On the Inalienable Rights

Of

Freedom, Happiness and Understanding
Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Montesquieu analyze the social institutions of law, religion and learning as a means of emphasizing the importance of freedom, happiness and understanding as the basic rights of all members of society. They provide ways of justifying and maintaining these social institutions that do not necessitate compromising the basic rights of individuals. According to them, people cannot comprehend society, and the Universe at large, without the rigorous application of reason to the tenets of these institutions. The overarching and humbling perspective that results motivates an improvement of the human condition. Society must actively control its own destiny; nothing is “written up yonder”\(^1\).

Voltaire sees self-interest as the fundamental legal precept of society\(^2\). He does not believe that geography, culture or the passage of time can change the fundamentals of law. He considers the fact that “a German needs only one wife, a Persian three or four”\(^3\) to be distinct from the legal code of those cultures. For him, an ideal state is one in which the people are obligated to obey only the law. Eldorado, described in Candide, meets this criterion. However, interestingly enough, extensive discussion of law and justice is markedly absent from the descriptions of Eldorado. The only article of law mentioned is that “all men are free”\(^4\). For Voltaire, freedom and the consequent ability to serve one’s self-interest in the pursuit of happiness and understanding are the only prerequisites for a perfect society. Unfortunately, isolation, probably commercial isolation, is necessary to preserve this idyllic state. Eldorado is completely cut-off from the rest of the world. Voltaire seems to hint that this is too high a price to pay for perfection.

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1 Diderot. Jacques the Fatalist, and his Master. Pg. 7
2 Voltaire. “Laws”, Political Writings. Pg. 13
3 Voltaire. “States, Governments”, Political Writings. Pg. 6
4 Voltaire. Candide. Pg. 279
He turns to England for an acceptable compromise. In his essay on government, he states that the supreme achievement of English legislation is “the restoration to all men of all natural rights.” These are freedom of expression, person, property and belief i.e. the unrestricted pursuit of self-interest. Voltaire sees the vigorous commercial activity in England as inducing legislation for a restoration of basic rights. He makes a very explicit connection between freedom, commerce and the greatness of a nation. This connection emphasizes the fact that laws must be useful if they are to make a nation great. Voltaire describes the London stock exchange as a place where “representatives from all nations [gather] together for the utility of men.” For Voltaire, a businessman pursuing the law of self-interest “contributes to the well-being of the world,” while a Marquis, following all the laws of etiquette, only gives himself “grand airs.” One benefits individually, the other while benefiting himself, also contributes to society.

Rousseau believes that society forms on common interest. As opposed to Voltaire, Rousseau draws a very sharp distinction between social man and natural man. This distinction is important because it affects Rousseau’s theory of law. He views natural or “savage man” as superior to social man. For Rousseau, “the Savage lives within himself; sociable man always outside himself.” The Savage is perfectly capable of attending to his own needs; he is self-sufficient and self-reliant. Sociable man, on the other hand, must constantly seek the opinion of others. He is a reflection; without society’s mirror, he is nothing. Consequently, Rousseau strongly favors natural law because it is the only law to which Savage man adheres. He believes natural law to consist of two principles – well-being and self-preservation. He holds that these

5 Voltaire. “Government”. Political Writings. Pg. 60
7 Voltaire. Letter 6, Letters on England. Pg. 41
8 Voltaire. Letter 6, Letters on England. Pg. 52
9 ibid.
12 ibid.
two principles are tempered by a repugnance of seeing others suffer. If Rousseau’s notions of self-preservation and well-being are taken to encompass self-interest, then his views on the fundamentals of law are similar to those of Voltaire.

Rousseau derives his theory of social law from his views on natural law. According to him, the development of the human mind “made a being wicked by making it sociable” and alienated man from nature. In The Social Contract, Rousseau seems resigned to the formation of society. He attempts to warn the public of the dangers of allowing a select few to usurp all the decision making power in society. Rousseau’s concept of the “general will” attempts to counteract the effect of the “ties of servitude formed solely by men’s mutual dependence and the reciprocal needs that unite them” by requiring that all members surrender their individual rights to the general body in exchange for a shared right to participate in the governing of the community. In this manner, Rousseau attempts to distribute power equally and ensure that it stays thus by requiring any change to occur exclusively through the general will.

He views this social contract as the best possible compromise to attain freedom. Rousseau seeks a “universal justice which springs from reason alone”, but realizes that the reciprocity that this requires may not be attainable. This follows from his belief that “what is good and in conformity with order is such by the very nature of things and independent of human agreements.” The general will, a human agreement, cannot achieve the pinnacles of universal justice. This appeal to reason as the supreme arbiter of action is an enduring theme in Rousseau’s political writings.

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13 Rousseau. “The Second Discourse”, The Discourses and other early Political Writings. Pg. 139, Pg. 154
14 Rousseau. “The Second Discourse”, The Discourses and other early Political Writings. Pg 159
15 ibid.
17 ibid.
Interestingly enough, despite a clear bias towards natural law and the freedom that it entails, Rousseau maintains that “freedom is not a fruit of every climate, and is not therefore within the capacity of every people\(^{18}\). He attributes this doctrine to Montesquieu, and seems convinced of its truth. He associates climatic conditions to forms of government, to legal codes, to the natures of people and finally to freedom. Rousseau does not draw a distinction between differing geographic forms of law and a universal concept of freedom. Montesquieu, in *The Persian Letters*, makes this distinction.

*The Persian Letters* set up a sharp contrast between the legal systems of Persia and France, as exemplified by Paris. Montesquieu also provides examples of notions of justice from other lands that take on a third form. In Muscovy, women “cannot believe that they possess the heart of their husbands if they are not properly beaten; any other conduct on his part is a mark of unpardonable indifference\(^{19}\). While not an explicit law, such conduct would go against all notions of justice in both Parisian and Persian society. Montesquieu believes that “the air ... is loaded with particles of the soil of each country, and it acts upon us in such a way that our temperament is fixed by it\(^{20}\). He justifies geographical differences in forms of law and certain notions of justice in this manner. However, as opposed to Rousseau, he clearly differentiates these differences from the universal concept of freedom.

Usbek, one of the central characters in the work, comments on the freedom of French women. Ironically, the women in Persia are no different. While the outward appearance of the seraglio may suggest limited notions of freedom, the end of the work suggests the contrary. Geography and culture do not temper or mitigate the desire of Usbek’s wives to control their own destinies. Roxana, perceived as the most virtuous, turns out to be the least so. As she dies of

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\(^{18}\) Rousseau, “That All Forms of Government do not Suit All Countries”, *The Social Contract*. Pg. 124

\(^{19}\) Montesquieu. Letter LI, *The Persian Letters*. Pg. 87

poison, administered to her as punishment for her deceit, she makes a very profound remark on her condition. “I have lived in slavery, but I have always been free. I reformed your laws by those of nature, and my spirit has always held to its independence."

This appeal to natural law, specifically the law of self-interest, parallels the attitudes of the other authors under consideration. Montesquieu, like Rousseau, also believes that human actions are tempered by a hesitation to harm others. However, distinct from the other authors, Montesquieu suggests that “morality always makes better citizens than the law” because “of all powers, this one is abused the least.” It is difficult to reconcile this view with a traditional interpretation of natural law under which each man exists only for himself. Perhaps Montesquieu assumes natural law to represent Rousseau’s intermediate stage, where man has only progressed (or regressed) to living with his family. However, at no other point does the issue of morality figure so prominently in discussions of natural law. Montesquieu, like Rousseau, might be considering not any morality, but a supreme and ultimate universal morality, under which “justice is eternal and independent of human conventions.” It is not clear whether Montesquieu believes the comprehension of this morality to be within the scope of human reason.

Diderot has a unique perspective on the importance of law in society. Unlike Voltaire, Rousseau and Montesquieu, he does not see society as an aberration of the natural state. Diderot recognizes that “man is born for life in society ... isolate him and his ideas will go to pieces.” However, even though he believes that man must exist within a social framework, Diderot depicts a very blasé attitude to the consideration and execution of justice. Jacques, the central character of *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master*, believes that all principles of jurisprudence

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are “rules for one’s own benefit laid down for the conduct of others”. Justice, according to Jacques, has become nothing but disguised self-interest. Diderot, speaking through the voice of Jacques, believes that there may be an element of truth in this. Diderot is also very critical of the manner in which justice is meted out. Suzanne, the central character of The Nun, remarks that in the courts “habit and boredom hardly permit a properly scrupulous examination even of the most important cases”. Diderot’s poignant description of judicial apathy is disconcerting.

He believes utility and merit to be critical determinants of law. Voltaire also holds this view. Jacques tells his master, “Everyone knows that all of your orders are but hot air until ratified by Jacques”. In French society at the time, a master’s orders were the law for the servant. Diderot is implying that social status alone does not give one jurisdiction over another. However, understanding, while lacking the façade of jurisdiction, provides everything else.

Diderot closely intertwines his discussion of law and justice with the discussion of religious issues. He believes in a primal law that exclusively sanctions gratification of the senses. Diderot sees religion as imposing a way of life that eliminates, or, at the very least severely restricts, acts of sexual and other sensual gratification. This violation of the primal law “deflects into monstrous affections which are all the more violent because they have no firm foundation”. Sexual activity, contradictory to the laws of the cloister, inevitably results from the restrictions placed on the nuns and the monks.

Freedom and happiness figure prominently in Diderot’s discussion of religion. Life in the cloister is a “prison”; a tyrannical religious order is instrumental in the deprivation of freedom.

26 Diderot. Jacques the Fatalist and his Master. Pg. 82
27 Diderot. The Nun. Pg. 101
28 Diderot. Jacques the Fatalist and his Master. Pg. 158
29 Diderot. The Nun. Pg. 176
30 Diderot. The Nun. Pg. 101
Suzanne is forced to bear “the burden of a state for which [she] has no vocation\textsuperscript{31}”. She is always looking to escape from the cloister in order to regain her liberty. Religion also forces the nuns to negotiate with God for their happiness. The nuns “barter their present happiness for happiness in the hereafter, they are assured of the latter by deliberate sacrifice of the former\textsuperscript{32}”. The irrationality in this justification for religious life is not apparent to any of the characters. Happiness, one of the prerogatives of any member of society, is denied to all those in the cloister. Promise of bliss after death rings hollow in the face of all the atrocities that the nuns endure on a daily basis.

Diderot’s descriptions of religious life are a “series of ... calculated atrocities [by] religious souls\textsuperscript{33}”. The deceitful wiles of the superiors of the convents and the escapades of Father Hudson leave little doubt that most religious personages, far from being worthy of respect, are the most depraved individuals in society. For them, the concepts of good and evil are devoid of any intrinsic meaning and are simply words to be manipulated in the name of religion. “It seemed not a little strange that the same thing could come from God or the devil according to the way they choose to look at it\textsuperscript{34}”. Unfortunately, this manipulation is not apparent to the populace because they fail to realize that the religious order is closely linked with the governing of the state and its associated monetary considerations.

Consequently, Diderot advocates the strict separation of church and state. Suzanne realizes that there are also political considerations involved in her inability to leave the convent. There is a tacit understanding between the “politician\textsuperscript{35}” and the religious order. Suzanne believes that “in a properly governed state [it should be] difficult to enter religion but easy to

\textsuperscript{31} Diderot. \textit{The Nun}. Pg. 37
\textsuperscript{32} Diderot. \textit{The Nun}. Pg. 173
\textsuperscript{33} Diderot. \textit{The Nun}. Pg. 99
\textsuperscript{34} Diderot. \textit{The Nun}. Pg. 31
\textsuperscript{35} Diderot. \textit{The Nun}. Pg. 101
come out\textsuperscript{36}. This would properly ensure the solemnity of religious life without making it onerous for those already committed to it. However, with church and state closely intertwined, dependencies between the two institutions blur the line between liberty and confinement.

It is important to consider Diderot’s materialistic and deterministic stance when discussing his views on religion. There are numerous atheistic references in \textit{Jacques the Fatalist and his Master}. \textit{D’Alembert’s Dream} focuses on justifying human creation without the appeal to a higher being. Diderot’s purpose in writing this work is to force his readers to ponder alternative explanations for various phenomena typically attributed to God. More than any other work under consideration, \textit{D’Alembert’s Dream} succeeds in displacing the reader’s intellectual complacency by forcing him to realize that the rigorous application of reason can justify other explanations of creation and destiny.

Montesquieu’s iconoclast criticism of Catholic doctrine is an enduring theme in \textit{The Persian Letters}. His descriptions of the numerous interpretations of Scripture that “fill the whole side of the library” and that contain “as many doubts as ... lines”, undermine the validity of religious doctrine\textsuperscript{37}. The implication is clear – with so many different interpretations and so many doubts, the odds are that society is following an incorrect religious doctrine. He makes this explicit when discussing the utility of religious ceremonies. Montesquieu believes that they “have no intrinsic excellence; they are good only relatively, and on the supposition that God has ordained them\textsuperscript{38}”. Since there are so many ceremonies to choose from, it is highly likely that the “dervishes” have decided on the wrong ceremonies for each occasion.

Montesquieu contrasts Islam and Christianity to the same effect. Usbek describes the similarities between the practices of the two religions. However, rather than concluding that both

\textsuperscript{36} Diderot. \textit{The Nun.} Pg. 101
\textsuperscript{37} Montesquieu. Letter CXXXIV, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 227
\textsuperscript{38} Montesquieu. Letter XLVI, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 75
Christians and Mohammedans will achieve salvation, Usbek remarks that “all men will be astonished to find themselves under the same standard”. This universal standard would apply to all men equally. Montesquieu sees no purpose in performing elaborate rituals and of having days of mortification and fasting, as these are irrelevant in the eyes of the Eternal. A supreme standard, beyond our comprehension, determines our fate.

In light of the meaningless of religious pomp and ceremony, Montesquieu is fascinated with the power of religious personages. Describing the pope, the leader of Roman Catholics, as an “old idol, revered by custom”, yet able to keep the king, the leader of the nation, “always in condition and in the habit of belief”, portrays a strange duality in the pope’s power. Montesquieu depicts a vicious cycle of dependency. The pope, revered by custom, is able to command power over the king. This power, in turn, ensures the pope’s continued reverence by royal decree. Ironically, the king himself, while loving his religion i.e. the pope, “does not suffer those who tell him he must rigorously observe it”. Religion becomes a power struggle, and not an avenue for salvation. In a similar vein, the sexual crimes committed by abbés and other religious personages, such as the rape of women, are not in keeping with the solemnity and dignity of their position. Yet, these crimes do nothing to undermine their power.

Like Diderot, Montesquieu believes in a dependency between religion and the law. He believes that the first and foremost duty of any man is to observe society’s laws and to do his duty to his fellow men. Montesquieu holds that “whatever religion one professes, its principal parts consist always in obedience to the law, love of fellow man, and reverence for one’s

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41 Montesquieu. Letter XXIV, *The Persian Letters*. Pg. 43
42 Montesquieu. Letter XXXVII, *The Persian Letters*. Pg. 64
parents. In the most assertive action towards promoting this belief, Rica does not comply with the wishes of the Capuchin father in requesting the King of Persia for a small establishment near Casbin. Rica realizes that the father wishes to spread his religion for all the wrong reasons. He dismisses the Capuchin, insinuating that he is only suitable for the one society that tolerated his creation.

For Voltaire, religion is primarily a medium for control over people. Voltaire, like Diderot, advocates the strict separation of church and state because he fears the ability of the clergy to usurp the power and freedom of the people. In his Political Writings, specifically the section on “Politics”, he is most explicit about the dangers of consulting an “inspired man” and of allowing him any semblance of ascendancy. “This holy man took ... over for himself, and starved the servants and the former master to death”. Someone else, in turn, ousts the holy man. This could be interpreted as a call to overthrow papal dominance over society. This theme of the separation of church and state, and of a legislated limitation of the powers of the church, is reemphasized in Voltaire’s “Republican Ideas”, XII and XV. Civil authorities must make all “ecclesiastical regulations”; comparing the power of popes to the power of kings should have no basis in fact.

Voltaire addresses the notion of papal tyranny in the Letters on England as well. “This idea of divine right would only serve to make tyrants in caps and rochets, but ... the law makes citizens”. Voltaire criticizes the belief that Bishops and other religious figures are divinely ordained; he believes them to be appointed by law and consequently no more superior than any other person in the service of the state. He is aware that religious personages seek to associate

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44 Montesquieu. Letter XLVI, The Persian Letters. Pg. 75
45 Montesquieu. Letter XLIX, The Persian Letters. Pg. 84
46 Voltaire. “Politics”, Questions on the Encyclopedia. Political Writings. Pg. 84
47 Voltaire. “Republican Ideas”, Political Writings. Pg. 198
divinity very closely with their name and position. Voltaire remarks that “a few miracles were needed; miracles were worked\textsuperscript{49} to indicate attempts to manipulate the beliefs of the general populace. Like Diderot, he is painfully aware that the religious order is largely successful in convincing the public of its legitimacy and necessity. England, however, once again provides an alternative. It is a land of many religious sects. This curbs the power of each of the sects individually. “An Englishman, as a free man, goes to heaven by whatever route he likes\textsuperscript{50},” because no one sect is able to convince him of its superiority and greater legitimacy. Rousseau advocates the same principle as well.

Voltaire also criticizes the rampant corruption amongst the clergy. In Zadig, the precious stones of young women sent to the pyre are given to them. In Candide, “Los Padres have everything and the people have nothing\textsuperscript{51}”. There is also a tradition amongst the monks of burning people who do not agree with them\textsuperscript{52}. The clergy are portrayed as impious and greedy murders – diametrically opposite what their chosen way of life would suggest.

Voltaire’s deistic stance also plays a role in his attitude towards religion. His poem on the Lisbon earthquake is most enlightening in this respect. He questions the centrality of man in the divine plan, and ponders how a beneficent and benevolent being can also cause the loss of life and the destruction of property on such a grand scale. Voltaire concludes with the realization that hope is man’s sole bliss on earth\textsuperscript{53}. It is not his conclusion, but his realization that even reason cannot justify the existence of a benevolent God that would have been shocking to his audience. However, Voltaire’s logic is flawless.

\textsuperscript{49} Voltaire. Letter 3, Letters on England. Pg. 31
\textsuperscript{50} Voltaire. Letter 5, Letters on England. Pg. 37
\textsuperscript{51} Voltaire. Candide. Pg. 263
\textsuperscript{52} Voltaire. Candide. Pg. 277
\textsuperscript{53} Voltaire. “The Lisbon Earthquake”. Pg. 569
Rousseau, like Voltaire and Diderot, also firmly believes in the separation of church and state. In *The Social Contract*, he states that “one cannot conclude that religion and politics have the same purpose among men; it is simply that at the birth of nations one serves as the instrument of the other.” Rousseau realizes that during the formation of societies, the lawgiver, constrained in his use of force and argument, must appeal to divine authority in order to convince everyone to obey freely and to bear with docility the yoke of public welfare. At later stages in a society’s evolution, this reliance on divinity needs to be reduced. Consequently, Rousseau is not opposed to religion per se, but insists that intolerance cannot be a part of any acceptable religion. A “religion of the priest”, such as Catholic Christianity, “produces a kind of mixed and anti-social system of law”. Such a religion has major defects. Rousseau concludes with determining that duties to fellow citizens should over-ride any other religious concerns. A religion should provide freedom, and complete disassociation from the functioning of the state. Such a religion can only be the religion of law. Montesquieu advocates this doctrine as well.

Rousseau’s stance on the importance of reason and understanding is slightly ambiguous. In his “Second Discourse”, he shows that the progress of the human mind created inequality – for inequality could not exist in a state of nature. “... Consider and bring together the various contingencies that can have perfected human reason while deteriorating the species.” However, in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau seems resigned to the formation of society and the perfection of human reason. He, himself, rigorously applies reason in his study and analysis of the various steps involved in the formation of a society. He advocates the supremacy of the law – a law founded on principles derived from reason. There is a slight contradiction in the above views.

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55 ibid.
57 Rousseau. The Second Discourse, *The Discourses and other early Political Writings*. Pg. 159
which can only be reconciled by holding that while Rousseau attributes the downfall of society to reason and understanding, he also holds that salvation lies in reason alone. Man has an innate faculty of perfecting himself\textsuperscript{58}; this faculty initially results in a loss of freedom and happiness, but it can also be harnessed to regain them. This realization provides the impetus to apply reason to effect a social change.

Montesquieu’s stance on the importance of reason and understanding is more definitive. He views religion as a serious impediment to furthering human knowledge. According to him, scientists in Paris, “left to themselves and deprived of holy miracles, [have] silently follow[ed] the trail of human reason instead”, and have succeeded in explaining “in simple mechanical terms, the principles of divine architecture\textsuperscript{59}”. Usbek, free from the confines of a religious life in Fatima\textsuperscript{60}, is able to find “pleasure in self-instruction” and is consequently never idle\textsuperscript{61}. His reflections on law, government and religion get more acute as the work progresses. The greater his disassociation from religion, the clearer his thinking becomes.

Montesquieu portrays intellectual complacency in the form of prejudices. “The French do not suppose that [Persian] climates can produce real men\textsuperscript{62}”. They are guilty of ethnocentricity, and an intellectual myopia in holding that only their way of life is ideal. The story of the pompous king of Guinea, who “sitting on a block of wood”, “regards all kings of the world as his slaves\textsuperscript{63}” is also applicable to the French. As far as they are concerned, the world outside of Paris is of no consequence.

\textsuperscript{58} Rousseau. The Second Discourse, \textit{The Discourses and other early Political Writings}. Pg. 141
\textsuperscript{59} Montesquieu. Letter XCVII, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 161
\textsuperscript{60} Usbek’s home city.
\textsuperscript{61} Montesquieu. Letter XLVIII, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 78
\textsuperscript{62} Montesquieu. Letter XLVIII, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 78
\textsuperscript{63} Montesquieu. Letter XLIV, \textit{The Persian Letters}. Pg. 72
Voltaire and Montesquieu are both highly critical of the prevalent arrogance in deeming man as central to an understanding of the Universe. Rica, in *The Persian Letters*, finds it hard to believe that even though the earth is “only a dot in the universe”, men propose themselves “as the exact model for providence”\(^{64}\). Voltaire, in *Micromegas*, describes the Sirian, far superior to man, as “angry that such infinitely small creatures should be possessed by an arrogance almost infinitely great”\(^{65}\). It is interesting to note that a member of the clergy asserts man’s superiority. Voltaire, akin to Montesquieu, believes the religious order to be an impediment to the furthering of human knowledge and understanding.

Science plays a very prominent role in Voltaire’s stance on learning. In the *Letters on England*, he devotes an entire letter to praising Newton and his accomplishments. Voltaire describes him as having traveled to the end of the road of truth\(^{66}\). Newton gets a “king’s burial”\(^{67}\). Voltaire believes that science, by appealing only to reason, provides a path to understanding.

Diderot, as a materialist, takes Voltaire’s views to the extreme in *D’Alembert’s Dream* by adroitly arguing that everything can be explained in terms of science. He shows that living tissue and marble are composed of the same substance. He disproves the concept of pre-existent germs and divine ordination. He advocates that anyone who “postulates a quite new phenomenon or brings back a moment from the past [creates] a fresh world”\(^{68}\). This refutes the pre-existent germ theory as well as suggests that there is an essentially random element in evolution. Diderot compares human memory to vibrating strings. In fact, by a strict application of logic and reason, Diderot justifies bestiality and homosexuality. These conclusions provide reasonable bases for questioning commonly held beliefs. The reader identifies very strongly with Mademoiselle de

\(^{64}\) Montesquieu. Letter LIX, *The Persian Letters*. Pg. 100  
\(^{65}\) Voltaire. *Micromegas*. Pg. 435  
\(^{67}\) Voltaire. Letter 14, *Letters On England*. Pg. 69  
\(^{68}\) Diderot. *D’Alembert’s Dream*. Pg. 154
l’Espinasse. As an intelligent person, she accepts the conclusions of the discussion. In this manner, Diderot is able to convince the reader to accept the preponderance of his somewhat bizarre conclusions.

Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot and Montesquieu are primarily concerned with the attributes of freedom, happiness and understanding as inalienable rights of each member of society. They see the currently existing systems of law, religion and learning as posing serious threats to these rights. Their works propose alternative systems, justified by reason alone, that do not alienate the basic rights of individuals. Each of them abhors the prevalent intellectual complacency involved in attributing incomprehensible phenomena to the divine. They see this apathy towards furthering knowledge and understanding as posing the most serious threat to freedom and happiness. Their analyses attempt to discredit dogmatic and intolerant adherence to religious practice by questioning the bases for belief in the practice. Ultimately, they accuse society of a general intellectual laxity in allowing a select few to deprive them of their rights. Man, as the “measure of all things”69, is responsible for the conditions in which he lives. Unless the populace changes its attitudes and its beliefs at an individual level, there is no hope for society as a whole. A significant portion of this attitudinal change is the humbling realization of man’s insignificance on the cosmic scale. These authors are, however, optimistic about man’s ability to change his attitude. Liberty can be gained70.

69 Protagoras
Bibliography


