The Mind of the Enlightenment

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Alan Kors was born in New Jersey in 1943, and received his bachelors degree summa cum laude, from Princeton University. After winning the undergraduate History Thesis Prize at Princeton, he did post-graduate work at Harvard, where he also earned his M.A. and Ph.D. on a Danforth Fellowship, Harvard Prize Fellowship, Woodrow Wilson Fellowship and Dissertation Fellowship; and earned but declined a Fulbright Fellowship.

Since 1968, Kors has taught history at the University of Pennsylvania. During his tenure he has intermittently served as the Director of the General Honors Program; Chair of the Committee on Undergraduate Education, and co-founder, resident faculty and finally Housemaster of Van Pelt College House.

He is also a member of the Graduate Group, Religious Studies, and has won awards such as the Lindback Foundation Award for Distinguished Teaching; Research Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies; Director to NEH Summer Seminars for Secondary School Teachers, "The Texts of Toleration," Fellow, Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University; and more recently, the Ira H. Abrams Memorial Award for Distinguished Teaching and a University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation Fellowship.

A great supporter of Academic Freedom, Kors was the Chair of the Committee on Academic Freedom, American Civil Liberties Union of Greater Philadelphia from 1971-74. He has lectured widely on academic freedom, and published the article "Harassment Policies in the University," in Society, (1991).

He is the author of over 40 articles and scholarly papers, and numerous books. His most recent books are Atheism in France, 1650-1729 Volume One: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief, (1990); Anticipation of the Enlightenment in England, France and Germany, co-editor; author of critical introduction; contributor, (1987).

In addition to teaching at University of Pennsylvania, Kors is working on his next book, Atheism in France, 1650-1729. Volume Two: Heterodoxy, Naturalism and Disbelief.

Lecture One: The New Philosophy

I. Few revolutions are as important as those in the way people think.
- **A.** Changes in the way people think transform society.
- **B.** Biologically, the lives of all species are quite similar from epoch to epoch. However, we also have a history that causes us to think in historical time.

II. The task of intellectual history is not to judge changes, but to explore the varieties of being human in terms of thought and interpretation.
- **A.** The joy of intellectual history is its ability to satisfy a profound human curiosity about the diverse ways humans have understood and thought about the world.
- **B.** We must understand history on its own terms, not moral terms. Context is almost everything.

III. The Enlightenment emerges from an orthodox culture that educated Europe in the late 17th and early 18th century.
- **A.** It is within a Christian, European culture (1685-1715) that a fundamental change in attitude toward the means of knowing truth takes place.
- **B.** Changing the criteria of knowledge changes one's substantive conclusions.

IV. The early 17th century had a system based on received authorities. This broke down in the 18th century.
- **A.** It was believed that there was a special burden of truth placed on beliefs and practices supposedly hallowed by time.
- **B.** Francis Bacon argued that on the river of time, it was likely that what was weighty and profound had sunk to the bottom and what was light and superficial had floated to the top.
- **C.** Europe always had committed itself to being a rational culture. But if you believe in a system of inherited authorities, then the proper system of the use of reason is to take premises derived from authorities, and make logical deductions based on their premises.
- **D.** By the early 18th century there is a demand that the proper use of reason be used inductively by inference from nature or experiment.
- **E.** Underlying this is the deep belief that we are capable as a species of learning not best from the books of men, but from the book of nature.
- **F.** Traditionalists warned that the abandonment of authority would be dangerous and subversive to European culture.

V. The 17th century offered extraordinary scientific accomplishment.
- **A.** There was confidence that inherited knowledge in books could be surpassed.
- **B.** Central to the transitional generation (1685-1715) is the belief that a transformation in the 17th century altered knowledge and the human relationship to nature: method.
- **C.** All the great accomplishments of science carried not only new conclusions but the gift of how to reach those conclusions.
- **D.** This transformation was accomplished in several ways.
  1. It declared itself free of intellectual authority and turned to induction from nature.
  2. Late 17th century thinkers sought general explanations.
  3. Theories were confirmed by experiment and put to use.

VI. Seventeenth century heroes:
- **A.** Francis Bacon insisted that the only way to learn from nature was by induction.
  1. He made a separation between natural inquiry and faith.
  2. He offered a vision of knowledge as human power.
  3. The method of induction and experiment plays the essential role. Method is the path, and genius the speed of travel.
- **B.** Rene Descartes insisted that philosophy begins in doubt. He saw a radical distinction between the domain of mind and the domain of matter in motion.
- **C.** Galileo was the vision of the martyr of the new philosophy.
  1. He insisted on freedom of natural philosophy.
  2. He demanded that people look to the book of nature and understand its language of shape and number.
- **D.** John Locke became associated with the achievements of the new sciences of the 17th century.
  1. He described a system of knowledge that gives an account of how the 17th century learned about nature.
  2. All of our knowledge is bounded by human experience.
- **E.** Isaac Newton developed the laws of motion, of dynamics and of gravity.
  1. Newton was the model of inductive, natural power.
  2. Newton gave the culture a sense that we possess faculties that allow us to see through nature.

VII. The new philosophy cannot be contained to areas of natural philosophy.
- **A.** An essential fact is this is occurring in a Christian learned culture.
- **B.** What is produced is an enlightenment that will challenge the orthodox claim for intellectual and educational hegemony.

Lecture Two: Deism: Claims of Natural Religion

I. A manifestation of the new philosophy is in religious belief, specifically, European Deism.
   - **A.** Working definitions of deism:
     1. A deep conviction about the existence and goodness of God and a rejection of all sectarian religions.
     2. A complete naturalization of divine providence. Our sole link to knowledge of God is found in general operations of nature.
     3. A generalizing of divine providence.
   - **B.** Particular v. general providence:
     1. Particular providence is exemplified in Calvin's writing. Every particular event has been willed by God.
     2. The model of general providence is that God's dominion is embodied in the general operations and laws of nature.
   - **C.** If you believe in deism/general providence, there are dramatic aspects of traditional religions that must be rejected.
     1. Rejection of revelation. (That God chose a time and place to reveal his will to a particular people in a particular time.)
     2. Deism eliminates the concept of miracle (That an act of God would alter the course of nature.)
     3. It eliminates the notion of particular relationship to God. What God has revealed has been revealed through nature.
     4. A good example: Thomas Paine's "The Age of Reason" attacks revelation and treats supernatural knowledge as superstition.
   - **D.** The roots to the movement:
     1. Naturalism: the natural world is not obscure or closed to us.
     2. Deism is also rooted in the rejection of presumptive authority of received tradition.
   - **E.** There are two sides of 18th century deism.
     1. Positive deism is the construction of a positive set of deistic beliefs.
     2. Critical deism is the critique of the Judeo-Christian traditions and the claims of revelation and miracle.

II. Elements of positive deism:
   - **A.** Positive deism is critical of atheism. What we know from the study of nature proclaims that there is a universal God of benevolence who acts through a universal providence, the rules of nature, and is known to us by natural sense and reason through a universal medium.
   - **B.** This theology fits the God whom deists see as a universal architect.
   - **C.** The metaphor from the deistic perspective is of two clockmakers.
     1. One devises a clock so perfect that it always works in perpetual motion and never requires repair (deistic).
     2. The other clockmaker must repair his clock frequently, intervening in its workings (Judeo-Christian).
   - **D.** For positive deists, the dramatic evidence of God is found in the order of creation. The system is well disposed and life is possible.
   - **E.** God intended us for happiness since a perfect God does not create for his own need, but for the well-being of the creatures.

III. Elements of critical deism:
   - **A.** The critical Deist's denial of the claim of revelation is both moral and and historical.
   - **B.** They challenged the establishment of canon: human beings decided which books were divine revelation.
   - **C.** They challenged the veracity of Christian claims of Christian origin.
   - **D.** They challenged the chronology, sources, and science of scripture.
   - **E.** They assailed the moral claims of revelation saying that its views of God's ways with the world are blasphemous.
   - **F.** They argued that the function of mystery is to give power to the guardians of the mystery (priests).
   - **G.** They denied that the testimonies of miracle provided persuasive grounds for Christian belief.

Lecture Three: The Problem of Relativism: Montesquieu and Voltaire

I. Relativism is a problem inherent in the new epistomology.
   A. If one's knowledge is bound by one's experience, then it follows that one's sense of the world, values and beliefs are relative to time and place and personal experience.
   B. This epistomology is linked to the sense of the ability to find universal truths.
   C. However, if one's experience determines belief, how would your thoughts, beliefs, and values change if the circumstances of your life were different?
   D. John Locke was committed to the principle that the mind is a blank slate. There are no ideas innate to the human mind; there are no moral principles engraved on our souls.
   E. This leads Locke to engage in problematic speculations on the relativity of knowledge to circumstance and experience.

II. Voltaire popularized and explained Locke to a French audience.
   A. He forces us to think of the relativity of life in many ways.
      1. Our most fundamental senses are conditioned by the particularity of our experience.
      2. These are sobering considerations in a time of confidence.
      3. In a cosmic sense, the human grasp of the totality of reality is quite limited.
   B. This is not a pessimist view. God, in his wisdom, has endowed us with those faculties needed for survival, procreation and interaction with nature.
   C. Looking at the status of our claims to absolute knowledge however, this is not reassuring.

III. Europe in the 16th and 17th century encountered peoples, minds and belief systems of other lands.
   A. Europeans are frank at their wonder at the differences.
   B. They are struck by how other cultures mistreat women, and equally struck by their respect for the elderly.
   C. Up until this time, Europeans believed that they had received the sole moral code that allowed for order and justice in society.
   D. Missionaries, who were thought to be the least open to other ways of doing things, end up being often the most honest reporters.
      1. They are extremely attentive to the diversity of religions and range of beliefs in the world.
      2. They discovered the difficulty of translation.
      3. They are amazed at flourishing non-Christian cultures.
   E. Europeans became aware that they were as strange to other cultures as other cultures were to them.
   F. These discoveries happened both geographically and temporally.

IV. Montesquieu wrote The Persian Letters in which he claims that he has found letters written by Persian travellers in France.
   A. He maintained the fiction that he found the letters, going as far as to write a piece on what he thought of them.
   B. There is humor in its Relativism. There are satiric possibilities of looking at Europeans from a naive foreign perspective.
   C. The deeper theme of the book includes the questions: what is relative to time and place and what is absolute knowledge?
   D. Voltaire deals with these questions in his philosophical tales involving the intergalactic travellers.
   E. For Voltaire, there is a purely polemical side to Relativism. Relativism should lessen national and religious pride.
   F. Montesquieu focuses on the malleability of human life. The same beings can live differently despite a common human nature.
   G. Montesquieu notes that there are limits to Relativism because of a reality principle. Behaviors have real consequences. H. Montesquieu contrasts the simple laws of 17th century natural philosophy to the complex theological differences and belief systems that simply cannot convince each other.

Lecture Four: God's Providence: The New Vision of Nature

I. The revolution in 17th century natural philosophy radically transformed the culture's sense of nature and its relationship to divine providence.
   - **A.** The belief was that natural philosophy from the 17th century on, was not offering opinions, but discovering the laws of God.
   - **B.** The laws of nature were the reflection of God's wisdom.
   - **C.** Natural philosophy in the Enlightenment sense believed that having achieved proper method, it was gazing upon God's handiwork for the first time with proper understanding.
   - **D.** There is a deep religious awe to the new science, leading to a location of divine providence in the natural mechanisms of the natural world. This forces a reconceptualization nature which entails a reevaluation of human nature in terms of its ordinary mechanisms.
   - **E.** This involves a dramatic change in the location of religious wonder from the particular to the general.

II. The problem of miracles:
   - **A.** Deists find the idea of miracles blasphemous.
   - **B.** However, for a growing number of 18th century Christians, there is a desire to look upon miracles as things that happened at the time of Jesus in order to establish the church.
   - **C.** There was also a fanaticism associated with those who explained things by miracles.
   - **D.** The naturalization of providence led to a growing skepticism about miracles in devoutly Christian circles attuned to the new philosophy.
   - **E.** This signified a deep shift in the religious culture.
   - **F.** This also affected daily religious experience. Natural disasters , for example, were no longer occasions for scrutinizing God's intentions.

III. The evidence of wisdom in creation assures us of God's benevolence in the world.
   - **A.** Christian and deistic thought moved on the same tidal current of intellectual change.
   - **B.** The reevaluation of nature as the location of God's providence transformed an understanding of human happiness.
   - **C.** Physical and secular pleasures were validated as a right from God.
   - **D.** The new philosophy required people to scrutinize every element of their existence and ask: is this moral? Does it lead to happiness?
   - **E.** It was argued that before and independent of the Christian revelation, natural knowledge lead us to virtue. We seek good because we seek well-being.

IV. According to Bishop Butler, there is no contradiction between moral duty and self love/interest.
   - **A.** The deistic addition to this world view is minor: the absolute naturalization of the frame of reference.
   - **B.** The Christian Butler argued that Christ came to reinforce our obligation to virtue in case we failed to identify it through self-interest.
   - **C.** The deist Tindal argued that the universal laws of nature, including the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain are the sole moral nexus between God and mankind.
   - **D.** Butler said that not to pursue happiness is irreligious.

V. Thomas Jefferson reflects so much of 18th century naturalism and deism.
   - **A.** He put forward the statement that it is self-evident that all people are endowed by the creator with the unalienable right to the pursuit of happiness.
   - **B.** Jefferson's claim was revolutionary in the context of history.
   - **C.** In thinking about government and ways of being human, the Enlightenment believed that moral obligation is to accept the criterion of utility, the pursuit of happiness.

VI. It is not a coincidence that the 18th century was politically a century of revolution and reform.
   - **A.** The only moral foundation of human authority is whether it increases well-being and reduces suffering.
   - **B.** The antiquity of practices and structures become irrelevant.
   - **C.** The only explanation for the sacrifice of individual liberty to the society or state was in return for increased happiness.
   - **D.** 18th century legal reformers looked back at the past of authority the same way it looked at past theories of science.

Lecture Five: The Skeptical Challenge to Optimism

I. The foundation of 18th century optimistic, natural philosophy:
   A. Our natural faculties through nature link us to natural truth and knowledge of God's will.
   B. Nature and human nature interact to the benefit of mankind by the arrangement of God.
   C. In theory, these are empirical propositions. However, there are also two currents of rational analysis that reinforce the theology.
      1. Once we understand God as a perfect being, it follows that He creates for the happiness of others, not his own.
      2. God is perfect so He can, and therefore would, create the best possible world. Once the perfect world is created, there can be no defects. When we see evil, it is due to our ignorance.

II. This family of arguments forms a powerful tidal current that faces counter currents of skepticism about such optimistic conclusions.
   A. John Wesley argued that there could be no greater folly than to tell people to follow human nature.
      1. The more beautiful you paint human virtue, the more people will be repelled by it and turn to vice.
      2. God has reminded us through things like earthquakes and plague that we should not tie our souls to this world.
   B. There is also a skeptical perspective that is inherent in 18th century empiricism: our knowledge is limited to our experience.
      1. Epistomological problems were raised by Berkeley: what are the units of our experience?
      2. All that we experience is the content of our own minds. (We don't experience people, but the idea of people.)
      3. It is a leap beyond all experience to assume that there is a material world "out there" that corresponds to these ideas.
   C. The naturalizing Christian theologians had second thoughts.
      1. By the mid 1730's, Butler was concerned about the disbelief in scripture, Christian mystery and faith.
      2. He wrote a new book saying that to reconcile ourselves to God's providence in both nature and Scripture requires an act of faith.
   D. The most dramatic challenges came from within the camp of the new philosophy. One challenge came from David Hume.
      1. Hume's character Philo was a powerful voice for skeptical philosophy.
      2. He challenged the fundamental premise of natural religion saying that basing a religion on human experience left it probable at best.
      3. He said the dissimilarities between the universe and the works of men are more numerous than the similarities.
      4. He said negative evidence counts even more than positive evidence in the confirmation of a hypothesis.
      5. The world is not what we would expect or predict from an omnipotent, loving deity.
      6. Philo lists four possibilities: The cause of things is infinitely good, infinitely evil, a set of opposites, or indifferent. All of these are disproved except the last.
   E. Another dramatic challenge came from Voltaire.
      1. In the mid-17th century, Voltaire's consciousness was aroused to the problem of evil and suffering, making it difficult to accept that this was a product of God's love.
      2. After the Lisbon earthquake, he declared that all philosophical explanations only add insult to injury.
      3. After the Seven Year War he wrote "Candide", subtitled "Optimism". Is everything really for the best?
      4. He said that philosophical optimism is fatalism. If everything is right, why work to change things?
      5. The only antidote to pain and despair is work to cultivate the human garden.
      6. Voltaire redefined the European intellectual from a speculative philosopher to a secular member of the "party of humanity".

Lecture Six: The Philosophes: The Triumph of the French Enlightenment

I. In the mid-18th century a community of influential writers and thinkers emerged who shared certain basic attitudes toward the new philosophy, arbitrary authority, and the church.
   - **A.** They saw themselves as part of a "Republic of Letters" meaning that they judged people on the quality of their contributions rather than on their background.
   - **B.** They saw themselves as the watershed between a tragic past and a possible future of enlightenment.
   - **C.** This generation captured the attention and loyalty of the public.
   - **D.** The "Philosophes" often coalesced around certain institutions (cafes, salons, academies) and certain ideas and values.
   - **E.** They were committed to empirical evidence, rational analysis, nature and utility. Happiness of the species was the highest value.
   - **F.** They competed with the clergy to fulfill the role of educator. This led to a conflict with the Roman Catholic Church.

II. "Anti-clericalism" was the most common denominator of the French Enlightenment.
   - **A.** The priests were seen as usurping God's voice in the name of human sectarian religions.
   - **B.** The "intolerance" of this conflict is often exaggerated by the Enlightenment, which comes to enjoy a certain prestige and privilege.

III. One of the major agencies of the organization and dissemination of Enlightenment thought and values was the project of the great Encyclopedia of the French Enlightenment.
   - **A.** This was produced largely under the editorship of Denis Diderot.
   - **B.** The work was to be a sanctuary for all acquired knowledge and experience. It was also designed to teach the principles of Enlightenment thought and method. This included everything from philosophy to technology.
   - **C.** It grew to a project of 17 volumes of text published from 1751-65. and 11 volumes of technical plates.published from 1765-72.
   - **D.** It was a best seller and engaged hundreds of authors and consultants.
   - **E.** The tone was set by the preliminary discourse which said there had been a rebirth of knowledge which created the need to explain not only what people know, but on what ground they know it.
   - **F.** The encyclopedia's readers could not help but learn of their right to question received authority and the origins of beliefs.
   - **G.** The Encyclopedia was attacked and suppressed, but drew its supporters (who came from all levels of educated society) into the censorship battle against censorship.
   - **H.** It played a role in establishing the consciousness of the party of humanity / reason.

IV. The Enlightenment presented a diverse set of phenomena.
   - **A.** The enlightenment assailed arbitrary authority and called for it to justify itself in all domains.
   - **B.** To call for justification required criteria:
     1. <u>Claims must be based on natural experience</u>. This rules out the legitimacy of supernatural claims as justification of any authority.
     2. <u>The principle of utility</u>. One must ask by experience if things serve to add to our pleasure or pain. But, how do you define happiness?

V. Between the 1750's and the 1780's there is remarkable literary output by the Philosophes.
   - **A.** The church finds itself on the defensive. Almost every act of censorship produces a best seller.
   - **B.** The church's opposition and attempts to censor provide the Enlightenment great issue and battle cry that united its diverse tendencies, and that won over public opinion and eventually the state.
   - **C.** Voltaire became the great agent for bringing cases of religious injustice and persecution to the conscience of France and Europe.

Lecture Seven: Rousseau's Dissent: The Challenge to the Idea of the Progress

I. There is much that is different about Rousseau's identity and ideas.
   A. He was a self-educated Protestant from Geneva.
   B. He was a solitary man in an age of great sociability.
   C. He was a fervent deist, and focused on the reality of the atheists of the French Enlightenment whom he loathed.
   D. He argued that to prove God required good faith as well as reason and evidence.
   E. He believed that most of the philosophes were more eager to pursue reputation and fame than honest truth.
   F. He argued that reason may be the enemy of truth and virtue.

II. Rousseau's "First Discourse" (1749) was on the arts and sciences.
   A. Rousseau addressed the question: did progress in the arts and sciences lead to moral progress as well?
   B. Most Enlightenment philosophers said that this progress not only led to, but was an essential condition of moral progress.
   C. However, Rousseau argued that progress in the arts and sciences has led us away from virtue.
   D. He offers historical arguments on behalf of this thesis.
      1. Moral decadence always accompanies cultural progress.
      2. The post-Renaissance culture of cultivation and politeness lost its simpler virtues.
      3. The "simpler" Swiss and the American Indians compare favorably on moral terms to the great centers of progress of the arts and sciences (France, England).
      4. Sparta lacked the culture of Athens, but its citizens were more self-sacrificing, and virtuous.
   E. Reason comes to the aid of history and shows the logic of the linkage between cultural progress and moral decadence. The sciences satisfy not our natural human needs, but our vices. They create desire for luxury and lead to laziness.
   F. Rousseau made a distinction between the artificial and the natural.
      1. There is a world in which we were originally created where we function as we were meant to.
      2. There is also a social/cultural world of human creation that distracts us from the natural and causes us to live artificial as opposed to natural lives.

III. Rousseaus' Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (1755) also exploded on the consciousness of Europe.
   A. He addressed the question: is inequality natural? His answer: no.
   B. He painted a picture of primitive humanity showing healthy, morally sound, compassionate beings who lived according to natural instinct. There was no ownership, property, divisions of labor.
   C. Although there were physical differences, they were without social or moral consequence.
   D. The great tragedy of human history for Rousseau was the perceived need to form a social unit to solve a temporary problem.
   E. Once you have social organization, it conquers whatever adjoins it.
   F. Social organization is the root of inequality and unhappiness.
   G. Rousseau might have described his way of looking at primitive people as the "the problem of the zoo:" although species might be extinct in their natural state, we could go to the zoo and attempt to envision them without the artificial, social, constructs. Likewise, God did not create us as we observe ourselves.
   H. The problem of society is permanent. The goal is to minimize human depravity and maximize original human nature.
   I. Partial reparation can take place through education and the nature of government and society if we think of it rightly. J. Only citizens who make decisions from the "general" rather than the "particular" Will are real and moral citizens of the society.

Lecture Eight: Naturalism and Materialism: The Boundaries of the Enlightenment

I. Atheistic materialism is one of the dramatic legacies of the French Enlightenment.
   - **A.** The 18th century was an age of increasing naturalist mechanistic explanation in natural philosophy -- substantive science.
   - **B.** Spiritual causality was eliminated from physical phenomena.
   - **C.** There is one profound limit to the 18th century's willingness to naturalize and mechanize explanations of behaviors. Humans are unique not because of physical properties, but because of their possession of an immortal and immaterial soul.
   - **D.** This produced dilemmas. Why should the behavior of animals be described as reflexive and in humans as decisions of a soul?
   - **E.** The 18th century sought to preserve spiritual reality within which physical explanation could occur.
     1. Many concluded that if mass is inertial, then matter is indifferent to motion or rest and thus cannot be the cause of its own motion.
     2. The cause must come from immaterial origins.
   - **F.** The 18th century also had to deal with "spontaneous" as opposed to "acquired" motion. Its existence indicates a permeation of living matter by something immaterial. (Growth is a spiritual reality.)

II. La Mettrie's The Human Machine insisted there is a fundamental "either-or" in the science of mankind. We are either materialists or spiritualists.
   - **A.** If we adopt spiritualism, it is an admission of ignorance.
   - **B.** Materialism, as a strategy, invites us to set no boundaries to human knowledge.
   - **C.** The strongest argument against this position is that we have a soul that is independent from our body.
   - **D.** But, there is one physical unity of what we think of as bodily and mental phenomena. Things such as illness and sexuality change our thoughts, indicating that mind is a behavior of body, and not an independent entity.
   - **E.** The transition from animals to men is not categorical but gradual.
   - **F.** What moves us is the physical energy of our organs, not a spirit.

III. Diderot was one of many who built dramatically on La Mettries's work.
   - **A.** Diderot said that all of nature is potentially alive.
   - **B.** The organic/inorganic distinction is not categorical. Every piece of matter can move from one mode to the other.
   - **C.** Explaining things by the "God" hypothesis is no explanation at all.
   - **D.** The critical dimension for Diderot that limited science was Scriptural time. Eliminate Scriptural boundaries of time, and the evolution of of universe and of life becomes a subject of inquiry.
   - **E.** Diderot argued that human thought is a scientific, not a theological mystery. It emerges from complex organization of brain.
   - **F.** There is no extra-human moral dimension.
   - **G.** Ethics are a behavior of the physical mechanism. Our only ethic is seeking what is useful and fleeing the harmful.
   - **H.** We are linked to a nature that does not care for us. We only have the natural light of our knowledge to guide us.
   - **I.** Our fate and happiness depends on our ability to coexist with nature as it actually is.

SUGGESTED READINGS TO ACCOMPANY

The Mind of the Enlightenment

Primary (original) sources, arranged in rough chronological order of first appearance of the author in the course. It is recommended that students of the Enlightenment study the texts of the Enlightenment themselves, rather than historian's accounts of those texts. As the Enlightenment itself urged, "experience," not "arbitrary authority" should be one's guide.

E.G. WARING, Deism and Natural Religion. Published by Ungar, in 1967, this is an excellent anthology of deistic writings, both "positive" and "critical," and of contemporaneous defenses of Christianity against the Deists.

Matthew TINDAL, Christianity As Old As the Creation. First published in 1730, this work was termed "the Deists Bible," and was at the center of many of the Christian-Deistic controversies.

Charles de Secondat, baron de MONTESQUIEU, Persian Letters. First published in 1721, this work enjoyed ten editions in its first year, introducing France to Montesquieu's satirical, ironic and often quite relativistic view of France, religion, and both political and social authority.

VOLTAIRE, Philosophical Letters. First published in 1732, when they caused a scandal, these letters expressed Voltaire's criticisms of essential features of French intellectual, religious, political and moral life, and caused French readers to examine their own world in the light of foreign perspectives.

VOLTAIRE, "Micromegas," "Zadig," "The Tale of a Good Brahmin," and "Candide." These "philosophical tales," a genre made famous by Voltaire, express Voltaire's skepticisms, social criticisms and mordant examinations of the human condition. The can be found in most good anthologies of Voltaire's prose, such as The Portable Voltaire or Candide and Other Writings (Modern Library).

VOLTAIRE, Philosophical Dictionary (articles: Abbe, Arius, Fanaticism, Final Causes, God, Inquisition, Lent, Superstition, Tolerance). In the 1760's (and in revisions thereafter), Voltaire continued his task of moral criticism and redefinition. This work has been published in several English editions, and its most important articles have been anthologized in many anthologies of Voltaire's prose (see above).

Bishop Joseph BUTLER, Five Sermons on Humane Nature. First published in 1724, Butler's Sermons demonstrate how far orthodox

Christian theology in the 18th century could go toward a celebration of nature and of human nature.

Cesare BECCARIA, On Crimes and Punishments. First published in 1764, Beccaria's work became an influential international best-seller, applying Enlightenment notions of human nature and morality to an analysis of the legitimate authority of the state and to the project of reforming the laws of Europe in light of a proper understanding of that authority.

Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, Discourse on the Arts and Sciences. (Rousseau's "First Discourse," 1750) and Discourse on the Origins of Inequality (Rousseau's "Second Discourse," 1755). These two critical assessments of the negative moral consequences of "progress" and "civilization," provoked great debate in the 18th century (and ever after), and constituted Rousseau's dissent from much of the Enlightenment's confidence in progress.

Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, Emile and The Social Contract. Both published in 1762, these two works, the first on education and the second on the moral nature of civil society, both sought ways to restore, as much as possible, the "natural" to the social state of mankind.

David HUME, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. Published posthumously in 1779, these dialogues examined, with the advantage given to philosophical skepticism, the claims of natural religion that we ought to infer from the evidence of nature the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, benevolent and intelligent God. They constitute a major criticism of an optimistic 18th-century natural theology.

J. le Rond D'ALEMBERT, Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot. First published in 1761, this discourse explained the vision of knowledge and the history of knowledge held by so much of the French Enlightenment, and became a rallying point for the camp of the new philosophy.

Julien Offroy de LA METTRIE, Man a Machine. First published in 1748, this dramatic treatise sought to extend a wholly naturalistic and materialistic model of understanding to human physical and cognitive behavior. It sought to marshall the fullest materialistic potential of the new life-sciences on its behalf.

Denis DIDEROT, D'Alembert's Dream. Published posthumously but well-known in Enlightenment circles, this explicitly atheistic and materialistic work sought to naturalize all of human understanding, including our understanding of mental life and ethics.

Related Books by Alan Charles Kors:

Atheism in France, 1650-1729, vol. I: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief (Princeton University Press, 1990). An attempt to show how the dynamics of orthodox culture generated the possibility and categories of the most heterodox thought.

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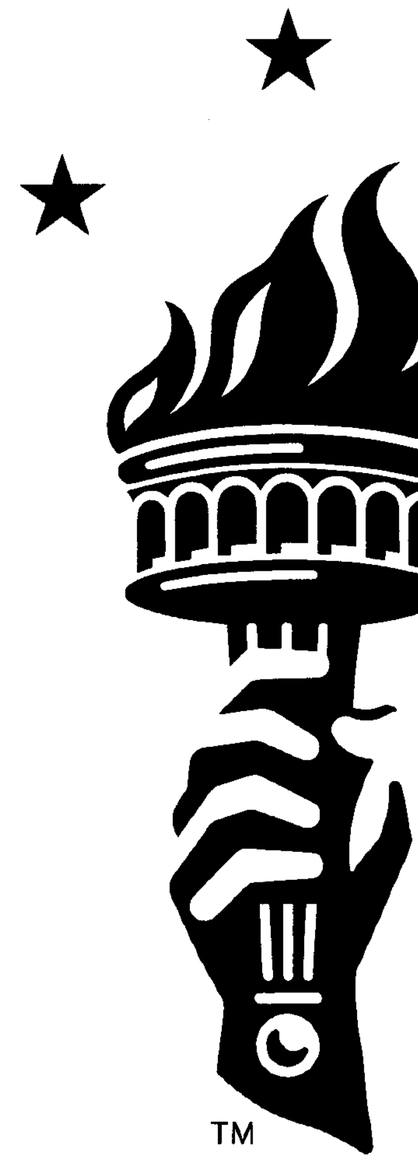

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