What's Left of Enlightenment?

A Postmodern Question

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Introduction

It has become increasingly clear in recent years that, for all their differences, the many varieties of thinking commonly grouped together under the rubric of "postmodernism" share at least one salient characteristic: they all depend upon a stereotyped, even caricatural, account of the Enlightenment. Postmodernity, by definition, requires a "modernity" to be repudiated and superseded. And the tenets of this modernity—variously described as rationalism, instrumentalism, scientism, logocentrism, universalism, abstract rights, eurocentrism, individualism, humanism, masculinism, etc.—have invariably been assumed to be postulates of a philosophy of absolute reason identified with the so-called Enlightenment Project. The aim of this volume is to explore more critically than usual the now conventional opposition between Enlightenment and Postmodernity and to suggest some of the complications bearing upon it.

The authors of the essays presented in Part I under the rubric, "Enlightenment or Postmodernity," offer some general reflections on the way in which contemporary discussion characterizes the two movements as radical alternatives. In doing so, David Hollinger defends the epistemological heritage of the Enlightenment as a necessary foundation for the acceptance and implementation of the crucial liberal values to which it also gave rise. In his judgment, to flirt with relativism is to put rights at risk. Richard Rorty, by contrast, argues that it is both possible and necessary to disengage the political project

of the Enlightenment from its outmoded epistemological base. What's left of Enlightenment, in his view, is its forward-looking aspiration to create a more decent human society through practical action, not its atavistic desire for a non-human authority embedded in such hypostatizations as "Truth" and "Reason."

Part II, "Critical Confrontations," provides a kind of archeology of the opposition between Enlightenment and Postmodernity by charting a series of critical engagements carried out by those who have demeaned or affirmed Enlightenment values in the course of the twentieth century. German thinkers played a crucial role in forming the terms of the debate. Jonathan Knudsen traces the first major critique of Enlightenment made by German historicists from the beginning of the nineteenth century, a critique that continued well into World War II with such thinkers as Meinecke, Auerbach, and Benjamin. Hans Sluga shows how Heidegger's consideration of the Enlightenment served as an entry point to the much larger critique of grounded rationality and universal reason which led to his radical rethinking of reason as embedded in history. Johnson Kent Wright, by contrast, analyzes the famous interpretation of the Enlightenment published in 1932 by Heidegger's principal philosophical opponent during the Weimar period, Ernst Cassirer. Appearing as it did on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power, and seen in its historical context, Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was at once a celebration of Enlightenment thinking and a defense of Weimar values. Its goal was the restoration of an activist conception of philosophical reason which is not merely imitative or instrumental but has the power to shape life itself.

Kant's motto, "*Sapere aude*—Dare to Know," was the epitome of the philosophy Cassirer found in the Enlightenment. Nor has he been alone in that regard. Michel Foucault's well-known confrontation with the Kantian imperative is analyzed in the essay by Michael Meranze. In Meranze's analysis, Foucault turned the Kantian injunction against the Enlightenment itself by identifying the singular, contingent, and arbitrary elements in what Kant presented as universal, timeless, necessary, and obligatory. Thus he continued the Enlightenment even as he challenged it. Meranze's Foucault, urging us to problematize all problematizations, remains, in striking ways, an Enlightenment figure.

Part III, "A Postmodern Enlightenment?," includes three essays that complicate the dichotomy between Enlightenment and Postmodernity by pointing to the existence within the Enlightenment of elements frequently seen as characteristic of Postmodernity itself. The central characteristic of contemporary thinking, as Lorraine Daston defines it, is a repudiation of devices of naturalization. Postmodernism refuses the absolutist discourse of nature and natural facts it assumes to be the legacy of the Enlightenment, instead mapping the path to emancipation through celebration of the cultural and the contingent rather than of the natural and the necessary. In Daston's analysis, however, the Enlightenment had no supreme confidence in the authority of facts or in the undisputed rule of nature. To the contrary, it exhibited enormous anxiety regarding the reliability of facts and the extent to which the rule of nature could be frustrated by human action. Its constantly reiterated fears of the powers of the imagination need to be seen as a powerful index of its sense of the fragility of facts and the unreliability of nature.

Epistemological anxiety could find practical relief in the practice of sociability, as David Hume most famously argued. It is appropriate therefore that the concluding essays of the volume turn to this aspect of the Enlightenment. Focusing on issues of gender, Dena Goodman offers us an Enlightenment which refused the choice between universality and difference and saw the latter as an essential social value. Through the civility practiced in the salons, she argues, difference—and especially a gendered difference—shaped the common good. Lawrence Klein, too, sees polite conversation as the quintessential activity of the Enlightenment, a way of fashioning self and world by the process Richard Rorty has advocated as "continuing the conversation."

Holding skepticism at bay through the effort to maintain a human conversation, seeking liberation even in the face of uncertainty, hoping for the best in human conduct even while recognizing the human capacity for the worst: these, too, are part of what's left of Enlightenment.

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Center for Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Studies at UCLA and the Stanford Humanities Center, Stanford University. We wish to acknowledge the excellent staffs of these two Centers and to thank them for their work in organizing these conferences. We are also grateful to Charly J. Coleman for his assistance in preparing the volume for publication.

PART I

ENLIGHTENMENT OR POSTMODERNITY?

DAVID A. HOLLINGER

The Enlightenment and the Genealogy of Cultural Conflict in the United States

In 1969, Charlie Manson and his band committed the stylized murders for which they are still remembered. Several months after these grisly events, a faculty colleague of mine at SUNY Buffalo, where he and I had just begun our teaching careers, said to me in a sober voice that if Charlie Manson was what it truly meant to not believe in God—if this cult of murder was the culmination of the historical process of secularization, was what the Enlightenment had come to—he was glad to remain a Christian believer. At first I thought my friend was joking. He was a sophisticated Assistant Professor of English, widely read, and a specialist, as it happened, in the eighteenth century. Surely, he was carrying out the kind of ironic routine that he, as a master of Fielding and Gibbon, of Hume and Johnson, could handle well. But I soon saw he was in earnest, and was trying to send a warning to me, whom he suspected of being rather too far over on the free-thinking side of the spectrum of spiritual orientations. I was nonplused by my friend's sincerity, and, without thinking, my tongue almost in cheek but not quite, mumbled something to the effect that the Catholicism so dear to him had resulted, after all, in the Spanish Inquisition.

Our friendship somehow survived, for a few years, at least. But I invoke here my memory of this private exchange because its dynamics are similar to many of the public conversations of our own time in which "the Enlightenment" is invoked. It is a discourse of warning and counter-warning, of morally portentous claims and counter-claims, a discourse in which episodes from intellectual history are ma-

nipulated and mobilized to discredit or to legitimate one program or another in contemporary struggles. The late Ernest Gellner appears to have believed that his opinions on contemporary issues were endowed with more weight if he identified these opinions with the Enlightenment, and that it discredited his critics to depict them as opponents of the entire body of rational and empirical wisdom built up over the course of two centuries.[1] In the meantime, John Gray seems to think his arguments against certain liberal political theorists are vastly strengthened, and the importance of his own arguments greatly underscored, if it is understood that at issue is the entire heritage of the Enlightenment.[2]

So, on the one side, we are told that the Enlightenment project apotheosized individuality and has left us without means of acting on the elementary communitarian truth that selves are the product of social groups. The Enlightenment project denied the constraints and the enabling consequences of history by assigning to human reason the role of building life anew from a slate wiped clean of tradition. This project tyrannized a host of particular cultural initiatives and tried to make everyone alike by advancing universal rules for identifying goodness, justice, and truth. Politically, the Enlightenment promoted absolutist and imperialist initiatives. Above all, the Enlightenment project blinded us to the uncertainties of knowledge by promoting an ideal of absolute scientific certainty.

Meanwhile, others assure us with equal confidence that the Enlightenment recognized the limits and fallibility of knowledge to a degree that pre-Enlightenment regimes of truth simply did not. This Enlightenment project brought under devastating scrutiny the prejudices and superstitions that protected slavery and a virtual infinity of other injustices. It created the historical and social scientific inquiries that enable us to speak with such confidence about the social dependence of the self. The Enlightenment promoted religious tolerance against the imperialist ambitions of conflicting absolutisms. Above all, the Enlightenment was subversive of traditional political authority, and ultimately it gave us democracy.

Thus we go on merrily, or sometimes grumpily, reenacting Maistre and Mill, just as I played Thomas Jefferson to my Buffalo colleague's Edmund Burke. And while so doing, we add the entire expe-

rience of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to our inventory of historical vehicles that have transported things we like—or don't like—from the eighteenth century to the present. The Enlightenment led to Auschwitz, just as it had led to the Terror; or the Enlightenment led to the principles by which we judge the Terror to have been excessive, just as it led to the standards by which Auschwitz can be the most convincingly condemned today. This dynamic is displayed on shelves of books well beyond the constantly cited works of Lyotard and Habermas, ranging from Alasdair McIntyre's *After Virtue* to Stephen Toulmin's *Cosmopolis*, from Connor Cruise O'Brien's *On the Eve of the Millennium* to John Gray's *Enlightenment's Wake*.[3] I'm hot stuff because I'm not only refuting you, my puny opponent, but I am refuting every great thinker from Descartes to Popper; or, watch out, you think you are arguing against only me, but the implications of your reasoning are to deny the common sense of every humane and rational mind since the seventeenth century. Into such heroic postures we seem to fall into very quickly when we invoke the Enlightenment. One result of this dynamic in some contexts has been to turn the Enlightenment into a conversation-stopper: as soon as one's interlocutor is firmly classified as a defender or a critic of the Enlightenment, a host of associations, loyalties, and counter-loyalties are implicitly in place, and there is little to say.

This is often so in the multiculturalist debates. The Enlightenment blamed for what is said to be the excessive universalism and individualism that multiculturalists are trying to correct. The Enlightenment, it seems, has led us to suppose that all people are pretty much alike, thus blinding us to diversity. It is another mark of lingering Enlightenment assumptions, moreover, to focus on ostensibly autonomous individuals rather than the groups that provide individuals with their culture. And on the other side of the ideological coin, those who suspect multiculturalism of putting people into a small number of color-coded boxes and expecting them to stay there often voice their complaint in the name of the Enlightenment's revolt against the claims of blood and history. Yet some ideas that might be seen as extensions of an Enlightenment tradition—such as the right of an individual to choose his or her own cultural affiliations regardless of ancestry—are quite acceptable to the same audiences who will be suspicious of these

same ideas if they are presented as Enlightenment ideas. A good rule of thumb in the multiculturalist debates is that a good way to get your ideas accepted is to conceal, rather than to emphasize, whatever ancestry those ideas may have in the Enlightenment.[4]

The polemical use of history is common. It would be a mistake to suggest that the case I have described is unique. The legacy of the Enlightenment, in particular, has always been contested because so many enduring religious, political, and philosophical issues were engaged in the historic episode that bears its name. But during the last quarter-century, the Enlightenment has been an extreme case of this dynamic in the United States. Why this has happened is the chief question I pursue here. I want also to comment, more tentatively, on another question: where do we go from here? What are the prospects for an honest inquiry into the long-term historical trajectories in which the Enlightenment-invoking quarrels of our own time are embedded?

An answer to the first question requires an understanding of how the debate over the "modern" was transformed during the 1980s by historical claims offered under the sign of postmodernism. Among Anglophone intellectuals, the term modernism was long used to refer to a cluster of revolts against the Enlightenment. Lionel Trilling's generation used the term "modernism" to refer to Nietzsche, Proust, Conrad, Yeats, Mann, Joyce, Stravinsky, Picasso, Nolde, Klimt, and William James. In a stock-taking essay of 1961, "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," Trilling himself offered a penetrating meditation on the modern canon, commenting on the moral and pedagogical problems presented by each of the texts he used in his legendary course at Columbia University.[5] *Consciousness and Society*, H. Stuart Hughes's a classic work of 1958, considered the social thought of the 1890–1930 epoch largely as a critique of the Enlightenment.[6] The modern canon, in the arts as well as philosophy and social theory, was widely understood in the 1950s and 1960s to be the work of a heroic generation of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century intellectuals who had challenged the epistemological and political traditions of the Enlightenment, and had seen the dark side of what came to be called the modernization process.[7] What had happened during the

very late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, scholars agreed, was a revolt against the positivism, rationalism, realism, and liberalism that the Victorian intellectuals had refined from the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. Carl Schorske's use of the word "modernism" in his *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* of 1980 continued this firmly grounded and widely dispersed historiographical practice.[8]

During the 1980s, however, Anglophone intellectuals attended to a formidable sequence of books and articles that used the word modernism very differently, to refer not to the revolt against the Enlightenment, but to the tradition of the Enlightenment itself. Modernism came to mean not Dostoevsky, but Descartes. Anyone whose sense of modernism had been formed by Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr.'s massive anthology of 1965, *The Modern Tradition*,[9] and by the works of Trilling, Hughes, Schorske, Richard Blackmur, Anthony Quinton, and Irving Howe — to list only some of the most prominent discussants of modernism during the period between 1940 and 1980 — had cause to wonder why the term modernism was suddenly being linked with rationalism, the Scientific Revolution, and Kant. These things, one had learned on good authority, were what modernists tried to get beyond.

This new sense of modernism was aggressively retailed in the United States under the name of postmodernism. Nietzsche, after his long career as a founder of modernism, began a new career as a precursor, if not a founder, of postmodernism. The transition can be sometimes found within the work of a single scholar. In 1983 philosopher Robert Pippin described Nietzsche as the prototypical modernist, and in 1991 described Nietzsche as the prototypical postmodernist.[10] Nietzsche's ideas had not changed. Nor had the details of Pippin's analysis of those ideas. The only thing that had changed was the history in which Nietzsche was to be placed, or, more precisely, the movement to which he was assigned. What took place between Pippin's two iterations of Nietzsche's grand historical significance was that modernism had become the Enlightenment and the revolt against it had become postmodernism. The same repackaging was afforded to William James, who, in book after book, made the switch from modernist to postmodernist.

The postmodernists virtually plundered the old modernist canon,

appropriating the thinkers they liked for postmodernism and declaring the rest to be lingering echoes of the Enlightenment. In a vivid case of the classic maneuver of appropriation and effacement, some of the postmodernists appropriated the most exciting of the contributions of the canonical modernists and effaced the movement that produced them. The profound tensions within the work of the 1890–1930 generation were relaxed by a new historiography responsive to the hegemonic ambitions of persons who claimed postmodernism as their vehicle. The 1890–1930 historical moment was thus virtually evacuated in order to create a more stark and momentous confrontation between postmodernism and the old Enlightenment of Descartes and Kant. There was virtually nothing of consequence in between. Hardly anybody, it seemed, had really seen through the illusions of the Enlightenment until the postmodernists came along. All those folks who thought everything had changed on or about December 1910 were kidding themselves. There was a big break, all right, but it did not take place in Bloomsbury on the eve of World War I. It took place in Paris after 1968. One book after another carrying postmodernism in its title provided a capsule history of postmodernism, in which the generation of 1890–1930 was treated not as the group of heroic, agonistic explorers whose careers had been analyzed by Trilling and Howe, by Hughes and Schorske, but as a pusillanimous prolegomena to Foucault.[11]

Entailed in this transformation in the Enlightenment's relation to modernism was the more widespread acceptance, by American academics, of a notion of intellectual modernity that had been popular in France, and that achieved currency in the United States along with the ideas of French theorists whose names were associated with postmodernism.[12] Two autonomous revolts against two quite distinctive modernisms merged, apparently without anyone's planning it or negotiating it.[13] The first modernism was that taken for granted when the term postmodernism was first invoked by Leslie Fiedler, Susan Sontag, and Howe in the United States in the 1960s. The modernism against which these writers and their American contemporaries defined postmodernism was still the modernism of Eliot and Pound and Nietzsche and James; this was the modernism that entailed a critique of the Enlightenment and of the social and cultural processes of "mod-

ernization." Fiedler and Sontag and others thought this old modernism, as appreciated in the pages of the *Partisan Review* and the *Hudson Review*, had become academicized and stuffy. In this context, postmodernism seemed a refreshing change. It was found in the fiction of Thomas Pynchon and the music of John Cage. But a resoundingly different version of modernism, one associated with the Enlightenment, was the counter-referent for Lyotard's *Postmodern Condition*, translated into English in 1984.[14] The French conversation that produced Lyotard had been preoccupied, moreover, not with the arts, but with ideas about language, power, and the human subject that had been developed by philosophers, psychologists, and political theorists.

The authority of this French-centered conversation was facilitated by several specific features of the American intellectual scene. Active engagement with Lyotard was encouraged in the mid–80s by the antiphilosophical philosopher Richard Rorty, who briefly but portentously took for himself the label postmodernist and began to write about Proust and Nabakov shortly after having revived a pragmatic antifoundationalism for which the way had been prepared by Thomas S. Kuhn. These literary-philosophical explorations of Rorty's—grounded in James, Dewey, and Kuhn, and openly appreciative of the political tradition of American liberalism—served to enlarge and extend the postmodernist debate in the United States.[15] Another engagement was manifest in the work of Frederic Jameson, the most influential Marxist literary critic of the era. Jameson's critical studies of canonical modernists preceded his widely discussed paper of 1984, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," which addressed many genres of modernism and of postmodernism.[16] Simultaneously, Jürgen Habermas' attacks on the French postmodernists and on Hans-Georg Gadamer for betraying the Enlightenment project invited the large contingent of American followers of the Frankfurt School to engage the issues, and of course to see postmodernism's modernism as that of the Enlightenment.

Still, these two quite distinctive postmodernisms—an American, literary-artistic postmodernism defined against the canonical modernists of 1890–1930, and a French, philosophical-political postmodernism defined against the Enlightenment—might not have become

part of the same discourse were it not for the quaint belief that there is but a single torch to be passed, requiring that each moment in the discourse of intellectuals be named. What is our moment? Why, the moment of postmodernism, of course. How do we know what it is? Well, we can start by scrutinizing the various things said and done under its sign. By the end of the 1980s the Anglophone world was awash with sweeping assessments of architecture, poetry, film, social theory, epistemology, fiction, and political economy, all of which were said to partake of postmodernism in the French sense of the term.[17] Older critiques of the Enlightenment that had previously attained only a tiny constituency, such as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a book published in German in the 1940s but translated into English only in 1972, gained unprecedented currency.[18]

Hence the Enlightenment made the historic transition from a distant episode long interrogated by the great modernists into a vibrant enemy of the newest and most exciting insights coming from Paris. The Enlightenment was dehistoricized, and made into a vivid and somewhat dangerous presence insufficiently criticized and transcended by previous generations of intellectuals. It was up to us, now in the 1980s and 1990s, to do the job right, to complete the anti-Enlightenment project. No wonder the tensions surrounding the name of the Enlightenment sharply increased. All of the historic layers of mediation between "us" and the Enlightenment had been put aside. The Enlightenment became more relevant to contemporary cultural conflicts because the discourse of postmodernism made it so.

Where do we go from here? One response to the ease with which discursive blacksmiths forge and shatter links between ourselves and the Enlightenment is to suspend, temporarily, at least, explicit assertions of the Enlightenment or counter-Enlightenment significance of contemporary debates. If the Enlightenment can be moved around so easily to suit contemporary doctrinal agendas, perhaps it is not worth the struggle to establish a warranted account of the Enlightenment and its consequences. We might be better off with a more relaxed attitude toward the Enlightenment, and toward history in general, ac-

companied by a determination to formulate contemporary issues in terms that are closer to the ground. New openings and new alliances might come about in contemporary debates if the partisans are less determined to identify their own positions with symbolically charged discursive giants of the past. Simultaneously, we might rehistoricize the Enlightenment with a vengeance. A stronger historiography of the Enlightenment might emerge from a conviction that eighteenth-century studies can flourish well enough without exaggerated claims to relevance in contemporary culture wars. Enlightenment studies might then become more like patristics and Tang sinology, worthy *Wissenschafte* whose findings are relatively removed from debates over the character and direction of our civilization.

Yet this approach, tempting as it will be to anyone who has encountered the Enlightenment in its capacity as a conversation-stopper, runs into difficulties when enacted. Consider what happens when we try this in relation to a set of ideas that were widely adhered to by American intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s, were then brought under severe suspicion at one point or other between the late 1960s and the 1980s, and have more recently been subject to critical revision and reassertion. Before I list some of the ideas that fall into this class, let me underscore the distinctive historical destiny of these ideas. This class is quite specific; it does not include ideas that were bequeathed by the World War II generation yet were not called sharply into question by the next generation. Excluded, also, are ideas that were so bequeathed and then so challenged yet were not reasserted with noteworthy vigor. I call attention only to ideas that underwent all three experiences: popular in the 40s and 50s, then subject to widespread suspicion, and, finally, subject to critical reformulation and defense in recent years. Such ideas—argued about so earnestly, and subject to sharp reversals—are obviously important to the intellectual life of our own time. Any study of American intellectual life since 1950 needs an analytic language for interpreting these ideas.

What ideas fall into this distinctive class? Let me suggest seven, although the list could no doubt be extended:

- Nature has a capacity to significantly resist or respond to human efforts to represent it and to intervene in it.
- Humankind as a whole is a valid epistemic unit.

— Intersubjective reason has great emancipatory potential.
— Civil liberties formulated on the basis of rights ascribed to individual citizens are indispensable to a just society.
— Religion, whatever its role in past centuries, is now likely to be irrelevant, or even an obstruction, to cognitive and social progress.
— Physical characteristics such as skin color and shape of the face should not be allowed to determine the cultural tastes and social associations of individuals.
— The United States is potentially a world-historical agent of democratic-egalitarian values.

These ideas were affirmed with conviction by a great variety of voices during the 1940s and 1950s, when modernization theorists and positivists and behaviorists and liberals and integrationists of many kinds were in vogue: the Walt Rostows and the Hans Reichenbachs, the Perry Millers and the David Trumans, the Gunnar Myrdals and Cary McWilliamses of those years. Each of the seven was later brought under suspicion, often by persons identified with one or more of the following movements: communitarianism, feminism, neo-conservatism, poststructuralism, Marxism, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. These seven ideas are now situated in the classic baby-and-bathwater domain. Some say, in effect, "forget it, it's time we got beyond those ideas, let's talk about something else," and other people respond, "wait a minute, there's something here we can probably still use, if we are careful about it." And some who say "forget it" concerning one or another of the seven will switch sides about another of the seven, and say, "hold on, I like that one if we can make it non-racist, non-sexist, non-imperialist, non-universalist, non-logocentric, non-formalist, and, above all, non-European."

Accepting one of these ideas does not require one to accept the others. One of our most indefatigable skeptics about the epistemic unity of all humankind, about the capacity of nature to provide non-discursive restraints upon our representations of it, and about the emancipatory potential of intersubjective reason is at the same time a notorious defender of the American nation-state as an instrument for democratic-egalitarian values, and a scourge of the religiosity found in the likes of Stephen Carter and Christopher Lasch. I refer to Richard Rorty.

Each of the seven ideas on my little list deserves its own history within the discourse of the American academic intelligentsia since 1950. I invoke these ideas here only to render concrete the challenge of dealing with recent intellectual history in relation to the question of the Enlightenment's legacy. Are these seven ideas "Enlightenment ideas"? Of what significance is it that one thinker who accepted all of them—Ernest Gellner—called himself an "Enlightenment Rationalist Fundamentalist"?[19] Is Anthony Appiah a "neo-Enlightenment thinker" by virtue of his defense of cosmopolitanism?[20] Is Ian Hacking, by virtue of his critique of popular notions of "social construction"?[21] Is Michael Ignatieff, by virtue of his perspective on "blood and belonging"?[22] Does the critical revision and reassertion of these ideas in very recent years amount to a "neo-Enlightenment" of sorts? I state these questions not to answer them, but to suggest that if one wants to be historical at all, it is difficult to analyze some central feature of recent American intellectual life without making at least some use of the Enlightenment. The universalism and individualism prominent in the list surely owe much to Christianity, but so does the Enlightenment itself. The potential connection between the Enlightenment and these seven energetic ideas of our own time cannot be disposed of simply by pointing to a "more complicated" intellectual ancestry. At issue, rather, is whether we can get very far in explaining how these ideas have come to us, and how they acquired the hold they have on our conversations, without making extensive use of the collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century-centered episodes that we continue to call "the Enlightenment."

This is to suggest that if we are going to make any use at all of intellectual history in trying to understand where we are today, the Enlightenment is extremely difficult to avoid. The temptation to turn away in disgust and frustration at the polemicism of recent uses of the Enlightenment should be resisted. To give in to this temptation would be to deny our own historicity, and to shrink from searching for the sources and sustaining conditions of the ideas that animate much of contemporary intellectual life. We might save the Enlightenment from polemicism, but at a considerable cost: we might cut off too abruptly an opportunity for the cultural self-knowledge that history is supposedly in the business of providing. Historians have been

relatively passive in the disputes in which the Enlightenment has been invoked; rather, the thinkers who have been most active in those disputes are philosophers, literary scholars, and political theorists. Historians have put remarkably little resistance—in venues where it counts—to the transformation of modernism from Dostoevsky to Descartes, and to the proliferation of cardboard-character representations of the Enlightenment mind.

Facing and trying to bring reason and evidence to the polemics that invoke episodes from intellectual history, then, comes with the intellectual historian's calling unless one simply wants to withdraw from the concerns of one's colleagues in other parts of the humanities and social sciences. We should not shy away from constructing the most historically sound Enlightenment we can, and from offering the best arguments we can about its consequences. If someone claims, as did the author of a recent book, *Hitler as Philosophe*, that Hitler was a follower of Rousseau on sexuality and of Ricardo on economics, that he was a Jacobin in his religious orientation, and that he was, in general, a popularizer—in the words of the *American Historical Review*'s reviewer—of "Enlightenment values" such as "optimism, progress, and human perfectibility through adherence to natural law,"[23] these claims should be confronted head-on.

This requires that those of us who work primarily in the history of the twentieth century listen to what our colleagues in Enlightenment studies have to say. I hope we can count on our colleagues in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century studies to provide us with a sound and stable sense of the Enlightenment to work with. But you never know what they will say. In a recent issue of *Critical Inquiry*, one scholar argued that the true Enlightenment, the complete Enlightenment, the one expression of the Enlightenment that did not deny its own ferocious imperative for truth, was found not in Kant, not in Rousseau, not in Locke. The complete Enlightenment, this scholar explained, was found in that most commanding of all efforts to integrate power and knowledge, the Spanish Inquisition.[24] If my Buffalo friend had understood this in 1969, he could have had the last laugh on me.

JOHNSON KENT WRIGHT

"A Bright Clear Mirror": Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*

Among the classics of historical writing on eighteenth-century Europe, Ernst Cassirer's *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* occupies a unique position. Has any other book had so central and so enduring an impact on the field? First published in 1932, on the eve of its author's exile from Germany, it received a warm welcome in Cassirer's native land and elsewhere in Europe, and has continued to command respect there. But it is in the United States above all that the book has enjoyed its greatest success. Koelln's and Pettegrove's lucid translation, published by Princeton in 1951, rode the high crest of the wave of enthusiasm for Cassirer that began with his arrival in New York and his turn to writing in English. Thus launched, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* soon attained a canonical status within eighteenth-century studies that it has never really lost. It eventually reached a mass audience via paperback, and remains vigorously in print to this day. Even such criticism as the book has received has tended to enhance rather than detract from its magisterial reputation. By the end of the sixties, for example, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* seems to have become the chief pole of comparison *against* which the emergent "social history" of the Enlightenment defined itself. The practice actually began with Peter Gay, who is sometimes regarded as a "disciple" of Cassirer.[1] But he was soon trumped in this regard by Robert Darnton, for whom *The Philosophy of Enlightenment* was the finest achievement of a traditional history of ideas, one that confined its attention to a "High Enlightenment" of canonical texts, merely recatalogued by Gay; the most urgent task for historians in the present

was an assault on the archives, where the true social history of the Enlightenment, high and low, lay buried.[2] Today, however, it is Darnton himself who is taxed with failing to break free from Cassirer's spell, in the most commanding work of the new feminist scholarship, Dena Goodman's *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*. Ultimately, *c'est la faute à Rousseau*, the original source of the misogyny that, in Goodman's eyes, has obscured our understanding of the central contribution of the *salonnières* to Enlightenment sociability. But the chief advocate of Rousseau's outlook in our time has indeed been Cassirer, "who did more than anyone else to make the Enlightenment the subject of serious scholarship."[3]

If anything, the result of this kind of critical tribute "from below" has been to reinforce the status of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* as the quintessential history of the Enlightenment "from above." The essay at hand will not try to overturn that judgment. Goodman is no doubt correct in her assessment of the pivotal role played by Cassirer's text in twentieth-century scholarship on the Enlightenment, indeed, in constituting the field as an object of study. For precisely that reason, however, a serious reappraisal of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*—an attempt to examine the substance of its argument, rather than criticize the limits of its vision—seems overdue. For Cassirer's book appears to have enjoyed the privilege of launching a very durable research program in its field, one that may not yet be spent. What accounts for the lasting impact of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*? Why should it have proven difficult for different kinds of revisionism to move beyond it? If this is an opportune moment to pursue such questions, then our first task must be to take a closer look at the background from which the book emerged. Whatever elective affinity there may have been between Cassirer's study and the academic world of post-world America, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was produced in a very different cultural and political context—in fact, has something of the character of a message in a bottle, from a lost intellectual world.

Context: Symbolic Forms and Weimar Liberalism

Above all, it is no accident that the book that did more than any other to restore the Enlightenment to philosophy should have been

the work of a major philosopher, not a historian. There is neither space nor competence here to attempt a general profile of Cassirer as a thinker. Not only was he the author of one of the most ambitious, even extravagant philosophical projects of the twentieth century, but his thought has in fact proven very difficult to categorize, eluding any easy capture. The central puzzle of Cassirer's intellectual career is that of determining his precise relation to the Marburg "school" of neo-Kantianism in which he was formed. Was the centerpiece of his mature thought, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, the culmination and fullest expression of the neo-Kantianism of his Marburg teachers, Hermann Cohen and Paul Natorp? Or did it amount to a mutation in some novel direction, and if so, which—a turn to Hegel, to phenomenology, to pragmatism? The relations between Cassirer and such key corespondents and interlocutors as Husserl and Heidegger remain to be fully documented and interpreted; the same applies to fascinating affinities between his thought and major figures of American pragmatism, Peirce and Dewey above all, and to his considerable influence on later thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty. At all events, the most that can be attempted here is to suggest a periodization of Cassirer's intellectual career down to the publication of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*—if only to give us a sense of where it fits into his enormous and very complicated oeuvre.[4]

Cassirer was born in 1874, in Breslau (today Wrocław), Silesia, to a Jewish family whose wealth was drawn primarily from the manufacture of industrial chemicals. Cassirer's own generation, however, was characterized by remarkable intellectual and cultural achievement. The circle of his first cousins, with whom he maintained extremely close relations during his young adulthood in Berlin, included the composer and musicologist Fritz Cassirer; Bruno Cassirer, whose publishing firm played a key role in German intellectual life; the art dealer Paul Cassirer, famous for promoting French Impressionism and other schools of modernist painting in Germany; and the pioneer of gestalt psychology, Kurt Goldstein. At university, Cassirer's interests shifted from law to literature, and finally to philosophy. The turning-point in his intellectual life, by all accounts, was a lecture on Kant by Georg Simmel, in which the latter described Hermann Cohen's interpretation of Kant as at once authoritative and incompre-

hensible. The discovery of Cohen was a revelation for the young Cassirer, who soon moved to Marburg, where he completed a doctorate in 1899 under Cohen's direction. His earliest work revealed all of his most characteristic philosophic concerns, blending epistemology and history in an original fashion. Cassirer's dissertation was a study of Descartes's critique of the philosophy of mathematics and natural science of his time. This in turn became the introductory chapter in his first book, *Leibniz' System in seinen wissenschaftlichen Grundlagen* (1902), which not only contributed to the striking wider revival of interest in Leibniz at the turn of the century, but also showed Cassirer's characteristic penchant for bridging the French and the German intellectual traditions. From this starting-point, he launched a major project in historical epistemology, whose production stretched over the next two decades, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*. Its first two volumes, extending from Nicolas of Cusa to Kant, appeared in 1906 and 1907, and established Cassirer's claim to be heir apparent to Cohen and Natorp within the Marburg "school." Cassirer in fact went on to assume the editorship of the ten-volume edition of Kant's works published by Bruno Cassirer between 1912 and 1923; the intellectual biography he added to the edition, *Kants Leben und Lehre* (1918), has of course enjoyed a long life in print on its own.[5]

There was a lag in winning academic recognition for these intellectual achievements, perhaps owing not a little to the darkening shadow that anti-Semitism cast over German academic life in these years. In 1912, Cohen's and Natorp's efforts to secure the former's professorship at Marburg for Cassirer failed; he had already assumed a position as *Privatdozent* at the University of Berlin, where he remained until 1918. Lack of preferment did not stem his intellectual energies. In 1910, Cassirer published *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*, in which for the first time he staked out an independent philosophical position—in this case, a defense of "logical idealism" against empiricist epistemology. Here, too, however, the foundation of Cassirer's argument was narrative in form. Tracing the history of conceptformation in mathematics and natural science from the Greeks to modernity—with explicit reference to the advances of Schroeder, Peirce, and Russell in logic—Cassirer described the gradual replace-

ment of a metaphysics of "substance" by a science of "relations," in which "function" had now became the touchstone of the veridical. The war years in turn provided the opportunity for Cassirer to make an initial excursion beyond epistemology, into the domain of culture. Ineligible for combat, Cassirer was eventually drafted into the "War Press Office," where his linguistic skills were put to work surveying the French press for the purposes of generating political propaganda. As his wife recounted in her memoir, Cassirer found the experience deeply demoralizing.[6] His response was to produce a remarkable survey of German cultural history, *Freiheit und Form: Studien zur deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (1916). From the Renaissance to the Enlightenment, Cassirer argued, German culture had been defined by a dialectical tension between freedom and form; the greatest figures in the national past, Goethe and Kant above all, were those who had managed to maintain these two principles in a creative, if precarious equilibrium. As these names also suggested, German culture was at its characteristic best when it rejoined, rather than departed from, a common European tradition. An attempt to define national identity in wartime, the politics of *Freiheit und Form* were quiet yet firm—its liberal cosmopolitanism at the opposite end of the spectrum from, say, Mann's notorious *Betrachtungen Eines Unpolitischen*. Assuming a milder nationalist position between the two, Ernst Troeltsch in fact charged Cassirer with having ignored the medieval roots of German freedom, which indeed rendered it distinct from Anglo-French conceptions.[7]

The end of the war and the advent of the Weimar Republic considerably improved Cassirer's academic fortunes, and in fact ushered in the most creative and productive period of his intellectual career. In June 1918 he was appointed professor in the *geisteswissenschaftliche* faculty at the University of Hamburg, a "republican" institution brought into existence just one month earlier. By happy accident, Hamburg also possessed an institutional resource that proved to be decisive for Cassirer's intellectual development in these years, the Warburg Library for Cultural Studies. Cassirer soon formed a close relationship with Aby Warburg's successor as director of the library, Fritz Saxl, and it was here that he first made the acquaintance of Erwin Panofksy. The library's holdings, especially in the areas of mythology and his-

torical philology, provided many of the primary sources that formed the background to the emergent philosophy of "symbolic forms." Older intellectual concerns were by no means abandoned. In 1920, Cassirer published the third volume of *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, which pursued post-Kantian epistemology, from Hegel to Schopenhauer; the next year, he produced a study of Einstein's theory of relativity and the problems it posed for the philosophy of science—in effect, a striking attempt to coordinate the epistemology of "critical idealism" with the findings of the new physics. It was in fact in the latter work that the term "symbolic form" appeared in print for the first time. The idea, according to family legend, first occurred to Cassirer while boarding a bus in Berlin in 1917. By the time of his first years in Hamburg, it had become the linchpin of a massive project of philosophical totalization, which came to fruition with impressive speed. The first volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, entitled *Language*, came out in 1923, the second, *Mythical Consciousness*, two years later, and the third, apparently culminating volume, *Phenomenology of Knowledge*, appeared in 1929.

How should the "philosophy of symbolic forms" be described? Its background seems to have lain in a gradual realization on Cassirer's part—going back at least as far as *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff*—that his defense of an idealist epistemology in science required foundations in a deeper theory of intersubjective *meaning* itself. By 1921, Cassirer had arrived at a stable definition of the concept that would stand at the center of such a theory: "Under a 'symbolic form' should be understood every energy of mind [*Energie des Geistes*] through which a mental content of meaning is connected to a concrete, sensory sign and made to adhere internally to it."[28] The originality of this definition should not be exaggerated. If Cassirer always gave pride of place to Humboldt in tracing its genealogy, the echoes of contemporaries such as Peirce and Saussure are evident, if unintentional. Unlike these thinkers, however, Cassirer then set out to try to map both the variety and the development of the entire world of "symbolic forms," in an effort to establish, as he put it in the foreword to the opening volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, a "morphology of the human spirit." Although the first volume was devoted entirely to just one form, that of *language*, it also advanced a more general schema for

understanding the development of all "symbolic forms," which could be expected to pass from "mimetic" through "analogical" to "symbolic" forms of expression, in a gradual movement from the concrete to the abstract. The progress of language, in particular, was traced from its initial "sensuous" expression, in the gestural and immediately aural, to more "intuitive" forms, which made use of more abstract conceptions of space and time, to a culminating state in which it had developed concepts of "pure relation," objective and self-referential. For all that, however, language never entirely loses its anchorage in sensuous and material media of expression—a feature of "symbolic forms" in general. From here, Cassirer in a sense moved backwards, historically and logically, in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, which provided a similar theory of the development of "mythical thought." Rejecting all theories of myth as "primitive science," Cassirer portrayed it as a radically distinct form of consciousness, rooted in social ritual, more archaic, immediate, and concrete than language itself; it was in fact the instability and disenchantment of "mythic consciousness" over time that paved the way for the emergence of language as an independent symbolic form.

Four years later, the third volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* integrated these analysis of myth and language into a systematic attempt to account for the emergence and development of scientific thought proper. *Phenomenology of Knowledge* offered more than a general epistemology, however. For the theory of symbolic forms was now for the first time grounded in something close to a full-scale philosophical anthropology, pointing to Cassirer's later definition of human beings as "symbolic animals." The key theoretical innovation was his concept of "symbolic pregnance," designed to situate the phenomenon of meaning in the very process of perception itself, prior to any intellectual or cultural moment: "By symbolic pregnance we mean the way in which a perception as a 'sensory' experience contains at the same time a certain nonintuitive 'meaning' which it immediately and concretely represents."[9] Here, Cassirer suggested, lay the solution for the oldest problem of philosophical anthropology: "The relation between body and soul represents the prototype and model for a purely symbolic relation, which cannot be converted either into a relationship between things or into a causal relation . . . a genuine ac-

cess to the body-soul problem is possible only if we recognize as a general principle that all thing connections and all causal connections are ultimately based upon such relations of meaning. The latter do not form a special class *within* the thing and causal relations; rather they are the constitutive presuppositions, the *condition sine qua non*, on which the thing and causal relations themselves are based."[10]

With this theory of the anthropological priority of *meaning*, Cassirer seems to have left any narrow form of neo-Kantianism well behind him. Where should *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* be located on the wider philosophic map? Cassirer himself was in fact quite candid about the general inspiration for his philosophical program. In the "Introduction and Presentation of the Problem" in the first volume, he paid tribute to Kant as a pioneer, each of the *Critiques* having opened up a new terrain for exploring the work of spirit, in science, ethics, and art. Yet the real model for his project was to be found elsewhere, in Hegel's attempt at a systematic, totalizing narrative in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "More sharply than any thinker before him, Hegel stated that we must think of the human spirit as a *concrete* whole, that we must not stop at the simple concept but develop it in the totality of its manifestations."[11] The gesture of assimilation to Hegel was repeated in the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*—"That myth stands in an inner and necessary relation to the universal task of this phenomenology follows directly from Hegel's own formulation and definition of the concept"[12]—and then finalized in the third: "In speaking of a phenomenology of knowledge I am using the word 'phenomenology' not in its modern sense but with its fundamental signification as established an systematically grounded by Hegel."[13] In point of fact, however, the differences from any conventional form of Hegelianism are bound to leap out at the reader. Above all, Cassirer's presentation of the development of "symbolic forms" across time turns out to be both less linear and more plural than the model of *The Phenomenology of Spirit* would suggest. As Krois puts it in his study of Cassirer's thought, the real shape of his conception of development is *centrifugal*—a plurality of relatively autonomous "symbolic forms" exfoliating from the common matrix of mythical thought, itself a rather different starting-point from Hegel's.[14] It is worth stressing that *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* was very much

an unfinished project: in later works, the "forms" analyzed by Cassirer included philosophy (in his essays in intellectual history), technology (a striking anticipation of certain Frankfurt School themes), morality (his study of Axel Hägerström), and art (a famous chapter in *An Essay on Man*). Not surprisingly, Cassirer's system also tends to lack any strong conception of an end-state, to match Hegel's notion of the domination of "absolute" philosophic knowledge. Indeed, for all of Cassirer's appeals to Hegel, it does not seem difficult to glimpse in his philosophic vision the inspiration of another figure standing behind both Hegel and Kant—that of Leibniz, whose thought had been the starting-point in Cassirer's own intellectual itinerary. It may not be entirely inaccurate to see in *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* the outline of a kind of *cultural* monadology, projecting a plurality of autonomous spheres of "meaning," traversed by a pre-established harmony and unity.

Neo-Kantian, Neo-Hegelian, or Neo-Leibnizian—in any case, Cassirer's mature thought involved a creative recovery and development of the central themes of classical German Idealism. As such, he had long since begun to contrast his own thought with an alternative tradition of continental philosophy, descending from Kierkegaard to Nietzsche, Bergson, and Scheler, whom he tended to group under the dismissive label of "*Lebensphilosophie*." By the mid-twenties, however, this tradition had produced a major new figure, capable of doing battle on the most sophisticated terrain of academic philosophy. Cassirer and Heidegger seem to have met as early as 1923, in Hamburg; a series of critical exchanges, marked by a combination of respect for and dissent from one another's philosophical positions, followed down to 1931. In 1928, Heidegger published a generous review of the second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, to which he also alluded in a significant footnote in *Being and Time*.[15] Cassirer recognized the originality and importance of Heidegger's masterpiece; his most extended comment, however, was a long and insightful review of Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* in 1931. Between these dates, the two participated in a series of public lectures and discussions in Davos, Switzerland, during March and April 1929—encounters that have, in retrospect, taken on an almost legendary status as marking a profound parting of the ways in modern German

thought. The exact terms of the "debate" between Cassirer and Heidegger have had to be reconstructed from onlookers' notes.[16] The terrain was the interpretation of Kant, whom Heidegger sought to rescue from the extreme cognitivism of the "neo-Kantians" by restoring what he saw as Kant's supreme emphasis on human *finitude*—the ground for his own understanding of *Dasein*. Cassirer's response was to concede the moment of finitude in Kant—thus rejecting the stark antithesis drawn by Heidegger—while also insisting on a transcendental moment as well, the opening onto a world of "objective spirit" rooted in intersubjective language. Lacking this anchor, Heidegger's interpretation ran the risk of endorsing a romantic irrationalism and relativism. Two years later, Cassirer contrasted the thought of Kant and Heidegger in these pregnant terms: "Heidegger's fundamental ontology, which is grounded in the interpretation of care as the being of the existent and which sees a primary revelation of the existent in the fundamental mode of fear, must put all of Kant's concepts from the very beginning—however much Heidegger attempted to do justice to their purely logical mode—into a changed atmosphere and thus, as it were, cover them up. Kant was and remained a thinker of the Enlightenment, in the most noble and beautiful sense of this word. He strove for illumination even as he thought about the deepest and hidden grounds of being."[17]

At all events, much of the drama attached retrospectively to the Davos "disputation" has to do with the ultimate political fates of the two thinkers. What in fact were Cassirer's own politics? As the legal liberalism of Jellinek and Kelsen and the ethical socialism of Hermann Cohen suggest, the neo-Kantianism in which he was formed was capable of inspiring strong and original programs. There is no doubt that Cassirer's chief inclination from the outset was toward a moderate version of the former. The most overt political statement of the early part of his intellectual career was *Freiheit und Form*, which projected a cosmopolitan liberalism onto the screen of German cultural history. The advent of the Weimar Republic naturally brought opportunities for more forward kinds of political expression. Cassirer observed the Revolution coolly, from a distance, but actively identified with the Republic from the start. We have seen that he accepted a professorship at the "republican" University of Hamburg in June

1919; in the same month, he joined the center-left protest against the trial and execution of Eugen Leviné for his role in the Bavarian Soviet. Cassirer seems to have voted with the DDP consistently throughout the twenties. Nevertheless, it was not until 1928 that he produced a major political statement of his own. The occasion was Hamburg's celebration of the ninth anniversary of the Weimar constitution in August. Cassirer's speech, *Die Idee der Republikanischen Verfassung*, published the following year, made a passionate defense of the Republic, by tracing its founding ideas to an interlocking set of German, English, and French thinkers—Leibniz, Wolff, Blackstone, Rousseau, and Kant, whose sober defense of the French Revolution Cassirer echoed and endorsed. In the spring of 1929, he reached the apex of his academic career, being elected Rector at Hamburg, for 1929–30—the first Jew to head a University in Germany. By this point, of course, the centrist liberalism for which Cassirer stood had begun to expire as a political force in Germany. Nevertheless, his public interventions on behalf of the Republic continued, as if in increasingly anxious compensation. Cassirer's last major political statement before his exile from Germany was the speech, "Vom Wesen und Werden des Naturrechts," delivered in February 1932—a survey of the history of the modern natural rights tradition from Grotius onwards, with special emphasis on the eighteenth-century elaboration of the concept of inalienable rights. Cassirer ended his remarks by calling for a revival of the notion in the contemporary world. Hitler's assumption of the Chancellorship a year later brought his career at Hamburg to an end. In May 1933, the same month that Heidegger delivered his own inaugural address as Rector at Freiburg, Cassirer led his family into exile in Vienna, and reached Oxford in the fall, never to return to Germany.

Text: Totalization and Nostalgia

Such were the circumstances in which *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was produced. As it happened, the book formed the last part of an unintentional trilogy of studies in European intellectual history, having been preceded by *Individual and Cosmos in the Renaissance* in 1927, and *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, published earlier in

1932. Cassirer spent much of the summer of 1931, just after stepping down from the Rectorship at Hamburg, reading in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. The research trip also produced the two overlapping studies of Rousseau that might well be seen as extended appendices to *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*—*Das Problem Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, which has of course become a classic in its own right, and "L'unité dans l'oeuvre de Jean-Jacques Rousseau," first delivered (in French, a matter of some pride to Cassirer) at a conference in Paris in February 1932. As for *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* itself, it reached print at the very end of that year, and proved to be Cassirer's last publication in Germany before his exile.

At first glance, the text hardly seems to register the turbulence and drama of this background. In the Preface, Cassirer explicitly disavowed any "polemical intentions" in writing *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Nor did he aim at an exhaustive treatment of the subject. On the one hand, limitations of space constrained him to approach the Enlightenment "in its characteristic depth rather than its breadth . . . in light of the unity of its conceptual origin and of its underlying principle rather than of the totality of his historical manifestations and results."[18] On the other, the Enlightenment was itself only one episode in a larger drama, the process "through which modern philosophic thought gained its characteristic self-confidence and self-consciousness," which could only be gestured at in this book. Here Cassirer referred the reader to his two earlier works of intellectual history: like *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, these were only "preliminary studies" for a more comprehensive "phenomenology of the philosophic spirit," which Cassirer doubted he would ever complete. As for the work at hand, his chief purpose was to emphasize the *originality* of eighteenth-century philosophy within this larger story. Its key-note was the restoration of philosophical reason to its "classical" vocation as both unifying medium of all intellectual endeavor and active shaper of the world. No less a thinker than Hegel had, on occasion, dismissed the Enlightenment as a passive "philosophy of reflection"—even though his own *Phenomenology* shows that Hegel the metaphysician knew better. For the Enlightenment set out not merely to interpret but to change the world: "[T]he fundamental tendency and the main endeavor of the philosophy of the Enlightenment are not to ob-

serve life and to portray it in terms of reflective thought . . . Thought consists not only in analyzing and dissecting, but in actually bringing about that order of things which it conceives as necessary, so that by this act of fulfillment it may demonstrate its own reality and truth."[19] It was this novel fusion of cognition and agency that lay at the core of the philosophical outlook of the Enlightenment and thus provided the chief focus of Cassirer's study. Only at the end of the Preface did he make any allusion to the intellectual and political context in which he wrote, expressing two larger hopes for the book. One was that it might succeed in overturning "the verdict of the Romantic Movement" on eighteenth-century thought, silencing once and for all the slogan of "the shallow Enlightenment." Beyond this, the unavoidably *critical* character of reflection on the history of philosophy suggested that contemporary conceptions of "progress" might appear differently when glimpsed in "that bright clear mirror fashioned by the Enlightenment": "Instead of assuming a derogatory air, we must take courage and measure our powers against those of the age of the Enlightenment, and find a proper adjustment. The age which venerated reason and science as man's highest faculty cannot and must not be lost even for us. We must find a way not only to see that age in its own shape but to release again those original forces which brought forth and molded this shape."[20] As a political gesture in 1932, this was characteristically modest, even oblique—but unmistakable nonetheless.

What shapes appeared to Cassirer in the "bright clear mirror" of eighteenth-century thought? *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* is made up of seven chapters. The first of these, "The Mind of the Enlightenment," serves as a kind of general introduction, elaborating the portrait of the new philosophical reason of the epoch already sketched in the Preface. In point of fact, it seems that the Enlightenment, at least at the outset, may have been of *two* "minds," since the chapter is divided into two unequal parts. Cassirer began by recalling D'Alembert's own portrait of the French Enlightenment, at the moment of its self-discovery, in his "Elements of Philosophy": the eighteenth century was the century of philosophy *par excellence*, and its centerpiece was indeed a novel conception of reason. But there have been many "ages of reason"—what was the *differentia specifica* of Enlightenment rationalism? Cassirer's answer was to construct its genealogy,

tracing its roots to the first philosophical system of the modern world, Cartesianism, and the subsequent impact on it of the emergence of Newtonian natural science. For the result of the success of Newton's "analytic" method, with its emphasis on empirical induction, was to modify rather than destroy Cartesian rationalism, by effecting an alteration and relaxation in its guiding ideals. Here Cassirer invoked—to lasting effect—the contrast drawn by D'Alembert and echoed by Condillac, between the "*esprit de système*" of Cartesianism and the "*esprit systématique*" of the French Enlightenment, the modulation from noun to adjective suggesting the more expansive conception of reason of the latter, now set free from any strictly mathematical or logical basis. Paradoxically, what "reason" thus lost in rigor and certainty was more than made up for by a dramatic extension of its powers, now reaching beyond abstract shape and number to govern the physical and moral worlds as well. The result was the discovery of the *formative* powers of philosophical reason that constituted the unique contribution of the Enlightenment. Having thus returned to the central theme of the Preface, instead of ending the chapter, Cassirer made an abrupt change of scene, devoting a short second section entirely to Leibniz. Despite appearances, the rationalism of the latter was in fact utterly distinct from that of Descartes—*pluralist* rather dualist or monist, with a specific accent on the *continuity* of monads, instead of a more properly Cartesian obsession with identity and difference. The result was two-fold. On one hand, the concept of *totality* or the whole had for Leibniz a far greater significance than for any French thinker. On the other hand, since the monad, in contrast to the material atom, was conceived in terms of a unique "force," Leibniz's system also enshrined a certain kind of *individualism*—in his system, "an inalienable prerogative is first gained for the individual entity." What was the upshot of Leibniz's philosophy for the "mind of the Enlightenment"? Cassirer ended the chapter reminding his readers that, according to legend, Leibniz tended to be either ignored or ridiculed in France. But the example of *Candide* was misleading. In fact, in "this fundamental opposition"—between the "classical Cartesian form of analysis and that new form of philosophical synthesis which originates in Leibniz"—"lay the great intellectual tasks which eighteenth century thought had to accomplish, and which the century

approaches from different angles in its theory of knowledge and in its philosophy of nature, in its psychology and in its theory of the state and society, in its philosophy of religion and in its aesthetics."[21]

The rest of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was devoted to surveying those topics, in precisely that order. In the second chapter, on "Nature and Natural Science," Cassirer turned first to a more detailed account of the emergence and triumph of Newtonianism, which, among other things, completed the long process, begun two centuries earlier, of permanently separating cosmology from religion. In physics proper, the result of the turn to empiricism was to open the door to a new kind of skepticism, which found its ultimate expression in the philosophy of Hume; the seventeenth-century concept of "substance" was a major casualty of this line of thought. The biological sciences, on the other hand, which found their major popular representation in Diderot and made their greatest advance with Buffon's *Natural History*—the biological counterpart to Newton—were far less affected by epistemological doubt, since this field of knowledge remained subject to the continued dominance of Cartesianism. Cassirer then concluded the chapter in the same way that he did the first, by looking beyond French borders. In England, the Cambridge neo-Platonists kept alive a Renaissance conception of the "dynamism" of nature. Natural science in Germany, on the other hand, was dominated by the similar heritage of Leibniz, and it was in this domain that his impact was first felt in France, above all through the efforts of Maupertuis, who happened to be the major native exponent of Newtonianism as well. The ultimate fate of science in the eighteenth century was in any case inseparable from psychology, the subject of the third chapter of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Here, the destruction of the rationalist conception of "innate ideas" by the English empiricists was the counterpart to the dethronement of metaphysical "substance." This left, however, a "core problem," that of the relation between the various fields of sensation, whose solution was necessary to ward off the threat of Berkeley's "subjective idealism." Hints of a way out of this impasse could be found in Condillac's novel emphasis on *will* in his own philosophical psychology, echoed by Rousseau. Not suprisingly, another possible solution was implied in Leibniz's monadology, which dominated the German scene. But the ultimate

resolution of the problem was to be found in Kant, building on the work of Lambert and Tetens: "When these two separate streams of thought of the German Enlightenment joined in Kant, their relative goal was achieved, and with achievement the goal vanished to be supplanted by a new principle and new problems."[22]

From here, Cassirer turned in his fourth chapter to religion, in regard to which the Enlightenment could lay claim to three major achievements. One was to complete the destruction of the dogma of original sin, bringing the process of secularization begun with the Reformation to its climax. This move left a "problem" in its wake as well, that of theodicy, or the explanation of evil, whose challenge was to be seen in Voltaire's tormented life-long struggle with the ghost of Pascal. The solution was only finally reached with Kant's ethics, which stripped pleasure and pain of all moral significance—though Kant was anticipated in this respect by both the aesthetics of Shaftesbury and the social thought of Rousseau. Kant also gave full expression to a second major achievement of Enlightened thinking on religion—the erection of *toleration* as a central ethical demand of religious thought itself. Another German thinker, finally, was responsible for a third major advance in theology: it was Lessing's *Education of Humanity* that first suggested the means for overcoming the potential contradiction, introduced by Spinoza, between religion and history. In fact, Lessing's achievement pointed beyond theology to the wider domain of historical understanding, the subject of the fifth chapter of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. Here Cassirer set out specifically to overturn the Romantic verdict that the Enlightenment was somehow "unhistorical"; on the contrary, it was the Enlightenment that established the conditions of possibility for Romantic historicism itself. The true pioneer here was Bayle, whose destruction of one "fact" of historical dogma after another constituted a veritable "critique of historical reason." The terrain cleared by Bayle was then occupied, in the first instance, by the incomparable Montesquieu, whose conception of "ideal types" and explanatory pluralism have formed the solid basis of all subsequent social science. Voltaire received rougher treatment at Cassirer's hands: his historiography tended to be flawed by his commitment to an all-too-static conception of human nature, sign of the dominance of the "analytic spirit" in his writing. Among other

narrative historians, only Hume resisted this spirit—though he, too, lacked the "buried treasure" of Leibniz's thought, which alone possessed the means of assigning individuality its true philosophic weight in historical explanation. It was in Germany that the "treasure" of Leibniz's conception of substance was finally released into circulation by Herder, whose philosophy of history thus broke the spell of analytical thinking once and for all. Indeed, Herder had in one sense simply surpassed the Enlightenment altogether. However, Cassirer insisted, his break with the immediate past was not total: "The conquest of the Enlightenment by Herder is therefore a genuine self-conquest. It is one of those defeats which really denote a victory, and Herder's achievement is in fact one of the greatest intellectual triumphs of the philosophy of the Enlightenment."[23]

In the sixth chapter of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, on "Law, State, and Society," Cassirer reproduced the themes of his contemporary writings on natural law and Rousseau. An opening section examined the doctrine of inalienable rights as it emerged in the eighteenth-century—Cassirer admitted that the notion rested on insecure foundations, in evident tension with the consensual rejection of "innate ideas." From here he turned to the adjacent field of contract theory in political thought, where Rousseau turned out to play a role analogous to that of Herder in the philosophy of history, anchoring his own conception of inalienable rights in the communal terrain of the state: "Rousseau did not overthrow the world of the Enlightenment; he only transferred its center of gravity to another position. By this intellectual accomplishment he prepared the way for Kant as did no other thinker of the eighteenth century. Kant could find support in Rousseau when he came to build up his own systematic edifice—that edifice which overshadows the Enlightenment even while it represents its final glorification."[24] Cassirer then concluded *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* with by far the longest chapter in the book—a close analysis, extending across nearly a hundred pages of text, of the emergence of aesthetics as an independent philosophical discipline. His starting-point here, as elsewhere, was with the disintegration of an essentially Cartesian program, in this case the classical aesthetics of Boileau, which duly fell prey to a variety of subjectivist attacks, beginning with Bouhours and Dubos, and culminating with Hume. The

triumph of these psychological theories of art was all too complete: "In no other field was the transition from the psychological to the transcendental approach, by which Kant finally resolved this alliance, so hard to realize and burdened with so many systematic difficulties as in that of the fundamental problems of aesthetics."[25] Cassirer then described the gradual resolution of these "difficulties," first in English thought, with Shaftesbury's reconstruction of Plotinus's conception of "intelligible beauty" and Burke's recovery of the category of the "sublime," both pointing beyond the limits of classical aesthetics; then in the neo-classicism of Gottsched and the response of various of his Swiss critics; and finally, in Baumgarten himself, who used Leibniz's doctrine of the degrees of knowledge to found the philosophical autonomy, perhaps even priority, of aesthetic judgment. At the start of the chapter, Cassirer had declared that the emergence of the new discipline of aesthetics had owed a good deal to the "pre-established harmony" between thought of the greatest philosopher and the greatest poet of the age: "Kant's philosophy and Goethe's poetry form the intellectual goal toward which this movement prophetically beckons."[26] *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* concluded, however, with neither Kant nor Goethe, but with the figure of Lessing: "It is above all because of him that the century of the Enlightenment, to a very great extent dominated by its gift of criticism, did not fall prey to the merely negative critical function—that it was able to reconvert criticism to creative activity and shape it and use it as an indispensable instrument of life and of the constant renewal of the spirit."[27]

Now what even such a stenographic summary of the book makes clear, in the first instance, is the extent to which Cassirer made good his effort to present eighteenth-century thought "in the unity of its conceptual origins and of its underlying principle." Elsewhere in the Preface, he insisted that the Enlightenment, "which is still usually treated as an eclectic mixture of the most diverse thought elements, is in fact dominated by a few great fundamental ideas expressed with strict consistency and in exact arrangement."[28] This is a perfect description of the book itself, which is in fact structured around a single narrative form, which is then presented at *two* successive levels in the text, the first subsumed into the second. The narrative form is, of course, a familiar one: the dialectical development from an initial state

of undifferentiated unity to one of rupture and fragmentation, in order to arrive at an end-state in which unity has been restored in a higher, "differentiated" shape. As for the content of the form, the prior state is always some variety of Cartesianism, whose certainty is then shaken or destroyed by a species of "analytic" or "psychological" thought, most often English in inspiration, whose "problems" then find their solution in the emergence of "synthetic" or "transcendental" philosophy—the privilege, of course, of German thinkers above all. Each of the six substantive chapters of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* tells the same tale, in effect. Thus Cassirer's account of eighteenth-century science began with the challenge posed to Cartesianism by Newtonian "analysis," whose empiricism turned out to lack stable foundations, risking a collapse into Hume's skepticism; the solution was to be found in Kant's "Copernican Revolution," whose origins were traced to the pluralist metaphysics of Leibniz. In psychology, the reign of Descartes's "innate ideas" was cut short by Locke and his successors; the resulting slide toward incoherent subjectivism was stayed by the rediscovery of "will" in Condillac and Rousseau, which in turn inspired Kant's restoration of psychic objectivity and wholeness, in the "transcendental unity of apperception." It was the dogmatism of Pascal, rather than the rationalism of Descartes, that formed the target of Enlightened "analysis" in the domain of religion; but the solutions to the moral and intellectual "problems" thus unleashed were, again, owing to the efforts of German thinkers—Kant's "practical reason" and defense of toleration, Lessing's reconciliation of religion and history. As for historiography, it was here a French Protestant, Bayle, who challenged the rule of dogmatism, Cartesian or Catholic; but the story again ended in Germany, where Herder, reaching back once more to Leibniz, definitively ended an unstable period dominated by an "analytical" understanding of history. Cassirer's account of political thought traced a similar path, moving from the rationalist rights theories of the seventeenth century to the liberal doctrine of inalienability in the eighteenth, and then from Rousseau to Kant. Aesthetics, finally, showed the same trajectory: the Cartesian classicism of Boileau gave way to the "psychologisms" of Dubos or Hume; Shaftesbury and Burke then paved the way for the consolidation of a fully modern aesthetic theory in

Baumgarten and Kant, which emerged in "pre-established harmony" with the artistic practice of Lessing and Goethe.

At the same time, these are not simply discrete case-studies of topics in eighteenth-century thought, nor is the order of their presentation an accidental one. For taken together, the separate chapters of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* reproduce precisely the same narrative at a higher level of generality. Here the first chapter, depicting the "Mind of the Enlightenment," plays a crucial enabling role. For as we have seen, far from attributing a single, stable outlook to the Enlightenment, Cassirer instead produced an elaborate description of what was essentially the *French* version of it, caught in a long moment of disequilibrium—in transition, that is, from the reign of the "*esprit de système*" to that of the "*esprit systématique*." The chapter then concluded by shifting abruptly to a snapshot of Leibniz, sitting offstage. It was the essential "task" of the Enlightenment as a whole, Cassirer insisted, to bridge the gap between the "analytic" outlook of the one and the "synthetic" project of the other—to combine, as it were, a French melody and a German counterpoint. As the succeeding six chapters pursue this project, the center of gravity of the narrative gradually shifts from the French to the German scene, with English thinkers, again, serving as mediators—of the "vanishing" variety, one is tempted to add—between the two. Thus the chapters devoted to science and psychology are still dominated by accounts of French thought, ending with mere gestures in the direction of Leibniz or Kant. The gap begins to close in the next three chapters, each of which concludes with descriptions of German resolutions to French "problems," in Kant, Lessing, and Herder. The story then reaches its climax in the last chapter, with its astonishingly detailed account of the emergence of German aesthetics; indeed, the weight of this chapter in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, which lacks any conclusion proper, lies in its presentation of Baumgarten's aesthetic theory as in some sense the climax and end-point of the European Enlightenment as a whole.

In point of fact, this is unlikely to surprise any reader who knows that Cassirer was in some sense a "neo-Kantian" philosopher. For the basic shape of the narrative at this level faithfully reproduces the order of topics of Kant's three *Critiques*: Cassirer's chapters move from the

scientific and epistemological terrain of the first to the religious and moral topics of the second, and then conclude at the doorstep of the *Critique of Judgment* itself. Moreover, there was a precedent for the emphasis placed upon the aesthetic in this design. For Cassirer emphatically belonged to the camp of those interpreters of Kant who see his aesthetic theory as the capstone of the critical system as a whole—the chapter on the *Critique of Judgment* in *Kants Leben und Lehre* occupies roughly the same position and weight as the chapter on aesthetics in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. At the same time, there *is* an evident problem for any attempt to read the book as a "Kantian" account of eighteenth-century thought *tout court*. This is the fact that Cassirer quite clearly excluded Immanuel Kant himself from the Enlightenment. The plan of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* echoes that of Kant's critical philosophy; and Kant is referred to continually in its pages—the place he occupies in its index puts him in the same rank as Diderot and Voltaire. Yet there is no extended discussion of a major work of Kant's anywhere in the book, even where it is most to be expected. Over and over Cassirer's chapters lead the reader in a direction for which one work or another of Kant's would seem to be the logical end-point, only to stop short, concluding with discussions of what come to seem to be so many substitutes or "precursors"—Lessing, Herder, Rousseau, Baumgarten. Behind these, there is the figure of one other German thinker, whose works *do* receive extended discussion in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, and who in fact looms as a far larger presence in the book than Kant—Leibniz, surprisingly enough. The paradox here looks acute: the one major German thinker of the epoch to align himself self-consciously and unequivocally with the Enlightenment appears to have been excluded from Cassirer's study, in favor of a philosopher who died a half-century before the movement can plausibly be said to have arrived in Germany. What is the explanation for this?

In a fascinating political reading of Cassirer's intellectual career down to the moment of his exile, David Lipton has suggested that Cassirer's treatment of Kant, or lack thereof, in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was in effect an "evasion" in the face of wrenching philosophical and political pressure. Both the implosion of Weimar liberalism and the intellectual challenge posed by Heidegger ought to

have led Cassirer to a new, more profound engagement with Kant. His study of the Enlightenment brought him to the threshold of just such a project; but in the end, he nervously swerved away: "Under these circumstances Cassirer undoubtedly felt that to re-examine the nature of reason would only further undermine the cause of human freedom."[29] Lipton's suggestion is to be respected; we will return in a moment to the character of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* as a political statement. But it may explain too much. For Cassirer's handling of Kant in the text is not only a good deal more coherent and nuanced than it appears at first glance; but it in fact becomes still more intelligible when the book is restored to the context of his mature philosophical thought as a whole. As we have seen, the Preface alerted the reader to the fact that the text was to be regarded as one more "preliminary study" for a much larger project, that of a "phenomenology of the philosophic spirit." Philosophy, in other words, was here understood as another "symbolic form," in Cassirer's technical sense of the term, in whose history the Enlightenment was only one specific moment. Indeed, it is one of the great rhetorical achievements of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* that Cassirer was able to present the "dramatic action" of eighteenth-century thought as a coherent, self-enclosed narrative, while also continually conjuring up the shape of a wider philosophical drama extending before and after the story at hand. At one end, this is what explains the close attention that Cassirer devoted in the book to seventeenth-century rationalism, Descartes above all, which, strictly speaking, might be thought to fall outside his purview. At the other, there is Kant, whose thought is consistently presented as marking *both* the "culmination" of the Enlightenment and its cancellation, for the launching of an entirely new phase in the development of philosophy. Cassirer's description of Kant's philosophy as an "edifice which overshadows the Enlightenment even while it represents its final glorification" was perfectly loyal to Kant's own understanding of his relation to the Enlightenment—though it is hardly necessary to add that the guiding spirit behind this narrative was not Kant but Hegel, the original model for this and the rest of Cassirer's "phenomenologies" of form. Given this understanding of Kant, the result of a full-scale presentation of his thought in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, logically enough, could only have been to

diminish the Enlightenment, turning it into a mere preamble to Critical Philosophy. Instead, Cassirer chose to reduce Kant to something like a gestural presence in the text, with his place, and that of classical Idealism as a whole, "held" by the series of transitional figures who occupy center stage in the book. Moreover, there was a specific logic in granting Leibniz a certain pride of place among these, in addition to Cassirer's own evident affection for him: rather than being a central figure in the Enlightenment proper, Leibniz serves as the indispensable bridge linking its immediate predecessor, the philosophic culture of rationalism, to its immediate successor, that of classical German Idealism.

It is perhaps not surprising to discover that the Enlightenment was in some sense subordinated to classical Idealism in Cassirer's book, given the depth of his own philosophic commitments to the great themes of the latter tradition. "Needless to say," he wrote in the Preface, "following Kant's achievement and the intellectual revolution accomplished by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is no longer possible to return to the questions and answers of the philosophy of the Enlightenment."[80] But neither was there any need for such a "return," since the most original contribution of the Enlightenment to modernity survived the movement itself, finding a still more secure home at the heart of classical Idealism. This was its "activist" conception of philosophic reason, which "attributes to thought not merely an imitative function but the power and the task of shaping life itself." The philosophy of the Enlightenment set out not merely to understand the world, but to use that understanding freely to *remake* it, according to its lights. This is indeed the central, enduring theme of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, and no reader is likely to forget the vividness with which Cassirer presents the idea in the Preface and first chapter of the book. To make such a claim, however, is to point to another paradox, which will return us to the question of Cassirer's politics. For if we ask ourselves what examples Cassirer cites of this kind of philosophic reason in action—what institutions and practices were actually shaped by Enlightened thought—the answer appears to be virtually none. The idea of philosophy as sovereign maker of the world largely remains just that, an idea—it is never brought to earth in concrete instances. It is noticeable that the chapter devoted to politics in

The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, where the notion might have been expected to find its chief illustration, is by far the slenderest in the book; the topic of "enlightened despotism," the zone of philosophical activity *par excellence* in the second half of the eighteenth century, is never broached. Beyond this, probably the largest single lacuna in Cassirer's study is the total disregard of economic theory and practice; neither Smith nor physiocracy make an appearance in the pages of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. The garden later tilled by Peter Gay in *Voltaire's Politics*, and the entire domain of Enlightened political practice, reformist and revolutionary, magisterially cultivated by Franco Venturi, were utterly neglected by Cassirer. If it is appropriate to speak of an "evasion" in the book, it is probably here, in what appears to be the near-total excision of *politics* from an account of the Enlightenment that insists on placing a conception of conscious *agency* at its core.

A full explanation of this anomaly would point us to a larger pattern of omission and occlusion in Cassirer's thought. In a thinker renowned for the encyclopedic breadth of his vision, such gaps as there are come to have, in a sense, a "symptomatic" look to them. There is a very striking contrast, for example, between Hermann Cohen's passionate, life-long engagement with *both* the intellectual traditions of socialism and those of modern Jewish philosophy, and his star pupil's almost complete silence about them. It is unlikely to be accidental that psychoanalysis, too, failed to attract any attention from Cassirer.[11] At all events, the explanations for *both* of the features of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* highlighted here—its paradoxical treatment of Kant, simultaneously "in" and "beyond" the Enlightenment, and its apparent repression of the "politics" of the movement—are no doubt to be traced to the same source. At the end of the day, what is most striking about Cassirer's study in its proper historical context, surprisingly enough, is its quality as a *political* intervention of a unique kind. In some ways, Cassirer's liberalism can be seen to have conformed recognizably to a national type, reflecting a wider German concern with the free expression of individual personality, above all in the various domains of culture. At the same time, however, Cassirer's consistent cosmopolitanism—the almost complete lack of any nationalist tincture in this liberalism—marks him out as very unusual indeed

in the German context. As we have seen, his reaction to the catastrophe of the Great War was to seek relief in a celebratory recovery of the cultural past of the nation; yet his constant focus throughout *Freiheit und Form* was on those moments when German thought converged with wider European streams—the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the rights-based ethical liberalism of the present. What seems clear is that he now repeated the gesture in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, on a grander scale, in the face of a still more dire emergency. For by the early thirties, the strain of European liberalism to which Cassirer adhered had reached the very nadir of its historical fortunes. Before its political thought and practice could even begin to stage a recovery from the disaster of the Great War, the inflation of the twenties and then the Depression itself threw its economic institutions and doctrines into utter disarray. Nowhere was the crisis of liberal civilization felt more acutely than in Germany, where the decline of Weimar constitutionalism into Nazi dictatorship proved to be the deepest sounding of its depths.

Cassirer's response to this crisis—obviously personal as well as national—was to seek consolation and inspiration alike in a vivid portrait of European civilization at the moment of its maximum intellectual and cultural unity, in the epoch when the lacerations of early-modern religious conflict first lay securely behind it, and the divisions of later nationalist contention were still well in its future. Cassirer's recovery of the Enlightenment was all the more compelling in that the unity he ascribed to it was neither simple nor facile. The cosmopolitanism he described by no means canceled the differences between national intellectual traditions, which continued to feature prominently in his text. The distinction between Anglo-French *Zivilisation* and German *Kultur*, a token not only of German conservatism but of a good deal of liberal thought as well, was not simply set aside by Cassirer, but surpassed, in something closer to a properly hard-won *Aufhebung*. There was naturally a price to be paid for the resulting "totalization" of the Enlightenment, which, in Cassirer's rendering, became a moment in the career of modern *philosophy* above all. The result, on the one hand, was to make it necessary to set Kant, and German Idealism as a whole, just beyond the precincts of the Enlightenment itself, in order to maintain the full autonomy of the latter.

Whatever else they achieved, Cassirer's efforts in this regard bear the marks of an almost superhuman rhetorical *tact* under the circumstances. On the other hand, the story of the "dramatic action" of the *philosophy* of the Enlightenment also required that a good deal of its actual *politics*, reformist or revolutionary, be set aside as well. In point of fact, it is not quite accurate to speak of a simple repression of a political moment in the text. Instead, what seems to have occurred was a displacement from the political to the *aesthetic* realm—as the other, less divisive domain in which the idea of reason as the active *maker* of the world could be brought to earth. The aesthetic theories of Baumgarten and Kant, the artistic achievements of Lessing and Goethe, were presented, in a sense, as promissory notes for a future politics. If the authority for this move can be traced back to Kant himself, there were contemporary parallels as well. In a famous essay on Walter Benjamin, Fredric Jameson once reminded readers that "nostalgia as a political motivation"—"a nostalgia conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude"—was not the privilege of Fascism alone, but had its counterparts on the Left.[32] In Cassirer's *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, we seem to be presented with a similarly "lucid nostalgia" of the Center, from the same epoch—as if encouraging European liberalism, at its darkest hour, to begin to reconstruct its identity by means of a meditation on its happy youth.

Conclusions: Abstraction and Reflection

It would be wrong to suggest that the character of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* as a political statement—as one of the masterpieces of Weimar liberalism, a fitting German counterpart to, say, Ruggiero's *Storia del Liberalismo Europeo*—has somehow been overlooked until now. Twenty years after its initial publication, the book could still provoke surprisingly strong responses. One stands out in its harshness, coming from what may be a surprising source. Writing in the *Spectator* in the year after the book's first appearance in English, Alfred Cobban declared without further ado that Cassirer's portrait of the Enlightenment was "profoundly wrong." What the author had produced, in a misguided effort to demonstrate the fundamental

unity of European thought, was essentially only a "German history." Among the outrages in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was the fact that the catalytic role that rightfully belonged to Locke had been usurped by Leibniz; and, at the other end of the century, that utilitarianism had disappeared entirely, while the thought of Herder and Kant was presented as the culmination of the Enlightenment. The effect of Cassirer's narrative—obviously unintended by the author, a "good European"—was to add "the Enlightenment to the genealogical tree of the Nazi movement." The English and French reader, Cobban concluded, could be forgiven for declining to see "the founders of German idealism and nationalism" as having contributed very much to the "process of man's progressive self-liberation."[33]

Cassirer had plainly touched a nerve—there is perhaps something refreshing about recalling so strong a reaction to the book, given the combination of veneration and condescension with which *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* tends to be viewed today. Issues of national pride aside, the example of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* from the Left is there to suggest that Cobban was not entirely wrong to worry, from the Right, about suggestions of a filiation linking the European Enlightenment to European Fascism. At the same time, it also seems clear that what were vices for Cobban were precisely the virtues that recommended *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* to its post-War audience, especially in the United States. For this was the moment when the brand of liberalism for which Cassirer stood had begun to make its astonishing recovery from the trough of the inter-war years, and was showing the first fruits of this resurgence under American sponsorship. In the epoch of the Schuman Plan and the Treaty of Rome, what could be more appropriate than a portrait of the Enlightenment as, in effect, the joint production of French and German thinkers? In fact, it might be thought that the combination of political will and economic design that lay behind the emergent institutions of the European Community was a perfect illustration of the new kind of historical agency—philosophic reason in action, remaking the world—whose origins Cassirer located in the Enlightenment. Above all, the intellectual reconstruction of liberalism after the War required the careful rehabilitation of the main traditions of German thought and culture. In this regard, one suspects that the lesson of *The*

Philosophy of the Enlightenment for most of its readers in this period, especially those in America, was precisely the opposite of that feared by Cobban—the message that Kant, Lessing, Herder, and Goethe were all "good Europeans" as well, active contributors to the collective, cosmopolitan effort of the Enlightenment.

At the same time, there is an obvious limit to any attempt to explain the reception of Cassirer's book in primarily political terms. In order to arrive at a fuller estimation of the achievements and qualities that have made *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* an enduring classic, we need to turn to a review whose lavish praise is at least as surprising as Cobban's brusque dismissal. A French translation of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was delayed until 1966, when it was brought out as the inaugural volume in Fayard's *Histoire sans frontières* series, edited by François Furet and Denis Richet. The first major comment came from Michel Foucault, fresh from completing *Les mots et les choses*, writing in the *Quinzaine littéraire* during its first year.[34] What made for the "actuality" of Cassirer's masterpiece, thirty years after its first publication, wrote Foucault, was that we are *all* in some sense "neo-Kantians," living with "the impossibility, for Western thought, of overcoming the gash [*coupure*] opened up by Kant." The supreme merit of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* was that it reposed the essential question: "what are the fatalities of reflection and knowledge that made Kant possible and necessitated the constitution of modern thought?" Kant had sought to establish the conditions of possibility of scientific knowledge. In a mimetic gesture that added a profoundly important reflexive dimension, Cassirer set out to establish the conditions of possibility for Kantianism itself, the "enigma" that for two centuries has rendered Western thought "blind to its modernity." For there is nothing less at stake here, Foucault went on, than the identity and autonomy of modernity itself. Two great currents of nostalgic identification have flowed from the birth of the modern epoch at the end of the eighteenth century: a "Hellenism," extending from Hölderlin to Heidegger, and an attachment to the Enlightenment, descending from Marx to Lévi-Strauss. "To be Greek or Enlightened, on the side of tragedy or the Encyclopedia, that of poetry or the well-made language, that of the morning of Being or the noon of Representation, such is the dilemma from which modern thought . . . has

yet to escape." Cassirer himself came down on the side of the Enlightenment. But the lesson of his book lay not so much in his political decision, as in the methodological model that accompanied it. For Cassirer's return to the eighteenth century proceeded by means of a "foundational abstraction" that, on the one hand, set aside the appeals to "individual motivation" and "biographical accident" that made for the substance of psychological explanation, and, on the other, deferred consideration of social and economic determinations. The result was to uncover, for the first time, an "autonomous world of discursive thought," whose ordering principles and laws of motion could be grasped in their own terms. What Cassirer had left behind, in his flight from the Nazis, was a manifesto for a new kind of history of thought, still to be accomplished.

There is an attractive irony in the fact that Foucault could hail *The Philosophy of Enlightenment* for showing the way to a new intellectual history, at precisely the moment that spokesmen for the new "social history" of the Enlightenment—whose later practitioners have often looked to Foucault himself for inspiration—were first declaring its model obsolete. In retrospect, it is not at all difficult to see the parallels between Cassirer's "phenomenology" and Foucault's "archeology" of the human sciences, indeed between the project of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* and the whole enterprise of Foucault's thought, at least down to *The Archeology of Knowledge*—convergences all the more striking, given the embattled "humanism" of the one and the strident "anti-humanism" of the other. In any case, Foucault was certainly right about one aspect of the lasting appeal of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. We have seen that Cassirer set out to overturn the Romantic verdict on the Enlightenment's "shallowness." His success in establishing its philosophic depth, once and for all, depended on just the manner of "foundational abstraction" described by Foucault—his bracketing of explanations of either a psychological or social kind, in order to focus on a description of the "dramatic action" of the *thought* of the Enlightenment. The result was what remains to this day the most vivid and finely wrought of all general surveys of eighteenth-century philosophy, a major work of historical *literature* as well as scholarship. In fact, Cassirer achieved more than just effective description in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*. His roots in the dialectical tradition of classical Idealism

made it possible to give the book a narrative thrust that is lacking in Foucault's own handling of "discursive thought," in which, notoriously, narrative explanation of ideas, or their dynamic over time, tends to give way to static description and categorization. This, in turn, probably explains why it has never proven particularly difficult for later historians to restore one "missing" dimension or another to Cassirer's account of the Enlightenment, without dramatically altering its substance. Cassirer's own essay on Rousseau shows how easily the move to biographical evidence and explanation could be made; the different "social histories" of Gay and Darnton reveal something of the same for the restoration of Cassirer's "high Enlightenment" texts to their social and economic context.

But what of the other dimension of *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* highlighted by Foucault—not its method, but its *parti pris*? It is evident that Foucault respected Cassirer's quiet defense of the Enlightenment, even if the choice was not quite his own. In specifying the two great alternatives facing the modern age—the camps, roughly, of Enlightened rationalism and Romantic reaction—Foucault suggested in an aside that the "monstrosity" of Nietzsche was perhaps to belong to both at the same time; a sentence later, he asserted that if the antithesis still dominated modern thought, it was nevertheless possible to sense it "shaking beneath our feet." The hope of discovering a third path, of eluding a choice between, as it were, Marx and Heidegger, of course animated Foucault for much of his intellectual career. Unlike many of his postmodern successors, however, it is not clear that Foucault was ever satisfied that he found such a path—nor, like other thinkers who followed, was he ever tempted by a retreat to Heidegger. If anything, the itinerary of his later career, with its compulsive returns to the terrain of Kant, suggests that Foucault's final position was rather closer to that of Cassirer than might be expected. As for *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, if it is indeed the most compelling of all twentieth-century "defenses" of the Enlightenment, it is surely not by way of any straightforward *identification* with its object of study—in the style, say, of Gay's *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*. At the outset, Cassirer warned his readers that he intended neither to celebrate nor to criticize the Enlightenment; his motto was instead borrowed from Spinoza—"*non ridere, non lugere,*

neque detestare, sed intelligere" ("Smile not, lament not, nor condemn, but understand"). Indeed, much of the power of Cassirer's text derives precisely from its serene, even Olympian "objectivity"—from the sense that one is gazing on the Enlightenment from the "outside," affording a view of it as a whole, as a *totality*, together with a fleeting glimpse of its place within an even larger narrative of struggle and emancipation.

In the end, we are left with Cassirer's own image for grasping our relationship to the eighteenth century from the vantage-point of the twentieth—the notion of the Enlightenment as holding up a "bright clear mirror" to the present. The metaphor is more studied and ambiguous than might appear at first glance. Elsewhere in Cassirer's writing, reflection of this kind could take on a sinister aspect. In the first chapter of *The Myth of the State* he invoked the scene in the "Witch's Kitchen" from the first part of *Faust*, in which Faust, in pursuit of eternal youth, falls prey to a beautiful phantom glimpsed in an enchanted glass—the shadow of his own imagination, scoffs Mephistopheles.[35] The menace in question here was the Romantic retreat to mythical thought, in whose mirror could first be glimpsed the furies later set free by nationalism and fascism. Other thinkers have of course seen a return of repressed elements of mythical thought in the Enlightenment itself, "intertwined" with its rationalism. For his part, Cassirer allowed that a gaze in the mirror of the Enlightenment was likely to be disconcerting: "Much that seems to us today the result of 'progress' will be sure to lose its luster when seen in this mirror; and much that we boast of will look strange and distorted in this perspective." Nevertheless, he went on, "we should be guilty of hasty judgment and dangerous self-deception if we were simply to ascribe these distortions to opaque spots in the mirror, rather than to look elsewhere for their source. The slogan: *Sapere aude*, which Kant called the 'motto of the Enlightenment,' also holds for our own historical relation to that period."[36] More than sixty years later, it is not clear that the enchanted glass of the Enlightenment, with its clear reflections, opacities, and "distortions," has exhausted all of its lessons for us. For those still gazing into this mirror, friends and foes of philosophical modernism alike, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* remains an incomparable guide.

DENA GOODMAN

Difference: An Enlightenment Concept

"The dismantling of the universal is widely considered one of the founding gestures of twentieth-century thought," Naomi Schor has written. While giving wide chronological berth to universalism's nefarious implications—from the Spanish inquisition to the "genocidal massacres of our own blood-soaked century"—Schor plants universalism itself firmly in the Enlightenment, and then draws a straight line from it to the Holocaust. "Following Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno," she explains, "the Enlightenment leads to Auschwitz; after Auschwitz, the Enlightenment is a bankrupt, discredited, blighted dialectic."[1] In this chapter I would like to address the demonization of the Enlightenment by postmodern critics like Naomi Schor by questioning the simple identification between Enlightenment and universalism on which it is based.

Schor, herself, it must be said, maintains her distance from this simplistic identification of universalism with the Enlightenment—but only to point out that *universalism* has a long history, going back to the Greeks, and that the Enlightenment is but one "very crucial" episode in this history. She thus frees universalism from the Enlightenment, but the Enlightenment remains nevertheless a synecdoche for universalism: an episode in its history that can conveniently be made to stand for it.

I would like to challenge the identification of universalism with Enlightenment—not to deny that universalism was a central theme in Enlightenment thought, but to assert that difference was an equally

important theme. I will argue that difference, too, is an Enlightenment concept, and that any understanding of the Enlightenment must account for the discourse of difference as well as and in relation to that of universalism. Moreover, I would suggest that contemporary discourse is seriously impoverished when the discursive possibilities opened up by the Enlightenment are reduced to universalism. One arena in which this conceptual poverty is most obvious and troubling is feminism.

In fact, Schor's article is a contribution to the current debate among feminists concerning whether feminism should abandon its traditional faith in the universal discourse of equality and rights that constitutes the Enlightenment legacy and should instead join forces with postmodernism in combating the universal and its false promises.[2] As feminist theorists have increasingly chosen the postmodern position, a cry of protest has arisen from those (historians in particular) who see no alternative but to embrace the universal even more tightly: "The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in August 1789 put rights on the agenda, and they have stayed there in one form or another ever since," declares Lynn Hunt. "To dismiss this as the origins of totalitarianism or a con job to deprive women of their rights is to willfully overlook a bigger and ultimately more important story, that of the challenge posed to the old order by new conceptions of individual rights."[3]

If we look more closely at the Enlightenment legacy for feminism, however, we find that it contributes as much to the discourse of difference as it does to universalistic individualism. Consider, for example, article III of Olympe de Gouges's *Déclaration des droits de la femme* (1791): "The Principle of all sovereignty rests essentially with the nation, which is nothing but the union of woman and man; no body and no individual can exercise any authority which does not come expressly from it."[4] Jeanne Deroin's Saint-Simonism, which stressed the complementarity of men and women in the construction of a whole "social individual," is equally indebted to an Enlightenment discourse of difference. As Joan Scott writes, the premise of Deroin's argument for rights was the complementarity of men and women based on their difference, and the incompleteness of one without the other.[5] Modern feminism reflects not one but two domi-

nant strains in Enlightenment thought: a universalistic discourse of individualism and a discourse of difference founded on gender complementarity and natural sociability.

Yet Scott, like Schor and Hunt, takes universalism to be the Enlightenment's only legacy and thus the sole discursive basis of modern feminism. She argues that "women's ambiguous status as objects and subjects" emerged directly from the universalistic discourse of the Revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. The recognition of women "as civil agents and their exclusion from politics," she asserts, in turn "engendered feminism."[6] It was the Declaration's universalism alone, and not the more complex Enlightenment legacy of universalism and difference, which established the discursive parameters within which feminist writers from Olympe de Gouges on maintained that women had both the same (universal) political rights as men and (different) special needs which demanded protection. Because Scott sees only universalistic individualism coming out of the Enlightenment, she argues that, for feminists, the Enlightenment has "only paradoxes to offer."[7]

Feminism does have roots in the Enlightenment, but the Enlightenment cannot be reduced to a universalistic discourse of individualism. In the eighteenth century, individualism was not a simple assertion of autonomy, but was framed within theories of natural sociability and gender complementarity, as well as by practices of voluntary association which shaped eighteenth-century culture.[8] The individual was not simply cut loose from all ties to brave it alone in the world, as romantics would later represent him; rather individuality and sociability went hand in hand, just as it was individuality that made the public more than just a mass and publicity that allowed individuality to be enacted and experienced.[9] Moreover, to the degree that the individual was gendered masculine, he operated within a world in which both sexes played significant and acknowledged roles. Indeed, the masculine discourse of universalism was at least in part a reaction against the discourse of difference in which women as women had a significant place. These two competing discourses define a range of discursive and political possibilities which together may be said to constitute an Enlightenment legacy richer than that imagined by either postmodernists or feminists.[10] In locating the Enlightenment

discourse of difference, I aim to expand not only our understanding of the eighteenth century, but the discursive and political possibilities available to us today.

The Enlightenment discourse of difference was articulated in the cultural spaces of urban sociability in which the practices of civility were cultivated. Difference, it should be noted, has always been at the bottom of the need for civility. In the seventeenth century, French men and women came to aristocratic salons to learn how to act nobly, which is to say, how to distinguish themselves from others through the practice of civility. In the salon, one set of differences, based on birth, was devalued and replaced with another, based on comportment, manners, and a shared discourse. To be civil was to act nobly, and thus to be noble. Nobles were people who shared a set of manners and a discourse, defined by rules of comportment which regulated how they were to relate to one another as persons who were admittedly different, in a society defined by ranks and orders. "The *honnête homme* was the man of whatever social origin who appropriated to himself noble *civilité*," writes Carolyn Lougee. "The ideology of the salons rested on this substitution of behavior for birth."[11]

If civility was primarily a sign of aristocratic status in the seventeenth century, it was also a means to avoid or overcome potential conflict. The noble warrior may have been "civilized" into a gentleman through the practices of the salon, but the warrior ethos was only transformed, not eliminated. Civility controlled differences within the group, even as it distinguished the group from those excluded from it. At the same time that the rules by which civility was maintained defined a society which excluded many as it included some, within that exclusive group, the same rules allowed differences to be both fostered and controlled. Civility became the key to a new culture that acknowledged difference because it enabled meaningful and fruitful interactions among people defined by it.[12]

In the eighteenth century, when the elite who engaged in public discourse expanded well beyond the limits of the Parisian nobility, aristocratic civility gave way to the broader and more egalitarian notion and practice of politeness. "*Civility*," the chevalier de Jaucourt wrote in the *Encyclopédie*, "does not say as much as *politeness*, and makes up but a portion of it."[13] As *le monde* became more diverse and

suffused with Enlightenment values, the aristocratic civility which recognized rank and status as legitimate differences came to be seen as superficial, even hypocritical. True politeness was more than mere civility and the very opposite of flattery; it smoothed away from discourse all rudeness, bombast "and other defects contrary to common sense and civil society, and reclothed it with gentleness, modesty, and the justice sought by the mind, and which society needs in order to be peaceful and agreeable."[14]

In the eighteenth century, civil conversation took on a new social function as well, but one equally concerned with organizing social and discursive relations among people defined by difference: it enabled men of letters to cooperate in the project of Enlightenment despite the differences of *opinion* continually brought to the fore by their critical method. It also allowed men of letters to exchange ideas as equals despite their very different social origins and economic situations: the marquis de Condorcet, the noble bastard d'Alembert, the master cutler's son, Diderot, the peasant-born Marmontel. As Jean-Baptiste Suard wrote in 1784:

> In a nation where a continuous communication reigns between the two sexes, between persons of all estates, and between minds of all sorts . . . it is necessary to set some limits to the movements of the mind as well as those of the body and to observe the feelings of those to whom we speak in order to temper the sentiments or thoughts that would shock their beliefs or injure their pride.[15]

As the philosophes extended their invitation to join in the project of Enlightenment to all readers, the Enlightenment became a new kind of society in which politeness was crucial: a society in which differences did not disappear but, rather, became all the more visible and audible in their proximity to others. Because civil conversation allowed those men and women who embraced it to interact with one another despite cultural differences, either real or assumed, it set them apart from those who believed difference to be natural, immutable, and unbridgeable; it became a practice of Enlightenment.[16]

Politeness was one of the conditions of the common quest for knowledge and understanding, for seeking truth and spreading enlightenment. Progress depended on politeness because the pursuit of knowledge depended on it, and the pursuit of knowledge was not a

solitary activity, but a sociable one. Rather than an occasion to demonstrate status, conversation was a medium of Enlightenment. Commerce, conversation, Enlightenment itself, were all created out of a culture of interaction and exchange among groups and individuals whose differences made such relations meaningful rather than tautological, but which also necessitated rules, structures, and institutions to make them work.

The philosophes soon looked to salon conversation not only to structure the work of Enlightenment, but as the model for civil society itself. As Daniel Gordon has written, the philosophes "tended to idealize 'civil society' as a vast gathering of free and polite individuals—a kind of universal salon."[17] In the writings of the philosophes, a harmonious civil society was both a challenge to the absolute state and an alternative to the "stormy liberty" they saw operating across the English Channel.[18] For the philosophe, according to one contributor to the *Encyclopédie,* "civil society is, so to speak, a divinity on earth."[19]

More concretely, civil society was put forward as the ground upon which any legitimate political and economic structure (including the monarchy) must be built. The abbé Morellet, for example, grounded social and political order neither in the will of the monarch (as absolutists such as Hobbes did); nor in laws and civic virtue (as republicans such as Rousseau did); but in the "aggregate of private exchanges" which constituted civil society.[20] This meant organizing a diverse people into a harmonious whole through the invention of political institutions, and in particular through the invention of "public opinion" as a source of political authority and legitimacy that, like the salonnière and the rules by which she governed her guests, stood apart from and above them.[21]

The wheels of commerce had to be greased to run smoothly; the guiding metaphor of the salon was the harmonious orchestration of strings or instruments.[22] Suzanne Necker, herself a prominent eighteenth-century salonnière, saw politeness precisely in terms of organizing a society of people who were not only different, but who enjoyed differential power in relation to each other. In her view, politeness redressed the balance of power between strong and weak, men and women, adults and children. "Politeness," she wrote, "conforms to the principle of equality that is so often spoken of; it is the rampart

of those who cannot defend themselves, and that as well on which their praise and their merit are based."[23]

As Necker's remark suggests, gender difference and the question of the role and status of women are embedded in the history of civility. In salons like hers, men and women learned to interact in a way that acknowledged gender difference without sexualizing it. In the microcosm of the salon they created a model society in which women were the civilizing force that enlightened historians from Voltaire on claimed them to be: the benign force that brings out what is noble in men and suppresses not only their brutality, but their hostility toward each other, thus making them both civil and civilized.[24] Gender difference played a major role not only in the maintenance of civility, but in the definition of civilization and Enlightenment.

Both "weak" and "strong" versions of the civilizing force of women were operative in the age of the salons, from the 1630s to the revolution of 1789: the weak version can be found in the idea that civil conversation, and thus society and civilization, depended simply on the bringing together of men and women. The stronger set of claims emphasized the specific talents, characteristics, and virtues of women that were necessary to society and civilization and which produced a civil conversation. Voltaire's claim in the preface to his tragedy *Zaire* (1736) that "the continual commerce between the two sexes, so lively and so polite, has introduced a politeness quite unknown elsewhere," represents the first position; Claude-Charles Guyonne de Vertron's claim in *La Nouvelle Pandore* (1698) that "the virtue of women reestablishes what the vice of men ha[s] corrupted," represents the second.[25] In addition, what women are thought to do to produce civilization or civility, or to civilize men, varied over time. In the seventeenth century, when civility was the mark of nobility, women were prized as models of civility and teachers of civil conversation. Nicolas Faret, for example, the author of *L'Honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (1630), advised his (male) readers "to go into town and observe those among the ladies of quality who are esteemed as the most *honnête* women, and at whose homes the most beautiful assemblies are held." Faret led the way in holding up female conversation as a model of civility, "the most difficult and the most delicate."[26]

The salons that flourished during the reign of Louis XIV became the basis of *le monde*—an autonomous society, beyond the reach of king and court. In these salons, in which aristocratic men and women conversed together, gender difference was itself the subject, the *topos* of conversation. The *querelle des femmes*, revived at various points throughout Western history, became in the second half of the seventeenth century the matrix of salon discourse. As Carolyn Lougee has shown, the woman question now "intersected with crucial controversies over social organization and was interwoven with the major issues of social transformation which concerned seventeenth-century Frenchmen"; it was, she writes, "a controversy central to its own age."[27] Recently Joan DeJean has argued similarly that the *fin-de-siècle* war known as the *querelle des anciens et des moderns* was in fact a battle in the *querelle des femmes* and "a struggle between conflicting visions of French society."[28]

In the eighteenth century, however, as the salon became a model for civil society, and a civil society in which men of letters were, by their own definition, centrally important, the salonnière was no longer revered as a model of civil conversation to be imitated by men and women alike, and the topos of gender difference was marginalized if not eliminated from salon discourse.[29] Instead, the salonnière came to be valued for traits that men either could not or need not imitate because they were gender specific, traits that were understood in terms not simply of gender difference, but of gender complementarity. Moreover, these traits were ascribed to women's nature. As, under the scrutiny of critical reason, all differences between men came to be viewed by the enlightened as culturally derived—a function of class to be overcome by education, or of power to be overcome by political reform—gender difference alone survived as natural and immutable, to be nurtured rather than transcended.[30]

By the 1770s, when the great salonnières of the Enlightenment had made their mark, women were no longer admired for their own conversational skills, but for their ability to orchestrate, to govern, the conversation of men. Male salon-goers were able to identify specific attributes of women that made them especially capable of fulfilling the particular role assigned to them. As Antoine-Léonard Thomas wrote in his *éloge* of Madame Geoffrin:

> These sorts of societies ... require a certain power to temper them. It seems that this power is no better held than in the hands of a woman. She has a natural right that no one disputes and that, in order to be felt, has only to be shown. Madame Geoffrin used this advantage. [In her salon], the reunion of all ranks, like that of all types of minds, prevented any one tone from dominating.[31]

Of Julie de Lespinasse, the Comte de Guibert wrote similarly: "Her great art was to show to advantage the minds of others, and she enjoyed doing that more than revealing her own."[32]

While men did not stop writing about the beneficial effects on society as a whole of commerce between men and women, they increasingly emphasized the governing role of women in a society composed of men. Thus in 1777, Jacques-Henri Meister mourned the loss of two Enlightenment salonnières in political terms: "The disorder and anarchy that have reigned in this party since the death of Mlle de Lespinasse and the paralysis of Mme Geoffrin prove how much the wisdom of their government had averted evils, how much it had dissipated storms, and above all how much it had rescued it from ridicule."[33] It was this governing role that disturbed Rousseau and caused him to put forward (in *Emile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse*) an alternative role for women as wives and mothers which would prove to be as appealing to women as to men.

Gender difference became institutionalized in the different roles played by men and women in the model society of the salon. The definition of the salonnière—the articulation of her attributes, her functions, and her contribution to the Republic of Letters and the project of Enlightenment through her work in the salon—signaled the opening of a sort of career for elite women that gave them the opportunity to have utility and thus real value within the society of their day. At the same time, however, it defined in gendered terms different and complementary roles for men and women within that society and thus limited the ambitions of women to a role defined for them by men. In so doing, it displaced the "Woman Question" from the center of discussions about the shape and meaning of society and civilization as these two were being redefined and, in a sense, answered it by framing the discussion itself in gendered terms. At the same time that women became more visible in their dominant role as salonnières, the question of gender virtually disappeared from the dis-

course of society. The status of women was recognized in the dominant theory of history as a gauge of civilization—most notably by Diderot, who demanded that women be seen as "so many thermometers of the least vicissitudes of morals and customs"—but their role was firmly established as the civilizers of men rather than as contributors to the cultural progress from which they benefited.[34]

The shift from a salon discourse focused on the Woman Question to one framed in gendered terms by the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in it marked a marginalizing of women from the actual discussion of society and its future precisely as that discussion became more political and more public, as Erica Harth has suggested.[35] In the writing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, women were displaced from the space of discussion altogether—they were, in effect, sent out of the room in which any serious discussion took place. We can thus situate Rousseau's influential discourse on women and gender in a development that begins with a practice of civil conversation in which men and women participate, to one in which unruly men are governed by rules enforced by women, to one from which women are excluded. Gendered difference moves from the basis of civility to the instrument of civility to the boundary of civility. With the exclusion of women from it, moreover, the conversation in which men engage is no longer civil and no longer acknowledges difference.

The association of women with civility made them vulnerable to the critique of civilization itself, mounted by Rousseau but shared to some degree, as Sylvana Tomaselli has shown, even by Diderot in his contributions to Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*.[36] For Rousseau, difference may be the reason for civility; it may be the means of achieving it, but civil society—and thus the difference that marks it—is rejected as the foundation of political association. In Rousseau's world, the exclusion of women allows men to get along through the articulation of a general will that is by definition, their will alone. The polity is not built on a society marked by difference; it is the unitary expression of a group of men who have no need for either society or any other form of community because they are themselves defined by their equality, not by their differences. This is Jürgen Habermas's point when he writes that "Rousseau projected the unbourgeois idea of an intrusively political society in which the autonomous private

sphere, that is, civil society, emancipated from the state, had no place."[37] Keith Baker makes a related point in arguing that when the National Assembly adopted a Rousseauian "discourse of the political, grounded on the theory of a unitary will," in the fall of 1789, it rejected "a discourse of the social, grounded on the notion of the differential distribution of reason, functions, and interests in modern civil society."[38] Accepting a Rousseauian discourse meant rejecting a discourse of modernity, in which social progress went hand in hand with social difference and differentiation; it meant rejecting the very notions of civilization and society associated with women as being outside the political community of citizen-men.[39]

Rousseau's individuals were not only equal, they were by nature free. Rousseau criticized civility not only because he saw a simpler solution to the problem of difference in the removal of women from the political scene, but because he saw civility as a curb on natural freedom. After all, civil conversation is governed conversation. It should thus not be surprising that since the French Revolution, the value of civility has been seriously problematized, compromised in fact, by the threat that traditional government has been seen to pose to natural liberty.[40] Before the Revolution, civility was criticized for the artificiality it tended to produce, for its attention to form and appearance. (The substitution of politeness for "mere" civility was an attempt to rescue civility from this critique.) In that discourse, civility was unnatural because it was artificial and superficial, not because it was unfree. Essence and sincerity were at stake, not liberty.[41] Before the Revolution, only Rousseau really worried about freedom being sacrificed at the altar of civility; his contemporaries were more concerned about the destructive and deceptive potential of language for human society than they were with its role in representing individual identity and thus personal freedom. Indeed, as Roger Chartier points out, the value of civility in the view of Rousseau's contemporaries was its role in "the tightening of men's interdependence."[42]

The real divide between Rousseau and the philosophes put (natural) masculine freedom on one side, and civil (governed) society on the other. As Ernst Cassirer recognized long ago, Rousseau's "radical opposition" to the Enlightenment was grounded on a rejection of the conviction that "all political and social enterprise must stand on the

same foundation."[43] In Rousseau's view, a just political order must be founded on the freedom of individual men, not on the differentiated society in which women played a conspicuous role. The governing role of women was a red flag for Rousseau not only because it put men under the rule of women, but because it compromised masculine freedom and thus violated nature. In the name of freedom, nature, and masculinity, Rousseau not only tore out the social foundations of the state, he created a new role for women outside both the polity and political discourse—a valued role as wife and mother that would compensate for the loss of society's value and the significant role of women in assuring mutual respect in it.

Because, of course, difference—gender difference—does not just wither away with society. Rather, in Rousseau's powerful vision it is relocated in the family. Rousseau's critique of civilization opened up a space of true happiness for modern men and women only in a domestic sphere seen as a haven from the depraved modern, urban world created and dominated by competitive, acquisitive, rational men. Women who sought to imitate men by cultivating their reason, or who made a name for themselves in society (writers and salonnières, in short) were not only ridiculous, but foolish, since in defying their nature they ran away from the happiness that they alone could enjoy. Why should women want to imitate men or be jealous of their freedom, when reason and the freedom based on it were merely poor substitutes for the happiness based on instinct and natural virtue available to them alone?[44]

Rousseau took the theory of gender complementarity at the heart of a society-based notion of civilization and used it as the basis of two separate spheres: the moral sphere of the family, whose soul was the natural virtue of woman; and the public sphere of the commercial economy and the state, in which men were driven by rational calculation and self-interest.[45] The polity would now be composed of equal men rather than of differentiated men and women; it would be governed not by someone defined as different, but by a general will defined as the unity of all relevant (that is, male) wills. In *Du Contrat social* (1762) Rousseau laid out the democratic political principles by which the public sphere of men ought to be governed; in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) he imagined the private sphere of a patriarchal family in

which gender complementarity was again inscribed: where the husband ruled with the guidance of reason, but the wife was the emotional and moral center around which the family was built. Society and civility were eliminated from both the moral and the political universe.

In drawing the line between masculinity and freedom, on the one hand, and mixed-gender civility and civilization, on the other, Rousseau redefined gender roles and re-opened the woman question. Difference—gender difference—was at the heart of civilization and was the basis of civility. At the same time, it defined the boundary between the political and the not-political. If we follow the philosophes—Voltaire, Morellet, d'Alembert, Diderot, and others—we see difference as the ground upon which all of society's structures, institutions, rules of interaction are built, and we thus accept it within political discourse; if we follow Rousseau, we use gender difference as a dividing line between the political and the familial, and as a basis, therefore, of definition and exclusion—as the basis for a unitary and exclusively masculine political identity. But in either case, civilization (civility, civil society) is associated with women. The open question is the relationship of the political and the social, of polity and civility. Where one stands on the "woman question" depends on where difference lies.[46]

The masculine republican tradition that goes back to Rousseau has certainly endured, but so has a commitment to a notion of civilized society based on mixed-gender sociability—as evidenced by the despairing cry voiced by the writer Drieu la Rochelle in 1927: "This civilization no longer has clothes, no longer has churches, no longer has palaces, no longer has paintings, no longer has books, no longer has sexes," he wrote.[47] In his final complaint, Drieu was reiterating the association of civilization with gender difference. As Mary Louise Roberts writes: "The blurring of the boundary between 'male' and 'female'—a civilization without sexes—served as a primary referent for the ruin of civilization itself."[48] That association has its origins in the discourse of the Old Regime and has survived, but as the social complement of Rousseauian masculine individualism, rather than as a competing political discourse. Still defined as the social, civilization has now become simply a nostalgic way of reinserting the missing

third term in the Rousseauian dualism—between the family and the polity—without, however, displacing either or calling them into question.

It is this understanding of society and civilization which underlies Mona Ozouf's recent championing of a French feminism that is uniquely and eminently civil. In her "Essay on French Singularity," Ozouf turns to the tradition of mixed-gender sociability that originated in the salons of Old Regime Paris for her understanding of the unique character of French feminism. She sees the "complexity" of the Old Regime as the basis of Frenchwomen's true freedom because, she explains, "in a world of differences, sexual difference was only one among many others, negligible in relation to differences of estate."[49] The salon serves as her example of how those marked by a variety of differences came together in the eighteenth century by accepting a common code of behavior. Indeed, Ozouf gives and endorses a classic account of the civilizing role of women in the Old Regime. "In short," she writes, "feminine arts civilized men, and from one end of the social ladder to the other."[50]

What makes French feminism unique (and admirable), according to Ozouf, is the way in which it is built on an aristocratic tradition of commerce between the sexes and a democratic tradition that in principle sets no limits on equality, even if in practice it is slow to realize its potential. "The result is a particular society, where the demand for equality among individuals remains fundamental, but can be combined with an emphasis on differences which are always subordinate."[51]

In support of Ozouf's thesis, Elisabeth Badinter has inscribed gender difference into the heart of a narrative of French history whereby men and women each stand for a different set of values; the triumph of the feminine in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (with a significant but temporary setback in the 1790s) defines both modern French history and civilization itself as functions of the feminine value of civility. The triumph of feminine civility, however, maintains gender difference in the form of gallantry while eliminating all forms of contestation. The victory of the feminine is the victory not of women over men, but of the social over the political.[52]

Badinter and Ozouf may be right in saying that the French have

remained more civil than others, but civility's triumph has been limited to a social realm divorced from the political; that is, it is limited by the priority of a political model grounded in liberty and equality which sets the boundaries of society and civility. Despite the great nostalgia for the Old Regime and for the salon culture central to it evinced by both Ozouf and Badinter, they are in fact inscribing that nostalgia within a Rousseauian vision of a masculine polity based on an equality of sameness, and a feminine society in which civility harmonizes differences. Not only is feminism depoliticized, as Michelle Perrot has pointed out,[53] but the association of women with society and men with politics remains unchallenged.

Ozouf does not provide a satisfactory response to the postmodern feminist critique of the Enlightenment because she does not call into question the individualistic and exclusionary basis of the modern political order. Rather, she endorses that order and reinforces two ideas that mitigate against both the feminist campaign for equality and a much-called for civility in political discourse: a belief, first, in the civilizing role of women—in the natural role of women to discipline and thus to civilize naturally free and unruly men; and second, a resistance to the government of the tongue in the realm of politics. A serious feminist response to the postmodern critique would not simply idealize women, salons, and civility; it would reassert the Enlightenment commitment to a society defined by difference as the basis of an inclusionary political order and institutions.

For the most important and original insight of the philosophes for feminism is not that women civilize men; it is that difference underlies the social and makes both society and the state necessary and meaningful and valuable. Politics operates in this constructed social field and builds its institutions on it, rather than developing abstractly from a social contract among abstract, autonomous individuals.[54] The structures of society and politics, in this view, are not simply necessary evils, encroachments on natural freedom and equality, but human constructions built to organize human differences and make them useful—not to minimize, eliminate, or deny them.

However, as long as society and civility are associated with women, and politics, natural truth-telling, and truth-seeking language are associated with men, men will resist both women and civil-

ity because not just truth and honesty are stake, but masculinity itself. Rugged individualism will never allow itself to be civilized in these terms.[55] Civility, however, is not a compromise with truth, honesty, and nature, just as society is not a refuge from the hurly-burly of politics: it is a necessary condition of (political) discourse. It is a necessary condition of all relations rooted in discourse, which means all social and political relations including those whose aim is truth or knowledge.

The Enlightenment discourse in which difference is central is not simply an alternative to that other Enlightenment discourse—the one in which universal reason plays the crucial role. It must serve as the discursive context for universalism by means of which we can place the reasoning individual back in a social world marked by differences. At the same time, the universal discourse of reason can continue to play the critical role it has played since Descartes launched it in the seventeenth century: it can de-naturalize those differences and de-essentialize them. Not, however, in order to dismiss them, but in order to organize them usefully and fairly for the greater good of society and the happiness of individuals. Viewed in this way, the Enlightenment concept of difference can be helpful in laying the groundwork for both the multicultural community called for by feminists, and the new civility in the public sphere demanded by cultural critics from both the left and the right.

In a 1992 article on "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," Joan Scott suggested that the university become an "alternative" and "a place from which to search for a different understanding of what a community might be." In other words, that it play the role in our culture that the salon played in Old Regime France. The humanities in particular, she writes, "offer the best possibility of thinking about difference and community in new ways." Just as the seventeenth-century followers of Descartes placed difference at the center of salon conversation, of conversation about society, so must we in the university do the same today. In what I hope can now be seen as the discourse of Enlightenment, Scott concludes that "communities cannot be based on conformity, but on an acceptance and acknowledgment of difference."[56]

Rules of civility, she might have added, are what make such communities possible in the modern world. Thus, it would seem, the current linking of a breakdown of American society with a "civility crisis." However, the cultural commentators who have made such a linkage do not acknowledge the significance of difference as a real basis for community and thus the need for civility; nor do they question the individualism that makes civility suspect in the modern world. Deborah Tannen, for example, who wants us to question "the assumption that it's *always* best to address problems and issues by fighting over them," is careful to deny that she is a proponent of civility because, she explains, "'civility' suggests a superficial, pinky-in-the-air veneer of politeness spread thin over human relations like a layer of marmalade over toast. This book is about a pervasive warlike atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue . . . as if it were a fight."[67] Because she sees civility as superficial and agonism as essential to society, Tannen looks elsewhere for a solution to the crisis she finds in social and political discourse. Like agonism, individualism is simply a fact of life. All we can do, therefore, is look for ways to "blunt the most dangerous blades of the argument culture."[68]

Unlike Tannen, Stephen L. Carter embraces the notion of civility. It is, he asserts, one of the elements of good character. For Carter, civility is not superficial, not merely "good manners"; rather, it is a moral principle, an "attitude of respect, even love, for our fellow citizens." It is, he declares, "morally better to be civil than to be uncivil." Carter calls civility a "precondition of democratic dialogue" and posits as a moral imperative that it "requires us not to mask our differences but to resolve them respectfully." Civility "adds value to the better society we are struggling together through our differences to build."[69]

Carter, however, locates civility not in the social practices of a secular society erected in the wake of the Reformation, but in the Christianity it sought to replace. He makes of civility a new universal, a restatement of Christian love appropriate for modern, secular society. "The key to reconstructing civility," he argues,

> is for all of us to learn anew the virtue of acting with love toward our neighbors. Love of neighbor has long been a tenet of Judaism and Christianity, and a revival of civility in America will require a revival of all that

> is best in religion as a force in our public life. Only religion possesses the majesty, the power, and the sacred language to teach all of us, the religious and the secular, the genuine appreciation for each other on which a successful civility must rest.[60]

As a universal—like reason or Christian love—civility here denies the value of difference in transcending it. For Carter, the value of civility does not lie in its recognition of the differences that underlie society and its ability to manage them, but in its ability to act as a counterweight to individualism. "We cannot return to a world in which individual identity was subsumed within a larger and often brutal whole," he concedes. "What we can do is try, within the limits of democracy, to construct a civility that will lead future generations to admire what we tried to do for civilization rather than condemn us for our barbarism."[61] If Rousseau posited a retreat to the family as a moral refuge from an individualistic polity, Carter calls for a new civility to moralize that polity. "Civility," he writes, "is principally an ethic for strangers. In a democracy, especially a large one, we are most of us strangers to each other. . . . Civility supposes an obligation to a larger if anonymous group of fellow citizens."[62] In the end, this latest call for civility does not entail a displacement of the individual or his natural freedom from the foundations of democracy. An appeal to Christian love will not solve the problem of a society that does not acknowledge or accept difference as fundamental.

We do need civility, but not as a refuge from the "rough and tumble" masculine ways of politics or as a new morality designed to transcend or soften it. As long as civility continues to be opposed to individualism, critics will blast the former for opposing the masculine values associated with the latter. Thus Randall Kennedy writes against the new "civilitarians" such as Tannen and Carter:

> The civility movement is deeply at odds with what an invigorated liberalism requires: intellectual clarity, an insistence upon grappling with the substance of controversies; and a willingness to fight loudly, openly, militantly, even rudely for policies and values that will increase freedom, equality, and happiness in America and around the world.[63]

Civility must be seen not as coming from outside a political discourse among people whose right to speak is based on their individual reason, but as the very constitution of a society defined by difference.

Until the differences from which disagreements arise are acknowledged as the basis of society, the reason for its existence, civility will not be recognized as the means to harmonize them. Nor will the necessity and legitimacy of people willing to enforce the rules of civility be recognized—people who are willing to stand outside the conversation, its passions, egos, and interests—as salonnières did by virtue of their gender—in order to do the necessary and legitimate work of governance.

We need salonnières as much as we need civility, but we don't need to assign the role of salonnière to women. Unlike the men and women of the eighteenth century, we can analyze and understand the function of the salonnière as we understand the function of civility: in relation to difference, but not as grounded in nature. The full legacy of the Enlightenment helps us to grapple with difference as reasonable men and women. It allows us to see not only that differences are socially constructed, but that society is itself constructed out of differences and government developed to manage them. Standing on a differentiated society, the political sphere need not exclude women on the grounds of their difference from men, just as it need not submerge all men in an artificial equality based on a constructed sameness. Rather than grounding a choice between universalism and difference, the complex legacy of the Enlightenment allows us to refuse that choice as well as its derivatives: between universalistic feminism and difference feminism, between political rights and social power, and between politics and civility. The Enlightenment does this by opening the possibility of redefining the political such that difference, society, and civility are all essential to it.

LAWRENCE E. KLEIN

Enlightenment as Conversation

Notwithstanding Jean-François Lyotard's identification of the postmodern with "incredulity toward metanarratives," postmodernism has its own grand narrative. Anxious about its definition in time as in so much else, postmodernism has been accompanied by a passion to historicize, to define a history of modernity against which critique can then be launched. There has been a proliferation of grand narratives, theoretical histories, teleologically driven, developmental stories organized around some concept of modernity, in which "a series of elisions tend to prescribe a definite route here."[1] The Enlightenment is invariably a station on this itinerary. In those stories, there was *an* (i.e. *one*) Enlightenment, it had a series of doctrinal commitments, these commitments have dominated not only the philosophy but the cultures of the developed West, and the dominance of these doctrinal commitments is responsible for many of our predicaments. The grand narrative of postmodernism is cast in a range of figures, among which personification is prominent: the narrative concerns genealogies and lineages, ancestors and their legacies.

Although the postmodern narrative identifies several related candidates as the Enlightenment's legacy, this essay responds to scientism and the corresponding claim that Enlightenment intellectuals, inspired by Descartes, first assumed the posture of the distanced observer seeking mastery over what he sees. In the first instance, this mastery is intellectual, though, by an easy extension, it is political. The posture is marked by the distance between observer and ob-

served, who are separated by a kind of ontological gap; a hierarchical relation that privileges the intellectual and political authority of the observer; and the disembodied or decontextualized position of the observer, which gives rise to the claim to provide objective knowledge of universal validity. This scientistic posture is the signal comportment of the Enlightenment in postmodernism's grand narrative, as well as the signal legacy of the Enlightenment targeted by the postmodern critique.

This characterization can make for a nice fit between the very term "Enlightenment" and its presiding epistemology. According to Ludmilla Jordanova and Peter Hulme, light took on "a new vitality" as "a central metaphor for knowledge" in this period: "there was a whole epistemology behind the use of images of 'light' in the eighteenth century, one that was boosted by the belief that all knowledge came from the senses and that vision was queen among the senses, with observation at the heart of the acquisition of solid knowledge. Enlightenment was less a state than a process of simultaneous unveiling and observation."[2]

However, as Lorraine Daston has recently reminded us, it was highly important to eighteenth-century writers that their "light" not be confused with the sort of private illumination that had come in their time to be associated with the pathology known as enthusiasm. She writes that "the peculiar light of the enlightened" in the eighteenth century was "a sociable light. It was not the inner light of mystical vision, but rather the outer light of letters, lectures, treatises, memoirs, novels, journals, and conversations." We understand what she means, but the metaphors are awkward. When she continues, "whereas enthusiasm caught fire from a blinding, undeniable intuition that admitted neither elaboration nor rebuttal, enlightenment was kindled by argument, explanation, demonstration, and discussion with a network of interlocutors," we feel more precisely the jarring effects of a significant mixing of metaphor: metaphors of light and sight have shifted into metaphors of sound and speech.[3]

The same shift is undertaken, rather more strategically, by James Schmidt, who notes that "the Enlightenment's critics are in agreement . . . that there is something sinister about the light it casts."[4] He contends, however, that light has come to be over-estimated as a

trope of Enlightenment because theorists have failed to attend to what eighteenth-century writers themselves said. As a signal piece of evidence, he points out that Kant's answer to the question, "What is enlightenment?," "did not invoke those images of light that have cast such a shadow over recent criticisms of the Enlightenment. He instead talked about speech. For him, enlightenment demanded not a world in which everything stood naked to the light but rather a world in which it was possible to speak without fear."[5]

Following Daston and Schmidt, this essay approaches the Enlightenment as a moment in the history of human communication. It draws on historical research that locates the medium of the Enlightenment not in light and vision but in sound and speech. In this Enlightenment, engaged conversers rather than detached observers are in the foreground. In this Enlightenment, science does not run rampant but instead submits to the disciplines of sociability.

One reason to consider the Enlightenment as a conversational episode is simply to make clear that the intellectual cultures of the eighteenth century had many concerns besides observation and such related themes as taxonomy, abstraction, objectivity, and discipline: more than that was going on in the eighteenth century. In turn, the diversity of the Enlightenment undermines the simplistic grand narrative which postmodern writers have so often felt they required: scientism was not the only legacy of the Enlightenment, if we insist on seeing our relation to the past in that metaphor. However, my goal is not to suggest an alternate narrative of modernity to the grand narrative of postmodernity. Indeed, as I will suggest at the end of this essay, we can put postmodern insight to better historical use by abandoning grand narrative altogether. Finally, an account of the conversational Enlightenment helps to undermine the much-vaunted opposition between Enlightenment and postmodernity that shapes the grand narrative. In searching for an alternative to the alleged legacy of the Enlightenment, postmodern writers have themselves often put a high value on conversation: condemning the Enlightenment, they identify remedies for its legacy in modes most favored in the Enlightenment itself—the irony that is the heart of this essay.

According to Dick Hebdige, "the spirit of postmodernism" requires "the renunciation of the claims to mastery and 'dominant specularity.'"[36] In renouncing Enlightenment scientism, some critics have identified an alternative cognitive comportment in conversation or dialogue. In the words of David Simpson, conversation has risen to prominence among "tools of storytelling as we now do it, if we are liberal intellectuals laying claim to the novelty of a postmodern commitment."[37] A scene of embodied humans interacting in particular spaces seems a desirable substitute for the disembodied eyeball peering into the microscope. *Conversation* offers a better way than *observation* for thinking about cognition and knowledge: conversation replaces distance with engagement, elitism and authority with participation, solitude with sociability, hierarchy and elitism with equality, and the illusion of a privileged cognitive station with a frank admission of the situated perspective of all knowledge claims.

The postmodern commitment has at least two main uses for conversation, as the basis for all claims to knowledge and as a model for acquiring it. The first use is illustrated in the writings of Richard Rorty. For Rorty, conversation is an alternative to the scientism—adumbrated as early as Plato, put in place by Descartes and Locke, adopted as the cognitive program of the Enlightenment, and finally, passed on to modern Western culture.[8] This scientism has always sought to establish knowledge on the basis of a correspondence to an external reality; it involves a search for a knowledge that stands outside the contingencies of language, history and culture. Among other things, it is responsible for the bifurcation of the cognitive world into scientific and non-scientific kinds of knowledge. Rorty's pragmatism rejects "the common presupposition that there is an invidious distinction to be drawn between kinds of truth. For the pragmatist, true sentences are not true because they correspond to reality"; likewise, the undeniable effectiveness of modern science is not a function of the correspondence of its statements to reality.[9] Rorty does not deny that there is such a reality: "To say that the world is out there, that it is not our creation, is to say, with common sense, that most things in space and time are the effects of causes which do not include human mental states." But he insists that truth should not be considered a mirror of

that reality since what we call truth must be articulated in sentences, "sentences are elements of human languages," and "human languages are human creations."[10] In short, humans and their cognitions are entirely embedded in language. This "ubiquity of language" means that we never encounter reality "except under a chosen description."[11] There are no starting points or ending points outside language. Thus, knowledge is not a matter of confrontation between knower and reality but rather a matter of conversation, arising in the conversational relations of inquirers.[12] As Rorty notes, "there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones—no wholesale constraints derived from the nature of the objects, or of the mind, or of language, but only those retail constraints provided by the remarks of our fellow-inquirers."[13]

To think of knowledge as grounded in conversation rather than in correspondence is, for Rorty, a new way of describing our knowledge, a new way to cast the metaphors through which we articulate our purchase on the world.[14] To that extent, Rorty's redescription leaves scientific knowledge as it is: evolutionary biology, plate tectonics, quantum physics should be no less persuasive to us if, with Rorty, we forfeit their correspondence to external reality. However, Rorty's refiguration of knowledge does affect the discipline of philosophy since it requires the abandonment of epistemology, the project that has defined philosophy since the seventeenth century, and its dream of grounding knowledge on commensurability, "the assumption that all contributions to a given discourse are . . . . able to be brought under a set of rules which will tell us how rational agreement can be reached . . . ."[15] Whatever new role is found for philosophy—or whatever takes its place, since Rorty also talks of the need for a post-philosophical culture[16]—it will be at the hub of conversations. In a telling metaphor, with specific relevance for this essay, Rorty suggests that the philosopher might run *the salon* "where hermetic thinkers are charmed out of their self-enclosed practices."[17]

But philosophy is not the only field of knowledge in which the postmodern attraction to conversation implies reinventing the discipline. In anthropology, for instance, conversation has been advanced not just as the ground of knowledge but as a kind of method with implications for the nature of anthropological insight.[18] James Clifford

has been in the fore in calling for the rejection of the scientistic model. The anthropologist is to abandon the pretensions to detachment and objectivity in the participant observation model and assume the shape of a fully equipped and located human being; moreover, the object of inquiry must be regarded as a fully equipped and located being. The relations between these two are necessarily dialogic. According to Clifford, "it is more than ever crucial for different peoples to form complex concrete images of one another, as well as of the relationships of knowledge and power that connect them; but no sovereign scientific method or ethical stance can guarantee the truth of such images. They are constituted . . . in specific historical relations of dominance and dialogue."[19] The nature of the knowledge produced is quite different, then, under conversational conditions: "It becomes necessary to conceive of ethnography not as the experience and interpretation of a circumscribed 'other' reality, but rather as a constructive negotiation involving at least two, and usually more, conscious, politically significant subjects."[20]

For Rorty, the scientistic posture leads to false claims about the nature of our knowledge; for Clifford, it leads to false knowledge claims *tout court* with morally and politically odious implications. Both assertions of the importance of conversation and dialogue are rooted in a powerful sense of the ubiquity of language: our knowledge is always embedded in language, language is inherently discursive, and our discourse is always particular, located and contingent.

In what follows I do not take issue with the attractiveness of conversation and dialogue as models of intellectual and political community. The point, rather, is that in the eighteenth century plenty of people used conversation to organize not only their perceptions of the world but also their practical engagements with it. A fundamentally rhetorical, that is, linguistic, view of the world, with a concomitant sensitivity to historical and cultural context, was a central feature of the Enlightenment.[21]

While the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment supposes that, in the words of Dorinda Outram, science and technology "supplied the central cultural structure of the Enlightenment,"[22] recent work on the period suggests that conversation and sociability were of pre-

eminent significance. According to Dena Goodman, "the central discursive practices of the Enlightenment Republic of Letters were polite conversation and letter writing, and its defining social institution was the Parisian salon."[23] Goodman's contention betokens the direction that Enlightenment studies have taken in recent years. The Enlightenment is defined now not by a set of doctrines but by a set of communicative practices, along with such concepts as conversation, politeness and sociability, which contemporaries used to comprehend their distinctive practices.[24]

Of course, the eighteenth century did not invent ideas about conversation, but rather built on traditions of early modern and medieval provenance (which, in turn, were informed by ancient writings). Indeed, the conversational turn in Enlightenment studies has involved a rethinking of Enlightenment origins. The Enlightenment has often been interpreted as continuing and popularizing the scientific achievements of the seventeenth century. The *philosophes* have been seen as translating the work of "the trio of English 'pioneers,' Bacon, Newton and Locke," to a wider and more practical field or of adopting, in a similar way, "the *way of thinking* introduced by Descartes."[25] However, from the standpoint of communicative practice, the Enlightenment was developing and elaborating other strands of early modern culture, namely, the traditions of conversation, politeness and sociability that were important in elite European society, at princely courts and elsewhere, from the Renaissance on.[26]

Particularly important for the Enlightenment were seventeenth-century French ideas about the sociability appropriate for *honnêtes hommes*, developed by such writers as Guez de Balzac, the chevalier de Méré and the sieur de Saint-Évremond. These writers were looking, in the midst of a court culture, for forms of sociability in which an aristocratic dignity, independent of the royal court, could be asserted. The key features of their conversational ideal were equality, reciprocity and a certain ease and informality. This is the territory explored persuasively by Daniel Gordon, for whom "the whole preoccupation with the art of conversation in the late seventeenth century, in fact, constitutes the key element in the gradual transformation of aristocratic thought into Enlightenment philosophy . . . . [O]n the basis of the metanorms of exchange developed in seventeenth-century theo-

ries of conversation, eighteenth-century thinkers imagined other, not necessarily verbal, activities as forms of civility."[27]

Though both Dena Goodman and Daniel Gordon are students of France, a consequence of their rethinking of Enlightenment origins and character is to reposition England in the narrative of Enlightenment. Although seventeenth-century English luminaries from Bacon to Newton have long been recognized as inspirational for the Enlightenment, England was also usually considered to have been immune to the Enlightenment.[28] However, in relation to the conversational Enlightenment, England is a most central locale, not only because in the early eighteenth century English writers gave an influential rearticulation to the ideal, but because from the early eighteenth century England pioneered an elaborated world of conversational opportunity.

The impulse in England to assert the importance of conversation grew out of local political and ideological needs. In the wake of the 1688 Revolution, English Whigs constructed a cultural ideology organized around notions of conversation and politeness in order to legitimate the new political and cultural order which emerged then and survived into the nineteenth century.[29] In the decades after the Glorious Revolution, this ideology lost its partisan color and came to shape social, intellectual and cultural patterns throughout Britain in ways that were more and more generalized. Polite conversability became a great self-image of the age, a blueprint for many aspects of middling and upper-class culture. At the same time, it became influential throughout Europe, being appropriated and adapted to varieties of circumstances.

The Enlightenment was inspired by Bacon, Newton and Locke, but it also relied on the conversational idioms reinvented by the Whig cultural ideologists.[30] Anthony Ashley Cooper, the third earl of Shaftesbury, is a particularly interesting figure to examine. Not only was he a tutelary spirit of the conversational Enlightenment, but his example defies, in highly significant ways, generalizations about the Enlightenment in the postmodern critique. I offer him here as an Enlightenment opponent of scientism, a figure who refused to accept that science should set philosophy's agenda. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has indicated, Shaftesbury should be located among long-standing rhe-

torical, historicist and culturalist strands of discourse that were highly active in the eighteenth century.[31]

Nothing could be farther from the scientistic character ascribed by the postmodern critique to the Enlightenment than Shaftesbury's apothegmatic statement: "To philosophize, in a just signification, is but to carry good breeding a step higher."[32] He enunciated here his patently moral, aesthetic and political goals for philosophy, namely, to enhance the virtue, taste, and citizenship of gentlemen. Shaping the subjectivity of gentlemen was precisely the task, in Shaftesbury's view, that modern philosophy, embodied in the likes of Descartes, Hobbes and Locke, had begun to abandon.

However, the apothegm also indicated the close connection between philosophy and conversation since the heart of good breeding was the art of conversation. Shaftesbury's project of enlightenment was nothing less than the recovery of conversation. "If the best of our modern conversations," he wrote,

> are apt to run chiefly upon trifles, if rational discourses (especially those of a deeper speculation) have lost their credit and are in disgrace because of their formality, there is reason for more allowance in the way of humour and gaiety. An easier method of treating these subjects will make them more agreeable and familiar. To dispute about them will be the same as about other matters. They need not spoil good company or take from the ease or pleasure of a polite conversation.[33]

Building on ancient traditions of rhetoric as well as more recent expositions of conversation, Shaftesbury sought a *rapprochement* between philosophy and the world that would create, with philosophical worldliness, a new model of public discourse. Thus, he was an exemplar of the process, discussed by Daniel Gordon, through which face-to-face conversation was transmuted into a norm for society as a whole, and he was, as Jürgen Habermas envisioned it, a philosopher of the public sphere. Shaftesbury's project of enlightenment was an effort not to extend the accomplishment of seventeenth-century philosophy but to remedy the disintegrating effect of its having abandoned the world.

Shaftesbury showed how polite conversation could elicit values of social, cultural and ultimately political import. He indicated the pa-

rameters of this discursive practice by reflecting on a recent "free" conversation:

> It was, I must own, a very diverting [conversation], and perhaps not the less so for ending as abruptly as it did, and in such a sort of confusion as almost brought to nothing whatever had been advanced in the discourse before . . . . A great many fine schemes, it is true, were destroyed; many grave reasonings, overturned; but, this being done without offence to the parties concerned and with improvement to the good humour of the company, it set the appetite the keener to such conversations. And I am persuaded that, had Reason herself been to judge of her own interest, she would have thought she received more advantage in the main from that easy and familiar way than from the usual stiff adherence to a particular opinion.[34]

This conversation was serious without being solemn. In fact, it was diverting in the senses both that it was agreeable and that it was full of diversity. Its lack of order did not impede its intellectual value.[35] Indeed, this conversation—critical, open-ended, amiable—served the interests of reason by undermining unfounded opinion, by covering many topics and by encouraging further discussion. What Shaftesbury meant by "reason" here and elsewhere is unclear. Certainly, he stood on the trajectory from scholastic notions of right reason toward notions of empirical and discursive reason.[36] But reason may not have signified much more here than reasonableness, a pragmatic standard that arose by agreement among those present in the conversation. In any case, it is impossible to see Shaftesbury's use of "reason" as conforming to a model of Enlightenment reason as disembodied and decontextualized. Reason, for Shaftesbury, was a collaborative project conveyed by conversation.

Conversation was also anti-authoritarian. It implied activity among the participants. If, as Shaftesbury said, reason was a habit actuated in the practice of conversation, conversers were agents: they resisted the passivity of mere listening.[37] Attached to their activity was also a kind of equality. If not equally endowed with reason or wit, participants in conversation were equal in their capacity to deploy what they had of them.

Conversation also managed to be aligned both with liberty and discipline. An important reason that such a conversation was pleasurable was that it was free: it involved "a freedom of raillery, a liberty in de-

cent language to question everything, and an allowance of unravelling or refuting any argument without offence to the arguer."[38] The freedom that conduced to pleasure here was freedom to question and even to ridicule. Such discursive or intellectual freedom was not a legal entitlement or a politically sanctioned domain of latitude but, rather, the precondition of rational interchange, a convention for the operation of conversation. This was an endorsement of freedom that had nothing to do with rights—it is important to remember, in light of post-modern complaints about the language of rights, that there are many ways to persuade us that freedom is a value, and the language of rights is only one. At the same time, politeness depended on self-restraint, a willingness to make concessions to others, whether they deserve it or not. In the paradigm of politeness, liberty and discipline were hardly antagonistic but rather were folded in upon one another as values. Postmodernism in the Foucauldian vein has given discipline such a bad name that one must be explicit about its obvious necessity for collaborative human action.

For Shaftesbury, then, polite conversation was, in Habermas's expression, an ideal speech situation: the very nature of a polite conversation implied a normative framework for human relations since its conventions implied the values of freedom, equality, activity, pleasure, and restraint. Unpacking Shaftesbury's conversational ideal illustrates cultural tendencies that hardly accord with the identification of the eighteenth century with triumphant scientism. Indeed, his model of intellectual sociability offers many of the virtues of conversation to which postmodernists are attracted.

Shaftesbury's conversational ideal was also significant, in the discourse of philosophy, as an intervention that aimed precisely to limit and reverse the influence of science and scientifically inspired philosophy. In the philosophical dialogue, "The Moralists," a character complained that philosophy "is no longer active in the world" because "we have immured her, poor lady, in colleges and cells and have set her servilely to such works as those in the mines. Empirics and pedantic sophists are her chief pupils. The school syllogism and the elixir are the choicest of her products."[39] Academics and virtuosi represented the chief menaces to any significant, that is, worldly, philosophy: they were responsible for the gap which Shaftesbury's project of enlight-

enment was meant to bridge. While one of these menaces was, fairly predictably, the Church, the other was none other than modern philosophy as it had taken shape in the seventeenth century under the impress of natural investigations and as it was embodied in Descartes, Hobbes and Locke.[40] As Shaftesbury's figurative language indicated, philosophy had abandoned the world. The empiric in his cell was not just the scientist but also the modern philosopher; epistemology, the modern philosophical project, was on the same level as alchemy. Shaftesbury sneered at the analysis of ideas in Locke's *Essay on Human Understanding* and made slighting references to "clear ideas" and the Cartesian cogito. Bored by the new learning of the seventeenth century, Shaftesbury rejected one of its important outcomes, the reorientation of philosophical reflection around questions of knowledge. Thus, Shaftesbury attacked the privileges claimed by science and by epistemology, offering an Enlightenment protest against scientism.

Moreover, Shaftesbury was sensitive to precisely the abstractive universalism for which postmodernists have criticized the Enlightenment. He took seriously neither the attempt by Descartes to fathom the world by withdrawing from it nor the attempts by Hobbes and Locke, in keeping with the natural law tradition, to imagine humans outside of culture and history as the basis for theorizing the character of society and politics. Shaftesbury's enlightenment project stood against that sort of abstractive universalism and advanced instead an attempt to historicize human moral experience and ground it in conversation.[41]

Thus, in the name of polite philosophy, Shaftesbury's enlightenment project rejected the writers who were later canonized as the guiding spirits of "the Enlightenment." By pointing out the continuity between philosophy and politeness, Shaftesbury was prescribing ethical, aesthetic, and civic contents for philosophy. He was also proposing the ideal of the gentleman as philosopher. This ideal required a new site for philosophy, the conversation of gentlemen, and a new form to philosophic activity that was fundamentally dialogic. Thus, Shaftesburian politeness produced a new map of cultural space, in which cultural sites with their protocols of admission and operation were redefined and reevaluated.

Shaftesbury was certainly influential, through Hutcheson to the

Enlightenment in Scotland and through Diderot to the Enlightenment in France. However, he was also representative: his re-appraisal of discursive and cultural spaces was part of wider patterns of cultural transformation in contemporary Britain and Europe. It was hardly accidental that Shaftesbury's contemporary, Joseph Addison, defined the *Spectator*'s aims as relocating philosophy and, so, remapping the cultural world, bringing "Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and Coffee-Houses."[42] As in Shaftesbury, philosophy here was being transferred from what were represented as solitary or cloistered environments to worldly and sociable ones. First English-speakers and then Europeans of many nations imitated the Whig periodicals of Addison and Steele: they produced their own moral weeklies on the model of the *Spectator*; but, more tellingly, they sought to reproduce in their own lives the moralized clubbability represented in the works of Addison and Steele.[43]

Conversation, politeness, and sociability had remarkable success infiltrating a wide range of discussion in the European eighteenth century. Among many writers, the conversational ideal was extensively reiterated. Conversation was lauded as a concrete activity, and such praise did much to enhance the elaboration of actual sites of conversation. However, conversation was also a figure of the entire civilizing process, central to so much Enlightenment thinking. Writers dwelled on the meanings of natural human sociability. However, the endorsement of sociability was more than a simple counter to theories of egoism, expressed by Thomas Hobbes or Bernard Mandeville. It implied an understanding of the social and cultural development of the human individual and species through communication and interaction. Self and society were refined and advanced through the process of conversation, understood in a generously metaphorical way.[44] Such socially and culturally produced selves were far from aloof Cartesian subjectivities.

Even more remarkable was the way that the conversational ideal came to shape experience. The ideal was a set of representations that assumed a lived reality. It directed the actual elaboration of sites of edifying sociability; the aims of conversation were repeatedly formalized in collective projects from local clubs to encyclopedic inventories of human experience. Indeed, this sort of association has be-

come in recent interpretations an indicator, when not a defining attribute, of Enlightenment.

The forms and sites of such association were myriad. The coffeehouse provided one convenient locale because it provided an accessible, inexpensive, and fairly democratic place not just for drinking beverages but also for consuming printed material and discussing all it suggested. Coffeehouses also provided a place for lectures, scientific demonstrations, concerts, exhibits and auctions. Not all coffeehouses were polite, nor were all activities at any coffeehouse polite, but coffeehouses could be characterized as places for decorous conversation which refined the taste and polite capacities of those present.[46]

At the other end of the institutional spectrum was the salon, an occasion for conversation that met regularly at the home of a high-born woman who, as *salonnière*, exercised an ordering and disciplining function. From the seventeenth century, salons were sites for a redefinition of the French nobility according to the value of politeness. In the eighteenth century, the French tradition of *politesse* merged with Addisonian and Shaftesburian ideas, making salons occasions for a rich, bracing, and edifying conversation that defined the Enlightenment in France.[46]

Between the coffeehouse and the salon were the many kinds of associations and societies that scholars have been identifying all over Europe: language societies, learned academies, Masonic lodges, reading circles, literary and all manner of other clubs. There was great variety here, but many of these shared basic features: they sought to combine sociability and edification in orderly conversation among people from different orders of society.[47]

Thus, the Enlightenment was a conversable world not just in theory but in cultural practice. This is what Lorraine Daston, cited earlier, means by the "sociable light" of the eighteenth century. Sociability did not mean amicability, but even antagonism was subjected to rules: "views were developed, propounded, and criticized within reactive contexts—in conversations, correspondences, disputes, and above all, reviews." The intellectual life of the Enlightenment was "a great echo chamber" of reverberating opinion, whose rhythms followed "the movements of conversation," even when they worked "across time and space."[48]

In such a culture, conversation came to be a model for many intellectual practices, including natural science. While Shaftesbury and Addison both regarded natural science as peripheral to polite culture, recent research suggests that scientific activity in the eighteenth century prospered as a facet of this conversable culture. In the words of the editors of the recent *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, "the polite culture of taste and conversation is the relevant context for much Enlightenment science, not the world of professionalization or institutional formation."[49] The polite character of eighteenth-century natural science is worth emphasizing here because science and decontextualized scientific modes of reasoning are central targets in the postmodern critique of the Enlightenment legacy. But historians of science have shown that even eighteenth-century science was embedded in the culture of conversation and as such was hardly fit to leave scientism as its legacy.

From the 1970s, the notion of polite science was introduced into the historiography to account for the social conditions of scientific production in the eighteenth century.[50] The expression "polite science" was pointedly used to distinguish it from what came later and suggested the ways in which eighteenth-century science was ineligible as the progenitor of modern science. The politeness of science was partly a matter of the personnel of scientific investigation: eighteenth-century science was dominated by a gentlemanly cohort who practiced or sponsored scientific investigation as one feature of a more general conversable amateur culture. The idea of polite science also helped to specify the settings and goals of scientific investigation—exactly the range of conversable settings, discussed above, that we now take as indicative of the presence of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century. To an extent, politeness could even be used to characterize the content of scientific work: a science framed by a natural theology, which expressed also the cultural ideology of a gentlemanly oligarchy.[51] One can even make the case that the effort to detach reason from context, science from its surroundings, and to arrogate it to a troop of experts, was an anti-Enlightenment project by nineteenth-century figures who, for their own very good reasons, wanted to unfasten science from the well integrated role it had in the general culture of the eighteenth century.[52]

By emphasizing the conversational theme, I risk being cast as a defender of the Enlightenment; nevertheless, this essay does not seek to defend the Enlightenment by balancing the negatives in the postmodern critique with a cozier characterization or by constructing an alternative and more hopeful genealogy for modernity.[53] If anything, this essay is a defense of historical thinking against the unhistorical propensity to offer treatments of the Enlightenment in the tone of either accusation or defense. The forensic tone arises, of course, because, in relation to the contested category of the Modern, the Enlightenment is assigned a privileged status as founder, ancestor, and legacy-leaver.

However, historians should have a rather large investment in forswearing this kit of metaphors. That is because the engagement of professional history with the past is defined by a commitment to the notion of context—understanding things, developments, people, writings, whatever, with respect to other things, developments, people, writings, that are contemporary. The violation of this commitment provides us with our Scarlet Letter, that grave sin called Anachronism. The metaphorical array including genealogy and legacy is an invitation to anachronism because it interprets aspects of the past by reference to what they are alleged to have led to.

Some arguments against this approach are found in that war-horse of the modern professional historical consciousness, *The Whig Interpretation of History* by Herbert Butterfield. Butterfield's target in this classic book was a kind of historical genealogist: the Whig historian who wants to know "to whom do we owe our liberty?" In *The Whig Interpretation of History*, Butterfield's best examples came from the historiography of the Reformation, which, in Butterfield's time and for long afterward, was depicted as a turning point on the road to modernity, with Martin Luther as a hero of individualism, liberty, and even tolerance, while the Church at Rome was characterized as a retrogressive villain.

Butterfield made two salient rebuttals to this approach to history. One was an insistence on the local nature of past struggles: "The issue between Protestants and Catholics in the sixteenth century was an issue of their world and not of our world, and we are being definitely

unhistorical, we are forgetting that Protestantism and Catholicism have both had a long history since 1517, if we argue from a rash analogy that the one was fighting for something like our modern world while the other was trying to prevent its coming."[54] It follows, according to Butterfield, that one should regard Protestant and Catholics as "distant and strange people." This is exactly the opposite assumption of the genealogist who is looking for familiars in the past.

The second and more important point on which Butterfield insisted is the reductionism of a genealogical approach that tends to abstract individuals, or ideas, or themes from a larger historical process. He writes, "It is not by a line but by a labyrinthine piece of network that one would have to make the diagram of the course by which religious liberty has come down to us, for this liberty comes by devious tracks and is born of strange conjunctures, it represents purposes marred perhaps more than purposes achieved, and it owes more than we can tell to many agencies that had little to do with either religion or liberty. We cannot tell to whom we must be grateful for this religious liberty and there is no logic in being grateful to anybody or anything except to the whole past which produced the whole present. . . ."[55] History, he concluded, is not the study of origins; rather it is the analysis of "all the mediations by which the past was turned into our present."[56]

Like the Reformation, the Enlightenment was not one project but rather an array of projects. Modernity was central to many of these projects, but this modernity was an eighteenth-century one. The labors of these people were local in a setting of immense complexity. If one wants "legacies," one has to recognize that the "legacies" of their projects are multiple, if not infinite, and, at the same, these "legacies" are strictly untraceable.

The fact is that many insights associated with postmodern theory support the kind of historical consciousness advertised in Butterfield's famous book. These insights have redeployed and sharpened valuable tools of analysis for understanding the complexity of human life, past and present. With the encouragement of postmodern concerns and emphases, historical study is recasting its accounts.[57] The developments that one finds in most areas of historical investigation include:

foregrounding multiplicity and contestation instead of unity and unanimity; attending to developments at the margins as well as those at the center, and, beyond that, rethinking the figure of "center/margin" and its application; evaluating the claims of historical actors with greater skepticism, especially the suspiciously high-minded claims of Art, Science, Philosophy, and Truth; shedding "the economic," "the social," and other claimants to be the ultimate ground of historical explanation; and finally, insisting that the terrain for historical investigation is practice (a.k.a. culture), the point at which such categories as "structure," "event," "experience," "performance," and "meaning" collide.

Finally, and most relevant to the Enlightenment, postmodernism has encouraged greater diffidence about the long-term patterns. Indeed, the skepticism about grand narratives, associated with Jean-François Lyotard, has helped to sanction a rethinking of stories that had assumed a commonplace character. By insisting that people come to terms with the concept of the "postmodern," postmodernism has problematized "the modern" and the polarities, such as archaic/modern, which have given shape to much historical storytelling. Resonances between past and present which were usually drowned out by the din of "the modern" and "modernization" have become audible again. It has become possible to discuss the history of the last three centuries without assigning tried and true roles to the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, the rising middle class, the declining aristocracy, and so forth. "Watershed," "turning point," and "point of origin" are being cast out of the metaphorical kit in favor of new metaphors.

The irony is that, while the concept of the postmodern can be used to free the imagination to rethink the narratives of recent centuries, it can also be used to provide a grand narrative with a vengeance, a story that violates many of the insights that are properly associated with the postmodern. Instead of being a story about diversity, it is a story about unanimity. Instead of being a story about contestation, it is a story about a strict hegemony. Instead of suggesting that practice has to be examined as the site of cultural power, it assumes that what canonical writers write suffices for characterizing an entire culture. In-

stead of allowing for discordance in kinds of change over time, indeed for a multiplicity of narratives, it assumes a synchronicity of change across the aspects of society.

In the interests of a complex vision of the eighteenth century, I have discussed the conversational ideal and its impact. However, this essay is not intended as a contribution to an alternative genealogy to that of the postmodern critique of scientism. This is not a sketch towards a history of the rise of modern conversation or modern politeness or modern publicity or modern science. Is antiquarianism the alternative to genealogy? I think not. The features discussed are sufficiently different from those in our society that they are genuinely foreign. At the same time, they seem to be recognizable: they have a resonance with some of the predicaments in which we find ourselves. Resonance seems a more persuasive metaphor than genealogy for comprehending our relation to this past. As Quentin Skinner has pointed out, history helps us assess the present not just by showing the origins of current ideas and practices but also by indicating abandoned ideas and practices—the many routes not taken.[58] Anyone (whether postmodernist or not) who senses that conversation and dialogue may contribute to the prospect of social, political, and cultural renewal may gain something from reflecting on the Enlightenment as an age of conversation, which provides historical testimony to both the limits and possibilities of a conversational model.

Notes

Hollinger: The Enlightenment and Cultural Conflict

For helpful comments on versions of this paper presented at several workshops and conferences, I wish to thank Keith Baker, David Bates, Malachai Hacohen, Steven Lukes, Peter Reill, and Bernard Yack.

1. See, for example, Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (London: Routledge, 1992).

2. John Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 1995).

3. Conor Cruise O'Brien, *On the Eve of the Millennium: The Future of Democracy through an Age of Unreason* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (New York: Free Press, 1990); Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake*.

4. For an example of deep suspicion of the Enlightenment expressed within the context of the multiculturalist debates, see Robin Kelley, *Yo' Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

5. Lionel Trilling, "On the Teaching of Modern Literature," published first in 1961 and later reprinted in Trilling, *Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning* (New York: Viking, 1965), 3–30

6. H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reconstruction of European Social Thought, 1890–1930* (New York: Knopf, 1958).

7. For an interpretation of the process by which the modern canon was created and maintained, see David A. Hollinger, "The Canon and Its Keepers: Modernism and Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectuals," in Hollinger, *In the American Province: Studies in the History and Historiography of Ideas* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 74–91.

8. Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980).

9. Richard Ellmann and Charles Fiedelson, Jr., *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

10. Robert B. Pippin, "Nietzsche and the Origins of the Idea of Modernism," *Inquiry* 26 (1983): 151; Robert B. Pippin, *Modernism as a Philosophical Problem: On the Dissatisfactions of European High Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991), 4, 20.

11. For an example of the genre, see Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, eds., *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: Guilford Press, 1991).

12. Much of this paragraph, and parts of the previous two, are adapted from my "Postscript 1993," in *Modernist Impulses in the Human Sciences 1870–1930,* ed. Dorothy Ross (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 46–53, which updates an essay of 1987, "The Knower and the Artificer," reprinted in the volume edited by Ross.

13. One of the few books on the modernist-postmodernist divide to gasp this is Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), esp. 188–91.

14. François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

15. Richard Rorty, "Postmodern Bourgeois Liberalism," *Journal of Philosophy* 80 (1983): 583–89.

16. Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984): 53–92.

17. The most brilliant of these virtuoso performances was David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1989).

18. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

19. Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion*, 80.

20. Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23 (spring 1997): 617–39.

21. Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

22. Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1994).

23. Lawrence Birken, *Hitler as Philosophe: Remnants of the Enlightenment in National Socialism* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995); I allude to Joseph W. Bendersky's review in *American Historical Review* 101 (Dec. 1996): 1570–71.

24. Goeffrey Galt Harpham, "So...What *Is* Enlightenment? An Inquisition into Modernity," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (spring 1994): 524–56.

21. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 62. The following page references are once more to that text.

22. Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 104. The following page references are to the same text. In these lectures Heidegger makes much of the fact that the Latin *ratio* is rendered in German as both *Grund* and *Vernunft*. Thus, Leibniz's *principium rationis* becomes in German *Der Satz vom Grund*.

23. Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche," 55 and 57.

24. Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 113.

25. Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, section 559. The following references are to sections of the same text.

26. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, section 693.

27. "The Word of Nietzsche," 81. The following references are once again to pages of this text.

28. Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John H. Andersen and E. Hans Freund (New York: Harper, 1966), 53. The following reference is to the same text.

29. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Die Dailektik der Aufklärung* (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947), 13.

30. Heidegger, *The Principle of Reason*, 129.

Wright: "A Bright Clear Mirror"

1. For Gay's declaration of independence from Cassirer, see Peter Gay, "The Social History of Ideas: Ernst Cassirer and After," in *The Critical Spirit: Essays in Honor of Herbert Marcuse*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff and Barrington More, Jr. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 106–20.

2. See above all Darnton's double review (first published in 1971) of Gay's *Enlightenment* and the famous collection *Livre et société*—the first seen as descended from Cassirer, the second from Mornet: Robert Darnton, "The Social History of Ideas," in *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990), 219–52.

3. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 63.

4. The chief sources in print for biographical information on Cassirer are Dimitry Gawronsky, "Ernst Cassirer: His Life and His Work," in *The Philosophy of Ernst Cassirer*, ed. Paul Arthur Schlipp, vol. 6 of *The Library of Living Philosophers* (New York: Tudor Publishing, 1949), 1–37; and Toni Cassirer's memoir, *Mein Leben mit Ernst Cassirer: Erinnerungen von Toni Cassirer* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981). For the shape of Cassirer's intellectual career, see David Lipton, *Ernst Cassirer: The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual in Germany, 1914–1933* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1978); Walter Eggers and Sigrid Mayer, *Ernst Cassirer: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988), i–xxiv; and especially Heinz Paetzold, *Ernst Cassirer—Von Marburg nach New York: Eine philosophische Biographie* (Darm-

stadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995). The latter has also published a fascinating set of comparative reflections on aspects of Cassirer's thought: Heinz Paetzold, *Die Realität der symbolischen Formen: Die Kulturphilosophie Ernst Cassirers im Kontext* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1994).

5. Yale published an English translation in 1981: Ernst Cassirer, *Kant's Life and Thought*, trans. James Haden, intro. Stephan Körner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

6. See Toni Cassirer, *Mein Leben mit Ernst Cassirer*, 118–19.

7. For Troeltsch's review, see the *Theoligische Literaturzeitung* 18–19 (1917): 368–71.

8. Ernst Cassirer, *Wesen und Wirkung des Symbolbegriffs* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1969), 175.

9. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 3, *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 235; *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 3, *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 202.

10. *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, 117–18; *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, 100.

11. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 1, *Die Sprache* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), 15; *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 1, *Language*, trans. Ralph Mannheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 83.

12. Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, vol. 2, *Das Mythische Denken* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964), ix–x.

13. *Phänomenologie der Erkenntnis*, vi; *The Phenomenology of Knowledge*, xiv.

14. John Michael Krois, *Cassirer: Symbolic Forms and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 79. For a lucid account of Cassirer's relation to Hegel and Kant, see Donald Phillip Verene, "Kant, Hegel, and Cassirer: The Origins of the Philosophy of Symbolic Forms," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 30 (1969): 33–46.

15. For Heidegger's review of *Mythical Thought*, see *Deutsche Literaturzeitung für Kritik der Internationalen Wissenschaft* 21 (1928): 1000–1012.

16. See "A Discussion between Ernst Cassirer and Martin Heidegger," trans. Francis Slade, in *The Existentialist Tradition: Selected Writings*, ed. Nino Langiulli (Garden City, N.J.: Anchor, 1971), 192–203. For a succinct and authoritative analysis, see Pierre Aubenque, "Le Débat de 1929 entre Cassirer et Heidegger," in *Ernst Cassirer: De Marburg à New York: L'Intinéraire philosophique*, ed. Jean Seidengart (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 1990), 81–96.

17. Ernst Cassirer, "Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics: Remarks on Martin Heidegger's Interpretation of Kant," in *Kant: Disputed Questions*, ed. Moltke S. Gram (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1967), 155. The review was first published in *Kant-Studien* 36 (1931): 1–26.

18. *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1932), vii; *The*

Philosophy of the Enlightenment, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), v [hereafter *PA* and *PE*, respectively].

19. *PA*, xii; *PE*, viii.
20. *PA*, xvi; *PE*, xi–xii.
21. *PA*, 47; *PE*, 36.
22. *PA*, 177; *PE*, 133.
23. *PA*, 312; *PE*, 233.
24. *PA*, 367; *PE*, 274.
25. *PA*, 399; *PE*, 298.
26. *PA*, 372; *PE*, 278.
27. *PA*, 482; *PE*, 360.
28. *PA*, xiv; *PE*, x.
29. Lipton, *Ernst Cassirer: The Dilemma of a Liberal Intellectual in Germany*, 166.
30. *PA*, xv; *PE*, xi.
31. On this subject, see Gay's anecdotal remarks, in "The Social History of Ideas," 118, note 13.
32. Fredric Jameson, "Walter Benjamin; Or, Nostalgia," *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 82.
33. Alfred Cobban, "The Enlightenment and Germany," *Spectator*, 26 Sept. 1952, 406–7.
34. Michel Foucault, "Une histoire restée muette," *Quinzaine littéraire* 8 (1966): 3–4.
35. See Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 5.
36. *PA*, xvi; *PE*, xi.

Meranze: Critique and Government

An earlier version of this essay appeared as "Michel Foucault, the Enlightenment, and the Contexts of Critique," in the *American Journal of Semiotics* 12, nos. 1–4 (1995; delayed publication in 1998), special issue on semiotics and history, guest-edited by William Pencak, 311–22. I would like to thank Keith Baker, Michael Bernstein, Helen Deutsch, Page duBois, William Pencak, Paul Rabinow, Peter Reill, and Steven Rosswurm for their assistance.

1. Michel Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" in Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, vol. 1 of *The Essential Works of Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: New Press, 1997), 303–19; Foucault, "The Art of Telling the Truth," in *Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 86–95; Foucault, "Introduction," in Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological* (New York: Zone Books, 1989), 7–24; Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexu-*

24. Johnson, *Rasselas*, 105.

25. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759], ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 124.

26. Jean d'Alembert, "Essai sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands, sur la réputation, sur les mécènes et les récompenses littéraires," in *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire et de philosophie*, new ed. (Amsterdam, 1759), 352–53.

27. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* [1782], trans. Peter France (London: Penguin, 1979), 30, 33.

28. Ibid., 89.

29. Ibid., 101–2.

30. Réaumur, *Histoire*, 2: xxxv.

31. Rousseau, *Reveries*, 69–71.

32. Charles Baudelaire, *Salon de 1859*, in *Curiosités esthétiques: L'Art romantique et autres œuvres critiques*, ed. Henri Lemaître (Paris: Editions Garnier, 1962), 317–19.

33. Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* [1854], ed. John Craig (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 47–52.

34. Friederich Nietzsche, "Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben [1874]," in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* [1873–76], ed. Peter Pütz (München: Goldmann, 1992), 111–14.

35. Charles de Secondat de Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois* [1748], ed. G. Truc, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1961), 1: 6.

36. François Quesnay, "Despotisme de la Chine [1767]," in *Œuvres économiques et philosophiques de Quesnay*, ed. Auguste Oncken (Paris, 1888), 645.

37. "Raison," *Encyclopédie*, 13: 773–74.

38. Paul Henry Thiry d'Holbach, *Système social: Ou principes naturels de la morale et de la politique avec un examen de l'influence du gouvernement sur les moeurs*, 3 vols. (London, 1773), 3: 135.

39. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* [1947] (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1988), 12–35.

Goodman: Difference: An Enlightenment Concept

I am particularly grateful to Pierre Saint-Amand for pushing me to write an earlier version of this article for a symposium at Brown University in 1996, and Benoît Melançon for allowing me to refine my argument in an address to the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in 1999. Martin Staum also offered insightful comments at a conference at the University of Calgary. Several colleagues offered thoughtful, detailed critiques of talks and drafts along the way. I am happy to acknowledge especially Madeleine Dobie, Daniel Gordon, Randa Graves, Sarah Maza, Heather McPherson, and Philip Stewart.

1. Naomi Schor, "French Feminism Is a Universalism," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (1995): 15.

2. See Linda J. Nicholson, ed., *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), esp. Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," 39–62, and Christine Di Stefano, "Dilemmas of Difference: Feminism, Modernity, and Postmodernism," 63–82. The feminist debate is reviewed and extended in Robin May Schott, "The Gender of Enlightenment," in Schott, ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 319–37.

3. Lynn Hunt, "Forgetting and Remembering: The French Revolution Then and Now," *American Historical Review* 100 (Oct. 1995): 1132.

4. Olympe de Gouges, "The Declaration of the Rights of Woman," in *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789–1795*, ed. Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Mary Durham Johnson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 90.

5. Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminism and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 74–75.

6. Ibid., 20.

7. I discuss Scott's argument at length in "More than Paradoxes to Offer: Feminist Theory as Critical Practice," *History and Theory* 36 (Oct. 1997): 392–405.

8. See Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Londa Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), chap. 8; Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

9. Both Jürgen Habermas and Lynn Hunt have shown the importance of the family for the development of the individual in the eighteenth century. "In the intimate sphere of the conjugal family privatized individuals viewed themselves as independent even from the private sphere of their economic activity—as persons capable of entering into 'purely human' relations with one another," writes Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 48. Hunt concludes similarly: "The history of the family romance in French revolutionary politics shows that the individual was always imagined as embedded in family relationships and that these relationships were always potentially unstable." *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 202.

10. Pauline Johnson has a different approach but a similar aim in "Feminism and the Enlightenment," *Radical Philosophy* 63 (Spring 1993): 3–12. I am

sympathetic to Johnson's argument that postmodern feminists have a tendency to consider Enlightenment rationalism a form of dogmatism rather than to recognize in it the critical practices in which they themselves engage in the endeavor to unmask it and the "unfinished cultural project" in which they are thus participating. "Feminism's current critique of Enlightenment formulations appears as another vital episode in the unfolding of the Enlightenment project itself," she writes. "Feminism's discovery of the prejudices built into the various articulations of this project is nothing more than an extension and clarification of the meaning of the Enlightenment" (4). Here I am making a rather different argument, from a different perspective, but one that might complement rather than challenge Johnson's.

11. Carolyn C. Lougee, *"Le Paradis des Femmes": Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 52; Jacques Revel, "The Uses of Civility," in *A History of Private Life*, ed. Roger Chartier, vol. 3, *Passions of the Renaissance*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 190–94. Both Lougee and Revel make a crucial distinction between the reciprocity of salon civility and the hierarchical civility of the court, but Revel argues that with the triumph of Louis XIV and Versailles, the salon model "had no future." This dubious proposition is contested most notably by Gordon in *Citizens without Sovereignty*. See especially his discussion of the theory of Norbert Elias (88–94).

12. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 1–15.

13. Louis de Jaucourt, "Civilité, Politesse, Affabilité," in *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 35 vols. (Paris: Briasson, 1751–65), 3: 497. Abbé Nicolas Trublet wrote similarly: "The polite man is necessarily civil, but the man who is simply civil is still not polite, will not at all pass for polite around those who know, and can never be called polite, if this term is taken in the full breadth of its significance. Politeness supposes civility, but it adds to it. The former concerns principally the matter of things, the latter how to say and do them." "De la politesse" (1735), in Marc Fumaroli, ed., *L'Art de la conversation* (Paris: Garnier, 1997), 248. Roger Chartier discusses Jaucourt's article and others in "From Texts to Manners, a Concept and Its Books: *Civilité* between Aristocratic Distinction and Popular Appropriation," in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). His argument, however, is rather different from the one I am making here.

14. "Politesse," in *Encyclopédie*, 12: 916.

15. Quoted in Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 144.

16. The prevalence of the belief in natural and immutable difference is suggested by the responses to the Academy of Dijon's 1754 essay competition

on the question: What is the origin of inequality among men; and is it authorized by natural law? Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously answered the second part of the question in the negative, but the vast majority of the known entrants took the other side. See Roger Tisserand, *Les concurrents de J.J. Rousseau à l'Académie de Dijon pour le prix de 1754* (Paris: Boivin et cie, 1936).

17. Daniel Gordon, "Beyond the Social History of Ideas: Morellet and the Enlightenment," in *André Morellet (1727–1819) in the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution*, ed. Jeffrey Merrick and Dorothy Medlin (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), 50.

18. See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178–85.

19. "Philosophe," in *Encyclopédie*, quoted in Gordon, "Beyond the Social History of Ideas," 49.

20. Gordon, "Beyond the Social History of Ideas," 47–48.

21. On public opinion, see Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, chap. 8; on the salonnière, see Goodman, *Republic of Letters*, chap. 3.

22. See, e.g., Marmontel's praise of Julie de Lespinasse: "She found [her guests] here and there in the world, but [they] were so well matched that, when they were [with her], they found themselves in harmony like the strings of an instrument played by an able hand." Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires*, ed. John Renwick (Clermont-Ferrand: G. De Bussac, 1972), 1: 220.

23. [Suzanne Curchod Necker], *Nouveaux mélanges extraits des manuscrits de Mme Necker*, ed. Jacques Necker (Paris: C. Pougens, 1801), 2: 291.

24. Sylvana Tomaselli, "The Enlightenment Debate on Women," *History Workshop Journal* 20 (1985): 101–24.

25. Quoted in Gary Kates, *Monsieur d'Eon Is a Woman: A Tale of Political Intrigue and Sexual Masquerade* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 154.

26. Quoted in Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations*, 20.

27. Lougee, *Paradis des Femmes*, 209.

28. Joan DeJean, "The (Literary) World at War, or, What Can Happen When Women Go Public," in *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, ed. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 116, 127.

29. Kates, *Monsieur d'Eon Is a Woman*, 157. This is also Erica Harth's point in "The Salon Woman Goes Public... Or Does She?" in Goldsmith and Goodman, *Going Public*, esp. 192–93. Harth goes further in arguing that this shift was responsible for suppressing women's public writing.

30. On the reinforcing and naturalizing of gender difference in the *Encyclopédie*, for example, see Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex*, chap. 2. I would also point to Diderot's discussion of slavery in Bk. 11 of Abbé Guillaume-Thomas-François Raynal, *Histoire philosophique and politique du commerce et des établis-*

sements des Européens dans les deux Indes (3rd ed., 1780), for a good example of the minimizing of differences among men and the emphasis on women's different nature.

31. Antoine-Léonard Thomas, "A la mémoire de Madame Geoffrin," in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin, contemporaine de Madame Du Deffand*, ed. André Morellet (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812), 89.

32. Jacques-Antoine-Hippolyte, comte de Guibert, "Eloge d'Eliza," in *Lettres de Mlle de Lespinasse*, ed. Eugène Asse (Paris, n.d.), 360.

33. Friedrich-Melchior Grimm et al., *Correspondance littéraire, philosophique, et critique*, ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Garnier, 1877–82), July 1777.

34. Denis Diderot, "Sur les femmes," in *Qu'est-ce qu'une femme?* ed. Elisabeth Badinter (Paris: P.O.L., 1989), 179; see also Antoine-Léonard Thomas, "Essai sur le caractère, les moeurs et l'esprit des femmes dans les différents siècles," in Badinter, 51–54; and Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*, Bk. XIX, chap. 15: "Everything is closely related: the despotism of the prince is naturally conjoined to the servitude of women; just as the liberty of women is tied to the spirit of the monarchy." On this theme in Enlightenment historiography, see Tomaselli, "Enlightenment Debate on Women."

35. Harth, "Salon Woman Goes Public," 192.

36. Tomaselli, "Enlightenment Debate on Women," 114–18.

37. Habermas, *Structural Transformation*, 97.

38. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 305. Lynn Hunt makes the same distinction in her discussion of the Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795): "Sodomy, like incest and the community of women, are ways of effacing the system of signs that constituted French society in the eighteenth century (and perhaps any society)," she explains. "By advocating them, Sade in effect demonstrates the contradictions between the ideal of fraternity, taken to its logical extreme, and the idea of society." Hunt, *Family Romance*, 146.

39. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 240–41.

40. John Keane is one of the most interesting of recent political theorists struggling with the seeming contradiction between freedom and civility. A chapter on "Uncivil Society" in his book *Civil Society, Old Images, New Visions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) opens: "The emerging consensus that civil society is a realm of freedom correctly highlights its basic value as a condition of democracy" (114). By assuming both that natural freedom is the foundation of civil society, and that freedom and civility are necessarily in conflict, Keane can only suggest ways in which *incivility* can be eliminated from civil society. He does not ask how freedom can be achieved through a civil society organized by institutions of civility, but rather, "Can anything be done to prevent or to reduce incivility, particularly when it threatens whole populations?" (154).

41. Chartier, "From Texts to Manners," 84–87.

42. Ibid., 99.

43. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. Fritz C. A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 269.

44. On this point, see Steinbrügge, *Moral Sex*, chap. 5.

45. Much has been written on the theory of separate spheres and Rousseau's significance in its articulation for the modern world. An important and early formulation is Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (1984), 2d ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 75–79.

46. Kates makes a similar point in *Monsieur d'Eon Is a Woman*, 169.

47. Quoted in Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 2.

48. Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes*, 4.

49. Mona Ozouf, "Essay on French Singularity," in *Women's Words*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 229.

50. Ibid., 231.

51. Ibid., 281–82.

52. Elisabeth Badinter, "L'Exception française," *Débat*, no. 87 (Nov.–Dec. 1995): 123.

53. Michelle Perrot, "Une Histoire sans affrontements," *Débat*, no. 87 (Nov.–Dec. 1995): 132–34.

54. Such a vision accords with Keith Baker's assertion that "society" emerged in the seventeenth century when the ontological link was broken between "the Creator and the created," and thus became itself the "ontological horizon of human life." Cut adrift, humanity conceived as society developed a new theology, a new epistemology, a new politics. "In political terms," Baker explains, society emerged "as a middle ground between civil war and absolute rule ..., an autonomous domain of individualism without anarchy, order without arbitrary power." Keith Michael Baker, "A Foucauldian French Revolution?" in *Foucault and the Writing of History*, ed. Jan Goldstein (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 195–96. See also his "Enlightenment and the Institution of Society: Notes for a Conceptual History," in *Main Trends in Cultural History*, ed. W. F. B. Melching and W. R. E. Velema (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1994). Daniel Gordon, however, sees sociability as the basis of "a nonpolitical *polis* where citizens without sovereignty could be free" (*Citizens without Sovereignty*, 6). I find this conclusion extreme in that it does not see beyond the opposition between politics and society any better than Rousseau does. I see no reason why political institutions cannot be built on the ground of society, why society must be opposed to either democracy (Rousseau) or absolutism (philosophes).

55. One might draw this same conclusion from reading Paul Cohen, *Freedom's Moment: An Essay on the French Idea of Liberty from Rousseau to Foucault* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Cohen argues that the "French idea of freedom" is defined by a tradition of "consecrated heretics" who span

the political spectrum. He concludes that this *singularité française* is decidedly masculine. "The heretics appear to cast freedom itself in a fundamentally masculine mold," he writes (182).

56. Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign against Political Correctness: What's Really at Stake," *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 76–77.

57. Deborah Tannen, *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue* (New York: Random House, 1998), 3, 26.

58. Ibid., 290.

59. Stephen L. Carter, *Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), xii–xiii, 25, 132.

60. Ibid., 18.

61. Ibid., 278–79.

62. Ibid., 279–80.

63. Randall Kennedy, "The Case against 'Civility,'" *American Prospect* (Nov.–Dec. 1998): 84.

Klein: Enlightenment as Conversation

1. Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 202. For Lyotard, see *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv. On diverging postmodern approaches to history, Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 62–76.

2. Peter Hulme and Ludmilla Jordanova, eds., *The Enlightenment and Its Shadows* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 3–4.

3. Lorraine Daston, "Afterword: The Ethos of Enlightenment," in *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, ed. William Clark, Jan Golinski, and Simon Schaffer (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 497. For essays emphasizing the vexed attitude of Enlightenment to enthusiasm, see Lawrence E. Klein and Anthony J. LaVopa, eds., *Enthusiasm and Enlightenment in Europe, 1650–1850* (San Marino, Calif.: Huntington Library Press, 1998).

4. James Schmidt, "Introduction," in James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 27.

5. Ibid., 29.

6. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, 183.

7. David Simpson, *The Academic Postmodern and the Rule of Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 41. For the communicative ambitions within postmodernism, see Margaret Rose, *The Post-Modern and the Post Industrial: A Critical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44, 46, 49, 57, 61, 102–3, 112, 155. Of course, other strands of the postmodern point toward "a sublime, asocial now" and "a with-

drawal from the immediately given ground of sociality": see Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, 200–202. Moreover, intellectuals of a postmodern persuasion have no monopoly on conversation and dialogue as metaphors of renewal.

8. For Rorty's own "grand narrative," see David L. Hall, *Richard Rorty* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 11–64.

9. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), xvi–xvii.

10. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 5.

11. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, xxxix.

12. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 163.

13. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, 165. A parallel orientation appears in Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), 1–17.

14. Seeing "intellectual history ... as the history of metaphor" (16) is a principal burden of the essay, "The Contingency of Language," in Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 3–22.

15. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 316.

16. Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, xxxix.

17. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 317.

18. For related initiatives in history, literature, and sociology, see respectively: Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 16–69, 23–71; Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); and Paul Atkinson, *The Ethnographic Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 179–80.

19. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 23. See also Nigel Rapport, "Edifying Anthropology: Culture as Conversation, Representation as Conversation," in *After Writing Culture*, ed. Allison James, Jenny Hockey, and Andrew Dawson (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 177–93.

20. Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 41.

21. In suggesting that historical investigation challenges theoretical history or the grand narrative of postmodernism, I do not pretend that historical investigation operates outside the influence of theory. Enlightenment studies have evolved in recent decades in dialogue with theoretical debates. While the influences of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer and of Michel Foucault have inspired research emphasizing eighteenth-century obsessions with observation, taxonomy, abstraction, objectivity, and discipline, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu, and Jürgen Habermas (each with his own grand narrative) have inspired historical accounts of a conversational Enlightenment.

22. Dorinda Outram, "The Enlightenment Our Contemporary," in Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, 39.

23. Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 3.

24. For a recent summary of this evolution in Enlightenment studies, see Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, 5–29.

25. Hulme and Jordanova, eds., *The Enlightenment and Its Shadows*, 2, 3.

26. Peter Burke, "The Art of Conversation in Early Modern Europe," in *The Art of Conversation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 89–122, and references cited there.

27. Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670–1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 127–28. See also Peter France, *Politeness and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 53–73, and the essays in *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997), edited by Elena Russo and devoted to "Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability from the Classical Age to the Enlightenment."

28. Roy Porter, "The Enlightenment in England," in *The Enlightenment in National Perspective*, ed. Roy Porter and Mikulás Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1–5.

29. Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); John Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals: Continuity and Change in English Political Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

30. According to Dena Goodman, "When men of letters entered the Parisian salon in the eighteenth century, ... they saw themselves as French Shaftesburys, Addisons, and Steeles and helped transform Parisian salons into centers of this new style of conversation"; see *The Republic of Letters*, 125.

31. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 10–39.

32. Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 407.

33. Ibid., 37.

34. Ibid., 33.

35. "Vicissitude is a mighty law of discourse and mightily longed for by mankind": Ibid., 34.

36. Robert Voitle, "The Reason of the English Enlightenment," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 27 (1963): 1735–74.

37. "*Am I always only to be a listener?* is as natural a case of complaint in divinity, in morals, and in philosophy, as it was of old the satirist's in poetry." Conversational engagements were agonistic ("A free conference is a close fight"): Shaftesbury, *Characteristics*, 34.

38. Ibid., 33.

39. Ibid., 232.

40. The following discussion is drawn from Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness*, 51–69.

41. Ibid., 28–29, 67–68.

42. *Spectator* 10 (12 Mar. 1711) in Donald F. Bond, ed., *The Spectator* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I: 44.

43. For France, see Peter France, "The Sociable Essayist: Addison and Marivaux," in *Politeness and Its Discontents*, 74–96. For Germany, see Pamela Currie, "Moral Weeklies and the Reading Public in Germany, 1711–1750," *Oxford German Studies* 3 (1968): 69–86. For Italy, see Rebecca Messbarger, "Reforming the Female Class: *Il Caffè*'s 'Defense of Women,'" *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32 (1998–99): 355–69.

44. For France, see Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, 61–85, and articles in *Yale French Studies* 92 (1997). For Germany, see Hans Erich Bödecker, "Aufklärung als Kommunikationsprocess," *Aufklärung* 2 (1987): 89–111. For Britain, see Scott Black, "Social and Literary Form in the *Spectator*," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (1999–2000): 21–42; Marina Frasca-Spada, "The Science and Conversation of Human Nature," in Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, 218–45; John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 48–50, 234–39, 246–53; and articles in a special number of *Eighteenth-Century Life* 15 n.s., nos. 1, 2 (1991) on "Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland."

45. Hans Erich Bödecker, "Das Kaffeehaus als Institution aufklärerischer Geselligkeit," in *Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750–1850*, ed. Etienne François (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1987); Brian William Cowan, "The Social Life of Coffee: Commercial Culture and Metropolitan Society in Early Modern London" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 2000); Ulla Heise, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, trans. Paul Roper (West Chester, Penn.: Schiffer 1987); Lawrence E. Klein, "Coffeehouse Civility, 1660–1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59 (1996): 30–51; Steven Pincus, "'Coffee Politicians Does Create': Coffeehouses and Restoration Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 67 (1995): 807–32.

46. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, esp. 73–135.

47. In general, see Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 14–30; and evidence throughout the national surveys in Porter and Teich, eds., *The Enlightenment in National Perspective*. Also, Günter Birtsch, "The Berlin Wednesday Society," in Schmidt, *What Is Enlightenment?* 215–52; Dino Carpanetto and Giuseppe Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason, 1685–1789*, trans. Caroline Higgitt (London and New York: Longman, 1987); Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ulrich Im Hof, *The Enlightenment*, trans. Wil-

liam E. Yuill (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1994); Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of the Enlightenment: The Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture*, trans. Anthony Williams (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992).

48. Lorraine Daston, "Afterword: The Ethos of Enlightenment," in Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, 497–98.

49. Clark, Golinski, and Schaffer, eds., *The Sciences in Enlightened Europe*, 172.

50. Arnold Thackray, "Natural Knowledge in Cultural Context: The Manchester Model," *American Historical Review* 79 (1974): 672–709; Roy Porter, "Gentlemen and Geology: The Emergence of a Scientific Career, 1660–1902," *Historical Journal* 21 (1978): 809–36, esp. 811–25; Roy Porter, "Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England," *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3 (1980): 20–46.

51. John Gascoigne, *Joseph Banks and the English Enlightenment: Useful Knowledge and Polite Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Alice Walters, "Conversation Pieces: Science and Politeness in Eighteenth-Century England," *History of Science* 35 (1997): 121–54. For France, see Geoffrey V. Sutton, *Science for a Polite Society: Gender, Culture, and the Demonstration of Enlightenment* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1995).

52. Adrian Desmond's *The Politics of Evolution: Morphology, Medicine, and Reform in Radical London* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989) is a superb account of this process.

53. This is the strategy of Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), which organizes its grand narrative as a "dual trajectory of Modernity" (172) emerging out of, on the one hand, Renaissance humanism and, on the other, seventeenth-century exact science.

54. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965), 36–37.

55. Ibid., 45.

56. Ibid., 47.

57. Though primarily a critic of postmodern and poststructural opinions that challenge the discipline of history, Richard J. Evans also remarks on the contributions to historical thinking and research of "postmodernism in its more moderate guises," in *In Defense of History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), 216.

58. Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 112.