisure rather than taught the principles of agriculture? Hence all those touching descriptions of the innocent pleasures of the peasant, his play, his home, and the delights of retirement, so opposed to the frivolous amusements of men, and to occupations even more frivolous than their amusements.

There are so many lively, unexpected strokes in this painting, so many hidden and happy digressions, which prove that Virgil had a genius for satire that only his greater lights and the goodness of his heart prevented him from cultivating.[40] What veteran would not recognize himself in the old Corycian?[41] Like them, he had been accustomed to arms since his childhood. But now he found happiness in a wild retreat that his labors had transformed into a scene of delight.[42]

Worn out by a life of justified fears, the Italian joined Virgil in deploring the misfortunes of the day and in lamenting that his Prince seemed carried away by the violence of the veterans,

> So four fierce coursers, starting to the race,
> Scour through the plain, and lengthen every pace;
> Nor reins, nor curbs, nor threat'ning cries, they fear,
> But force along the trembling charioteer[43]

and so he returned to his labors in the hopes of a new golden age.

His success.

XXII. If my ideas are granted, Virgil will no longer be considered a simple writer describing the labors of the countryside. He is a new Orpheus, who plucks the lyre so that wild men will lay aside their ferocity and unite in the bonds of manners and laws.[44]

His songs accomplished this wonder. The veterans insensibly became used to repose. They spent thirty years in peace until, with no small difficulty, Augustus established a military treasury so they could be paid out in silver.[45]

CRITICISM. Idea of criticism.

XXIII. Aristotle, the father of criticism, shone light into the darkness of nature and art. Time, whose slow but steady justice finally replaces error by truth, has destroyed the statues of the philosopher but confirmed the decisions of the critic. As he was poor in observation, he gave

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39 Varro, *De Re rustica,* book I, chap. 1.

40 Hic petit excidiis urbem, miserosque penates,
Ut gemmâ bibat, et Sarrano dormiat ostro.
Virgil, "Georgics," book II, l. 505, etc.

41 Virgil, "Georgics," book IV, ll. 125ff.

42 He was one of the pirates who received land from Pompey. See Servius in loc. and Velleius Paterculus, book II, p. 56.

43 Virgil, "Georgics," I, ll. 512ff. [Dryden translation].

44 Sylvestres homines sacer interpresque Deorum
Cædibus et victu fædo deterruit Orpheus,
Dictus ob hoc lenire tigres rabidosque leones.
Horace, "Ars Poetica," l. 391.

45 Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*; Tacitus, *Annals*, book I, p. 39; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, book LV, p. 565; Suetonius, in Augustus, chap. 49.

out chimeras for facts. As he was educated in the Platonic school, and in the writings of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, and Thucydides, he derived his rules from the nature of things and the knowledge of the human heart. He elucidated them with examples taken from the greatest models.

Two thousand years have passed since Aristotle. Critics have perfected their art, and yet they still do not agree about the object of their labors. Such men as Le Clerc, Cousin, Des Maizeaux, and de Sainte-Marthe[46] have proposed different definitions, all of which, I think, are either too partial or too arbitrary. Criticism, in my view, is the art of judging writing and writers; what they said, how well they said it, and how true.[47] The first of these branches calls upon grammar, the knowledge of languages, and manuscripts, discrimination in works of uncertain authorship, and the emendation of corrupt passages. The whole theory of Poetry and eloquence can be drawn from the second branch, whereas the third opens up an immense field devoted to the examination and criticism of facts. The nation of critics can thus be distinguished into Grammarian critics, Rhetorician critics, and critical Historians. The exclusive pretensions of the first group have been damaging not only to their own work but also to the work of their peers.

Materials used by the critic.

XXIV. Everything that men have ever been, everything that genius has created, that reason has pondered and labor gathered: this is the department of criticism. To practice it properly, justness of thought, finesse, and penetration are all required. I follow the literary man into his cabinet and find him surrounded by productions from every age. His library is filled with them. His mind is enlightened but not overloaded by them. He looks to every side. No author is forgotten, not even the one farthest removed from his current labors: perhaps it is there the critic will encounter a beam of light that will confirm his discoveries or challenge his hypotheses. The work of the antiquarian is accomplished. In our day, the philosopher stops here to praise the compiler's memory, though the latter is sometimes its dupe and takes the materials for the finished building.

The operations of the critic.

XXV. But a true critic understands that his work is only beginning. He weighs, combines, doubts, decides. Being exact and impartial he yields only to reason, or to authority, which is the reason of facts.[48] Sometimes the most respectable name will give way before the testimony of writers to whom circumstances alone lend a momentary weight. Prompt and rich in resources, but bereft of false subtlety, he has daring enough to sacrifice the most brilliant, seemly hypothesis, and he never attributes to his masters the language of his own conjectures. A friend of truth, he seeks out the type of proof that suits his subject and contents himself with that. He never applies the sharp blade of his analysis to beauties that are so delicate they would wither at the least touch. But neither is he satisfied with sterile admiration. He delves into the most hidden principles of the human heart in order to account for its pleasures and disgusts. Modest and sensible, he never presents his conjectures as truths, his inductions as facts, his probabilities as demonstrations.

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46 Le Clerc, *Ars Critica*, book I, chap. 1.

47 This truth must be limited to historical truth, the truth of their testimony rather than their opinions. The latter species of truth depends on logic rather than criticism.

48 That is, authority combined with experience.

Criticism, good logic.

XXVI. Some have said that geometry is a form of good logic, and thought they were uttering high praise. For the sciences, there is more glory to be had in furthering man's development or in perfecting him than there is in pushing back the limits of the universe. But can criticism not share in this claim? It even has an advantage: geometry deals with demonstrations that do not exist outside itself, whereas criticism weighs different degrees of probability. Comparing these enables us to regulate our everyday actions and often to take fateful decisions.[49] Let us weigh some critical probabilities.

A controversy over Roman history.

XXVII. Our age, which believes itself destined to change laws of every sort, has engendered a historical Pyrrhonism that is useful and dangerous. M. de Pouilly, who had a brilliant and superficial mind, and who cited more often than he read, expressed doubts about the certitude[50] of the first five centuries of Roman history. But as his imagination was ill equipped for such investigations, it easily yielded to the erudition and criticism of M. Fréret and abbé Sallier.[51] M. de Beaufort revived this controversy, and Roman history suffered considerably from the attacks of a writer who knew how to doubt, and how to decide.

A treaty between Rome and Carthage.

XXVIII. In his hands, a treaty between the Romans and the Carthaginians became an overwhelming objection.[52] This treaty is referred to by that exact and enlightened historian Polybius,[53] in whose day the original document was kept in Rome. However, this authentic monument contradicts all the historians. L. Brutus and M. Horatius are described as being consuls at the same time, though Horatius rose to that office only after the death of Brutus. Peoples who were as yet only the allies of Rome are there called subjects, and mention is made of the navy of a people that built its first ships as late as the first Punic war, two hundred and fifty years after Brutus's consulate. How many fatal conclusions can be drawn from these contradictions, all of them unfavorable to the historians!

The treaty elucidated.

XXIX. This objection greatly perplexed M. de Beaufort's adversaries, who were led to doubt the authenticity of this original monument. So they advanced its date. But let us attempt to reconcile the monument and the historians by a probable explanation. Let us first separate the date from the body of the treaty, the latter being from the time of Brutus, the former in the manner of Polybius or his Roman antiquarians.

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49 This refers principally to the Elements of Geometry and to those of criticism.

50 The controversy would have been shortened by a clear definition of the certitude under discussion. "It is historical certitude." But the latter varies from one age to the next. In all I believe in the existence and actions of Charlemagne, but it is entirely different from the certitude I have concerning the exploits of Henri IV.

51 See *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. VI, pp. 14–190.

52 *Dissertation sur l'incertitude de l'histoire Romaine*, pp. 33–46.

53 Polybius, *Hist.*, book III, chap. 22.

The consuls.

The consuls' names were never to be found in solemn treaties, the *fœdera* consecrated by all the ceremonies of religion and signed only by the *feciales*, the ministers of the religion. This circumstance distinguished *fœdera* from *sponsiones*. This detail, which we owe to Livy,[54] allows us to clear away the problem. The antiquarians must have taken the *feciales* for consuls. But as the antiquarians were under no obligation to be precise in the explanation of public monuments, they gave no thought to the mistake and indicated the year in which the kings were expelled by citing the famous names of the men who founded their liberty and the capitol. It was of no great import to them to verify whether the two were consuls together.

Roman subjects.

XXX. The peoples of Ardea, Antium, and Terracina were by no means Roman subjects. Or if they were, the historians have given us a very false idea of the republic's size. Let us transport ourselves back to the age of Brutus and extract from Roman politics a definition of the term "ally" that is rather far removed from ours. Although it was the last of the Latin colonies, Rome soon imagined uniting all of that nation under its own laws. Its discipline, heroes, and victories quickly provided Rome with a decisive superiority. Proud but also politic, the Romans pursued their advantage with a wisdom equal to their good fortune. They understood that cities that were not fully subdued would resist the weapons, deplete the treasury, and corrupt the manners of the republic. By the more seemly name of "allies," the defeated peoples were made to love the yoke. The latter took pleasure in recognizing Rome as the capital of the Latin nation and in supplying her with a body of troops in every war. All that the republic provided was protection, a mark of its sovereignty, which cost these peoples very dearly. They were the allies of Rome, though they soon realized they were its slaves.[55]

XXXI. It will be replied that this explanation diminishes but does not remove the difficulty. The term employed by Polybius, Ὑπηκοοι, literally means subject. I do not deny that. But we possess only the translation of this treaty. Though we may grant these copies a conditional confidence for the main points, nothing should be concluded regarding the strict sense of its terms. The construction of the ideas is so arbitrary, the nuances are so slight, and the languages so different that even the most skillful translator may look for equivalent expressions but hardly find more than similar ones.[56] The language of the treaty was from another era. Polybius depended on Roman antiquarians, whose vanity magnified the objects before them. *Fœderati* does not mean equal allies: let us render it, they said, as subjects.

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54 "Spoponderunt consules, legati, quaestores, tribuni militum, nominaque eorum qui spoponderont adhuc exstant, ubi si ex fœdere acta res esset praeterquam duorum fecialium non extarent."
Livy, book IX, chap. 5.

55 Livy, book VIII, chap. 4.
The praetor Annius called the Roman government a *Regnum impotens*.

56 See Le Clerc, *Ars Critica*, book II, chap. 2, §§1, 2, 3.

Their navy.

XXXII. The Roman navy too perplexes our critics. Polybius assures us that the fleet of Duillius was their first effort in this domain.[57] Well, Polybius is wrong—because he contradicts himself. That is my entire conclusion. But even if his account were to be admitted, Roman history would not crumble. Here is a hypothesis to explain this phenomenon in a reasonable way, and that is all that can rightly be expected of a hypothesis. Tarquin oppressed the people and the soldiers. He took all the plunder for himself. This led to disgust with military service. Small craft were fitted out for expeditions on the sea. The young republic protected them but by this treaty put a stop to their depredations. Constant wars, and the pay given to the land forces, led to neglect of the navy, and within a century or two no one remembered that it had even existed.[58] Polybius must have spoken in somewhat too general a manner.

XXXIII. Indeed, the first Roman navy must have been formed by ships of fifty oars. Gelo and Hiero built larger vessels.[59] The Greeks and Carthaginians imitated them, and in the first Punic war the Romans outfitted ships of three or four tiers of oars that astonish antiquarians and shipbuilders even today. These craft made it easy to forget the Romans' early, crude attempts.[60]

Reflections on this dispute.

XXXIV. I have been pleased to defend a useful, interesting history. But most of all, I wanted these reflections to show what great delicacy is required in critical discussions, since the point is not to grasp a demonstration but to compare the weight of conflicting probabilities; and also how the most dazzling systems must be distrusted, since so few of them can stand the test of a free, attentive examination.

Criticism a practice but not a routine.

XXXV. A new consideration brings with it a new difficulty to perplex criticism. Some sciences consist in knowledge alone. Their principles are speculative truths, not maxims of conduct. It is easier to understand a proposition in a sterile manner than it is to make the proposition familiar, apply it justly, and use it as a guide in one's studies and a torch in one's discoveries.

The march of criticism is nowise a routine. Its general principles are true, but sterile. A person acquainted with only those principles will go wrong, whether he follows them or dares to leave them behind. A resourceful genius, who masters the rules but also the reasons for the rules, may often seem to despise them. His bold new route will seem to leave them far behind. But follow him down to the end. There you will find an admirer—an enlightened admirer—of those same rules, which always form the basis of his reasoning and his discoveries. That all the sciences could become *legum non hominum respublica* is the wish formed by the nation of scholars. Its realization would be their happiness. But we know all too well that the happiness of a nation often differs from the glory of those who enlighten or govern it, and sometimes the two are opposed.

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57 Polybius, book I, chap. 20.

58 I am not speaking of the fleet that came up before Tarentum. I believe those vessels belonged to the inhabitants of Thuricun. Cf. Freinsheim, *Supplementum Livianum*, book XII, chap. 8.

59 Arbuthnot's *Tables*, p. 225; Huet, *Histoire du commerce des anciens*, chap. 221.

60 Another hypothesis has been advanced by the famous M. Fréret. It is pleasingly simple but seems to me untenable. See *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XVIII, pp. 102, etc.

Scholars of the highest order will pursue no studies but those that are comparable to Achilles's spear, which was fashioned only for the hands of a hero. Let us try to wield it.

Can the Poet stray from history?

XXXVI. The legislator of criticism has decreed that the poet should depict his heroes as history presents them to us:

> Or follow Fame, or in th'Invented Tale
> Let seeming, well-united Truth prevail:
> If Homer's[61] great Achilles tread the Stage,
> Intrepid, fierce, of unforgiving Rage,
> Like Homer's Hero, let him spurn all Laws,
> And by the Sword alone assert his Cause.[62]

Shall we reduce the poet to a cold chronicler? Shall we remove the great power of fiction, the contrast, the collision of characters, the unexpected situations where we tremble for the man and admire the hero? Or shall we be friends to beauty rather than rules, and more easily pardon his anachronisms than his tediousness?

The law and the reason for the law. Example of Virgil.

XXXVII. To charm, move, and elevate the mind: that is the aim of poetry. Partial laws must never prevent us from seeing that they are but means to facilitate these operations, not to perplex them. We have seen that even if philosophy bristles with demonstrations, it hardly dares to broach our received ideas. How can poetry hope to please if it does not conform to them? We take pleasure in returning to the heroes and events of antiquity. If they seem to be travestied, they occasion surprise, but a surprise which revolts us against novelties. The author who ventures to introduce changes must consider whether they will give rise to striking or slight beauties, which in every case must be proportional to his violation of the laws. This is the price he must pay for his act.

Ovid's anachronisms displease us.[63] They corrupt the truth without embellishing it. How different in character is Virgil's Mezentius! This Prince died by the arms of Ascanius.[64] But what reader is so cold as to give it a moment's thought when he sees Aeneas, the minister of celestial vengeance, become the protector of oppressed nations, hurling lightning on the guilty tyrant's head and then being moved by the young and pious Lausus, the unfortunate victim of his blows, who deserved a different father and a better fate? What beauties the poet would have lost on account of history! Encouraged by this success, he then abandons history when he should have followed it. At long last Aeneas arrives in Italy. The Latins come forth to defend their homes and a bloody battle is in the offing.

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61 See Bentley and Sanadon on l. 120 of the Poetic Art of Horace.

62 Horace, "Ars Poetica," ll. 119ff. [I quote from the translation by Philip Francis, 1742–46.]

63 In matters of geography and chronology, Ovid can rarely be taken as an authority. This poet was crassly ignorant in both sciences. Read the descriptions of Medea's travels in the *Metamorphoses*, book VII, ll. 350–402, and book XIV of the same. Even the poet's commentators are tortured by the geographical errors in the former, and the latter teems with chronological blunders.

64 Servius on Virgil's *Aeneid*, book IV, l. 620; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Antiquitates Romanae*, book I.

Already the cloud of missiles, rising in the air
Already the blood flows, heralding slaughter.[65]

As soon as his enemies hear the name Aeneas, the weapons drop from their hands. They fear a warrior whose glory rises from his country's ashes. They rush to embrace a Prince who has been announced by so many oracles. From the depths of Asia he brings them his gods, a race of heroes and the promise of a universal empire. Latinus offers him asylum and his daughter's hand.[66] What dramatic effect! How worthy of the majesty of epic, and of Virgil's pen! Let it be compared, if one dares, to the mission of Ilioneus, Latinus's palace, and the Monarch's speech.[67]

Elucidations and restrictions.

XXXVIII. I repeat: let the Poet dare take the risk, so long as the reader enjoys the same degree of pleasure in his fictions that he would have from truth and propriety. But let him avoid confounding the annals of an age to frame an antithesis. Invention will not find this law overly severe if it reflects that feelings are the dominion of all men; but knowledge, of only a very few; and that beauty affects the soul more strongly than truth does the mind. Let it be remembered, however, that there are certain departures from truth that cannot be forgotten. Not even Milton's powerful imagination or Voltaire's harmonious verse would ever reconcile us to a cowardly Caesar, a virtuous Catiline, or an Henri IV who conquered the Romans. Let us collect these thoughts by saying that the character of great men must be kept sacred; but that the poets can write their stories, less as things were than as they should have been; that a fresh creation is less revolting than changes in the very essence, which must pass for errors, whereas the former will seem to arise from mere ignorance; and lastly, that it is easier to blend together times than places.

No doubt we must be indulgent with those distant ages in which the chronologists' systems are poetic fictions, minus the pleasure. Anyone who would dare to condemn the Dido episode is either more of a philosopher or less of a man of taste than I am.[68]

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65 Racine, "Iphigénie," act V, final scene [translation RM].

66 Livy, book I, chap. 1.

67 Virgil, *Aeneid*, book VII, ll. 148–285.

68 It may be doubted whether this episode is damaging to the true chronology. In Sir Isaac Newton's plausible system, Aeneas and Dido are contemporaries (1). The Romans must have known more than the Greeks about the history of Carthage. The Carthaginian archives had been transferred to Rome (2). The Punic language was fairly well known there (3). The Romans willingly consulted the Africans about their origins (4). In fact (and this is enough to exculpate our poet), Virgil adopted a chronology that is closer to Newton's suppositions than to those of Eratosthenes. It may not hurt to review the proofs of this impression.

Seven years hardly sufficed for Juno's wrath and Aeneas's travels. I learn this from Dido:

Nam te jam septima portat
Omnibus errantem terris et fluctibus aetas (5).

Several months later he reached the banks of the Tiber. There the river god appeared to him, to predict new battles but also to give hope of a glorious end to his misfortunes. This oracle was confirmed by a prodigy of nature. A sow lying on the shore indicated, by means of her thirty offspring, how many years must pass before young Ascanius would lay the foundations of Alba.

Jamque tibi, ne vana putes haec fingere somnum,
Littoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus sus,
Triginta capitum foetus enixa, jacebit;
Alba, solo recubans, albi circum ubera nati.
Hic locus urbis erit, requies ea certa laborum:
Ex quo ter denis urbem redeuntibus annis

THE NATURAL SCIENCES.

XXXIX. The more deeply the sciences were investigated, the more obvious it became that they were all related. The sciences have appeared to some like an immense forest. At first glance, the trees all seemed to be isolated, but on piercing the surface, it was found that their roots were intertwined.

Men's mutual needs.

There is no branch of study, not even the most paltry and the least known, that does not sometimes offer facts, openings, and objections to the most sublime and distant fields of learning. I enjoy pondering this thought. The different nations and professions must be shown their mutual needs. Show the Englishman the advantages of the French; acquaint the natural philosopher with the succor that literature can provide; self-love supplies what discretion led you to expunge. In this way Philosophy is diffused: humanity is fostered. Men were rivals; now they are brothers.

Ascanius clari condet cognominis Albam (6).

For three hundred years this city remained the seat of the Empire and the cradle of the Romans.

Hic jam ter centos totos regnabitur annos
Gente sub Hectorea (7).

Those are the terms Virgil puts into Jupiter's mouth. Our chronologists are hardly concerned whether the Lord of thunder must be made to keep his word. They would have Alba destroyed by Tullus Hostilius almost five hundred years after its foundation, and approximately one hundred years after that of Rome (8). But Newton's system smooths away all these difficulties. The fall of Troy is situated in 904 and followed by an interval of 337 years, which brings us to 567, that is, 60 years after the Palilia. This period fits perfectly with the reign of Romulus's third successor (9) and precisely coincides with an ancient tradition maintained by Plutarch (10). Numa's Books were unearthed in 181 BC, four hundred years after the death of that King and the beginning of Hostilius's reign. Numa therefore died 581 years before the Christian era. What art the poet used in taking the moment when Aeneas arrived in Carthage to answer his critics, in the only way in which the speed of his progress and the grandeur of his subject would allow! The critics are given to understand that, by his hypotheses, Dido and Aeneas's meeting is not a matter of poetic license. Virgil is hardly the only person to have called into question the common chronology of the Latin kings. I suspect, in fact, that he may have derived his ideas from the works of his contemporary Trogus Pompeius. The rival of Livy and Sallust (11), that historian also attributed three hundred years to the kingdom of Alba. Had his universal history not been lost, we would apparently have the details and proofs of his opinion. We must instead be content to read the simple statement made by his abbreviator: "Albam longam condidit quae trecentis annis caput regni fuit" (12). As for Livy, the father of Roman history, who sometimes shows so great an attachment to the traditional chronology (13) but who generally skims over the difficult passages in such a way as to show his good faith and his ignorance: Livy himself seems to distrust the guides of earlier ages. Nothing could be more natural than to mark the duration of the reigns of each Latin King mentioned in his account (14)! But he is silent on this matter. Nothing could be more necessary than to establish at least the interval between Aeneas and Romulus. He does not. And what is more, he writes: "The destruction of Alba occurred 400 years after its foundation" (15). If we allow one hundred years for the reigns of Romulus and Numa, plus half of Hostilius's reign, there remain three hundred years, rather than the four hundred given by the chronology of Eratosthenes. Livy thus agrees fairly closely with Virgil, and the slight difference between them reinforces rather than weakens their union. I can anticipate an objection, though a very meager one. To reply would be to create monsters who then need to be subdued, so I shall close a digression that is already too long.

(1) See Newton, *Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Reformed*, p. 32. (2) *Universal History*, vol. XVIII, pp. 111, 112. (3) Plautus, "Poenulus," act V, sc. 1. (4) Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*, chap. 17; Ammianus Marcellus, book XXII; *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. IV, p. 464. (5) Virgil, *Aeneid*, book I, l. 755. (6) Idem, book VIII, l. 42. (7) Idem, book I, l. 272. (8) See Helvicus, *Chronological tables*, 656 BC, etc. (9) Newton, *Chronology*, p. 52, etc. (10) See Plutarch, in Numa. (11) Flav. Vopisc. in proem. Aurelian. (12) Justin. book XLIIII, chap. 1. (13) Livy, book I, chap. 18, et alibi passim. (14) Idem, book I, chap. [2]9. (15) Idem, book I, chap. 29.

Relation between Natural Philosophy and Literature.

XL. We depend on reasoning and facts in all the sciences. Without the latter our studies would be chimerical. Without the former they would always be blind. It is in this sense that the Belles-Lettres are a miscellany. The same is true of every branch of the study of nature, in which what appears slight often conceals real magnitude. If natural philosophy has its Buffons, it likewise has (to speak the language of the times) its *érudits*. The knowledge of antiquity may offer both sides a rich harvest of facts capable of unveiling nature or, at least, of preventing those who study nature from confusing a cloud with a Deity. What lights a doctor may apprehend in the description of the plague that wasted Athens! I admire with him the majestic force of Thucydides,[69] the art and energy of Lucretius.[70] But he will go farther yet. In the ills of the Athenians, he studies those of his fellow citizens.

I know the Ancients did not much apply themselves to the natural sciences; that lacking instruments, and working in isolation, they were able to collect only a small number of observations, laced with uncertainties, diminished by the injuries of time, and thrown haphazardly into a great number of volumes.[71] But should poverty inspire negligence? The activity of the human mind is stimulated by difficulties. Necessity the mother of relaxation: that would be a strange construction.

Advantages of the ancients. Spectacles of the amphitheater.

XLI. Even the most zealous partisans of the moderns will not disagree, I think, that the ancients had resources that we lack. Trembling, I recall the gory spectacles of the Romans. The wise Cicero detested and despised them.[72] He preferred solitude and silence to these masterpieces of grandeur, horror, and bad taste.[73] Indeed, only a troop of savages can properly take pleasure in carnage. Palaces could be raised for the combat of animals only among a people who preferred decorations to beautiful verse, and stage machines to dramatic situations.[74] But such were the Romans: their virtues, vices, and even what was ridiculous in them were linked to their ruling principle, the love of country.

Nevertheless, though these spectacles may have been wretched to the philosopher, and frivolous to the man of taste, they must have been precious for the naturalist. Imagine draining the whole earth to furnish these games, the opulence of the wealthy and the power of the great employed to discover creatures of the most singular appearance, force, and rarity, to lead them into the Roman amphitheater and to bring the whole animal into action.[75] It must have been an admirable school, especially in the noblest part of natural history, which is devoted to the study

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69 Thucydides, book I.

70 Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, book VII, l. 1136, etc.

71 M. Fréret believed that the philosophical observations of the ancients were more exact than is generally thought. Anyone acquainted with his genius and lights will feel the weight of that authority. See *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XVIII, p. 97.

72 Cicero envies his friend Marius, who was in the country during the magnificent games held under Pompey. He speaks rather contemptuously of the other spectacles but focuses especially on the combat of wild animals. "Reliquae sunt venationes, (he says) binae per dies quinque; magnifice, nemo negat, sed quae potest homini esse polito delectatio, cum aut homo imbecillus a valentissimâ bestia laniatur aut praeclara bestia venabulo transverberatur?"

73 Cicero, *Ad Familiares*, book VII, epist. 1.

74 Horace, book II[I,] epist. 1, l. 187.

75 See Montaigne's *Essais*, vol. III, p. 140.

of the nature and properties of animals rather than to the description of their bones and cartilage. Let us remember that Pliny frequented this school, and that ignorance has two daughters, incredulity and blind faith. Let us not defend our liberty any less against the one than the other.

Lands where the natural philosophers of antiquity studied nature.

XLII. If we leave this theater to move to a vaster one, and examine which countries were available to the naturalists and natural philosophers of antiquity, we will not have cause to lament them.

I know that navigation has opened a new hemisphere for us, but I also know that a sailor's discoveries and a merchant's travels do not always enlighten the world so much as enrich it. The known world has narrower bounds than the material world, and the limits of the enlightened world are even more restrained. In the days of Pliny, Ptolemy, and Galen, Europe was the seat of the sciences, just as it is today. But Greece, Asia, Syria, Egypt, and Africa were rich in miracles and filled with eyes fit to see them. This vast body was united by peace, laws, and a language. The African and the Briton, the Spaniard and the Arab, met in the capital and instructed one another. Every year thirty members of the Roman elite, who were often themselves enlightened, left the capital in the company of people who were,[76] to govern the provinces. To the extent that they were curious, authority paved the roads of science.

Great Britain inundated by the ocean.

XLIII. Tacitus had no doubt learned from his father-in-law, Agricola, that the ocean inundated Great Britain, making it a great mass of swamps.[77] Herodian confirms the fact.[78] Today, however, the surface of our island is fairly elevated in all but a few places.[79] Can this fact be enlisted among those that confirm the system of subsiding oceans? Did human works provide ways of freeing the earth from the yoke of the ocean? The fate of the Pontine marsh,[80] and several others, may give us a very slight idea of such works. In any case, I am satisfied to have furnished this material, so that natural philosophers may make use of it. The ancients do not teach us to leave matters unexplored, to skim the surface of things, and to speak most boldly about the subjects we least understand.

The Philosophical Spirit. Pretensions to the philosophical spirit.

XLIV. "After a discerning spirit," says the judicious La Bruyère, "pearls and diamonds are the rarest things in the world." I unhesitatingly rank the philosophical spirit even higher. It is the

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76 See Strabo, ed. Casaubon, book XVII, p. 816.

77 Tacitus, *Vita Agricolae*, chap. 10.

78 Herodian, *Historia*, book III, chap. 47.

79 These are Herodian's words: "Τα γαρ πλεστα της Βρεταννων χωρας επικλυζομηνα ταις του ωκεανου συνεχως αμῳωτισιν ελωδη γινεται.["] Tacitus expresses himself in an even stronger fashion. "Unum addiderim (he says) nusquam latius dominari mare; multum fluminum huc atque iluc ferri, nec littore tenus accrescere aut resorberi, sed influere penitus atque ambire; etiam jugis atque montibus influere velut in suo."

80 This swamp was drained by the consul Cethegus in 592 AUC. In the age of Julius Caesar it was once again flooded. The Dictator intended to put men to work there. It seems that Augustus did, though I doubt his works were more successful than the previous ones. Pliny, for one, still calls it a swamp. Horace had, as it were, predicted this.

Debemur morti nos nostraque
Sterilis ut palus dudum aptaque remis
Vicinas urbes alit et grave sensit aratrum.

Freinsheim, supp., book XLVI, chap. 44; Suetonius, book I, chap. 44; Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, book III, chap. 5.

most advocated, ignored, and rare thing in the world. No writer but aspires to it. He gladly sacrifices his science. If you press him at all, he will admit that a severe sense of judgment perplexes the working of genius. But he will always assure you that the philosophical spirit that glows in his pages is the very stamp of our age. The philosophical spirit of a small number of great men has, in his opinion, produced the spirit of the age. It has spread through every social order and in turn prepared a line of fitting successors.

What it is not.

XLV. But taken in at a glance, the works of our sages are so diverse that we may feel uncertain about the nature of this talent, and that uncertainty may lead to doubts that they have all been given an equal share. Some employ their talent in blazing new paths, and finding fault with every reigning opinion, whether it belongs to Socrates or a Portuguese Inquisitor, simply because it reigns. Others identify the new spirit with geometry, that imperious Queen, for whom it is not enough to reign: she must also banish her sisters, declaring all reasoning that does not make use of line and number unworthy of that name. Let us do justice to that bold spirit whose waywardness has sometimes led to truth and whose very excesses work like popular rebellions to inspire despotism with a salutary fear. Let us keep thoroughly in mind how much we owe to the geometrical spirit. But for the philosophical spirit, let us try to find an object that is wiser than the former, and more universal than the latter.

What it is.

XLVI. Anyone who has become familiar with the writings of Cicero, Tacitus, Bacon, Leibniz, Bayle, Fontenelle, or Montesquieu will have as just an idea as the one I shall attempt to sketch, and a far more perfect one as well.

The philosophical spirit consists in the ability to revert to simple ideas, to grasp and combine first principles. A person possessed of that spirit sees justly but at the same time broadly, at a single glance. Standing on an eminence, he takes in a great stretch of land and forms a clear, singular image of it, whereas minds that are more limited but no less just discover only a part. Whether he be a geometrician, an antiquarian, or a musician, he is always a philosopher, and by dint of penetrating into the first principles of his art, he becomes superior to it. He takes his place among a small number of geniuses whose labors, at great intervals, serve in the creation of that first science that would subdue all the others if it were brought to perfection. In that sense, the spirit is hardly common. There are geniuses enough who can receive particular ideas with justness. But few can encompass in a single abstract idea a manifold construction of other less general ideas.

The aid it can receive from literature.

XLVII. What branch of study can produce this spirit? I know of none. It is a gift of heaven, ignored or despised by the many; the wise hope for it; several have received it; there are none who acquire it; yet I believe that the study of literature—that habit of becoming Greek, then Roman, a disciple of Zenon and then of Epicurus—is well suited to its development and exercise. In that infinite diversity of spirits, a general conformity may be observed among all those who were inspired by their age, their country, and their religion to view the same objects in something like the same manner. Those who are freest of prejudices still cannot escape them entirely. Their ideas have a

paradoxical air, and in bursting from their chains, they show you they once wore them. Among the Greeks I seek out the partisans of democracy, among the Romans the enthusiastic lovers of their country, among the subjects of Commodus, Severus, and Caracalla the apologists of absolute power, and in the ancient Epicurean[81] the denouncer of his own religion. What a spectacle, for a truly philosophical spirit, to see the most absurd opinions received among the most enlightened nations; barbarians attaining to knowledge of the most sublime truths; consequences that were true, but lacking in justness, derived from the most erroneous principles; admirable principles that constantly approached but never arrived at the truth; language modeled after ideas and ideas justified by language; the same sources of morality everywhere; the opinions of metaphysical contention always varying and generally extravagant; clear only so long as they were superficial; subtle, obscure, and uncertain every time they aspired to profundity. Even if it were full of absurdities, an Iroquois work would be a priceless treasure. It would offer a unique experience of the nature of the human mind under circumstances that we have never known, and governed by manners and religious opinions that are altogether contrary to ours. We would sometimes be impressed and instructed by the contrariness of the ideas that would arise; we would investigate the reasons; and track the soul from error to error. At other times we would be pleased to recognize our own principles, though reached by other paths, and almost always modified and adulterated. We would learn not only to acknowledge but also to feel the force of prejudices; never to feel surprise at what is seemingly most absurd; and often to distrust what seems most established.

I enjoy seeing how men's judgments take up the tincture of their prepossessions, and contemplating those who dare not draw conclusions that they feel are exact from principles that they have recognized as just. I enjoy detecting those who hate in the Barbarian what they admire in the Greek, and who qualify the selfsame history as blasphemous in the Pagan and sacred in the Jew.

If we were to forgo this philosophical knowledge of antiquity, we would do too great an honor to the human species. We would then know little of the empire of manners. We would constantly confuse the incredible and the absurd. The Romans were enlightened, but at the same time they were not shocked that Caesar's person could unite a God, a Priest, and an Atheist.[82] He looked on as temples were raised to his mercy.[83] In the company of Romulus, he received the nation's oaths.[84] During the sacred festivals, his statue was placed beside Jupiter's, whom he would invoke a moment later.[85] Whenever he tired of this vain pomp, he would seek out the company of Pansa and Trebatius in order to ridicule the credulity of the people, and the Gods who were the effect and object of their terror.[86]

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81 Once Epicurus disseminated his doctrines, men began to state their views on the dominant religion in a fairly public manner and to perceive it simply as an institution. See Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, book I, l. 62, etc. Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, chap. 51. Cicero, *Pro Cluentio*, chap. 61.

82 An atheist in that he denied the existence or at least the providence of the deity; for Caesar was an Epicurean. Those who wish to see how a man of genius can make a clear truth obscure will enjoy reading the doubts that M. Bayle was able to cast on Caesar's sentiments. See the article on Caesar in Bayle's *Dictionary*.

83 See the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. I, p. 369, etc.

84 Cicero to Atticus, book XII, epist. 46, etc., book XIII, epist. 28.

85 Caesar was the sovereign Pontiff, a priestly office which for the Emperors was no vain title. M. de la Bastie's fine dissertations on the Emperors' pontificates will convince anyone with doubts on this matter. In particular, consult the third of the pieces in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XV, p. 39.

86 Born with the enthusiastic imagination that produces great poets and missionaries, Lucretius wanted to be both. I should feel sorry for the theologian who would not indulge the latter on behalf of the former. In spite of himself, Lucretius gave proof of the Deity by relating natural phenomena to general causes. He then sought to

History is the science of causes and effects.

XLVIII. For a philosophical spirit, history is what gambling was to the marquis de Dangeau.[87] He saw a system, relations, a sequence, where others discerned only the caprice of fortune. This science, for a philosophical spirit, is that of causes and effects. It well deserves my attempt to lay down a few intrinsic rules, not in order to produce genius, but to prevent it from going astray. Perhaps if these rules had always been carefully weighed, there would have been fewer occasions when subtlety was confused with spiritual finesse, obscurity with profundity, and an air of paradox with creative genius.

Rules for choosing facts.

XLIX. Among the multitude of facts, some (indeed the greatest number) prove nothing more than their own existence. Still others may well be cited in a partial conclusion, by which the philosopher judges the motives behind an action or a character trait: they illuminate one link in the chain. Then there are the rare facts that dominate in the general system and are intimately related to it, moving its very springs. And rarer still are the spirits who know how to detect these facts in the vast chaos of events and to extract them pure and unadulterated.

To those who have more judgment than erudition, it will hardly seem necessary to point out that causes must always be proportional to effects; the character of an age must not be founded on one man's actions; the strength and wealth of a state must not be measured by a single, forced, and ruinous effort; it should be remembered that one can judge only by collecting; that a striking fact may dazzle like a flash of lightning but it will teach very little if it is not compared with others of its kind. By electing Cato the Roman people showed that they preferred to be corrected rather than flattered,[88] in the very same age that they condemned masculine severity in the person of Livius Salinator.[89]

Advantages of small strokes. Difference between vice and virtue.

L. Defer to facts that arise of themselves to form your system rather than to the ones that you discover after conceiving the system. Often prefer the small strokes to the illustrious facts. It is with

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understand how the error he wished to combat had taken such hold of men's minds. He found three reasons: I. Our dreams; in them we see beings and effects that we never meet with in the world, and we at once endow them with real existence and immense power. II. Our ignorance of nature, on account of which we everywhere have recourse to the action of the Deity. III. Our fear, the effect of that ignorance; fear induces us to bend before the calamities that ravage the earth and to try to appease by prayer some invisible being. Lucretius expresses this last point with an energy and immediacy that sweep us away, leaving no time for examination.

> Praeterea cui non animus formidine Divûm
> Contrahitur? cui non conrepunt membra pavore,
> Fulminis horribili cum plaga torrida tellus
> Contremit, et magnum percurrunt murmura cælum?
> Non populi, gentesque tremunt? Regesque superbi
> Conripiunt Divûm perculsi membra timore,
> Ne quod ob admissum fæde dictumve superbe
> Pœnarum grave sit solvendi tempus adactum.
>
> Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, book V, l. 1216, etc.

87 Fontenelle in his Panegyric on the marquis de Dangeau.

88 Livy, book XXXIX, chap. 40; Plutarch in Cato.

89 Livy, book XXIX, chap. 37.

an age or a nation as it is with a man. Alexander is better revealed in Darius's tent[90] than in the fields of Gaugamela. I recognize the Romans' ferocity when they condemn a wretch in the amphitheater no less than when I contemplate them strangling a captive King at the foot of the Capitol. There is no pomp in trifles. We undress when we hope no one is looking; but the curious mind will try to penetrate into the most secret retreats. To decide whether virtue triumphed among a people at a certain period, I observe their actions more than their words. To condemn them as vicious, I attend more to their words than their actions. Virtue is praised without being known; it is known without being felt; it is felt without being practiced; but things are otherwise with vice. Passion leads to it, and refinement justifies it. Furthermore, there are great criminals in every age and every land. But when corruption is not general, even criminals respect the age. If the age is vice-ridden (and they are skilled in discerning this), then they despise it, show themselves openly, brave its judgments or hope to turn them in their favor. They are rarely wrong. A man who would have detested vice in the age of Cato is content to love virtue in the age of Tiberius.

The age of Tiberius the most vicious of all.

LI. I have chosen this age deliberately, for vice reached its zenith there. I learn this from Tiberius's court, but a slight fact preserved by Suetonius and Tacitus assures me of it all the more. Here it is: Roman virtue punished female incontinence with death.[91] Their policy permitted debauchery among courtesans,[92] who were regrouped so that the disorder could be regulated. Under Tiberius a great many distinguished women did not blush to present themselves publicly before the aediles, to be enrolled on the list of courtesans, destroying by their infamy the barrier that the laws raised against their prostitution.[93]

Parallel between Tacitus and Livy.

LII. It is clearly a difficult task to choose which facts should become the principles of our reasoning. Negligence or bad taste in a historian can deprive us forever of a unique stroke, simply to dull us with the sound of battle. If philosophers are not always historians, it would at least be desirable for historians to be philosophers.

Tacitus is the only historian I know who satisfies my idea of the philosophical historian. Even Livy, as interesting as he is, cannot be compared to him in this respect. Both men raised

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90 Quintius Curtius, *De Rebus gestis Alexandri*, book III, chap. 32.

91 The Romans enjoined the woman's family to watch over her virtue. The family would gather to judge a woman under accusation and, if she was found guilty, condemned her to death and executed the sentence. The law likewise pardoned a husband's or a father's rage in killing the lover, especially if he was a slave. See Plutarch in Romulus; Dionysius Halicarnassensis, book VII; Tacitus, *Annals*, book XIII; Valerius Maximus, book VI, chaps. 3–7; Rosinus, *Antiquitatum Romanorum*, book VIII, p. 859, etc.

92 Roman morality in this matter can be learned from Micio's speech in Terence, from the way in which Cicero excuses his client's debauchery, and Cato's exhortations. Debauchery was criticized only when it prevented the citizen from accomplishing his essential duties.

Their ears were no chaster than their conduct. Very few people know Plautus's "Casina," but anyone who has read this miserable play will find it hard to understand how only forty or fifty years separate this farce from the "Andria." A foul story of slaves is improved only by like-minded strokes of wit and obscenity. And yet this was the most enjoyed and frequently requested of Plautus's comedies. Such were manners at the time of the second Punic war, and such the virtue that the posterity of the ancient Romans regretted and admired. See Terence, "Adelphi," act I, sc. 2, l. 38; Cicero, *Pro Cœlio*, chap. 17; Horace, Satires, book I, sat. 2, l. 29; second prologue to Plautus's "Casina."

93 Suetonius, III.35; Tacitus, *Annals*, II.85.

themselves above those crude compilers who, in facts, see nothing but facts: but one wrote history as a rhetorician, the other as a philosopher. It is not that Tacitus ignored the language of the passions or Livy the language of reason: but one is more bent on pleasing than instructing and leads you in his heroes' every footstep, so that you successively feel horror, admiration, and pity. Tacitus never draws on the empire that eloquence has over the heart except to bring the chain of events together before your very eyes and fill your soul with the wisest lessons. I labor up the Alps with Hannibal, but I am present at Tiberius's council. Livy paints the abuse of power, a severity that nature approves with a shudder, vengeance and love uniting with liberty, and tyranny succumbing to their blows.[94] But the laws of the Decemvirs, their character and faults, their relations with the genius of the Roman people and with the party of the Decemvirs and its ambitious designs: these he utterly forgets. In his pages I cannot see how these laws, which were made for a narrow, poor, half-savage republic, overthrew that very republic once the force of its creation had raised it to the pinnacle of greatness. But Tacitus would have shown me. I draw this conclusion, not only from the well-known stamp of his genius but also from his energetic, varied painting of the laws, those children of corruption, liberty, equity, and faction.[95]

Remark on an idea of M. d'Alembert.

LIII. Let us by no means follow the advice of a writer who, like Fontenelle, unites knowledge and taste. Undaunted by the withering name of *érudit*, I stand opposed to the sentence which this enlightened but stern judge has handed down, that at every century's end, a collection should be made of all the facts, a few selected, and whatever is left be delivered to the flames.[96] Let us conserve everything preciously. From the meanest facts a Montesquieu will unravel relations unknown to the vulgar. Let us imitate the botanists. Though every plant is not useful in medicine, they are constantly discovering new ones. Their hope is that genius and felicitous efforts will detect properties hitherto concealed.

Men have been made too systematic or too capricious.

LIV. Uncertainty is a forced state. A narrow mind cannot attain that balance which was the pride of the school of Pyrrhon. A brilliant genius allows himself to be dazzled by his own conjectures and sacrifices his liberty to his hypotheses. Systems arise from this disposition. A design was observed in the actions of a great man. A dominant tone was noted in his character. At once speculators in their cabinets sought to make all men into equally systematic beings, both in practice and in theory. Artfulness was detected in their passions, policy in their weaknesses, dissimulation in their inconstancy. In short, by insistently trying to honor the human mind, they have frequently done very little for the heart.

Others, whose minds are closer to nature, have justly been offended by this refinement and angered at seeing ambitions extended to all men that should have been reserved for a Philip or a Caesar. And so they run to the other extreme, banishing art from the moral world and replacing it with chance. For them, poor mortals act only by caprice. An idiot's fury raises an empire, which a woman's weakness destroys.

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94 Livy, book III, chaps. 44–60.

95 Tacitus, *Annals*, ed. Lipsius, book III, p. 84.

96 D'Alembert, *Mélanges de philosophie et de littérature*, vol. II, p. 1.

General but determinate causes.

LV. The study of determinate but general causes may satisfy both groups. The first is pleased to see that man has been humiliated, that he ignores the motives behind his own actions, that he is the sport of external causes, and that a general necessity arises from individual freedom. The other group recovers the concatenations that they hold dear and the speculations that nourish their minds.

What a vast career opens to my reflections! In the hands of a Montesquieu the theory of these general causes would comprise a philosophical history of man. He would show us how they govern the greatness and the fall of Empires, successively taking the guise of fortune, prudence, courage, and weakness; acting without the help of particular causes and sometimes even defeating them. Being above infatuation with his own systems—the sage's ultimate passion—he would have recognized that though these causes may be extensive, their effect is still limited; and that they appear principally in those general events whose slow but sure influence changes the face of the earth, even if we cannot perceive when the change occurs, especially as concerns manners, religions, and everything that wears the yoke of opinion. These are some of the lessons that this philosopher would have drawn from the subject. As for myself, what I find is simply an occasion to essay my thought. I shall now indicate several interesting facts and attempt afterward to account for them.

System of Paganism.

LVI. We know about Paganism, that cheerful but absurd system which peoples the universe with fantastic beings whose superior powers serve only to make them more unjust and foolish than ourselves. What were the nature and origin of these Gods? Were they princes, founders of nations, or great men who invented the arts? Was it ingenious gratitude, blind admiration, or selfish adulation that transported into the heavens those who in their lifetimes had been called benefactors of the earth? Or should we take these Deities as so many parts of the universe, to which the ignorance of the first men granted life and thought? The question is worthy of our attention: it is curious but also difficult.

Difficulty of knowing a religion.

LVII. We know little about the system of Paganism except what comes from the poets[97] and the church fathers, both of whom were addicted to fictions.[98] The enemies of a religion never know it well because they hate it, and often they hate it because they do not know it. They hurry to adopt the vilest calumnies against it and ascribe to their adversaries whatever dogmas they detest, along with consequences that were never imagined. As for the votaries of a religion, they are imbued with a faith that makes doubt a crime, and they often sacrifice their reason and even their virtue in its defense. Forging prophecies and miracles, palliating what they cannot defend, turning into allegory what they cannot palliate, and boldly denying what they cannot turn into allegory: no bigot has ever blushed to employ such means as these. Consider the Christians and the Jews.

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97 However, a distinction should be made in favor of Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, and the tragic poets, who lived when the tradition was purer.

98 See on this subject Dr. Middleton's *Free Enquiry* and M. Beausobre's *Histoire du Manichéisme*, two handsome monuments of an enlightened age.

If you question their enemies about them, you will be told they were magicians and idolaters[99] though their worship was as sober as their manners were strict. No Muslim has ever hesitated concerning the unity of God.[100] Yet how many times did our good ancestors accuse them of worshiping the stars![101] Even within these religions, a hundred different sects have arisen to accuse each other of corrupting the dogma they shared, thereby inspiring the people with fury and the wise with moderation. And yet these people were civilized, and books that were recognized as emanations of the Deity fixed the principles of their beliefs. But how should we find these principles in the tangled heap of fables that an isolated, contradictory, and falsified tradition dictated to a few savage tribes in Greece?

Reasoning will help but little.

LVIII. Reasoning is of little use here. It is absurd to consecrate temples to those whose tombs we see. What can be too absurd for men? Are there not very enlightened nations who appeal to the senses to prove a religion, one of whose main dogmas contradicts such testimony?

A thought on the reciprocal worship of the Pagan sects.

If the Pagan Gods had once been men, it would have been rather unreasonable for their votaries to engage in a reciprocal worship,[102] and unreasonable tolerance is not a common error in the people.

Croesus appealed to Delphi. Alexander consulted the oracle of Jupiter Ammon.

LIX. Croesus consulted the oracle at Delphi.[103] Alexander crossed the burning Libyan sands to ask Jupiter Ammon if he was his son.[104] But once he became the lord of lightning, would the Greek Jupiter, the king of Crete, not have destroyed Ammon, a Libyan, a new Salmoneus, who attempted to steal his lightning? When two rivals contend for the rule of the universe, is it possible to accept them both? But if both were simply Æther, Sky, the very same Deity, the Greek and the African must have designated them by symbols that suited their customs and by names that their languages provided for the expression of those attributes. But enough with reasonings: we must interrogate the facts. Let us listen to their reply.

The Greek religion was originally Egyptian.

LX. Unhappy denizens of the forests, the proud Greeks received everything from foreigners. The Phoenicians taught them the use of letters; they owed the arts, laws, and everything that raises man above animals to the Egyptians. The latter also furnished their religion, and when the Greeks adopted it, they paid the tribute which ignorance owes to knowledge. Prejudice made only a polite show of resistance and surrendered without difficulty once the oracle of Dodona had spoken in favor of the new worship.[105] This is the account given by Herodotus, who knew Greece

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99 Tacitus, *History*, book V; Fleury, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, vol. I, p. 369 and vol. II, p. 5, with the *Apologies* of Justin Martyr and Tertullian that he cites.

100 The article "Allah" in D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque orientale*, p. 100; Sale's *Alcoran*, Preliminary Discourse, p. 71.

101 Reland, *De Religione mohammedica*, part II, chaps. 6 and 7.

102 See Warburton, *Divine Legation*, vol. I, pp. 270–76.

103 Herodotus, book I.

104 Diodorus Siculus, book XVII; Quintius Curtius, book IV, chap. 7; Arrian, book III.

105 Herodotus, book II.

and Egypt. That his age was situated between the coarseness of ignorance and the refinements of philosophy makes his testimony decisive.

Egyptian religion allegorical.

LXI. Already I see a fair number of the Greek legends, such as Apollo's birth on the island of Delos and Jupiter's burial in Crete, fade away. If these Gods once inhabited the earth, their home was in Egypt rather than Greece. But if the priests of Memphis knew their religion as well as did abbé Banier,[106] Egypt never gave birth to their Gods. Reason gleamed through their dark metaphysics enough to convey to them that man can never become a God, nor a God be transformed into a mere man.[107] Mysterious in their dogma and worship, these interpreters of the Heavens and of wisdom disguised in pompous language the truths of nature, whose majestic simplicity a rude people would have despised. In many respects, the Greeks were ignorant of this religion. They adulterated it by admixing foreign elements, but the foundations remained. These Egyptian foundations were therefore allegorical.[108]

Hero worship.

LXII. We can see from hero worship, which in the early ages of Greece was clearly distinguished from worship of the Gods, that the Gods were not Heroes.[109] The Ancients believed that after dying, great men were admitted to the banquets of the Gods, to enjoy their felicity but not their power. The Ancients gathered at the tombs of their benefactors; songs of praise[110] celebrated their memory and produced a salutary emulation of their virtues. Summoned from the underworld, their shades were pleased to taste the offerings of devotion.[111] It is true that this devotion insensibly turned into religious worship, but this occurred very late and only when the Heroes were identified with ancient Deities whose names they bore or whose character they recalled. In the age of Homer, they were still distinguished. Hercules is not numbered among his Gods. He considers Aesculapius an accomplished physician only;[112] and Castor and Pollux are for him fallen warriors who were buried in Sparta.[113]

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106 In his *Mythologie expliquée par l'histoire*.

107 Herodotus, book II.

108 In this investigation, I owe a great deal to the learned M. Fréret of the Académie des Belles-Lettres. He opened new paths on a road that seemed to be marked out already on every side. Nonetheless, I believe his reasoning is more valuable when he works with facts than with dogmas. Prepossessed by esteem for this literary man, I avidly devoured his response to Newton's chronology. But dare I say? It was not up to what I expected. What novel features are left if you remove the principles of a theology and a new chronology that were already extant (1), some faulty and not very conclusive genealogies, some minute investigations of the Spartan chronology and an ancient astronomy that I do not understand very well, and the fine preface by M. de Bougainville, which I read each time with a new relish?

(1) In *Mémoires de l'Académie*, vols. V, XVIII, XX, XXIII.

109 *Histoire de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XVI, p. 28, etc.

110 See *Mémoires de Littérature*, vol. XII, p. 5, etc.; Ezechiel Spanheim in Callimachus.

111 Homer, *Odyssey*, book XI.

112 Homer, *Iliad*, book IV, l. 193.

113 Idem, book V, l. 241.

System of Euhemerus.

LXIII. But superstition had overstepped these bounds. Heroes had become Gods, and the devotion shown to the Gods removed them from the ranks of men; when a bold philosopher undertook to prove what they had formerly been. Euhemerus of Messina advanced this paradox.[114] But rather than call upon the authentic monuments of Greece and Egypt, which ought to have preserved the memory of these celebrated men, he went astray in the ocean. On the rich, fertile, and superstitious island of Panchaia, a Utopia ignored by the ancients and known only to him, stood a magnificent temple to Jupiter where Mercury had engraved the exploits and apotheosis of the heroes of his race on a golden column.[115] These fables were too crude even for the Greeks. They earned their author a universal contempt and the title of Atheist.[116]

LXIV. Emboldened, perhaps by his example, the Cretans vaunted the possession of Jupiter's tomb, who had died on their island after a long reign there.[117] Callimachus displays outrage at this fiction, and his scholiast reveals its origin.[118] A tomb bore the inscription *The Tomb of Minos son of Jupiter.* But time or some design effaced the words "son" and "Minos" so that it read: *Tomb of Jupiter.*[119] Nevertheless, in spite of these proofs, Euhemerus's system was slow to gain credit. Diodorus Siculus traveled the earth to gather whatever would support it from the traditions of various peoples.[120] But the Stoics, with their bizarre mixture of the purest Theism, Spinozism, and popular idolatry, related this paganism (to which they were zealously devoted) to the worship of nature broken down into as many Gods as there were facets of it. Cicero, that academic philosopher for whom everything could supply an objection and nothing a proof, hardly dared to confront them with Euhemerus's system.[121]

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114 Lactantius, *Institutes*, book I, chap. XI, p. 62.

"Antiquus auctor Ephemerus, qui fuit é civite Messanâ, res gestas Jovis et cæterorum qui Dii putantur collegit, historiamque contexit ex titulis et inscriptionibus sacris, quæ in antiquissimis templis habebantur, maximeque in fano Jovis Triphyllii, ubi auream columnam positam esse ab ipso Jove, titulus indicabat, in quâ columnâ gesta sua perscripsit ut monimentum esset posteris rerum suarum." This account by Lactantius is slightly different from the one by Diodorus.

115 Diodorus Siculus, book V, chaps. 29, 30, and book VI.

M. Fourmont the elder has written a dissertation on Euhemerus, which contains some very bold conjectures and some very pleasing flights (1). It ill becomes a young man to despise anything at all, but I cannot refute this piece seriously. Anyone who does not see that the Panchaia described by Diodorus Siculus was located to the south of Gedrosia, not very far to the west of the Indian peninsula, may well believe along with M. Fourmont that the Arabian Gulf lies to the south of Arabia Felix; that the land of Phank, situated on the continent, is the island of Panchaia; that the desert of Pharan is the most beautiful spot in the world; and that the city of Pieria in Syria is the capital of a small district in the neighborhood of Medina.

(1) *Mémoires de Littérature*, vol. XV, p. 265, etc.

116 Callimachus in Plutarch, vol. II, p. 880. Eratosthenes and Polybius in Strabo, *Geography*, book II, pp. 102, 103, and book VII, p. 299. Ed. Causabon.

117 Lactantius, *Institutes*, book I, chap. XI, p. 65; Lucian, "Timon," p. 34, and Jupiter Fragment, p. 701; Cicero, *De Natura deorum*, book III, chap. 21.

118 Callimachus, Hym. in Jovem, l. 8; Scholiast. Vet. in loc., ed. Grævius.

119 This is the scholiast's account, adopted by Sir Isaac Newton. But Lactantius reports the inscription as ZAN XPONOY, which I take to be much more ancient. As fables never cease to be exaggerated, Lucian tells us that according to the inscription, Jupiter no longer thundered, having suffered the fate of mortals, δηλουσαν ως ουκετι βροντησειεν αν ο Ζευς, τεθνεως παλαι.

120 Diodorus Siculus, books I–V, passim.

121 Cicero, *De Natura deorum*, book III, chap. 21.

Dominant only under the Roman empire.

LXV. It was only in the time of the Roman empire that the Messinian's ideas gained the upper hand. In a slavish world in which the title of Gods was awarded to monsters unworthy of the appellation of men, to confuse Jupiter and Domitian was so much courtly flattery. Adulation styled them benefactors of the earth, and they had the same rights to Divinity; their nature and their powers were equal. Whether out of policy or confusion, Pliny himself was not above this mistake.[122] Plutarch tried in vain to assert the faith of his ancestors.[123] Euhemerus now reigned everywhere; and the Church fathers pursued their advantage, attacking paganism where it was weakest. Can one blame them? If the so-called Gods were not really deified men, at least in the opinion of their worshipers that is what they had become; the fathers were at war only with their opinions.

Concatenation of errors.

LXVI. Let us go farther. Let us try to follow out this concatenation, not of facts, but of ideas; to plumb the human heart and unravel this thread of errors which, starting from the true, simple, and universal feeling that there is a power greater than man, gradually led him to produce Gods he would blush to resemble.

Confused sentiments of the Savage.

Sentiment is but a return upon ourselves. Ideas relate to objects outside ourselves. Their number fills the mind and weakens the sentiment. Sentiments are thus most intense, though at the same time most confused, among savages, whose ideas are limited to their needs, and whose needs are simply those of nature. At every moment the savage feels an agitation which he can neither explain nor repress. Ignorant and weak, he fears everything because he cannot defend himself from anything. He admires everything because he knows nothing. His well-warranted contempt for himself (since vanity is the work of society) leads him to feel the existence of a higher power. This is the power he invokes, though its attributes are unknown to him, and to which he appeals for grace, without knowing on what grounds he can hope for it. This indistinct feeling produced the beneficent Gods of the early Greeks, as well as the Deities of most savages. Neither group was capable of establishing their number, character, or worship.

He adores all that he sees. Why?

LXVII. Sentiment soon became idea. The savage paid homage to everything around him. Everything must have seemed excellent in comparison with himself. The majestic oak, which sheltered him with its thick foliage, had given shade to his ancestors since the beginning of their race. Its head rose into the clouds; proud Boreas vanished in its branches. Compared to this lofty tree, what was his life span? his size? his strength? Gratitude blended with admiration. The tree that generously supplied him with acorns, the clear stream where he slaked his thirst, were benefactors who made his life happy. Without them he could not subsist, but what need did they have for him? Indeed, without the lights that teach us how far reason alone is superior to all the necessary parts of an intelligent system, each of these parts is higher than man. But deprived of these lights, the savage conferred life and power on each of the parts. He bowed down before his own work.

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122 Pliny, *Historia naturalis*, book VII, chap. 51 et passim.

123 Plutarch, "De Placitis philosophorum." "De Iside & Osiride."

His ideas are singular.

LXVIII. The savage's ideas are singular because they are simple. To remark the different qualities of objects, to observe which ones are held in common, and on the basis of that resemblance to form an abstract idea representing the genus, which is not the image of any particular object: these are the workings of a mind that acts, turns in upon itself, and, already overloaded with ideas, seeks to relieve itself by the use of method. In its first state, the soul is passive, and knowing nothing of its strength, it can only receive external impressions. Do the latter convey objects only in isolation, the way they are in themselves? The savage encountered his Gods everywhere. Every forest and every meadow teemed with them.

He combines his ideas and multiplies his Gods.

LXIX. Experience developed his ideas, for nations, like men, owe everything to experience. As his mind grew familiar with a great number of external objects, it perceived their common nature. This nature became a new Deity that was superior to any of his individual Gods. But everything that exists is determinate in time or place, and that is what distinguishes it from everything else. Man must have responded differently in respect to these two modes of existence, the one a matter of sensation and sight, and the other transient, metaphysical, and perhaps only the succession of his ideas. Common nature, being differentiated only by time, must have effaced all particular natures, whereas those distinguished by place managed to subsist as parts of common nature. The God of rivers in no way encroached on the rights of the Tiber or the Clitumnus,[124] but the south wind that blew yesterday and the one that we feel today are both that furious Tyrant who stirs up the waves of the Adriatic.[125]

Further combinations.

LXX. The more we exercise our thought, the more combinations we make. Two genera differ in certain respects and are alike in others. They are destined to the same uses and belong to the same element. The spring becomes a river, the river flows into the sea. The sea forms part of the vast ocean that encompasses the entire earth, and the earth in its bosom contains all that subsists, by a vegetative principle. As nations grew enlightened, their idolatry must have become more refined. They came to feel more clearly that the universe is governed by general laws; they drew nearer to the unity of an efficient cause. The Greeks never succeeded in simplifying their ideas beyond those of water, earth, and sky, which, under the names of Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto, contained and governed everything. In contrast, the genius of the Egyptians was better suited to abstract speculations, and they at length produced Osiris,[126] the first of Gods, the intelligent principle that acts incessantly on the principle of matter, known by the name of Isis, his wife and sister. A people who believed in the eternity of matter could hardly go farther.[127]

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124 *Histoire de l'Académie des Belles-Lettres*, vol. XII, p. 36; Pliny, *Epistolae*, book VIII, epist. 8.

125 Horace, *Carmina*, book III, ode 3.
— Nec Auster
Dux inquieti turbidus Adriae.

126 Note that Osiris and his sister were the youngest Gods. It took centuries for the Egyptians to attain this simplicity (1).
(1) Diodorus Siculus, book I, chap. 8.

127 The worship of the sun has been embraced by all peoples. I shall give what I think is the reason. The sun is perhaps the only object in the universe that is both perceptible and unique. Being perceived by every

Generation and hierarchy of the Gods.

LXXI. Jupiter, the God of the sea, and grim Pluto were brothers. Their posterity extended in an infinite number of branches and encompassed all of nature. This was the Mythology of the Ancients. For rude men, generation was a more natural idea than creation. It was easier to grasp, supposed less power, and could be arrived at by the senses. But generation also led them to establish a hierarchy, which these free but limited beings could not do without. The three great Gods exercised a paternal power over their offspring, the inhabitants of the earth, air, and seas. Primogeniture gave Jupiter an advantage over his brothers, which earned him the title of King of the Gods and Father of men. But in every way this King, this supreme father, was too limited for us to honor the Greeks with belief in a supreme being.

Gods of human life.

LXXII. As ill constructed as it was, this system accounted for all the effects of nature. But the moral world, man, his fate and actions, had no Deities. Earth and air would hardly have been suitable. The need for new gods gave rise to a new concatenation of errors, which, together with the first series, formed a single theological Novel. I suspect that this system arose later. Man hardly thinks of retiring into himself before he has exhausted external objects.

Systems of liberty and necessity.

LXXIII. Two hypotheses have always existed and always will. In one, the Creator endowed man with reason and volition only, and it is man's lot to decide how to use them and regulate his actions as he wishes. In the other, he can act only according to the preordained laws of the Deity, of which he is but an instrument. His sentiments deceive him, and when he believes he is acting on his own, he is in fact obeying the will of his Master. The latter idea could arise in the minds of a people who had barely emerged from infancy.

The ancients embraced the latter.

Unused to the complex workings of the machine, the people felt that more than human strength was needed for the great virtues, horrid crimes, and useful inventions of that small number of exceptional souls who owe nothing to their century. The people saw Gods in action everywhere, who inspired vice and virtue in mortals too weak to escape their will.[128] It was not prudence that inspired Pandarus with the design of breaking the truce and launching an arrow into Menelaus's heart. Minerva moved him to attack.[129] Wretched Phaedra was not at all guilty: outraged with Hippolytus's show of scorn, Venus kindled an incestuous flame in that Queen's heart that precipitated her into crime and death.[130] A God took charge of every event in life, of every passion in the soul, and of every order of society.

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people, in the most brilliant and beneficent way, it commanded their praise. Since it is unique and indivisible, reasoners who were not overly demanding identified in it all the chief traits of the Deity.

128 I am not too happy with this passage. I give the best reason I could find, but it seems to me that these early ages must have been guided by sentiment, and sentiment is entirely on the side of liberty.

129 Homer, *Iliad*, book IV, l. 93, etc.

130 Αλλ' ουτι ταυτη τον δ' ερωτα χοη πεσειν.
Δειξω δε θησει πραγμα, κακφανησεται.
Και τον μεν ημιν πολεμιον πεφυκοτα
Κτεθει πατηρ αραισι, ...

Union of the two species of Gods.

LXXIV. But these Gods of man, these generalized, personified passions and faculties, had no more than a metaphysical and barely sensory existence for men. They had to be blended with the Gods of nature. Here allegory imagined a thousand fantastic relations, for the mind requires at least a semblance of truth. The God of the sea was naturally the God of sailors. The figurative expression of an all-seeing eye and of beams that pierce the air could easily make the sun into a gifted prophet and a skillful archer. But why was the planet Venus the mother of love? Why did she rise from the foamy waves? Let us leave these enigmas to diviners. As soon as the Gods of human nature had been assigned their provinces, they must have attracted all of human worship. They spoke to the heart and passions, whereas the physical Gods, who had acquired no moral attributes, were insensibly exposed to contempt and forgotten. So it is in only the most remote antiquity that I see smoke rising from Saturn's altars.[131]

The Gods had human passions.

LXXV. Thus, the gods were interested in human things. Nothing occurred of which they were not the authors. But were they the authors of crime? To us this consequence is alarming but a pagan would not have hesitated in his assent, and indeed he could not. The Gods often inspired vicious designs. To suggest them, they must have willed and even loved them. They were not given the resource of a small share of evil that was allowed in the best of all possible worlds.[132] Not only was evil allowed: it was authorized. Furthermore, the different Deities were confined to their respective provinces and were thus quite indifferent to a general good, of which they knew nothing. Each acted according to his character and inspired only those passions that he or she felt. The God of war was proud, brutal, and cruel; the Goddess of prudence was wise, reserved, and insincere; the mother of love was amiable, voluptuous, and unmanageably capricious; cunning and elasticity well suited the God of merchants; and the cries of the doomed were sweet to the distrustful Tyrant of the dead, the dark Monarch of the underworld.

They had preferences.

LXXVI. A God who is the father of men is equally so to everyone. He knows no hate and shows no favor. But partial Deities must have favorites. Will they not single out those whose taste is like theirs? Mars had to love the Thracians, whose lone activity was war,[133] and the Scythians, who thought the blood of their enemies was the most delicious of drinks.[134] The manners of an inhabitant of Cyprus[135] or Corinth, where everything breathed luxury and indolence, had to please the Goddess of love. Recognition united with taste. Feelings of preference were accorded to nations

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Η δ' ευκλεησ μεν, αλλ' ομως απολυται
Φαιδρα---------- (1).

(1) Euripides, "Hippolytus," act I, l. 40.

131 I mean among the Greeks. Worship of Saturn continued in Italy for a long time.

132 Fontenelle, in the panegyric on M. de Leibnitz.

133 Herodotus, book V, chaps. 4, 5; Méziriac, *Commentaires sur les épitres d'Ovide*, vol. I, p. 162.

134 Herodotus, book IV, chaps. 64, 65.

135 M. de Vaugelas apprises me that in speaking of antiquity one must always say "Cypre," though the modern French name is "Chypre" (1). I find that M. de Fénelon (2) and M. de Vertot (3) have made this distinction.

(1) *Remarques de M. de Vaugelas sur la langue Françoise*, vol. I, pp. 102, 103.

(2) In *Télémaque*.

(3) In his *Histoire de Malte*.

whose manners were a form of indirect worship of their tutelary Gods. The form of worship itself always related to the Gods' character. The human victims who expired on the altar of Mars,[136] the thousands of courtesans who practiced their devotions in the temple of Venus,[137] or the noble-women of Babylon who sacrificed their modesty to that Deity:[138] these actions attracted the most signal favor from the protectors of these various nations. And as the interests of nations are no less opposed than their manners, the Gods were required to adopt the quarrels of their votaries. "What? Look on patiently while a city that has raised a hundred temples in my honor succumbs to the arms of a conqueror? Ah, rather . . ." Thus, it happened that in Greece a war between men ignited a war among the Gods.

Their quarrels.

Troy overthrew the Heavens. The Scamander reflected the glow of Minerva's shield. It witnessed the effect of the arrows from Apollo's quiver. It felt Neptune's formidable trident, which lifted the earth from its foundations. Sometimes the irresistible decrees of Fate restored peace.[139] But most often the different Gods came to an agreement that they should abandon their enemies to each other;[140] for on Olympus as on earth, hate has always been more powerful than friendship.

They had a human shape.

LXXVII. A sober form of worship would have been ill-suited to such Deities. The people want objects of sense, a shape that could decorate their temples and fix their ideas. No doubt the most beautiful of shapes was required. But what shape is that? Ask men, and it is without question their own. Perhaps a bull would answer differently.[141] Sculpture was perfected to serve devotion, and temples were filled with the statues of old men, young people, women, and children, according to the different attributes of each of the Gods.

They felt bodily pleasures and pains.

LXXVIII. Beauty may be founded on no more than usage. The beauty of the human shape resides only in its relating so well to the uses meant for it. So too for the Divine shape, as it must be for the uses and even the defects of the gods. Thus arose that rude generation of Gods who henceforth formed a simple family, after the manner of men; with their feasts of Nectar and Ambrosia and

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136 Herodotus, book V, chaps. 4, 5; Minucius Fœlix, *Octavius*, chap. 25, p. 258; Lucan, *Pharsalia*, book I; Lactantius, book I, chap. 25.

137 Strabo, *Geography*, book VIII, p. 378.

138 Herodotus, book I, chap. 199.

Once in their lifetime they were required to prostitute themselves to the first comer, in the temple of Venus. M. de Voltaire, who turns this into an annual obligation, calls it a ridiculous fable (1). But Herodotus had traveled in these parts, and M. de Voltaire has read too much history not to know how many times superstition has triumphed over humanity and virtue. What does he think of an auto-da-fé? I can imagine the answer. Besides, I was not aware that Babylon was the most civilized city in the universe. Quintus Curtius depicts it as the most licentious, and even Berosus the Babylonian complains that his fellow citizens transgressed every bound of decency and lived like animals. Juvenal's scholiast makes us feel that in his day they had not at all degenerated (2).

(1) *Œuvres de Voltaire*, vol. VI, p. 24.

(2) Quintus Curtius, *De Rebus Gestis Alexandri*, V.1 and Comment. Freinsheim, in loc.

139 Banier, *Mythologie*, vol. II, p. 487; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book XV.

140 Euripides, "Hippolytus," act V, l. 1327; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, passim.

141 Cicero, *De Natura deorum*, book I, chaps. 27, 28.

the foods they received in sacrifices.[142] Thus too their sleep[143] and their pains.[144] Having become very powerful men, the Gods were often led to visit the earth, live in temples, enjoy human distractions, take part in the hunt or the dance, and sometimes even be charmed by a mortal beauty, which gave birth to a race of Heroes.

General events.

LXXIX. In great events, a unity of action or, rather, of effect arises from the interplay of a great number of individuals, differing in their viewpoints, situations, and characters: perhaps one should look for the cause of such events only among the general causes.

Mixture of causes in particular events.

LXXX. In more particular events, nature proceeds very differently from Philosophers. In nature very few effects are simple enough as to originate from only one cause, whereas our sages usually favor a cause that is not only universal but unique. Let us avoid this stumbling block. Whenever an action seems complicated, let us admit of general causes but without rejecting design and accident. Sulla resigned the sovereign power. Caesar lost it with his life. But their usurpations were preceded by their conquests. Before they were the most powerful of the Romans, they were the most famous.

The rise of Augustus.

Augustus followed them closely. A sanguinary tyrant,[145] who was suspected of cowardice, the greatest of crimes in a party leader,[146] he took the throne and made the republicans forget they had ever been free. The situation of these republicans makes me less surprised. Equally incapable of freedom under Sulla and Augustus, they ignored this truth in the first case; whereas the civil wars and two proscriptions that were crueler than war had taught them, by the time of Augustus, that when the republic sank under the weight of its greatness and corruption, it could not survive without a master. Besides, Sulla was the leader of the nobility and fought at the head of proud patricians who agreed to arm him with the sword of despotism if it avenged them of their enemies and his, so long as it did not give him the power to destroy them. They did not conquer for him but with him. Lepidus's oration[147] and Pompey's conduct[148] show clearly enough that Sulla preferred to step down from the throne rather than topple from it. But Augustus followed Caesar's example[149] and made use of those bold adventurers Agrippa, Maecenus, and Pollion, whose fortunes were tied to his and would have been lost among an aristocracy of nobles that was divided within itself but united in wishing to oppose any new man.

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142 See *Les Césars de Julien* by M. Spanheim, pp. 257, 258; Rem. 876; the "Birds" of Aristophanes; and almost everywhere in Lucian.

143 Homer, *Iliad*, book I, l. 609.

144 Idem, *Iliad*, book V, l. 335.

145 After the fall of Perusia, he sacrificed three hundred eminent citizens on an altar devoted to his father's Divinity. See Suetonius, book II, chap. 15.

146 Suetonius, book II, chap. 16.

147 Sallust, fragment, p. 404 (ed. Thys).

148 Freinsheim, supplement, book LXXXIX, chaps. 26–33.

149 Tacitus, *Annals*, book IV, p. 109; Suetonius, ubi infra.

Its causes.

LXXXI. Auspicious circumstances, Antony's debauchery, Lepidus's weakness, and Cicero's credulity combined with the general situation to favor Augustus. But it must also be confessed that if Augustus did not create these circumstances, he knew how to make use of them with consummate policy. So varied are my objects that they will not allow me to represent this subtle government, the chains that were worn but not felt, the Prince confounded with the citizens, and the senate respected by its master.[150] Let us choose one feature.

Augustus, the master of the empire's revenues and the world's wealth, always separated his private fortune from the public treasury. He thus afforded an easy show of his moderation, which left his descendants less wealthy than many of his subjects,[151] and of his love of country, by which he transferred two whole patrimonies to the State as well as an immense sum amassed from the testaments of deceased friends.[152]

The same action cause and effect.

LXXXII. Ordinary penetration is enough to make us feel when an action is both cause and effect. In the world of morals, there are many such acts or, rather, there are very few that do not partake more or less of both natures.

The corruption of every order of the Romans resulted from the extent of their empire, and produced the greatness of the republic.[153]

But uncommon judgment is needed to discern that when two things always exist together and seem intimately related, they do not at all owe their origin to one another.

The sciences do not derive from luxury.

LXXXIII. It has been said that the sciences are born of luxury: an enlightened people will always be prone to vice. I do not believe so. The sciences are not the daughters of luxury: both are born of industry. The rudiments of art satisfy mankind's first needs. Once they are perfected, they procure new needs, from Vitellius's shield of Minerva[154] to Cicero's philosophical discourses. But even as luxury corrupts manners, the sciences soften them, like the prayers in Homer that always race across the earth following an act of injustice, to placate the rage of that cruel Deity.[155]

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150 I am impatiently awaiting the continuation of M. de la Bleterie's dissertations on this subject, which he has promised us. Augustus's system, so often misunderstood, will then be delineated down to its slightest ramifications. This author thinks with finesse and an agreeable liberty. He discusses without being dry and expresses himself with all the graces of a clear and elegant style. Perhaps, as the Descartes of history, he reasons a little too a priori and establishes his conclusions on the basis of general inductions rather than particular authorities. But this is the failing of a man of great intellect.

151 When his legacies to the people and to the soldiers are deducted, Augustus left only "millies quingenties," or thirty million pounds, to Tiberius and Livia. The augur Lentulus, who died during his reign, possessed "quater millies," or eighty million, at death. See Suetonius, book II, chap. 101; Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, book II.

152 "Quater decies millies," or two hundred eighty million. See Suetonius, loc. cit., and Marmor Ancyranum.

153 See Montesquieu, *Considérations sur la grandeur des Romains.*

I distinguish the greatness of the Roman empire from that of the republic: one consisted in the number of provinces, the other in the greatness of its citizens.

154 Vitellius sent galleys to the pillars of Hercules to seek out the rarest fish, with which he filled this monstrous dish. If we are to believe M. Arbuthnot, it cost 765,625 pounds sterling. See Suetonius in Vitellio, chap. 13; Dr. Arbuthnot's *Tables*, p. 138.

155 Μετοπισθ' ατης αλεγουσι κιουσαι. Homer, *Iliad*, book IX, l. 500.

Conclusion.
These are a few reflections that seemed to me of substance on the different uses of the Belles-Lettres. I should be happy if I have inspired a taste for them! I would entertain too high an opinion of myself if I did not feel all the defects of this essay, and too low an opinion if I did not hope that at a less precocious age, when my knowledge is more extensive, I should be more capable of remedying them. It might be said that these reflections are true but hackneyed, or that they are new but paradoxical. What author enjoys criticisms? And yet the first case would displease me less. The gift of the art is dearer to me than the glory of the artist.

Finis

Unpublished Passages of the *Essai*

24

It is generally believed that after the death of Merula, who was assassinated during the Civil Wars of Marius, the office of Flamen Dialis or Priest of Jupiter with which he was invested remained vacant until the time of Augustus, for Seventy-two years. Tacitus( )[156] and Dio affirm it categorically,( ) and Suetonius implies as much when he says that Augustus restored a number of ancient ceremonies forgotten during the disorders from which he had just saved the Roman people; among these was the office of Flamen Dialis. These are quite Explicit Testimonies. But let us listen to Cicero, who inveighed against Antony in the Senate. Sacrilegious honors, he said, have been paid to the Memory of Caesar. The Corpse of a dead man has received that worship which is due only to the Immortal Gods. *Et ergo Flamen* (he added) *ut Jovi ut Marti ut Quirino sic Divo Julio. M. Antonius*. Shall we say that the Orator considered that this Ancient Priesthood survived though the position was no longer filled in his time? Shall we use his authority to demolish exact historians who were not his contemporaries? The meaning of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio is unambiguous, but they could have fallen into error. Cicero could not have fallen into error but it is possible that we mistake his meaning. In a word, does the probability that the Historians knew this fact overrule the probability that we are hearing Cicero properly, or does the former give way to the latter? It hardly matters to me how the question is decided, so long as we recognize how delicate the Critics' investigations are, and with what precautions they must be examined.

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A Steer of exceptional size was born in the land of the Sabines. The Soothsayers promised the Empire of the world to the Countrymen of whoever sacrificed it in the temple of Diana in Rome. The Sabine obeyed, led his Victim to Rome, and presented it to the Sacrificer. The Roman, seeing his country in danger and believing that anything that could remove the danger was legitimate, eluded the prediction by a trick. "The Tiber runs at the foot of the mountain," he said. "Purify yourself in the river and then we will immolate your offering to the Goddess." Full of Zeal, the Sabine raced off to carry out this instruction, and the Roman seized the opportunity to immolate the Victim fatal to Diana and his country. We read of this deed and know enough to be surprised at the credulity of the Romans, who could believe such inanities, and at the superstition of Livy, who transmits them to posterity. To link the destiny of the world to such childishness, and recompense dishonesty and Injustice. What Ideas, how unworthy of the greatness and equity of the Supreme Being; how unfortunate were the pagans. Religion put out the lights of their reason.

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I seek out a roughly similar fact in the annals of the Hebrews and I find the very same one in the Stratagem that Jacob Used to rob his brother Esau of the benediction of their father. What we see has not changed at all, but our eyes have. We no longer see anything low or absurd. Everything strikes us as grand and admirable, and if good sense should start at something, the commentators know how to find a Mystical sense that will silence the most obstinate. It is like with the hero and the Thief in Boileau: We Admire Caesar but

156 [The empty parentheses were intended as cues for footnotes.]

Should one deliver his like in France to la Reynie
In three days we would see this phoenix of warriors
Leave on the Scaffold his head and his laurels.

[Different version of XLVII]

I enjoy seeing how men's judgments take up the tincture of their predispositions and, contemplating how men dare not draw conclusions that they feel are exact from principles they have recognized as true, how they detest in the barbarian what they admire in the Greek. They praise an action in their compatriots, and if they Discover it in their enemies, it immediately strikes them as abominable. This is a defect of every people but the Romans provide us with the most marked examples. Because they believed they were invincible, they thought and acted as if their neighbors were enemies; their allies, subjects. Their Greatness reinforced these ideas. Once a Consul had transformed a flourishing country into a vast desert, the name given his Expedition was that of civilizing the barbarians, establishing the peace. But if after being reduced to despair by the cruelty of the Governors and the avarice of the tax-farmers,[157] the very same barbarians sought death at least with their weapons in hand, then their revolt seemed an act of treachery requiring the strongest punishment. They understood how legitimate it could be for them, and how handsome, to try to put an end to the disputes of other peoples, and that they could even use threats and intimidate the least peaceful with the fear of uniting with their enemies. But They carried the principle too far. The role of Mediator in their case became that of arbiter. Not only did they advise peace but they decided upon its conditions and employed the force of their arms to break those who resisted. Opening Livy at random will provide twenty examples. Popillius is the most famous case. "Make peace with Ptolemy and abandon Egypt. Those are the Senate's orders. Will you obey? You shall not leave this circle until you respond."[158] The Romans congratulated themselves on this use of their power, and their allies admired them and trembled. But as soon as another people dared to believe that this privilege was not limited to the Romans, the latter considered things differently. In the days when the republic was contemplating the conquest of Asia, the Kings of Syria were the only adversaries Rome needed to fear. Before overrunning Syria, the kings had to be weakened. The Governors of those provinces unused to respecting a Distant master had grown accustomed to Independence but their thrones were still unsteady. The free Cities complained that a Greek prince wished to deprive them of the liberty they had enjoyed under the barbarian kings. To protect all those who were discontented seemed to the Romans a shrewd, sure, and brilliant plan of Action. Their hopes were not disappointed. The City of Rhodes quickly formed a close alliance with them. In the wars with Philip and Antiochus, the Rhodian fleet lived up to its reputation and helped bring about victory. The friendship, shall I

157 Cicero's *Harangues against Verres*, v. especially book IV, chap. 19, and book V, chaps. 41–46, show to what extent they [i.e., cruelty and avarice] were suffered. If we recall that Sicily, the first province of the Republic, was considered more as an ally than a conquest, we will no longer be surprised to read in Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, chaps. 15, 19, of the state of the provinces that had not acquired the protection of the Romans by a prompt submission.

158 The Romans conducted this affair with finesse. Ptolemy's Ambassadors came to implore their help several days before the end of the *Quinquatria* on roughly 19 March 585 AUC. They seemed to take a warm interest in their ally. Popillius and his colleagues were to leave in three days. But as the outcome of the Macedonian War was uncertain, they stopped in Delos on rather slight pretenses for several months. They did not embark for Egypt until the news of the battle of Pydna (fought on 4 September 585 AUC) had removed the obstacles. See Livy, book XLIV, chaps. 19, 20, 29, and book XLV, chaps. 10, 11, 12.

say, or the policy of the Romans separated off the states of Antiochus, Lycia, and Caria, as recompense for their allies.[159] But the Rhodians who were enlightened about their real interests at last understood that the republic's victories would insensibly subjugate them. Is it any wonder that they looked askance at the coming fall of Perseus, the last barrier remaining to them? They sent Ambassadors to the King and the Senate. Their mission made them Mediators for a reconciliation. They exhorted the parties to this effect and even insinuated that they would ally themselves to the friend of peace. "Ne nunc quidem sine indignatione legi audirive posse certum habeo. Inde existimari potest qui habitus animorum audientibus ea patribus fuerit." This is the reflection of the judicious Livy, but more Roman than judicious. Instead of weighing the Rhodians' proposals, they rejected them with a response dictated by contempt and anger. Once the war had ended, the Senate thought to punish this outrage, a Tribune denounced them to the people, and it was only after subjecting their deputies to a thousand humiliations that the Senate consented to hear them. The maxims of Natural Law and Roman practice would have supplied them with a defense that was too solid not to irritate their judges. They understood this and advanced only the most submissive of prayers. It was by avowing their mistake rather than by recalling the memory of their past service that they sought to move the Senate. Cato supported them. Like his Compatriots, the austere Senator knew that every gesture that served one's country was acceptable,( ) and he was enlightened enough to see that this principle justified the Rhodians. He spoke in their favor. Cato's reasons and the Deputies' tears Saved the city. There was no more talk of razing it to the ground. But it was forgotten that in large part the Romans owed the conquest of Asia to Rhodes, they took away the provinces of Lycia and Caria, and in future times this sentence was Cited as proof of the clemency of the republic and the gentleness with which it treated the greatest criminals.[160]

50b

No one can escape the Influence of these causes. The Philosopher looks for the cause of the Civil wars of England at least as much in the religion, manners, [and] disposition of the English people as in the particular actions of their prince. But as we acknowledge that Influence, we should know how to set its limits.

51

There are Isolated facts that have no foundation, a partial cause, a design, a whim produce them, and one cannot go farther without becoming involved in false subtleties. Indeed, let us set as a first principle that general causes should not be invoked until the Energy of particular causes has been spent in vain. Compare the greatness of an Effect with that of the partial cause that seems to have given rise to it[. I]f we find that the cause is more powerful, then and only then let us generalize our Ideas. We will easily reach the first impulse and find sufficient force in it to move the whole machine.

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159 Livy, *Roman History*, book XXXVIII, chap. 39.

160 Livy, *Roman History*, book XLIV, chaps. 14, 15, book XLV, chaps. 20–26. Polybius, *Excerpta de legationibus*, XCIII. Diodorus Siculus, *Excerpta*, XIX. Sallust in *Bellum Catilinae*, pp. 143, 144 (ed. Thys).

52

Let us introduce into this comparison not only the greatness but also the respective duration of the cause and the Effect; the former can sometimes mislead us but the other will not. Xerxes's mad ambition could overwhelm the earth and provide an occasion for that important lesson that numbers, treasury, and pride are impotent against discipline, liberty, and Virtue; but for the continuity of Efforts, for the unshakable constancy of the Roman people under the most awful reversals of fortune, we must look for a more general cause that always subsists and is always active. The reason for this is clear. Chance, [or] the will of a man[,] can unleash great movements, but it is rare for the effects of a blind transient or inconstant cause to be uniform and steady. Lucretia's death was due to the crime of the Tarquinii and her own Virtue. The Roman Genius was immediately roused. The Tarquinii and Royalty fled before it. Porsena thundered in vain at the Gates of Rome. The Romans knew how to die, not how to serve. Porsena admired the force that liberty instills in the soul[;] he left these enraged lions with a Courage that later proved so fatal to Italy. The Republic gathered strength & with it an immortal hatred of kings.( ) Can this despair, this stubbornness, be resolved into the discontent produced by a few acts of Violence? Shall we not derive them instead from the constitution of the Roman government[?]

53

When examined with care, it will be seen that Lucretia's death was to the Establishment of liberty what trumpets are to a battle; the signal and not the cause. The authority of the Kings of Rome was great but poorly defined, and at the same time they possessed it in a highly precarious way; to recover it, all the people had to do was want it[;] one produced Tyrants, another punished them. They were judges, an immense power in times when written laws were few, and appeals to the people even rarer. They were Generals, and in times when wars were but incursions, it was easy indeed to instigate and maintain them. But without soldiers and a treasury, a fierce poor and sparsely populated nation kept close watch on all their actions, and that nation was neither dazzled by the imposing pomp of a Monarch nor blinded by the prejudices of divine right nor attached to a family by the bonds of gratitude and Habit.

54

Republican Historians have perhaps darkened the character of the last of the Tarquinii. He may have been less wicked, but he was not less weak. If this unity of action or rather of effect derived from the play of a great number of actors whose situations, characters, and views were very different, and which worked in similar fashion in periods quite distant from each other, then I make bold to conclude that a more general cause existed than the Will of each individual. Limited and blind, the latter could see only a part of these effects, and often not even this part. It is humiliating for men to compare their decisions to the throw of dice; but if we saw one Hundred thousand dice always come up the same, would we accuse the person who looked for a hidden cause of being oversubtle?

55

But It is when they produce effects in conflict with all the partial causes that can be enlisted that they reveal themselves most brilliantly. In the first Century of the empire the Romans' chains

were heavy but covered with laurels. Unhappy at home, they completed the conquest of the Universe.[161]

> Et nunc siquid abest, Italis adjudicat armis( )

The Barbarians feared the Roman arms; the pride of the Arsacids was humbled before that of the Caesars.[162] Proud Germany immolated three legions, the Elite of the army, to the cause of liberty, but the name of the Conquered inspired awe in the Conquerors, and instead of marching on a distressed Capitol, they considered themselves happy to be left alone in their marshes. At this time the sovereigns of the world were almost all either enraged or weak, unfit to command the legions, jealous of whoever could do so more than they,( ) awarding Unlimited power to the Freemen, binding the hands of the great men. The Spectacle that the same Empire provides us from Claudius II to Theodosius is precisely the opposite. Several were Tyrants, but all of them, if we exclude Constantius and Valens, [were] princes who liked war and knew how to conduct it, while the neighboring barbarians attacked the empire under its greatest men, overran it as soon as the prince seemed less formidable, and overthrew it fourteen years after the death of the great Theodosius. How can the Historian who confines himself to partial Causes explain this Phenomenon?

56

The Philosophical Spirit will easily find the reasons. He will see that in the first of these Epochs the world was convinced that the Empire of the Romans would never encounter limits in Space or time,

> His Ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono
> Imperium sine fine dedi.( )

In the second It expected a coming dissolution.[163] The military Virtues[,] which abandoned the Romans long after their sister virtues, finally passed to the Barbarians. The latter, instructed by their misfortunes and persuaded that the Roman Triumphs were largely due to their own lack of union, formed powerful leagues of French and Germans, who descended upon a Monarchy whose least dangerous division was that of East and West.

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161 Without counting a number of provinces that were acquired at no cost of blood, Rhaetia, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Great Britain, Armenia, Mesopotamia, [and] Palestine were subdued by the Empire between the reigns of Augustus and Trajan.

162 Tiridates, the brother of Vologeses, King of the Parthians, came to prostrate himself at Nero's feet before the whole Roman people; he invested himself with the title of Slave and assured the Emperor that he worshiped him as he did the Sun. Nero received him with goodwill and awarded him the kingdom of Armenia. Dio, book LX, pp. 717, 718. Tillemont, *Histoire des empereurs*, vol. I, p. 510.

163 When Romulus consulted the birds at the foundation of Rome, Twelve Vultures appeared before him; the Augurs saw in the number of birds the duration of the City; it was either twelve years or one Hundred twenty or twelve Hundred. The first two periods had long passed, and in the fifth century of the Christian Era, the Expiration of the last of them was expected with dread. These fears pervaded Italy in 402, when The Goths made their first Incursion. Terror had an influence on the calculation made by the Romans because the fatal time was not to come for another Forty-Five years. V. Howel's *History of the World*, vol. II, p. 538. *The History of the French Monarchy* by abbé du Bos, vol. I.

Religion

60

V. Literature considers it an honor to rally under the banner of Theology, not that Contentious Theology that can be depicted as the muse of Tragedy wearing a mask, a sword in hand, but of that celestial doctrine that is beneficent enough to preach only Virtue to its children and great enough to reward it in its enemies. This doctrine is a body of precepts, but it is founded on deeds that occurred among the very same peoples who comprise the object of the Literary man's work. Are the books where we find these deeds, and are the deeds, as ancient as they seem to us? Do they contain anything that is contrary to the known manners of the times? Are the religion of the pagans, the Roman Government, the State, [and] the provinces faithfully depicted[?] The slightest Error, the slightest contradiction, would reveal an Imposture and relegate the sacred books to the class of those favorite Novels of Don Quixote, one of whose heroes stole the Image of Mohammed from the Saracens, even though the religious principles of that people forbade them not only the cult of Idols but even the use of Sculpture. Our Theologians engaged in this combat honorably[.] All the science, all the subtlety, of the Unbelievers could not convict the inspired Writers of a single mistake; their authority must win out over all the other accounts, for I know of none that emerged victorious from such a Trial.

61

Physics shares with Belles-Lettres the honor of defending religion, and it must be admitted that the number of proofs that it furnishes can be matched only by their solidity. Their object is the Existence of the supreme Being who is sometimes concealed from our meditation but who always reveals himself to our eyes; however, though they [these proofs] are highly useful in confirming the wise man's faith, they do little to dispel the Sophistry of Enemies.

62

The adversaries of the supreme Being are few in number and hidden; perhaps they exist nowhere; those of revelation are numerous and bold. The more we make use of our Philological knowledge, the better we can avoid the all-too-common stumbling blocks. When tribute is paid to the excellence of Christian morals, its conformity with the purest lights of natural religion, Plato, Seneca, Cicero are cited to prove that Christianity was not a new yoke forced upon men but a System of duties known to all nations, adopted by priests, ordered by legislators, taught by Philosophers, sung by the poets.( ) Cato, Aristides, [and] Socrates come forth to reproach the Christians for their Vices; their virtue is used to depreciate ours. But, on the other hand, when men are to be instructed in what they owe to revelation, no colors are too strong for painting the blindness and errors of the greatest men, the faults of the best, and the vice and corruption that covered the earth when the legislator of the Christians came there to bring peace and light.

63

An in-depth Study of Antiquity will enable us to avoid these extremes[.] We will see that in their details and their applications true general principles pay their due To the prejudices of their age[.] Even the freest souls are hard-pressed not to pay this tribute; systems of Philosophy lending themselves to every inspiration often make of the intractable misanthropist a citizen above temptation thanks to the Idea of his own grandeur; of the dissolute rake, a delicate enlightened and

beneficent Voluptuary[.] But after paying homage to the virtue of a small number, we must tremble with horror at the General corruption. A history like Suetonius's makes me feel how greatly men needed a new law. Almost everywhere I see the most dangerous and debasing vices parade with their head held high, Virtue despised and persecuted, the simplest decency recommended as the most sublime Virtue. It is only among the Roman Emperors that I see what men are when they are free of the yoke of religion, deaf to the voice of shame, raised above human punishments.

64

It has been asked whether we cannot love virtue for itself, will a person who has gone into the disgusting history of these monsters not want instead to cry out at every moment[?] Did these men not love evil for itself? I can pardon their base debauchery[;] the slaughter of all the old Nobility of the republic afflicts me without being a surprise. Politicians could reluctantly immolate to their fears those who groaned to wear the irons of their peers, often of their inferiors, sometimes of the vilest of men. But I see some who spill blood with pleasure, who take delight in the torment of the unfortunate. One recalls the cold-bloodedness of the tyrant Tiberius. "I should not think of granting it," he answered a poor wretch who asked for a quick death as his last grace. "I have not yet pardoned you.["][164] His worthy Pupil Caligula wished to refine on his pleasures and, being tired of vulgar executions—even though his executioners, faithful to his desire, struck the Victims so that they could feel themselves dying[165]—wanted to enjoy the charming spectacle of a Senator torn to pieces by his colleagues. The complacent Senate cooperated with his wishes and bought his grace with its infamy.[166] Caesar did not pardon them until he had sated his eyes on the disgusting view of the victim's entrails and torn limbs dragged through the streets and then reassembled before him.

65

How these tyrants must have made men regret the memory of Augustus, whose dissolute and cruel youth only served to contrast with the labors of the rest of his life, which replaced the horrors of civil war with peace, abundance, and prosperity on earth. How his conduct must have inspired a lively gratitude in his subjects! Thus, we see dying fathers in those instants when flattery is dumb ordering their sons to thank the gods for leaving Augustus after them.( ) Augustus died, the eagle flew from the funeral pyre, the Senate granted him a place among the gods, they accorded him priests and temples.( ) Here Politics joined in the gratitude. In deifying Augustus what splendor his successors added to their government, their family, their persons. The pagans should not have been more shocked by the Apotheosis of Augustus than of Bacchus or Theseus[.] Like them his origins were taken to be divine; wonders, some of which dazzle the Philosophers, accompanied his birth;( ) Like them

> Post ingentia facta Deorum in templa recepti
> Dum terras hominumq: colunt genus, aspera bella
> Componunt, agros assignant, oppida condunt( )

164 Suetonius, book III, chap. 61.
165 Suetonius, book IV, chap. 30.
166 Idem, book IV, chap. 28.

and like them, men could believe him to have been received among the gods from whom he had descended. A Senator who had been Praetor swore an oath that the new divinity had appeared to him like that of Romulus in all the splendor of Celestial majesty.( )

66

Nevertheless, the enlightened Philosophy of this age easily dissipated all these Illusions, the God Augustus was never taken for more than a machination of Politics; the people neglected him[,] the most superstitious of his successors scoffed at him, and we know the reward that that cowardly flatterer Numerius Atticus received from Livia as the price of his perjury.( )

67

Eighteen years [later] an obscure man perished by the most sordid of ordeals. He issued from a nation despised by the whole earth. His disciples proclaimed him as God but god of a new order but destroying all the gods of the earth. All the while his doctrine spread. Persecuted everywhere, it everywhere was reborn from its ashes. Its enemies obstinately fought against it, by their own avowals they refuted themselves.( ) The cross was erected on the debris of the Capitol. The Magus and the Druid, the Stoic and the Epicurean, united in believing a doctrine that astonishes reason and that redeems [*amortit*].

A