

ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON THE WORKS OF DIDEROT

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PREFACE

Two years before the death of the extravagant and tyrannical Louis le Grand, Denis Diderot was born. As a highly intelligent and creative thinker, Diderot was observant of the political, social, economic, scientific, and esthetic developments of his time and expressed his opinions both in conversation and in writing during a major portion of the eighteenth century. When Louis XIV died in 1715, his five-year-old great-grandson became Louis XV. Under the reign of Louis XV, France continued the extravagance of Louis XIV along with an increasing absolutism and a government swayed by favorites such as Madame de Pompadour.

By the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, Louis XIV had caused great numbers of Protestants to leave France. In addition, his persecution of the Jansenists, an ascetic Catholic faction, had caused great injustice and bitterness among the people of France toward the end of his reign. Consequently, under Louis XV, the Encyclopedists with their free-thinking deism or atheism became the main force opposing oppression, whether that oppression came through the absolutism of the Church or the absolutism of the unpopular Louis XV.

Diderot dominated in many ways the philosophy of the free-thinkers of France, who were referred to as the Encyclopedists or the philosophes. The major goals of the philosophes were to enlighten their contemporaries concerning faith in human reason, hope of human progress, and love of virtue or bienfaisance. Their spreading of scientific knowledge as well as philosophic and critical ideas in literary form has caused the

eighteenth century to be called an Age of Enlightenment.¹ A further purpose of the philosophes was to expose the evils of absolutism and intolerance in both the government and religion of France. Direct criticism and even some indirect criticism brought persecution, imprisonment, or death to many individuals. Despite the possibility of dangerous consequences, the critics of the oppressive bigotry of the Church and State refused to be silenced. Diderot's courage in facing the threats to his personal safety was especially remarkable, and the circle of free-thinkers regarded him as their champion in the organized attack on tradition.

Diderot lived long enough to observe ten years of the reign of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. In 1789, five years after Diderot's death, the French Revolution began. This ended the ancien régime which had brought about its own violent finale by the refusal of the privileged monarchy, nobility, and clergy of France to make adequate reforms in time to have allowed a bloodless revolution to occur in their country as it had in England in 1688 when the monarchy was limited in authority and made subject to the laws of Parliament.

The thinking people of France deeply admired English thought and English freedom. This admiration has been called Anglomania. Certainly Diderot, in his pursuit of knowledge and understanding, shared the current Anglomania. As a humanist, concerned about the improvement of mankind's position, Diderot readily absorbed ideas of English writers.

To show how English authors influenced Diderot's writings in scientific, political, philosophic, and esthetic fields will be the chief

¹ Albert Leon Guérard, The Life and Death of an Ideal (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1956), p. 260.

aim of this thesis. The first chapter contains a biographical sketch of Diderot in which the development of the personality of this versatile writer and the major activities of his life are emphasized. The second chapter shows the English influences on Diderot during his bold years (1743-1749), with emphasis on his Pensées philosophiques and his Lettre sur les aveugles. The third chapter deals with the English influences during his cautious or "bourgeois" years (1749-1774), featuring the Encyclopédie, Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature, Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, De la Poésie dramatique, and the two novels -- La Religieuse and Jacques le Fataliste. The fourth chapter examines the English influences in the Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme, and the Paradoxe sur le comédien, which Diderot wrote during his last decade (1774-1784). The fifth chapter contains the conclusions of the writer based on the study of English influences on Diderot's thinking and writing.

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CHAPTER I

DENIS DIDEROT: L'HOMME

A play written by Diderot, which was his last published work before his death, poses the dilemma of the man, Denis Diderot. This dilemma is stated in the title of the play, Est-il bon? est-il méchant? Whether in an attempt to evaluate Diderot's personal virtue or in an attempt to understand Diderot's philosophy of virtue, the search for an answer to the question, "Is he good or is he bad?", provokes an endless debate. The problem of good and evil plagued Diderot all of his life. Depending on the opinions of the readers, the study of his life can be plagued by a desire to judge the moral qualities of the man. The author will attempt to interpret the life of Diderot without resorting to moral judgments. Diderot was, is, and will continue to be a controversial personality.

This sketch of Diderot's life will discuss his formative years, his bold years, his cautious years, and his last decade to parallel the order of the remaining chapters of the thesis. Because Diderot wrote so much, only his more important writings will be mentioned in this chapter. His works which were influenced by English writers are discussed at length later, and a chronological listing of his main works is in the appendix at the end of this paper. This chapter will be limited to events within Diderot's life that helped form the personality of the philosophe.

Denis Diderot was a sensitive child, yet robust in his physical

qualities. His childhood in Langres included the rugged play of an ordinary boy. The quiet town of Langres in the province of Champagne, one hundred eighty miles southeast of Paris, was a center for the cutlery industry. The child Denis grew up in this bourgeois setting under the protective guidance of his father, Didier Diderot, and his mother, Angélique Vigneron. Didier Diderot was engaged in cutlery, a trade which his family had followed since the thirteenth century. He was pious, generous, and respected by all his neighbors. His honesty and sound judgment caused him to be asked to settle disputes and serve as executor of wills. His professional skill was widely esteemed also and he specialized in forging surgical instruments. At one time when young Denis became tired of school, he begged his father to teach him the family trade. After a few days in the cutlery shop, he humbly asked his father to let him return to his books; he had found himself bored and without aptitude for the manual skill of forming knives. His parents were important to Denis Diderot. The mutual affection of father and son is apparent throughout Denis Diderot's writing. His affection for his mother was apparently too deep for public expression,² for he is strangely silent about her. The fact that he named two of his daughters Angélique indicated his high regard for his mother.

Denis, born on October 5, 1713, was the oldest living child of Didier and Angélique Diderot. A son, born a year earlier, had lived only a few hours. A daughter, Denise, was born on January 27, 1715. This sister, whose temperament so much paralleled her older brother's,

² Arthur McCandless Wilson, Diderot: The Testing Years, 1713-1759 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 12.

was to become a lifelong confidante of Denis. Three more daughters were born, of whom Angélique was the only one to live beyond childhood. She entered a convent, where she became insane and died at the age of twenty-eight. This tragedy was no doubt in Diderot's mind when he wrote his exposé of convent life, La Religieuse. Finally, on March 21, 1722, the younger brother of Denis was born -- Didier-Pierre. This son of Didier and Angélique Diderot became a priest, filling the position which his uncle had held in the Langres Cathedral. The impiety of Denis was a constant shame to the younger brother and their relationships as adults were never cordial.

At eight years of age, Denis was directed toward the priesthood by his family. So until he was fifteen years old, his education progressed under the expert guidance of the Jesuit teachers at the school in Langres. He proved to be an excellent student, with perhaps more than normal amount of delight in making mischief. When he was fourteen, his Uncle Vigneron died, leaving a request that his nephew, Denis, be named his successor as canon in the Church at Langres. For some unknown reason, the Langres Cathedral refused this request, so young Denis decided several months later to take vows as a Jesuit. This led to his enthusiastic decision to run away from home to go to Paris in order to train for his new calling. His father, who had been warned by a cousin to whom Denis had confided his plans, stopped the young man from leaving in the middle of the night. When the time for the fall term came, both father and son took the stagecoach to Paris. The father stayed until Denis was well established in the Collège d'Harcourt.³ After completing the three years

³Lester G. Crocker, The Embattled Philosopher (The Michigan State College Press, 1954), pp. 8-9.

of study at the collège, young Diderot was placed under the care of Maître Clément du Ris, an attorney in Paris, to study law. Finally after two years of unwilling work on the part of Diderot and patient forbearance on the part of Maître Clément, the latter felt forced to write to the elder Diderot about his son's uncooperative attitude and his waste of time on useless reading. This brought about the decisive showdown, in which the father gave Diderot the choice of studying medicine or law, if he did not want to go back to Langres and become a cutler. Denis stated that he was happy doing nothing at all and that he liked to study whatever pleased him. In desperation the father cut off the young man's allowance and gave him instructions to find his own means of support!⁴

The Bohemian existence which Diderot pursued during the next ten years in Paris was filled with shady adventures and a type of freedom that helped produce the erratic temperament for which Diderot was noted. The tutoring and hack writing which he did were not always sufficient to meet his expenses. But these years made possible the wide reading and accumulation of knowledge which prepared him for his future work. His interests included biology, chemistry, and physiology as well as his continued study of mathematics. He read Latin, Greek, Italian, and French classics avidly. But it was English literature for which he had the greatest enthusiasm. Professor Lester Crocker describes what young Diderot found there:⁵

...What French poetry could compare with Pope and Dryden, and especially with Thomson's Seasons, in which he discovered a

⁴ Wilson, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

⁵ Crocker, op. cit., p. 25.

feeling for nature absent from his own literature? Shakespeare, though a Gothic barbarian lacking in good taste, has many unsurpassable flights of genius. Milton was magnificent, Swift incomparable in his satire, while Defoe and Fielding put the English novel far above the French.

In addition to this admiration for English literature came the discovery of a country where tolerance was practiced. Voltaire's Lettres philosophiques, which treated the English customs and authors, stirred Diderot's imagination, so that his search for a meaningful philosophy of life turned towards English philosophy.

In 1742 Diderot found a fellow-thinker and friend in Jean-Jacques Rousseau and also fell in love with the girl he was determined to marry. For fifteen years the friendship with Rousseau was a happy and productive relationship. Diderot was not so fortunate in his relationship with Antoinette Champion. Their love affair was stormy and filled with obstacles to a proper marriage. Antoinette's mother would give her approval to the match only on the condition that Diderot's family would give its consent. Diderot finally went home to Langres hoping to be able to gain his parents' consent to a marriage with Antoinette. When he eventually made his wishes known, his father stormed and tried to change the young man's mind -- even procuring a lettre de cachet and having his son imprisoned in a monastery. Diderot slipped away from his imprisonment and journeyed back to Paris, where he and Antoinette were finally married secretly without parental consent on November 6, 1743, after almost a year of turbulent emotional stress. The marriage was not a happy one and the turbulence of the courtship was small compared to the friction experienced in the years of incompatibility that followed. Denis and Antoinette's first child was born on August 13, 1744. This little

Angélique lived only six weeks. The next year a son, Denis-Laurent, was born. The clash between the personalities of Diderot and his wife caused constant bickering. Since he found little companionship in his home, Diderot took Madame de Puisieux as his mistress in 1745. Soured by Diderot's infidelities and the burdens of the home, Antoinette's naturally jealous temperament developed into habitual nagging and scolding.

In 1746, when Diderot was thirty-three, the publisher Le Breton gave him a job as co-editor of the Encyclopédie, along with d'Alembert. This furnished a steady income for his family and gave his life direction and purpose. To escape the routine of his editing responsibilities and to meet the monetary demands of Madame de Puisieux, Diderot wrote and published anonymously the Essai sur le mérite et la vertu, par Mylord S * * *, traduit de l'anglais (1745); the Pensées philosophiques (1746), Les Bijoux indiscrets (1748); and the Lettre sur les aveugles (1749).⁶ Les Bijoux indiscrets was a licentious novel which he later regretted having written. It was censored because the plot closely resembled the actual circumstances in the court of Louis XV and Madame de Pompadour.⁷ To restore his reputation as a serious scholar after the indiscretion of publishing this type of work, Diderot wrote and published a five-volume treatise entitled Mémoires sur différents sujets de mathématiques.⁸

Reaction to the Lettre sur les aveugles brought about Diderot's arrest and a three-month imprisonment at Vincennes. For the first month in the dungeon Diderot had only a copy of Milton's Paradise Lost to read.

⁶Ibid., p. 53. ⁷Wilson, op. cit., p. 86. ⁸Ibid., pp. 88-89.

He wrote notes in the book by making ink from crushed slate dissolved in wine and using a pen made from a toothpick. His wife and the publishers of the Encyclopédie petitioned repeatedly for Diderot's release. He was finally assigned more comfortable quarters and allowed to have materials to continue his work for the Encyclopédie. But not until November 3, 1749, was he given his freedom.⁹ This taste of the power of the state over the life of an individual caused Diderot to adopt more cautious ways. At this point, the boldness of his youth came to an end.

At the end of June, 1750, the Diderot's five-year-old son died of a fever. Then in September another son was born, who died as a result of a fall from the arms of his godmother on the steps of the church where he was to have been baptized.¹⁰ In this year of domestic tragedy, Diderot met the man who became his dearest friend, Melchior Grimm. Rousseau had befriended Grimm when he came from Germany to France as companion to the son of a German count and subsequently introduced Grimm to his good friend, Diderot. Although Grimm was ten years younger than Diderot and of a very contrasting temperament, the two became fast friends. Whereas Diderot was demonstrative and explosive, Grimm was reserved and unemotional. But their common interests and opinions cemented their friendship. Rousseau soon became jealous of the intrusion of Grimm in the affections of Diderot. This jealousy eventually culminated in the quarrel that ended the Rousseau-Diderot friendship in 1758.¹¹

Another important friendship developed between Diderot and the baron d'Holbach starting in 1752. D'Holbach, who was born in Germany,

⁹Crocker, op. cit., p. 90. ¹⁰Ibid., p. 113. ¹¹Ibid., p. 110.

had been brought up in Paris. He was a wealthy atheist, who sided with the philosophes and became the patron of many writers who found themselves without funds. His dinners, which were held twice a week, became famous. He invited his philosophe friends and any congenial foreigners who happened to come to Paris. It was at d'Holbach's home that Diderot met David Hume, the historian; Laurence Sterne, the novelist; and David Garrick, the director and actor -- three English friends for whom he had great respect and affection. These dinners furnished excellent occasions for Diderot to use his forensic skills and to gain the reactions of his friends to his ideas. Rousseau stopped going to the dinners when his conscience rebelled against the irreverent talk that took place there.¹²

The year 1751 brought the publication and distribution of the first two volumes of the Encyclopédie. The following year Diderot confessed his marriage to his father and was forgiven. His mother had died in 1748.¹³ In the summer of 1752, Diderot sent Antoinette to Langres for a three-month stay. She won the hearts of her in-laws and returned to Paris with gifts and good wishes from family and friends.¹⁴ Finally, in 1753, a fourth child was born to Denis and Antoinette. This daughter, who was also named Angélique, survived to become the joy of her parents. After Diderot's death, she wrote her father's memoirs under her married name, Madame de Vandeuil. Except for his pleasure in the nurture of this second Angélique, Diderot still found his greatest comfort outside his home. He broke his liaison with Madame de Puisieux in 1754, when he dis-

¹²Ibid., p. 121. ¹³Wilson, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁴Crocker, op. cit., p. 128.

covered her fickleness. In the summer of 1755, Antoinette made a second and last trip to Langres with the three-year-old Angélique, so that the elder Diderot might see his only grandchild before his death.¹⁵

Then in October, 1755, Diderot met Mademoiselle Louise-Henriette Volland, who became his greatest love. He nicknamed her Sophie because of her wisdom.¹⁶ She could appreciate any discussion Diderot initiated, and her wide reading plus her ability to analyze made their conversations mentally stimulating. In April, 1759, Sophie's mother moved her family to their country estate to get her daughter away from Diderot.¹⁷ This began the long-term correspondence between the two friends, which reveals so much of the soul and thinking of Diderot.

The demands of his work on the Encyclopédie caused Diderot to return to Langres only after word of his father's death reached him in June, 1759. He stayed there two months until the estate was settled, and his brother and sister had agreed to live together in the paternal home.¹⁸

After the experience of imprisonment, Diderot was careful to publish only those things which he felt would not offend the authorities. In 1751 he published the Lettre sur les sourds-muets, which discussed the problems of language and sound and continued his study of the importance of the senses which he had begun in the Lettre sur les aveugles. In 1754 he published his tribute to Bacon, Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature. The volumes of the Encyclopédie continued to be published: Volume III (1752), Volume IV (1754), Volume V (1755), and Volume VI (1756). This luck did not last, however. The publication of Volume VII in 1757

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 211.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 207.

created a crisis. D'Alembert, Rousseau, and other contributors withdrew from the project for fear of reprisals by the enemies of the Encyclopédie. But Diderot refused to give up. Finally, in 1759, the Parlement of Paris ordered the suspension of the Encyclopédie.

During the tense time that the Encyclopédie was being threatened with suspension, Diderot turned to writing plays. In 1757 he published le Fils naturel, which failed to please theater-goers, when it was performed in 1771, because of its moralizing and long speeches. Le Père de famille, which he published in 1758, was more successful when it was produced on the stage in 1761 and 1769.¹⁹

The year 1758 started a series of reverses in Diderot's life. A quarrel with Rousseau ended in the final break of their friendship in October. The year 1759 brought the suspension of privilege to publish the Encyclopédie, the death of his father, and the moving of the Vollandes away from Paris. All of these tragedies left Diderot depressed and sobered by life's relentless harshness. Despite the suspension of privilege, Diderot was determined to continue the Encyclopédie in secret. The same tenacity of will which had made him resist his father's commands concerning his vocation and his marriage sustained him. He was aided by Louis de Jaucourt, a scholar content to work endlessly on articles. Diderot's contributions were second in quantity only to Jaucourt's.²⁰ Without Diderot and Jaucourt's continued devotion to the cause, the Encyclopédie would not have been completed. In 1764 Diderot had the terrible

¹⁹R. Loyalty Cru, Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1913), p. 294.

²⁰Crocker, op. cit., p. 131.

shock of discovering that Le Breton had cut out large amounts of the copy for the Encyclopédie which he felt might be dangerous in the eyes of the censors. Naturally Diderot was angry and hurt, but the damage was irreparable. Finally, in 1765, the last ten volumes of the Encyclopédie were distributed all at one time. Supplements and an index continued to be published until 1780. Diderot, however, ended his association with the project in 1772.²¹ The great work of his life was then finished.

Another project of Diderot's, which he started in 1758, was the pleasant one of writing criticisms of the art displayed at the Salon. These criticisms were published in Grimm's Correspondance littéraire, which was a bi-weekly report of the latest books and news to a small number of German subscribers. The Salon was an art exposition held every other year in Paris. Except for the Salon of 1773, when he was in Russia, Diderot attended the expositions and wrote criticisms for Grimm's publication until 1781. These art criticisms contain some of Diderot's most original writing.²²

In 1760, Diderot's need to express himself more freely caused him to try a new medium of writing. He decided to try the epistolary style which Richardson had used in the novels which he and Rousseau had so greatly admired. Diderot's epistolary novel, La Religieuse, started as a practical joke on a friend to whom Diderot sent the letters as if they were from a real Sister Suzanne who was seeking release from her tortured existence. This was one of the writing projects that remained in Diderot's

²¹ "Diderot", Grand Larousse encyclopédie en dix volumes (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1961), IV, 69.

²² Crocker, op. cit., p. 186.

desk drawer and was not published until twelve years after his death. In 1761, at Richardson's death, Diderot wrote his famous Eloge de Richardson, a passionate tribute to the greatness that Diderot firmly believed the English novelist deserved. The next year, Diderot began writing the Neveu de Rameau, which is commonly called his masterpiece.

Catherine the Great of Russia bought Diderot's library in 1765 with the stipulation that it was not to be delivered to her until she asked for it and that an annual payment would be made to Diderot for his services as caretaker of the collection. This financial boon greatly aided Diderot's economic position. Along with the purchase of the library came an invitation for him to visit Catherine in St. Petersburg. He respectfully declined the invitation at that time. In 1772, as a good bourgeois parent, Diderot negotiated an acceptable marriage for his daughter with Monsieur de Vandeul. With this duty fulfilled and his obligations to the Encyclopédie finished, he no longer had an excuse to avoid making a trip to express his gratitude to Catherine in person. So from June, 1773, to September, 1774, Diderot was away from home. The long and difficult journey by stagecoach took its toll on his health, even though he rested in Holland both going to St. Petersburg and coming back. It was during this trip that he tried his skill in writing the novel, Jacques le Fataliste, which was published posthumously in 1796.

When he was safely home again in Paris, Diderot predicted that he had about ten more years left to enjoy life, a prediction which proved accurate. In that last decade he played with his grandchildren and wrote almost continually. In 1775, he completed a Plan d'une Université en Russie which he had promised to write for Catherine. In 1778 he finished

the Paradoxe sur le comédien and the following year finished the Neveu de Rameau. These works remained in his desk drawer or were circulated only among his good friends and were not published until many years after his death. In 1781, Diderot wrote his best play, Est-il bon? est-il méchant?, which was autobiographical in its contents.

On July 31, 1784, the philosophe died quite suddenly at the dinner table, just five months after the death of his good friend, Sophie Volland. Despite the fact that Diderot had repeatedly refused to make a confession of faith, his son-in-law managed to have a splendid funeral on August first in the parish church of Saint-Roch. In his biography of Diderot, The Embattled Philosopher, Lester Crocker states that Diderot's body was laid to rest under the slabs in the Chapel of the Virgin, but that when it was next looked for, it could not be found.²³

André Cresson concluded his discussion of the life of Diderot with a comparison of his life to the lives of Voltaire and Rousseau, for these three writers have been credited with preparing the French nation to revolt against the injustices of the ancien régime. The sophisticated Voltaire had an unforgiving spirit towards his enemies and used vitriolic sarcasm in his writing. The unconventional and erratic Rousseau, who was Diderot's good friend for fifteen years and then his bitter enemy, became more paranoiac until he firmly believed that there was a world-wide plot to destroy him. As Cresson pointed out, Diderot was quite different from either Rousseau or Voltaire.

²³ Ibid., p. 436.

Cresson asserted:²⁴

...Diderot est tout autre chose. C'est un touche-à-tout passionné et enthousiaste, enthousiaste pour ceux qu'il croit ses amis et qui ne le sont pas toujours, enthousiaste de la beauté et du charme des femmes qu'il adore jusque dans sa vieillesse impuissante, enthousiaste de la science et de la vérité, enthousiaste de l'art sous toutes ses formes, enthousiaste surtout de la vertu, même quand il ne sent pas la force de la pratiquer. Aussi est-il l'homme qui, pour se rendre serviable, se répand en conseils, en suggestions, en bonnes paroles, en bonnes actions désintéressées...

It was perhaps this unselfish side of Diderot which makes him most admirable. He formed close friendships and managed to maintain almost all except Rousseau's. He was overly generous and impractical at times, but his ingenuous nature made him more approachable than either Voltaire with his barbed tongue or Rousseau with his suspicious jealousy.

To evaluate adequately the life of such a complicated person as Diderot in a few words is impossible. His admirable qualities -- his intelligence, his industry, and his inventiveness -- seem to counterbalance his less admirable traits. He was a humanist who did not remove himself from human society. He truly studied mankind and worked to better man's condition on earth. Voltaire nicknamed Diderot "Pantophile" (friend of all things), in recognition of his encyclopedic mind, which was probably the crowning quality of Diderot's life. Even today, Diderot's desire for knowledge and his struggle to find the truth cause the modern thinker to appreciate the eighteenth-century philosophe.

²⁴ André Cresson, Diderot: Sa Vie, Son Œuvre (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949), pp. 32-33.

CHAPTER II

ENGLISH INFLUENCE DURING THE BOLD YEARS

During the Age of Enlightenment, the great philosophers of France -- Montaigne, Descartes and Pascal -- were no longer considered leaders of French thought. Sir Francis Bacon, John Locke, and Sir Isaac Newton had brought into intellectual circles revolutionary ideas to challenge the old systems of thought. Bacon and Newton, in the field of science, encouraged mankind to observe and experiment. Locke's empirical psychology denied the Cartesian dualism which described a spiritual mind and a mechanical body. According to Locke, only three things exist -- the mind, the external world, and the ideas which are produced in the mind by the external world.²⁵ The English deists -- John Toland, Anthony Collins, Matthew Tindal and Anthony Ashley Cooper, third Earl of Shaftesbury -- influenced the radical and liberal elements of French society.²⁶ According to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, deism is the belief in a God who exerts no influence on men or on the world he has created. The term deist was given to a great number of both French and English free-thinkers who may or may not have held strictly to the deistic belief.

Of the English deists, the most influential on Diderot was the third Earl of Shaftesbury, who was born at London in 1671 and died in Naples in 1713 -- the same year that Diderot was born. The third Earl of Shaftesbury, like his grandfather the first Earl, supported a parliamentary

²⁵Crocker, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁶Guérard, op. cit., p. 262.

monarchy, religious tolerance, and freethinking in religion. In keeping with the issues of his day, the third Earl also supported the Protestant succession, which had been upheld by England's Glorious Revolution of 1688 and opposed French totalitarianism. According to Stanley Grean, both the active and contemplative life of the third Earl of Shaftesbury was motivated by the motto of the house of Shaftesbury, "LOVE, SERVE." Shaftesbury was able to live his life consistent with his belief "that true greatness in a philosopher requires not only greatness of thought but greatness of character."²⁷

Since John Locke lived in the house of Shaftesbury as a friend and secretary of the first Earl, he was asked to supervise the education of the grandson, Lord Ashley. Locke's theories of education were put into practice on young Shaftesbury, who was tutored in Latin and Greek at an early age and, therefore, could read both with ease. At age fifteen young Lord Ashley set out for a three-year tour of the Continent. Most of his time abroad was spent in Italy where his interest in the arts was greatly stimulated. After returning to England in 1688, he concentrated on the study of classical philosophy and became interested in politics. From 1695 to 1698, he served in the House of Commons. At the death of his father in 1699, he became the third Earl of Shaftesbury. He then served in the House of Lords in 1700-01. By this time he had attained some importance in the Whig party, but his asthma forced him to retire from political activities. During the last twelve years of his life, Shaftesbury spent his time writing. His Inquiry concerning Virtue had

²⁷ Stanley Grean, Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics (Ohio University Press, 1967), p. xvi.

been published in 1699 and a revised form, entitled An Inquiry concerning
Virtue or Merit, was published in 1711.²⁸

It was this revised essay which Diderot translated and published in France in 1745. At least three other writings of Shaftesbury influenced Diderot --The Moralists, A Letter concerning Enthusiasm, and Miscellaneous Reflections. In The Moralists, Shaftesbury employed the dialogue form which externalized an internal debate, such as Diderot was to use in many of his writings, of which the Neveu de Rameau is the most famous example. Diderot drew material from these writings of Shaftesbury and used it in his Pensées philosophiques. Within this rambling collection of thoughts, Diderot presented the basic position that there is no virtue without religion and no happiness without virtue. He opposed both atheism and religious fanaticism. Supposedly he wrote this work in four days of the Easter week of 1746 and had it published anonymously soon afterwards. The Jansenist Parlement condemned the book to be burned on July 7, 1746.²⁹

Some of the following quotations will demonstrate why the established Church felt that it could not tolerate the spreading of such ideas. Excerpts from Shaftesbury's Characteristicks* of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times have been paralleled with excerpts from Diderot's Pensées philosophiques. Many more parallels could be cited as pointed out by Paul

28

Ibid., pp. xiii-xv.

29

George R. Havens, The Age of Ideas (New York: The Free Press, 1955), p. 304.

*

The spelling and capitalization are as found in Shaftesbury's works.

Vernière in the notes for the Œuvres philosophiques, Garnier edition.³⁰

In his Miscellaneous Reflections, Shaftesbury wrote concerning the passion of enthusiasm from which Love and Friendship originate:³¹

...He who yields his Life a Sacrifice to his Prince or Country; the Lover who for his Paramour performs as much; the heroick, the amorous, the religious Martyrs, who draw their Views, whether visionary or real, from this Pattern and Exemplar of Divinity; all these, according to our Author's Sentiment, we alike actuated by this Passion, and prove themselves in effect so many different Enthusiasts.

At the first of his Pensées philosophiques, Diderot defended the passions:³²

...Cependant il n'y a que les passions, et les grandes passions, qui puissent élever l'âme aux grandes choses. Sans elles, plus de sublime, soit dans les moeurs, soit dans les ouvrages; les beaux-arts retournent en enfance, et la vertu devient minutieuse.

Les passions sobres font les hommes communs. Si j'attends l'ennemi, quand il s'agit du salut de ma patrie, je ne suis qu'un citoyen ordinaire. Mon amitié n'est que circonspecte, si le péril d'un ami me laisse les yeux ouverts sur le mien. La vie m'est-elle plus chère que ma maîtresse, je ne suis qu'un amant comme un autre.

Both Diderot and Shaftesbury believed that the highest virtue was to be found in the balanced use of passion and that without passion there would be no greatness.

In An Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit, Shaftesbury declared that he believed isolation from human kind to be the most melancholy state which a person could suffer. He continued:

...Now if Banishment from one's Country, Removal to a foreign Place,

³⁰ Denis Diderot, Pensées philosophiques (in Œuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964), pp. 9-49.

³¹ Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury, Characteristicks of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times (3 vols; London: James Purser in Bartholomew-Close, 1737), III, 34. Hereafter, quotations from the Characteristicks will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

³² Diderot, op. cit., pp. 9-10. Hereafter, quotations from the Pensées philosophiques will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

or anything which looks like Solitude or Desertion, be so heavy to endure; what must it be to feel this inward Banishment, this real Estrangement from human Commerce; and to be after this manner in a Desart, and in the horridest of Solitudes, even when in the midst of Society?(Characteristicks, II, 171).

Diderot was also concerned about estrangement from fellow humans. Many times he attacked the practice of hermits and monks who tried to be holy by separating themselves from human society. In this quotation, he ridiculed the idea of a society in which all people followed the example of the hermit:

...Si Pacôme^{*} a bien fait de rompre avec le genre humain pour s'enterrer dans une solitude, il ne m'est pas défendu de l'imiter: en l'imitant, je serai tout aussi vertueux que lui; et je ne devine pas pourquoi cent autres n'auraient pas le même droit que moi. Cependant il ferait beau voir une province entière, effrayée des dangers de la société, se disperser dans les forêts; ses habitants vivre en bêtes farouches pour se sanctifier; mille colonnes élevées sur les ruines de toutes affections sociales; un nouveau peuple de stylites se dépouiller, par religion, des sentiments de la nature, cesser d'être hommes et faire les statues pour être vrais chrétiens(Pensées philosophiques, p. 12).

Rather than separating themselves from society, Diderot and Shaftesbury became involved with all sorts of people and tried to help others as much as they could.

In A Letter concerning Enthusiasm as a part of his discussion about the existence of God, Shaftesbury referred to God as the "Mind which has relation to the Whole", then continued:

...For if unhappily there be no Mind, we may comfort ourselves, however, that Nature has no Malice: If there be really a Mind, we may rest satisfy'd, that it is the best-natur'd one in the World...For no body trembles to think there shou'd be no God; but rather, that there shou'd be one. This however would be otherwise, if Deity were thought as kindly of as Humanity; and we cou'd be persuaded to believe, that if there really was a God, the highest Goodness must of necessity

* Pacôme or Pachomius was a hermit in Upper Egypt and founder of the monastic system in the third century A.D..

belong to him, without any of those Defects of Passion, those Mean-nesses and Imperfections which we acknowledg such in our-selves, which as good Men we endeavour all we can to be superior to, and which we find we every day conquer as we grow better(Characteristicks, I, 40-41).

Diderot also suggested that atheism is less fearful than contemplating a vengeful and angry God:

Sur le portrait qu'on me fait de l'Être suprême, sur son penchant à la colère, sur la rigueur de ses vengeances, sur certaines comparaisons qui nous expriment en nombres le rapport de ceux qu'il laisse périr à ceux qui il daigne tendre la main, l'âme la plus droite serait tentée de souhaiter qu'il n'existât pas. L'on serait assez tranquille en ce monde, si l'on était bien assuré que l'on n'a rien à craindre dans l'autre: la pensée qu'il n'y a point de Dieu n'a jamais effrayé personne, mais bien celle qu'il y en a un, tel que celui qu'on me peint(Pensées philosophiques, p. 13).

Both Diderot and Shaftesbury believed that virtuous behavior based on fear of punishment was not the highest form of virtue.

In his Miscellaneous Reflections, Shaftesbury wrote that when a particular belief was imposed on the people by absolute authority of the government, there was no doubt of it having good success. He stated:

...He who is now an Orthodox Christian, wou'd by virtue of such a Discipline have been infallibly as true a Mussulman, or as errant a Heretick; had his Birth happen'd in another place(Characteristicks, III, 104).

Diderot stated the opinion that if religious belief is not confirmed by choice, then it is as inflexible a condition for a person as being born blind or lame:

Celui qui ne conserve pas par choix le culte qu'il a reçu par éducation, ne peut non plus se glorifier d'être chrétien ou musulman, que de n'être point né aveugle ou boiteux. C'est un bonheur, et non pas un mérite(Pensées philosophiques, p. 30).

Both writers believed that all religious beliefs should be tolerated.

In A Letter concerning Enthusiasm, Shaftesbury asserted that tolerance was the reasonable course in religious differences:

...There is hardly now in the World so good a Christian (if this be

indeed the Mark of a good one) who, if he happen'd to live at Constantinople, or elsewhere under the Protection of the Turks, wou'd think it fitting or decent to give any Disturbance to their Mosque-Worship(Characteristicks, I, 26).

In a footnote for his Miscellaneous Reflections he referred to Corneille's play, Polyeucte:

...The French Poets (we see) can with great Success, and general Applause, exhibit this primitive Zeal even on the publick stage: Polyeucte, Act II. Sc. 6(Characteristicks, III, 87).

Diderot adapted these two ideas in his commentary concerning the zeal for wiping out an opposing religion to be outmoded. He stated:

Celui qui, se trouvant à la Mecque, irait insulter aux cendres de Mahomet, renverser ses autels et troubler toute une mosquée, se ferait empaler à coup sûr, et ne serait peut-être pas canonisé. Ce zèle n'est plus à la mode. Polyeucte ne serait de nos jours qu'un insensé(Pensées philosophiques, p. 30).

The violence and intolerance of zealots did not appeal to either writer.

Shaftesbury commented on the bigoted behavior of the clergy and other pious people in the next two quotations from his Miscellaneous Reflections:

Even in the sixth Country, the fam'd Gregorius Bishop of Rome, who is so highly celebrated for having planted the Christian Religion, by his Missionary Monks, in our English Nation of Heathen Saxons, was so far from being a Cultivator or Supporter of Arts or Letters, that he carry'd on a kind of general Massacre upon every Product of human Wit (Characteristicks, III, 239).

The Mahometan Clergy seem to have a different Policy. They boldly rest the Foundation of their Religion on a Book: Such a one as (according to the Pretension) is not only perfect, but inimitable (Characteristicks, III, 235).

Diderot stated that the desire of the Church Fathers to suppress all opposition to their ideas must be inherited from their zealous Christian predecessors and that Gregory resembled the Mohammedans in his preference for only one book:

...C'est apparemment de ces prédécesseurs que saint Grégoire le Grand avait hérité du zèle barbare qu'il anima contre les lettres et les arts. S'il n'eût tenu qu'à ce pontife, nous serions dans le cas des mahométans, qui en sont réduits pour toute lecture à celle de leur Alcoran(Pensées philosophiques, p. 34).

Both writers ridiculed the suppression of opposition in the manner of Gregory or the Mohammedans. Each author felt that censorship of books was not compatible with any religion.

Shaftesbury described the misleading criticism of free-thinkers by their opponents in the following quotation from Miscellaneous Reflections:

The artificial Managers (the clergy) of this human Frailty declaim against Free-Thought, and Latitude of Understanding. To go beyond those Bounds of thinking which they have prescrib'd, is by them declar'd a Sacrilege. To them, Freedom of Mind, a Mastery of Sense, and a Liberty in Thought and Action, imply Debauch, Corruption, and Depravity(Characteristicks, III, 305).

Despite his defense of free thought, Shaftesbury declared his orthodoxy:

The only Subject on which we are perfectly secure, and without fear of any just Censure or Reproach, is that of Faith, and Orthodox Belief....And tho we are sensible that it wou'd be no small hardship to deprive others of a liberty of examining and searching, with due Modesty and Submission, into the nature of those Subjects; yet as for our-selves, who have not the least scruple whatsoever, we pray not any such Grace or Favour in our behalf: being fully assur'd of our own steady Orthodoxy, Resignation, and intire Submission to the truly Christian and Catholick Doctrines of our Holy Church, as by Law establish'd(Characteristicks, III, 315-16).

Diderot made a similar defense of free-thinkers and made a similar declaration of faith, when he stated:

Je connais les dévots; ils sont prompts à prendre l'alarme. S'ils jugent une fois que cet écrit contient quelque chose de contraire à leurs idées, je m'attends à toutes les calomnies qu'ils ont répandues sur le compte de mille gens qui valaient mieux que moi. Si je ne suis qu'un déiste et qu'un scélérat, j'en serai quitte à bon marché. Il y a longtemps qu'ils ont damné Descartes, Montaigne, Locke et Bayle; et j'espère qu'ils en damneront bien d'autres. Je leur déclare cependant que je ne me pique d'être ni plus honnête homme, ni meilleur chrétien que la plupart de ces philosophes. Je suis né dans l'Eglise catholique, apostolique et romaine; et je me sou mets de toute ma force à ses décisions. Je veux mourir dans la religion de mes pères, et je la crois

bonne autant qu'il est possible à quiconque n'a jamais eu aucun commerce immédiat avec la Divinité, et qui n'a jamais été témoin d'aucun miracle. Voilà ma profession de foi; je suis presque sûr qu'ils seront mécontents, bien qu'il n'y en ait peut-être pas un entre eux qui soit en état d'en faire une meilleure(Pensées philosophiques, p. 46).

Whether Diderot's declaration of faith was sincere at the time he wrote this, or whether he was hoping to avoid trouble by stating a faith, which he did not really hold, is not known. Shaftesbury did remain a member of the Church of England all his life, whereas Diderot soon gave up all pretense of orthodox belief. However, the Protestant tradition in England tolerated greater freedom of thought and expression than did Catholicism in France.

Both Shaftesbury and Diderot sought to strike out against superstition and intolerant forces in civil and religious circles. Shaftesbury's discussion of ridicule in A Letter concerning Enthusiasm no doubt influenced Diderot to try using ridicule in the Promenade de sceptique, a philosophical allegory written in 1747. Shaftesbury believed that Reason and Justice have nothing to fear in Ridicule. He stated:

I have often wonder'd to see Men of Sense so mightily alarm'd at the approach of any thing like Ridicule on certain Subjects; as if they mistrusted their own Judgment. For what Ridicule can lie against Reason? Or how can any one of the least Justness of Thought endure a Ridicule wrong plac'd? Nothing is more ridiculous than this it-self. The Vulgar, indeed, may swallow any sordid Jest, any mere Drollery or Buffoonery; but it must be a finer and truer Wit which takes with the Men of Sense and Breeding. How comes it to pass then, that we appear such Cowards in reasoning, and are so afraid to stand the Test of Ridicule?(Characteristicks, I, 10-11).

In the Promenade du sceptique Diderot once again borrowed quite freely from Shaftesbury and used an opening narrative that resembled the opening part of The Moralists.³³ There is some doubt about the history of the

³³ Cru, op. cit., p. 147.

manuscript of the Promenade du sceptique, since it was apparently seized by the police and never returned to Diderot. It was finally published posthumously in 1830.³⁴

A writing project which Diderot did as relaxation from the grueling task of compiling the Encyclopédie was the Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient, which he published in 1749. It was his most original work up to that time, yet Diderot was again influenced by English sources.

In this long letter concerning the blind, supposedly written to a lady interested in the subject, Diderot began by reporting a conversation with a blind man whom he had personally interviewed. Observations of this intelligent blind man's behavior were supplemented with information about other behavior of the blind taken from the biographical introduction of Elements of Algebra by Nicholas Saunderson, a famous Cambridge professor of mathematics who had been blind from birth.³⁵ Saunderson had devised an abacus with which to make his mathematical calculations by the sense of touch. Diderot described this device,³⁶ then launched into a speculation of the concept of God and concept of morality that a person deprived of one of his senses must have. This led into a fabrication of the happenings immediately preceding the death of the blind mathematician, Saunderson. Diderot used some basic facts taken from the account of

³⁴ Wilson, op.cit., p. 64.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 98.

³⁶ Denis Diderot, Lettre sur les aveugles (in Œuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964). pp. 101-10.

Saunderson's life found in the introduction of Elements of Algebra, but added his own dramatic ideas and attributed them to a book by a Mr. William Inchliff, supposedly a disciple of Saunderson. For this fictitious Inchliff account and for making Saunderson the central figure in an argument for atheism, the Royal Society of London never forgave Diderot.³⁷

The following excerpts from the death-bed scene will illustrate the dramatic embellishments of Diderot, as well as his implication that Saunderson died unconvinced of God's existence:³⁸

Lorsqu'il fut sur le point de mourir, on appela auprès de lui un ministre fort habile, M. Gervaise Holmes; ils eurent ensemble un entretien sur l'existence de Dieu, dont il nous reste quelques fragments que je vous traduirai de mon mieux; car ils en valent bien la peine. Le ministre commença par lui objecter les merveilles de la nature: "Eh, monsieur! lui disait le philosophe aveugle, laissez là tout ce beau spectacle qui n'a jamais été fait pour moi! J'ai été condamné à passer ma vie dans les ténèbres; et vous me citez des prodiges que je n'entends point, et qui ne prouvent que pour vous et que pour ceux qui voient comme vous. Si vous voulez que je croie en Dieu, il faut que vous me le fassiez toucher."

A discussion followed in which the minister tried to convince the blind Saunderson to accept faith in God as demonstrated by Leibnitz, Clarke, and Newton. The blind philosopher then expounded his ideas of a Creatorless creation of the world. Finally Diderot concluded his fictitious account by having Saunderson say:

"...Cependant nous passerons tous, sans qu'on puisse assigner ni l'étendue réelle que nous occupions, ni le temps précis que nous aurons duré. Le temps, la matière et l'espace ne sont peut-être qu'un point."

³⁷ Cru, op. cit., p. 160.

³⁸ Diderot, op. cit., pp. 118-19. Hereafter, quotations from the Lettre sur les aveugles will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

Saunderson s'agita dans cet entretien un peu plus que son état ne le permettait; il lui survint un accès de délire qui dura quelques heures, et dont il ne sortit que pour s'écrier: "O Dieu de Clarke et de Newton, prends pitié de moi!" et mourir (Lettre sur les aveugles, p. 124).

The letter continued with some more details about Saunderson's life, allegedly from the Inchliff biography, which told of the dying man's last words with his wife and children. Then Diderot praised the merits of Saunderson (Lettre sur les aveugles, pp. 125-26).

The last part of the Lettre sur les aveugles contained Diderot's response to the famous question which William Molyneux, a professor at Trinity College of Dublin, had posed to John Locke: Could a man blind from birth, then being made to see, be able to discern a sphere from a cube by his sight alone? John Locke (1632-1704), the great English philosopher, expounded the question in his voluminous Essay concerning Human Understanding in the chapter "Of Perception":³⁹

8.* We are further to consider concerning perception, that the ideas we receive by sensation are often in grown people altered by the judgment, without our taking notice of it.... To which purpose I shall here insert a problem of that very ingenious and studious promoter of real knowledge, the learned and worthy Mr. Molineaux (sic), which he was pleased to send me in a letter some months since; and it is this: Suppose a man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a cube and a sphere of the same metal, and nighly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and the other, which is the cube, which the sphere. Suppose then the cube and sphere placed on a table, and the blind man be made to see: quaere, "whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could distinguish and tell, which is the globe, which the cube?" to which the acute and judicious proposer answers: Not (sic). For

³⁹ John Locke, "Of Perception", Essay concerning Human Understanding (in The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes. London: C. Baldwin, 1824, I, 124).

* John Locke and George Berkeley numbered the paragraphs in their writings.

though he has obtained the experience of how a globe, how a cube affects his touch; yet he has not yet obtained the experience, that what affects his touch so or so, must affect his sight so or so: or that a protuberant angle in the cube, that pressed his hand unequally, shall appear to his eye as it does in the cube. I agree with this thinking gentleman in his answer to this his problem; and am of opinion, that the blind man at first sight, would not be able with certainty to say which was the globe, which the cube, whilst he only saw them...

Several philosophers responded to this challenging question which William Molyneux had written to John Locke.

One of them was George Berkeley(1685-1753), an Irish philosopher, who was a leading thinker and writer of his day. He was a Fellow at Trinity College in Dublin from 1707 to 1724. Then he resigned from Trinity College to pursue a missionary project of starting a college in Bermuda. His dream never materialized, so he returned from a two-year stay in Rhode Island to become the Bishop of Cloyne in the south of Ireland from 1732 to 1752.⁴⁰

Diderot had read Berkeley's Three Dialogues (1713) and Essay towards a New Theory of Vision (1709).⁴¹ To understand somewhat the work of Berkeley helps to understand some of the background study which Diderot had done before writing his letter about the blind. The following discussion of Berkeley's Essay towards a New Theory of Vision can be seen to relate to the excerpts from Diderot's Lettre sur les aveugles which will follow.

The first part of Berkeley's Essay is a technical interpretation

⁴⁰Alexander Campbell Fraser, Berkeley and Spiritual Realism (London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1908) pp. 6-14.

⁴¹Diderot, Lettre sur les aveugles, op. cit., p. 114.

of the science of optics. Then he dealt in great detail with the difference in judgment as determined by sight and touch. The following excerpt will illustrate the type of problems that Berkeley presented:⁴²

92 In order to disentangle our minds from whatever prejudices we may entertain with relation to the subject in hand, nothing seems more apposite than the taking into our thoughts the case of one born blind, and afterwards, when grown up, made to see....

93 It is certain that a man actually blind, and who had continued so from his birth, would by the sense of feeling attain to have ideas of upper and lower....

94 But then, whatever judgments he makes concerning the situation of objects are confined to those only that are perceivable by touch. All those things that are intangible and of a spiritual nature, his thoughts and desires, his passions, and in general all the modifications of the soul, to these he would never apply the terms upper and lower except only in a metaphorical sense....For a man born blind, and remaining in the same state, could mean nothing else by the words higher and lower than a greater or lesser distance from the earth: Which distance he would measure by the motion or application of his hand or some other part of his body.

Berkeley continued his New Theory of Vision with several conditions that would be observed by the man upon first attaining his sight. He later quoted verbatim the question of Molyneux from Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding, then gave his reaction to the problem:⁴³

133 Now, if a square surface perceived by touch be of the same sort with a square surface perceived by sight, it is certain the blind man here mentioned might know a square surface as soon as he saw it: It is no more but introducing into his mind by a new inlet an idea he has been already well acquainted with. Since, therefore, he is supposed to have known by his touch that a cube is a body terminated by square surfaces, and that a sphere is not terminated by square surfaces: upon the supposition that a visible and tangible square differ only in numero it follows that he might know,

⁴² George Berkeley, Essay towards a New Theory of Vision (in The Works of George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne, ed. A. A. Luce. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946), I, 209.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 225-26.

by the unerring mark of the square surfaces, which was the cube, and which not, while he only saw them. We must allow therefore either that visible extension and figures are specifically distinct from tangible extension and figures, or else that the solution of this problem given by those two thoughtful and ingenious men is wrong.

In his conclusions, Berkeley agreed with Locke and Molyneux that the man born blind, then being made to see, would not be able to distinguish between the sphere and the cube by sight alone.

The complete Essay towards a New Theory of Vision is a scientific and philosophical treatise which has been important to the development of modern thought. Its publication in 1709 brought the first indication of Berkeley's breaking away from the philosophy of Locke.⁴⁴ Naturally Berkeley's new ideas received criticism. So in 1733, Berkeley published a short tract entitled The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained, in which he defended his theory of vision as well as defending the usefulness and necessity of thinking. Berkeley also referred to the famous case of a man, blind from his birth, who was given his sight by the surgical removal of his cataracts. The doctor, William Cheselden, F.R.S., Surgeon to Her Majesty and to St. Thomas's Hospital, reported the reactions of the man on first being able to see to be the same as Berkeley had proposed in his theory. The Irish philosopher concluded his tract by stating his pleasure that this experience had upheld an idea which he had deduced by reasoning.⁴⁵

These selections from Berkeley's writings can be seen to relate to

⁴⁴ Bonamy Dobrée, English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 276.

⁴⁵ Berkeley, The Theory of Vision Vindicated and Explained, op. cit., pp. 275-76.

the excerpts from the last part of Diderot's Lettre sur les aveugles.

There Diderot stated the Molyneux problem in his own words:

...On suppose un aveugle de naissance qui soit devenu homme fait, et à qui on ait appris à distinguer, par l'attouchement, un cube et un globe de même métal et à peu près de même grandeur, en sorte que quand il touche l'un et l'autre, il puisse dire quel est le cube et quel est le globe. On suppose que, le cube et le globe étant posés sur une table, cet aveugle vienne à jouir de la vue; et l'on demande si en les voyant sans les toucher il pourra les discerner et dire quel est le cube et quel est le globe(Lettre sur les aveugles, p. 128).

Diderot then discussed various reactions to the problem, after which he indicated the limits of his analysis of the problem:

La question de l'aveugle-né, prise un peu plus généralement que M. Molineux ne l'a proposée, en embrasse deux autres que nous allons considérer séparément. On peut demander: 1^o si l'aveugle-né verra aussitôt que l'opération de la cataracte sera faite; 2^o dans le cas qu'il voie, s'il verra suffisamment pour discerner les figures; s'il sera en état de leur appliquer sûrement, en les voyant, les mêmes noms qu'il leur donnait au toucher; et s'il aura démonstration que les noms leur conviennent(Lettre sur les aveugles, p. 132).

Diderot next explained the position of those who said that the blind man would not be able to see at first, in which he cited the Cheselden case:

On ajoute à ces raisonnements les fameuses expériences de Cheselden. Le jeune homme à qui cet habile chirurgien abaissa les cataractes ne distingua, de longtemps, ni grandeurs, ni distance, ni situations, ni même figures. Un objet d'un pouce mis devant son oeil, et qui lui cachait une maison, lui paraissait aussi grand que la maison. Il avait tous les objets sur les yeux; et ils lui semblaient appliqués à cet organe, comme les objets du tact le sont à la peau. Il ne pouvait distinguer ce qu'il avait jugé rond, à l'aide de ses mains, d'avec ce qu'il avait jugé angulaire; ni discerner avec les yeux si ce qu'il avait senti être en haut ou en bas, était en effet en haut ou en bas. Il parvint, mais ce ne fut pas sans peine, à apercevoir que sa maison était plus grande que sa chambre, mais nullement à concevoir comment l'oeil pouvait lui donner cette idée.(Lettre sur les aveugles, pp. 133-34).

In answer to his first question as to whether the man born blind will see as soon as the operation is done, Diderot concluded that experience of at least two months would be necessary for the eye to distinguish anything, but that touch would not be necessary for the practice of the

eye (Lettre sur les aveugles, pp. 138-39). To his second question as to whether the man, if he sees, will be able to give the same name to things upon seeing them as he gave to them by touching, Diderot gave a complicated answer. He said that it depended on the type of person who was doing the judging. An uneducated person, unaccustomed to reasoning, would probably see no relationship between what he saw and what he had previously experienced only by touch. A philosopher with his questioning mind would study the objects carefully, but conclude that he had no certain knowledge to make the decision. But a mathematician would approach the problem in another manner:

Si nous substituons un géomètre au metaphysicien, Saunderson à Locke, il dira comme lui que, s'il en croit ses yeux, des deux figures qu'il voit, c'est celle-là qu'il appelait carré, et celle-ci qu'il appelait cercle: "car je m'aperçois, ajouterait-il, qu'il n'y a que la première où je puisse arranger les fils et placer les épingles à grosse tête, qui marquaient les points angulaires du carré; et qu'il n'y a que la seconde à laquelle je puisse inscrire ou circonscrire les fils qui m'étaient nécessaires pour démontrer les propriétés du cercle. Voilà donc un cercle! voilà donc un carré..." (Lettre sur les aveugles, p. 142).

Diderot continued his analogy of the superior judgment of the geometrician in figuring out the names of the things he saw for the first time. Then he concluded the Lettre sur les aveugles with a declaration that mankind knows almost nothing in comparison with the wealth of knowledge which there is to be learned (Lettre sur les aveugles, pp. 144-46).

Diderot basically disagreed with the solution of Locke and Molyneux, which Berkeley had upheld, that the man born blind, then being made to see, would not be able to distinguish the sphere from the cube. Diderot believed that a relationship existed between the sense of touch and the sense of sight. He admitted that there would be much difficulty in recognizing many objects; but as to the sphere and the cube, it would be

possible to distinguish between them by the sight alone.

Locke, Shaftesbury, and Berkeley have been the three English authors which this chapter has included as influencing Diderot's writing during his bold years (1743-49). Locke's basic philosophy that knowledge comes from sensation and reflection assumed that a mental and a material world exist over against one another.⁴⁶ As a disciple of Locke, Shaftesbury continued the materialistic philosophy and emphasized the importance of the senses. But Shaftesbury departed from Locke's idea that nothing is innate, when he described man as a naturally virtuous creature.⁴⁷ Shaftesbury believed that to do the virtuous act brought tranquility to man since that was his natural state, while to do the vicious act brought unhappiness. In opposition to Locke and Shaftesbury, Berkeley developed an immaterialistic philosophy which declared that nothing had existence except in the mind of man. Berkeley and his followers were called idealists. In his attacks on Shaftesbury's ideas in 1732, Berkeley gained considerable fame for himself.⁴⁸ In this philosophic debate, Diderot sided with the materialistic school of thought, as seen by his comment in the Lettre sur les aveugles, in which he stated that the idéalisme of Berkeley should be denounced (Lettre sur les aveugles, p. 114).

Of all the English influences on Diderot during his early years, Shaftesbury's was the greatest. Through his close study of Shaftesbury's Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times and his translation of

⁴⁶Sir A.W. Ward and A.R. Waller, The Age of Johnson (Vol. X of The Cambridge History of English Literature. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1961), p. 326.

⁴⁷Cru, op. cit., p. 122.

⁴⁸Dobrée, op. cit., p. 274.

An Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit, Diderot became so engrossed with the ideas of Shaftesbury that this Englishman's influence can be found even in Diderot's later writings.

CHAPTER III

ENGLISH INFLUENCE DURING THE CAUTIOUS YEARS

In 1745 Diderot was asked to assist in the translation of Chamber's Cyclopoedia. Diderot had gained his reputation as an English translator from his translation of Temple Stanyan's History of Greece (1743) and his translation of Dr. Robert James' Medicinal Dictionary (six volumes, 1744-46). The idea of the Encyclopédie grew until it became envisioned as a much larger project than the translation of the five volumes of Ephraim Chambers' Cyclopoedia or Universal Dictionary of the Arts and Sciences, which had been published in England (1728-29). With Diderot and d'Alembert as editors, the Encyclopédie was to include all the knowledge of the world, a project conceived in the spirit of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626).

In the "Discours préliminaire" of the first volume of the Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers published in 1751, Diderot and d'Alembert attributed to Sir Francis Bacon the inspiration for the project. The editors stated that while the war against philosophy was being carried on by its adversaries, philosophy took refuge in the works of a few great men who in the shadows and the silence were preparing the light by which the world should be enlightened little by little. Then they continued:⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Diderot and d'Alembert, "Discours préliminaire", Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (Paris: Chez Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751), I, xxiv.

A la tête de ces illustres personnages, doit être placé l'immortel Chancelier d'Angleterre, François Bacon, dont les Ouvrages si justement estimés, et plus estimés pourtant qu'ils ne sont connus, méritent encore plus notre lecture que nos éloges. A considérer les vûes saines et étendues de ce grand homme, la multitude d'objets sur lesquels son esprit s'est porté, la hardiesse de son style qui réunit par-tout les plus sublimes images avec la précision la plus rigoureuse, on seroit tenté de le regarder comme le plus grand, le plus universel, et le plus éloquent des Philosophes. Bacon né dans le sein de la nuit la plus profonde, sentit que la Philosophie n'étoit pas encore, quoique bien des gens sans doute se flatassent d'y exceller; car plus un siècle est grossier, plus il se croit instruit de tout ce qu'il peut savoir. Il commença donc par envisager d'une vûe générale les divers objets de toutes les Sciences naturelles; il partagea ces Sciences en différentes branches, dont il fit l'énumération la plus exacte qu'il lui fût possible: il examina ce que l'on savoit déjà sur chacun de ces objets, et fit le catalogue immense de ce qui restoit à découvrir: c'est le but de son admirable Ouvrage de la dignité et de l'accroissement des connoissances humaines.

As this tribute to Chancellor Bacon indicates, Sir Francis Bacon had held high positions under the reign of James I, who succeeded Elizabeth I to the throne of England in 1603.

Despite his busy career, Bacon managed to write. As a young man he had instigated a grandiose scheme for renovation of the sciences, which he outlined in The Great Instauration. A classification and survey of all the existing sciences was published in 1605 under the title, Advancement of Learning. Then, in 1620, Bacon published the Novum Organum, in which he expounded his experimental method, for which his name is famous. Bacon fell from his high position in government as a result of his enemies in Parliament accusing him of accepting bribes. Exiled from the court, Bacon was free to continue his writing and experimentation during his last years.⁵⁰

*The spelling, accents, and punctuation of the Encyclopédie have been preserved.

⁵⁰ Edwin A. Burt, The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 3.

Another evidence of Bacon's influence on the Encyclopédie is found in the presentation of the "Système général de la Connaissance Humaine suivant le Chancelier Bacon" in the preface to the Encyclopédie.⁵¹ His system of knowledge was printed along with a system of knowledge which the Encyclopédie would follow in the light of discoveries made since Bacon's time.

Diderot again borrowed ideas from Bacon in the article entitled "Art", which is found in the first volume of the Encyclopédie. In his Novum Organum, Bacon had expressed the problems involved in experimentation. For one thing, men have been accustomed to accept vague and ill-digested experience in place of orderly experiment based on careful observation.⁵² Compounding this difficulty is the opinion that the dignity of man is debased by experimentation, and therefore the true path to knowledge is "rejected with disdain" (Aphorism lxxxiii, Novum Organum, pp. 57-58). Following a Latin quotation from this second aphorism, Diderot continued his commentary in the article, "Art":⁵³

...Préjugé qui tendoit à remplir les villes d'orgueilleux raisonneurs et de contemplateurs inutiles, et les campagnes de petits tyrans ignorans, oisifs et dédaigneux. Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'ont pensé Bacon, un des premiers génies de l'Angleterre; Colbert un des plus grand ministres de la France; enfin les bons esprits et les hommes sages de tous les tems.

⁵¹Diderot and d'Alembert, op. cit., pp. li-lij.

⁵²Sir Francis Bacon, Novum Organum (in The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill, ed. and trans. Edwin A. Burt. New York: Random House, 1939), aphorism lxxxii, pp. 56-57. Hereafter, quotations from Novum Organum will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

⁵³Denis Diderot, "Art", Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (Paris: Chez Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751), I, 714.

Bacon also believed that mechanical experiments were of greatest value as shown by an aphorism in which he stated that there is a scarcity of knowledge about the mechanical arts because the mechanic does not trouble himself with anything beyond his immediate work. Bacon declared that upon experimentation in this field depended the advancement of knowledge in the mechanical arts (Aphorism xcix, Novum Organum, p. 69). Diderot based the following quotation on this idea of Bacon's that the mechanical arts were the most important branch of philosophy:⁵⁴

...Bacon regardoit l'histoire des arts mécaniques comme la branche la plus importante de la vrai Philosophie; il n'avoit donc gardé d'en mépriser la pratique. Colbert regardoit l'industrie des peuples et l'établissement des manufactures, comme la richesse la plus sûre d'un royaume.

Throughout the years of working on the Encyclopédie in accordance with Bacon's challenge to pursue the study of the mechanical arts, Diderot went into the factories and shops of Paris to learn the mechanics of their machines in order to draw diagrams and illustrations for the plates to be printed in the Encyclopédie. Study of these plates shows that Diderot was meticulous to the last detail. As the son of an artisan, he found the contacts which he made with working men most satisfactory.⁵⁵ His admiration and respect for his father extended to all those people who were skilled with their hands and who followed a useful trade.

Diderot borrowed material from various sources for his articles in the Encyclopédie. Cru stated that much of the material which Diderot used in articles on philosophy, even that from English works, came through the Latin work, Historia Critica Philosophiae by Jacob Brucker, member of the

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Cru, op. cit., pp. 253-54.

Royal Society of Berlin.⁵⁶ Diderot also borrowed from the dictionaries of Bayle and of Chambers.

An example of an article partly taken from Chambers is the one about butter. Chambers had a wry sense of humor similar to Bayle or Voltaire as shown in the discussion of the history of butter. Chambers stated that the historian Stockius had wondered if Abraham knew butter and if it might not have been the food with which he treated the angels.⁵⁷ Diderot enjoyed this whimsical idea so much that he used it in his article, "Beurre", in the second volume of the Encyclopédie:⁵⁸

...Stockius écrivit un volume assez gros,...où il traite de l'origine et des phénomènes du beurre. Il a recherché si le beurre étoit connu du tems d'Abraham, et si ce n'étoit pas le mets avec lequel il traita les Anges;...

Diderot included much more technical information in his article, "Beurre", than Chambers had in his article, "Butter". For, in addition to the historical development, Diderot described all the ways currently in use for making butter.⁵⁹

Diderot did not hesitate to borrow freely from his own translation of Robert James' Medicinal Dictionary and from portions of Chambers' Cyclopaedia which John Mills had translated.⁶⁰ The pressures of haste and secrecy under which the last ten volumes were written caused him to take shortcuts which he might not have done, if the work could have

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 257.

⁵⁸ Diderot, "Beurre", op. cit., II, 218.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 261.

⁶⁰ Cru, op. cit., p. 263.

progressed as planned.⁶¹

Another element of English influence on the Encyclopédie is seen in the article, "Génie", in Volume VII. Diderot's praise of Shakespeare as a man of genius is expressed in the following quotation:⁶²

...Le sublime et le génie brillent dans Shakespear comme des éclairs dans une longue nuit...

Further on in the article Diderot made a comparison between Locke and Shaftesbury in which his great admiration for Shaftesbury is evident:⁶³

Il y a peu d'erreurs dans Locke et trop peu de vérités dans milord Shafsterbury (sic): le premier cependant n'est qu'un esprit étendu, pénétrant, et juste; et le second est un génie du premier ordre. Locke a vu; Shafsterbury a créé, construit, édifié: nous devons à Locke de grandes vérités froidement aperçues, méthodiquement suivies, séchement annoncées, et à Shafsterbury des systèmes brillans, souvent peu fondés, pleins pourtant de vérités sublimes; et dans ses momens d'erreur, il plaît et persuade encore par les charmes de son éloquence.

In the rest of the article, Diderot discussed at great length the attributes of genius and the various forms it manifests.

Other Englishmen influenced the formulation of the Encyclopédie. They were Hobbes with his emphasis on the part the state plays in human society, Locke with his emphasis on tolerance and the importance of the senses, and Newton with his theory of gravitation which discarded the physics of Descartes.⁶⁴

In 1754, Diderot published a philosophical study of science,

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 284.

⁶² Diderot, "Génie", Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers (Paris: Chez Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1757), VII, 582.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 583.

⁶⁴ Wright, op. cit., p. 54.

Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature. In the form as well as the title, he had borrowed from Bacon's Novum Organum, which was subtitled "True Directions concerning the Interpretation of Nature". Diderot apparently studied Bacon's writing as well as other philosophical sources and made notes of his reactions. Cru pointed out several parallels between Bacon and Diderot's writing.⁶⁵ For example, Diderot opened his Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature with "Jeune homme, prends et lis".⁶⁶ This paralleled the Ad Filios which Bacon liked to use. In the preface to Novum Organum, Bacon made a plea that the two tribes of philosophers be "bound together by mutual service; -- let there in short be one method for the cultivation, another for the invention, of knowledge" (Novum Organum, p. 26). Diderot developed this same idea in the first paragraph of his Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature, in which he proposed:

...L'intérêt de la vérité demanderait que ceux qui réfléchissent daignassent enfin s'associer à ceux qui se remuent, afin que le spéculatif fût dispensé de se donner du mouvement; que le manoeuvre eût un but dans les mouvements infinis qu'il se donne; que tous nos efforts se trouvassent réunis et dirigés en même temps contre la résistance de la nature; et que, dans cette espèce de ligue philosophique, chacun fît le rôle qui lui convient (Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature, pp. 177-78).

Bacon compared the men who make experiments to the ant that collects and uses things; the men who reason he compared to spiders that make their webs from their own substance. Then he compared the purpose of philosophy

⁶⁵ Cru, op. cit., pp. 195-202.

⁶⁶ Diderot, Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature, op. cit., p. 175. Hereafter, quotations from Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

to the activity of the bee:

...But the bee takes a middle course, it gathers its materials from the flowers of the garden and of the field, but transforms and digests it by a power of its own...(Aphorism xcv, Novum Organum, p. 67).

From this analogy of Bacon's, Diderot adapted his famous comparison of the search for truth being like a bee collecting honey in its hive:

...Tout se réduit à revenir des sens à la réflexion, et de la réflexion aux sens: rentrer en soi et en sortir sans cesse. C'est le travail de l'abeille. On a battu bien du terrain en vain, si on ne rentre pas dans la ruche chargée de cire. On a fait bien des amas de cire inutile, si on ne sait pas en former des rayons(Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature, p. 185).

Both Bacon and Diderot resembled the bee in their continual process of observing, reflecting, and synthesizing. Each writer outlined more for others to do than he was able to attempt himself. Concerning Diderot, Cru made the following analysis of the reason that the philosophe could never be a specialist in sciences or any other field:⁶⁷

...Being interested in everything, he could not devote his life to any one particular pursuit, be it ethics, or chemistry or physiology, or the arts and crafts, or mathematics, or literature.

This characteristic of Diderot led him into his next project of writing two plays and two critical essays concerning the theater.

From his early days in Paris, Diderot had been an enthusiast for the theater. He even stated that he contemplated being an actor at one time and committed long portions of Racine and Corneille to memory.

During the early years of Diderot's friendship with Rousseau, the two young men were enthusiastic playgoers.⁶⁸ This interest finally caused

⁶⁷ Cru, op. cit., p. 204.

⁶⁸ Josephe Texte, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature (trans. J. W. Matthews. London: Duckworth and Co., New York: The Macmillan Company, 1899), p. 128.

Diderot to write two plays, le Fils naturel (1757) and le Père de famille (1758). The plays were not too successful, as has been explained in Chapter I,⁶⁹ but the essays which he published along with the plays became quite influential.⁷⁰

In the Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, the three conversations which followed le Fils naturel, Diderot expounded three major reforms for the theater. The first was a demand for more realism. The stage settings should be made more realistic and spectators should not be allowed to sit on the stage, thus marring the effect of reality.⁷¹ This greater realism would also allow Diderot's second reform to be realized -- the creation of domestic and bourgeois tragedy for the French theater. The conversations were written as though Dorval, the chief character of the play, and Diderot are having a discussion. In the second conversation, Diderot asked Dorval what type of drama he would call the play, Sylvie, a one-act tragedy in prose written by Paul Landois. Dorval made the following reply:⁷²

La tragédie domestique et bourgeoise. Les Anglais ont le Marchand de Londres et le Joueur, tragédies en prose. Les tragédies de Shakespeare sont moitié vers et moitié prose. Le premier poète qui nous fit rire avec de la prose, introduisit la prose dans la comédie. Le premier poète qui nous fera pleurer avec de la prose, introduira la prose dans la tragédie.

But Diderot did not consider his play to be a tragédie bourgeoise. At

⁶⁹ cf. ante, p. 10.

⁷⁰ Wilson, op. cit., p. 268.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Diderot, Entretiens sur le Fils naturel (in Oeuvres esthétiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1959), p. 120. Hereafter, quotations from Entretiens sur le Fils naturel will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

the first of the third conversation, Dorval classified le Fils naturel as a new type:

Je demande dans quel genre est cette pièce? Dans le genre comique? Il n'y a pas le mot pour rire. Dans le genre tragique? La terreur, la commisération et les autres grandes passions n'y sont point excitées... Or, il me semble que ces actions étant les plus communes de la vie, le genre qui les aura pour objet doit être le plus utile et le plus étendu. J'appellerai ce genre le genre sérieux(Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, p. 136).

This genre sérieux Diderot later called le drame. In his recommended innovations, Diderot did not propose doing away with the classic unities, which he thought made sense. His own plays adhered to the unities of time, place, and action.⁷³ The third reform which Diderot proposed was to make the theater an institution for teaching morality. In the third conversation, Dorval asked what the object of a dramatic composition is, to which Diderot replied:

C'est, je crois, d'inspirer aux hommes l'amour de la vertu, l'horreur de vice(Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, p. 152).

This emphasis on a moral purpose for the drama was enlarged upon in Diderot's next essay about the theater, De la Poésie dramatique.

Shaftesbury's influence is again found in the Entretiens sur le Fils naturel. In The Moralists, Shaftesbury considered that all real love and admiration is enthusiasm:

...The Transports of Poets, the Sublime of Orators, the Rapture of Musicians, the high Strains of the Virtuosi; all mere Enthusiasm! Even Learning it-self, the Love of Arts and Curiositys, the Spirit of Travellers and Adventurers; Galantry, War, Heroism; All, all Enthusiasm!(Characteristicks, II, 400)

Diderot expressed a similar idea in the second conversation as he described what made an actor or actress great:

⁷³Wilson, op. cit., p. 268.

Les poètes, les acteurs, les musiciens, les peintres, les chanteurs de premier ordre, les grands danseurs, les amants tendres, les vrais dévots, toute cette troupe enthousiaste et passionnée sent vivement et réfléchit peu (Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, p. 104).

It is this very point of view which Diderot retracted in his later work, Paradoxe sur le comédien, which is discussed in Chapter IV.⁷⁴

In the essay, De la Poésie dramatique, which was published in 1758 with le Père de famille, Diderot presented Richardson's novels as an example of effective portrayal of pantomime:⁷⁵

C'est la peinture des mouvements qui charme, surtout dans les romans domestiques. Voyez avec quelle complaisance l'auteur de Paméla, de Grandisson et de Clarisse s'y arrête! Voyez quelle force, quel sens, et quel pathétique elle donne à son discours! Je vois le personnage; soit qu'il parle, soit qu'il se taise, je le vois; et son action m'affecte plus que ces paroles.

Just as Diderot admired the dramatic techniques which Richardson used in his novels, he also admired the techniques of the English dramatists. Lillo and Moore, whose works he had mentioned as examples of the tragédie bourgeoise in the Entretiens sur le Fils naturel. In 1760, Diderot had translated The Gamester by Edward Moore (1712-1757) under the title, le Joueur (Note, Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, p. 120). The London Merchant or the History of George Barnwell, a tragedy in prose by George Lillo (1693-1739), became the prototype of the tragédie bourgeoise in France after it was translated into French by Clément de Genève in 1748 (Note, Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, p. 90).

In his essay, De la Poésie dramatique, Diderot quoted a portion

⁷⁴ cf. post, p. 59.

⁷⁵ Diderot, De la Poésie dramatique, op. cit., p. 271. Hereafter, quotations from De la Poésie dramatique will be referred to in parentheses in the body of the thesis.

of a scene taken from The London Merchant to demonstrate Lillo's comprehension of the passions. The ill-fated London merchant, Barnwell, is in prison when his friend Truman visits him. Barnwell is explaining how his passion for Millwood, his mistress, had caused him to murder his uncle at her instigation. In fact, he continues, if she had wanted him to murder his friend Truman, he probably would have done it. Diderot was greatly impressed by the response which Lillo had the true friend make, "We have not yet embraced....Come to my arms!" Diderot commented that this was quite a response for a person to make to one who had just admitted that he would have assassinated him! (De la Poésie dramatique, pp. 254-55)

Diderot's admiration for Lillo's play was so great that he contemplated publishing an annotated edition of The London Merchant along with one of The Gamester. This idea, which he expressed in letters to Sophie Volland, was never carried out.⁷⁶

In De la Poésie dramatique, Diderot again emphasized the importance of truth and virtue as the goal of the theater. He stated:

La vérité et la vertu sont les amies des beaux-arts. Voulez-vous être auteur? voulez-vous être critique? commencez par être homme de bien. Qu'attendre de celui qui ne peut s'affecter profondément? et de quoi m'affecterais-je profondément, sinon de la vérité et de la vertu, les deux choses les plus puissantes de la nature? (De la Poésie dramatique, p. 281)

In this essay, Diderot still held the conviction that the good, the true, and the beautiful formed a united force against evil.

As Diderot had cited Richardson as a master of portraying pantomime in his novels, so he also credited him with being a master of dialogue (De la Poésie dramatique, p. 254). In fact, Diderot's enthusiasm for the

⁷⁶ Texte, op. cit., p. 141.

novels of Richardson, led him to his next experiment in writing. Samuel Richardson (1689-1767) was the son of a carpenter of Derbyshire, England, who moved his family to London soon after Samuel's birth. The family ambition to make young Richardson a clergyman did not have the backing of sufficient funds, so he was apprenticed to a printer and spent the rest of his life in the printing business. In 1739, two of his printer friends asked him to write a volume of letters as a guide to proper living to be circulated among country readers. As a result, the two volumes of the novel, Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded, was published in 1740. Then in 1747-48, the seven volumes of Clarissa, or The History of a Young Lady were published. After the great success of this novel, the women of England urged Richardson to write the life of an ideal man. Richardson hesitated to undertake this task; but his rival, Henry Fielding, had written a complete portrait of a man, Tom Jones, and had satirized Pamela in his novel, Joseph Andrews. Goaded by this competition, Richardson finally produced the seven volumes of The History of Sir Charles Grandison in 1753-54.⁷⁷ By his emphasis on morality, Richardson's desire to preach was realized in his novels. Their popularity was widespread despite the criticisms of some readers.

Diderot and Rousseau would read and discuss Richardson's novels. They read them from the translations of the Abbé Prévost, which had been published in France --Pamela (1741-42), Clarissa Harlowe (1751), and Grandison (1754). Prévost had reduced Richardson's material by almost a third and left out details and episodes that would offend the French

⁷⁷Will and Ariel Durant, The Age of Voltaire (The Story of Civilization: Part IX. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), pp. 188-92.

taste. This abridgement gave offense to Richardson, but it made a more readable version for the French public.⁷⁸ Richardson had used the epistolary form, in which all the story unfolds as from letters written by the characters of the novels. This form created more intimate psychological analysis and pathos. Both Rousseau and Diderot wept or raged at the sad trials of Richardson's characters.

Commonly Pamela (1740) had been named as the first English novel by literary historians, but Bonamy Dobrée pointed to Defoe's Moll Flanders (1722) as marking the birth of the modern novel.⁷⁹ No doubt Richardson learned a great deal from Defoe's way of delineating character, his manner of dialogue, and his minute description of events.⁸⁰ The repeated gestures in Richardson's novels, as well as his emphasis on proper costume for his women characters, show the additional influence of stage productions of his time.⁸¹

By these characteristics of Richardson's writing, Diderot was influenced in the creation of his epistolary novel, La Religieuse, written in 1760. A young woman of illegitimate birth is forced to enter a convent by her parents, who wish to insure that the two legitimate daughters will not have her as a rival for the inheritance. After years of unhappiness and inability to adjust to cloistered living, the Sister Suzanne petitions the Parlement to be released from her vows. Richardson's

⁷⁸ Texte, op. cit., pp. 161-64.

⁷⁹ Dobrée, op. cit., p. 424.

⁸⁰ John Robert Moore, "Daniel Defoe: Precursor of Samuel Richardson", Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature (ed. Charles Carroll Camden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 354.

⁸¹ Leo Hughes, "Theatrical Convention in Richardson: Some Observations on a Novelist's Technique", Ibid., pp. 240-44.

influence is apparent in the heroine's self-analysis, which arouses the sympathy of the reader. Diderot used detail, but not so tediously as Richardson. Rather than using straight description, Diderot painted tableaux which leave indelible scenes in the reader's memory. Diderot's portrayal of sexual deviation in the convent dramatized his conviction that human beings were never intended to live in such a separated condition. He revised his manuscript carefully in 1780, but never dared to publish it.⁸²

The author of "one of the most peculiar books in all the history of literature"⁸³ was the English parson, Laurence Sterne (1713-1768). Diderot was influenced both by Sterne's novel and by his personal friendship. After the hardships and poverty of his youth, Sterne, aided by a scholarship, earned his degree at Cambridge in 1737. A lung hemorrhage in 1736 indicated the beginning of his struggle with tuberculosis. He was ordained as an Anglican priest in 1738 and given a modest vicarage. His marriage in 1741 proved to be unhappy. During a time of domestic turmoil in 1759, Sterne wrote the first two volumes of The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy and published them anonymously in 1760. He continued writing sequels until the ninth volume was finally published in January, 1767. In his attempt to conquer the consumption which plagued him, Sterne traveled in France and Italy. His little book about his travels, A Sentimental Journey, was published just a month before his death on March 18, 1768.⁸⁴

⁸²Crocker, op. cit., pp. 264-68.

⁸³Durant, op. cit., p. 790.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 787-90.

It was during these travels that Sterne and Diderot became friends. They first met in January, 1762, at the home of the baron d'Holbach. Sterne had no difficulty adjusting to the anticlerical group that frequented d'Holbach's home. By the middle of April, Sterne was reading a rough translation of Diderot's Fils naturel, which Diderot planned to send to Garrick for an English production. It is not known what Sterne told Diderot, but he wrote Garrick that the play was "too sentimental, wordy, and didactic for his taste".⁸⁵ Sterne, however, did take the play with him to England, where it was finally published in 1767 by Dodsley as Dorval, or the Test of Virtue. Each of the four times that Sterne passed through Paris in his travels, he was welcomed by Diderot and the philosophes. The last visit was in June, 1766, as Sterne was returning to London.⁸⁶

The use which Sterne made of the opposing hypotheses which dominated embryology in his day formed much of the humor in the first part of Tristram Shandy. The ovists and animalculists controversy had many facets. The animalculists contended that the spermatozoa had all the parts of the body perfectly formed, therefore the mother's contribution to conception was of small importance in comparison to the father's. Whereas the ovists maintained that the discovery of the mammalian egg by de Graaf made the mother's contribution most important to conception.⁸⁷ This dispute, used

⁸⁵ Alice Green Fredman, Diderot and Sterne (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁸⁷ Louis A. Landa, "The Shandean Homunculus: The Background of Sterne's Little Gentleman", Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature (ed. Charles Carrol Camden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), pp. 51-57.

by Sterne for humor in Tristram Shandy, was no doubt influential to Diderot's thinking in his Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot and his Rêve de d'Alembert, written in 1769. The interest of both writers in the scientific and emotional reality of sex was a part of their following Locke and Bacon in the challenge to take all knowledge as their province.

Laurence Sterne ranked Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding with the Bible as the books that had affected him most.⁸⁸ Locke had credited Bacon with introducing the idea that it is necessary for the mind and understanding to be put to better use. Both Locke and Bacon thought that a person can know his inner self; and by knowing himself can find his true relationship to reality. Locke attacked the traditional dualist view that the mind is independent of the body. Sterne in Tristram Shandy compared the body and mind to a jerkin and a jerkin's lining. He pointed out that if you rumple one, you will rumple the other.⁸⁹ Sterne used the comic and satirical to show how opinions rise; he conducted his readers into other people's minds and demonstrated Locke's opinion that the ideas in men's minds govern the whole person.⁹⁰ He also dramatized Locke's concern that when man tries to understand what he cannot understand, he loses his way in this world.⁹¹

The immediate influence of Sterne on Diderot was seen in the novel, Jacques le Fataliste, which Diderot patterned after Tristram Shandy. Diderot used the same type of rambling dialogue, full of digressions,

⁸⁸ Ernest Tuveston, "Locke and Sterne", Reason and Imagination (ed. Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 255.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 260.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 264.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 277.

that Sterne had used. Both Trim (Tristram) and Jacques were wounded in the knee. In Tristram Shandy, Trim said, "King William was of an opinion, an' please your honour, that everything was predestined for us in this world; insomuch, that he would often say to his soldiers, that 'every ball had its billet'."⁹² While in Jacques le Fataliste, Jacques told his master, "Mon capitaine ajoutait que chaque balle qui partait d'un fusil avait son billet."⁹³ Repeatedly throughout the book, Jacques explains "que tout ce qui nous arrive de bien et de mal ici-bas était écrit là-haut."⁹⁴ Towards the end of his novel, Diderot borrowed a long paragraph from Tristram Shandy concerning the circumstances of Trim's love affair with Beguine.⁹⁵ Before he adapted the paragraph to the love affair of Jacques and Denise, Diderot inserted the following acknowledgement:⁹⁶

Voici le second paragraphe, copié de la vie de Tristram Shandy, à moins que l'entretien de Jacques le Fataliste et de son maître ne soit antérieur à cet ouvrage, et que le ministre Sterne ne soit le plagiaire, ce que je ne crois pas, mais par une estime toute particulière de M. Sterne, que je distingue de la plupart des littérateurs de sa nation, dont l'usage assez fréquent est de nous voler et de nous dire des injures.

Alice Fredman pointed out in her book, Diderot and Sterne, that neither writer regarded it a crime to use the works of others. They both took the work of someone else at times and used it to lead to the creation of something original.⁹⁷

⁹²Laurence Sterne, The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1925), p. 458.

⁹³Denis Diderot, Jacques le Fataliste (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), p. 25.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁶Diderot, op. cit., p. 271.

⁹⁵Sterne, op. cit., pp. 464-65.

⁹⁷Fredman, op. cit., pp. 4-5.

Twenty-four years after his imprisonment at Vincennes, the philosophe could look back over the activities of his most productive years with some feeling of accomplishment. He had seen the Encyclopédie to completion despite the suspension of privilege in 1759. He had published his Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature in 1754, which had been inspired by his close study of Bacon's writings. For his greatest literary satisfaction, he had published two plays and seen them performed. He had developed his ideas about the theater in two dramatic criticisms -- Entretiens sur le Fils naturel and De la Poésie dramatique. He had written an epistolary novel, La Religieuse, influenced somewhat by the style of Richardson, whom he greatly admired. Then he had turned to Sterne's Tristram Shandy as a model for his next novel, Jacques le Fataliste. Diderot did not publish La Religieuse, Jacques le Fataliste, or Le Neveu de Rameau and other writings which came from his fertile imagination, for, while he was determined to write freely, he was extremely careful to avoid confrontations with authority that might once again put his freedom in jeopardy.

Through these years Diderot had remained an ardent admirer of English thought and customs, although he was aware that the government and morality of England were not perfect and were subject to human error. He had borrowed freely from English sources for articles in the Encyclopédie. He had especially followed Bacon's thought and spirit in his scientific and technological studies. Admiration for the English dramatists, Lillo and Moore, had led Diderot to try a new type of drama in France. Then his enthusiasm for English novels, especially those of Richardson and Sterne, had encouraged him to try writing some novels of

his own. And the influence of Shaftesbury continued to be seen throughout Diderot's cautious years.

CHAPTER IV

ENGLISH INFLUENCE DURING THE LAST DECADE

When Diderot returned from St. Petersburg in September, 1774, he had aged considerably from the rigors of the long journey. He looked forward philosophically to the "great voyage" of death which was ahead of him. His friends were aging also and life took on a calmer aspect. But he kept busy reading, thinking, and writing when he was not able to talk long and earnestly with friends, which was his chief pleasure.

During the trip to Russia, Diderot had studied the manuscript of Helvétius' book, De l'Homme, for which he felt compelled to write a refutation. The tax collector, Claude-Adrian Helvétius (1715-1771) of Swiss origin, was motivated by a desire for notoriety which alarmed his philosophe friends. His publication of l'Esprit in 1758 had added oil to the flame of the anti-philosophic party, which was enraged at the seventh volume of the Encyclopédie. Since his father, who had served as physician to the queen, had saved the life of Louis XV as a child, Helvétius was only required to retire to his estate for two years as a penalty for writing a scandalous and licentious book.⁹⁸ He did not publish any more books, but restated his views in the treatise, De l'Homme, which was published posthumously in 1774.⁹⁹ Diderot finished writing his Réfuta-

⁹⁸ Durant, op. cit., p. 681.

⁹⁹ John Morley, Diderot and the Encyclopaedists (2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), II, 151.

tion suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme in 1775, but it was not published until a century later in 1875. Diderot refuted and modified many of Helvétius' propositions. For example, Helvétius had stated that each person is born equal and only his experience determines what he will become. Diderot presented his belief in the Réfutation that each individual is born with different tendencies which will be developed by education and experience. He argued:¹⁰⁰

...En un mot, je voudrais bien savoir comment l'intérêt, l'éducation, le hasard, donnent de la chaleur à l'homme froid, de la verve à l'esprit réglé, de l'imagination à celui qui n'en a point. Plus j'y rêve, plus le paradoxe de l'auteur me confond. Si cet artiste n'est pas né ivre, la meilleure instruction ne lui apprendra jamais qu'à contrefaire plus ou moins maussadement l'ivresse.

Diderot then gave examples of men whose original work distinguished them greatly from all others. He used Shakespeare as one illustration:

...Si Shakespeare est un original, est-ce dans ses endroits sublimes? Aucunement; c'est dans le mélange extraordinaire, incompréhensible, inimitable, de choses du plus grand goût et du plus mauvais goût, mais surtout dans la bizarrerie de celles-ci. C'est que le sublime par lui-même, j'ose le dire, n'est pas original; il ne le devient que par une sorte de singularité qui le rend personnel à l'auteur; il faut pouvoir dire: C'est le sublime d'un tel. Ainsi: qu'il mourût, est le sublime de Corneille; Tu ne dormiras plus, est le sublime de Shakespeare. J'ai beau laver ces mains, j'y vois toujours du sang; ce vers est de moi, mais le sublime est de l'auteur anglais (Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme, pp. 578-79).

In his Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme, Diderot also praised Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). Diderot admired the materialism of the English philosopher but was repelled by his moral

¹⁰⁰ Durant, op. cit., p. 690.

¹⁰¹ Diderot, Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme, (in OEuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Éditions Garnier Frères, 1964), p. 577. Hereafter, quotations from Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme will be referred to in the body of the thesis.

and political ideas. In his discussion of Helvétius' statement, "Sentir c'est juger", Diderot commented:

Descartes avait dit: "Je pense, donc j'existe".

Helvétius veut qu'on dise: "Je sens, donc je veux sentir agréablement."

J'aime mieux Hobbes qui prétend que pour tirer une conséquence qui menât à quelque chose, il fallait dire: "Je sens, je pense, je juge, donc une portion de matière organisée comme moi peut sentir, penser, et juger" (Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme, p. 564).

The later philosophy of Locke had overshadowed that of Hobbes. In reaction to Hobbes' belief that an absolute monarchy is the best kind of government for self-seeking and antisocial mankind to fulfill his highest goal of self-preservation, Locke compared the peace of Hobbes' state to the peace of a dungeon. Hobbes had also stimulated much of the thinking of Shaftesbury, who sought to refute Hobbes' idea that man is basically selfish and vicious.¹⁰² Diderot held opinions similar to Locke and Shaftesbury about the political and moral philosophy of Hobbes, but found his materialistic ideas concerning man's condition to be worth considering.

Another work which shows considerable English influence is the Paradoxe sur le comédien, which Diderot finished writing in 1778. Diderot had changed his opinion about the qualities that make an actor great somewhere between writing his Entretiens sur le Fils naturel in 1757 and writing in 1770 an observation on a pamphlet entitled "Garrick or the English Actors", which had been translated from the English by Antonio Sticoti, actor. Diderot's commentary was published in Grimm's Correspondance littéraire in 1770. Whereas Diderot had first maintained that

¹⁰² "Hobbes", Encyclopaedia Britannica (1964 ed.), XI, 566-67.

true greatness of an artist was determined by his sensibilité, he declared in 1770 that sensibilité leads to mediocrity of genius.¹⁰³

The man most responsible for changing Diderot's opinion about the qualities of greatness in an actor was David Garrick (1717-1779), the famous English actor, director, and playwright. Garrick's own writing, his revival of Shakespeare's plays, and his natural method of acting have entitled him to an important place in the history of English drama.¹⁰⁴ It was Garrick's visit to Paris from the fall of 1763 to the spring of 1764, that caused Diderot to change his point of view.¹⁰⁵ When Garrick gave his three famous scenes from Shakespeare for his French audiences, they hailed his acting ability to be greater than anything they had seen in the French theater. For his French admirers, Garrick performed the ghost scene from Hamlet, the dagger scene from Macbeth, and a scene portraying King Lear's madness.¹⁰⁶

Diderot started his essay, Paradoxe sur le comédien, in 1772. It was in this essay that Diderot related Garrick's opinion concerning the difference between the French and English theater:¹⁰⁷

...Cependant comme il n'y a presque rien de commun entre la manière

¹⁰³ Frederick Charles Green, Diderot's Writings on the Theater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 241.

¹⁰⁴ Ward and Waller, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁰⁵ Frank A. Hedgecock, David Garrick and his French Friends (London: Stanley Paul and Co., n.d.), p. 213.

¹⁰⁶ Margaret Barton, Garrick (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 176.

¹⁰⁷ Diderot, Paradoxe sur le comédien (in Œuvres esthétiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1959), pp. 304-05.

d'écrire la comédie et la tragédie en Angleterre et la manière dont on écrit ces poèmes en France; puisque, au sentiment même de Garrick celui qui sait rendre parfaitement une scène de Shakespeare ne connaît pas le premier accent de la déclamation d'une scène de Racine; puisque enlacé par les vers harmonieux de ce dernier, comme par autant de serpents dont les replis lui étouffent la tête, les pieds, les mains, les jambes et les bras, son action en perdrait toute sa liberté:....

Garrick was a craftsman who studied continually the tools of his trade.

He understood the different techniques that were necessary to portray either Racine or Shakespeare's works.

The personal qualities of David Garrick included a wit and vivacity which almost exhausted the people he encountered. He was a short man, well-proportioned, and naturally graceful. His large dark eyes, his expressive mouth and cheeks, and all his facial and bodily agility allowed him to portray any emotion instantly and believably. In a conversation concerning Garrick's premature aging, Dr. Samuel Johnson once commented that Garrick's face had had twice the activity of any other person's, so naturally it would wear out from lack of rest.¹⁰⁸ The ability of Garrick to express many emotions so convincingly that his audience was held spell-bound was described by Diderot in the Paradoxe sur le comédien:

Garrick passe sa tête entre les deux battants d'une porte, et, dans l'intervalle de quatre à cinq secondes son visage passe successivement de la joie folle à la joie modérée, de cette joie à la tranquillité, de la tranquillité à la surprise, de la surprise à l'étonnement, de l'étonnement à la tristesse, de la tristesse à l'abattement, de l'abattement à l'effroi, de l'effroi à l'horreur, de l'horreur au désespoir, et remonte de ce dernier degré à celui d'où il était descendu. Est-ce que son âme a pu éprouver toutes ces sensations et exécuter, de concert avec son visage, cette espèce de gamme? Je n'en crois rien, ni vous non plus... (Paradoxe sur le comédien, p. 328).

Diderot was delighted to meet an actor who was capable of using gestures

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Ernest Short, Introducing the Theater (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949), p. 302.

to interpret the intention of the playwright. Although Garrick did not use excessive gestures and was a constant student of the natural expression of character, Frank A. Hedgcock maintained that it could be said that Garrick "helped to urge the drame bourgeois down the natural slope which was to carry it into the excesses of melodrama."¹⁰⁹

The paradoxe which Diderot observed in the talented performance of David Garrick was the ruling position of the intelligence over the emotions. Every expression and gesture was studied in advance to portray the desired emotion. The actor who is carried away by his emotion loses his judgment and self-possession. The great actor has no sensibilité, Diderot decided. He maintained:

...La sensibilité n'est guère la qualité d'un grand génie. Il aimera la justice; mais il exercera cette vertu sans en recueillir la douceur. Ce n'est pas son coeur, c'est sa tête qui fait tout. A la moindre circonstance inopinée, l'homme sensible la perd; il ne sera ni un grand roi, ni un grand ministre, ni un grand capitaine, ni un grand avocat, ni un grand médecin(Paradoxe sur le comédien, p. 310).

While the audience is being moved to tears or to horror, the great actor is not feeling the emotion which he is portraying, but merely doing from memory the actions that will produce the desired effect. The actor who depends upon feeling the emotion which he is portraying will give a good performance only when he is in the proper mood. After discussing this paradox at length, Diderot restated his opinion:

...J'insiste donc, et je dis: "C'est l'extrême sensibilité qui fait les acteurs médiocres; c'est la sensibilité médiocre qui fait la multitude des mauvais acteurs; et c'est le manque absolu de sensibilité qui prépare les acteurs sublimes"(Paradoxe sur le comédien, p. 313).

Garrick never commented on a copy of Diderot's essay which a friend sent

¹⁰⁹ Hedgcock, op. cit., p. 406.

to him in 1773. No doubt he had mixed feelings about Diderot's analysis of him being a person of no sensibilité.¹¹⁰

After his stay in Paris, Garrick made this observation about the French people in a letter to a Danish friend:¹¹¹

...Their politesse has reduced their character to such a sameness, and their humors and passions are so curbed by habit, that when you have seen half a dozen French men and women you have seen the whole. In England every man is a distinct being, and requires a distinct study to investigate him; it is from this great variety that our comedies are less uniform than the French, and our characters more strong and dramatic.

It was this variety in the English theater that appealed to Diderot and caused him to admire Lillo, Moore, Shakespeare, and Garrick for a realism in the drama which French taste had not yet accepted.

Diderot's contribution to the theater of his day was not very important, but through his dramatic criticism he foresaw the trend of the coming generation, whose strong current of social action and realism related to Diderot's theory that the drama should glorify private virtues and domestic life.¹¹²

The influence of Shaftesbury's naturalism persisted throughout Diderot's life. Even in his last decade a parallel to Shaftesbury's thought can be found. For Diderot continued to believe in the unity of the good, the true, and the beautiful.¹¹³ In The Moralists, Shaftesbury had stated that a balance is sought in the affairs of Europe, so why should not a balance of passions be sought by mankind. He continued:

... we shou'd then see Beauty and Decorum here, as well as elsewhere

¹¹⁰ Barton, op. cit., p. 178.

¹¹² Morley, op. cit., I, 310.

¹¹¹ Hedgcock, op. cit., pp. 243-44.

¹¹³ Ibid., I, 63.

in Nature; and the Order of the Moral World wou'd equal that of the Natural. By this the Beauty of Virtue wou'd appear; and hence the Supreme and Sovereign Beauty, the Original of all which is Good or Amiable(Characteristicks, II, 294).

Diderot adopted this idea and used it many times. For example, in his Pensées détachées sur la peinture (1781), he expressed these thoughts: ¹¹⁴

La beauté n'a qu'une forme. Le beau n'est que le vrai, relevé par des circonstances possibles, mais rares et merveilleuses...Le bon n'est que l'utile, relevé par des circonstances possibles et merveilleuses.

Diderot also believed that all art should be a lesson in morality for the spectator and that truth and harmony of nature were always enchanting. ¹¹⁵

Despite Diderot's criticism of England's war against the colonies and his observation of injustices carried on within Great Britain, ¹¹⁶ he realized the great contribution of English writers to modern thought and was always ready to expound upon the subject in his conversation and in his writing. His acknowledgement of the original genius of Shakespeare and his preference for Hobbes' materialistic view of man appeared in the Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme. Also his indebtedness to Garrick for his ideas about acting was frankly stated in the Paradoxe sur le comédien.

¹¹⁴ Diderot, Pensées détachées sur la peinture (in OEuvres esthétiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1959), pp. 830-31.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 765.

¹¹⁶ Cru, op. cit., p. 66.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In comparison with the great amount of writing which Diderot did and the wealth of material available about Diderot and his times, this thesis includes only a small introduction to the study of this French philosophe. In the area of English influence, only the most obvious sources have been explored. The analysis could be greatly enlarged.

From the many impressions received during the study of Diderot's life, his cosmopolitan spirit was perhaps the most striking. For Diderot found himself fascinated by all types of knowledge from all sources. His boundless curiosity, encouraged by his excellent education under the Jesuits in Langres and his studies in Paris, gave him the basis for his wide interests. His mastery of English and Italian allowed him to do translations from those languages. His thinking expanded as he read widely from German and English philosophers. His admiration of the art of the Italian masters gave him a desire to travel to Italy to see the original paintings and sculptures to be found there. Despite these cosmopolitan interests, Diderot did not like to travel and made only one journey out of France -- the famous trip to visit Catherine II of Russia in 1773-74. The philosophe enjoyed his contacts with foreigners visiting in Paris and was greatly influenced by such English visitors as Hume, Sterne, and Garrick. Friendships with the German writers, Grimm and d'Holbach, and with the Swiss writers, Rousseau and Helvétius, also demonstrated Diderot's cosmopolitan spirit. The French writer, Jean

Baudry, summarized well this trait of Diderot, when he wrote, "C'est le premier, chez nous, qui ait une tête vraiment européenne."¹¹⁷

Other impressions gained from the study of Diderot's life include a realization of his sense of responsibility towards his family and friends, his steadiness under attack from the opposition to the Encyclopédie, his sensitivity to the people around him, his ability to synthesize and grasp the trend of coming developments, and his humanistic search for the good, the true, and the beautiful. Diderot did not feign perfection and was aware of his human weaknesses, so that in his honesty as well as his persistent admiration of virtue, he was an "homme de bien".

In another culture, such as Germany or England, Diderot might not have felt compelled to take an atheistic position. Since the absolutism of the Catholic tradition in France tolerated no Protestant movements, the chief avenue of dissent was that of deism or atheism. Diderot admitted that his atheistic ideas were rejected by his heart. It was this struggle between heart and head, between his bourgeois temperament and his rebellious mind that causes Diderot's writing to be so contradictory and confusing. His rationalism led him to atheism, materialism, and anarchy, while his sentimentalism led him to moralizing, humanitarianism, and defense of property rights. When he faced a practical problem, his bourgeois sense of propriety more often overruled his sense of revolt.¹¹⁸

Of the many sources which Diderot read and studied, the influence

¹¹⁷ Jean Baudry, L'OEuvre de Diderot (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1966), p. 8.

¹¹⁸ Crocker, op. cit., p. 347.

of English authors on his thinking and writing was certainly outstanding and possibly dominant. During Diderot's bold years (1743-49), the philosophic ideas of the third Earl of Shaftesbury exerted the greatest influence on Diderot's development. After translating Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit (1745), Diderot used many ideas from Shaftesbury's works in the Pensées philosophiques (1746) and the Promenade du sceptique (1747). In his Lettre sur les aveugles (1749), Diderot drew from the works of Locke and Berkeley as well as from the Elements of Algebra by the mathematician, Saunderson.

During Diderot's cautious years (1749-74), Sir Francis Bacon's tree of knowledge and challenge to delve into all truth formed part of the inspiration for the Encyclopédie, which demanded most of Diderot's time and energy from 1745 to 1772. Other English influence found in the Encyclopédie came from Locke, Newton, Hobbes, Shaftesbury, and Shakespeare. Borrowings from Chambers' Cyclopaedia and James' Medicinal Dictionary can also be included as English influence. In Diderot's Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature (1754), Bacon's influence can be seen in both form and content. English influence in the Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, published along with Diderot's first play, le Fils naturel (1757), is indicated by Diderot's admiration of The London Merchant by Lillo and The Gamester by Moore. These English plays led Diderot to recommend domestic or bourgeois tragedies in prose to be developed in France. In the Entretiens sur le Fils naturel, Diderot also used the idea of Shaftesbury that all greatness comes through the passion of enthusiasm and that a great artist feels deeply and reflects little. In Diderot's next dramatic criticism, De la Poésie dramatique, published with his second play, le

Père de famille (1758), Diderot quoted a scene from The London Merchant to illustrate Lillo's comprehension of the passions. He also praised Richardson's description of pantomime and his use of dialogue in his novels. This enthusiasm of Diderot for Richardson's novels influenced the form and style of La Religieuse (1760), Diderot's epistolary novel about a mistreated young nun with pathos similar to that found in Richardson's Pamela and Clarissa Harlowe. Diderot patterned his next novel, Jacques le Fataliste (1773), after Sterne's Tristram Shandy. Thus one can see how varied were the sources of English influence on Diderot during his cautious years.

During his last decade, Diderot continued to write new works and to revise earlier ones. In his Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme (1773-75), Diderot praised Shakespeare as an original genius and Hobbes as having a better philosophy concerning reality than either Descartes or Helvétius. In Diderot's Paradoxe sur le comédien (1773-78), the philosophe expressed the belief that it required a complete lack of sensibilité to become a sublime actor. By this he meant that the intelligence must be in complete control of the emotions at all times. Observations of Garrick's acting and conversations with Garrick in 1763-64 had caused Diderot to reconsider his opinion about the qualities of greatness in an actor. After observing the famous English actor's ability to portray any emotion instantly and after reading a pamphlet about Garrick in 1769, Diderot revised his idea that intense sensibilité was the chief attribute to greatness. In fact, he stated that sublime genius required complete lack of sensitivity. Diderot realized that this analysis excluded him from the category of great genius, because his sensibilité was

too highly developed. However, he preferred being a sensitive person, he maintained, because he felt that the language of the heart was much more varied than the language of the mind. He felt that a person who has only intellectual genius misses many of the delights which life offers. Diderot might have added that the insensitive person does not suffer as intensely as the sensitive one. In reviewing Diderot's life and works, a question arises as to whether the delights of his life balanced with the sufferings.

Just as Diderot had compared himself to a weather vane which changes direction with the force of the wind, so his writings appear varied and contradictory. In this variety, the reader of Diderot is forced to think about all the realms of knowledge -- scientific, philosophic, esthetic, and political. And in each of these areas of study, some English influence will be detected, for Diderot maintained his Anglomania throughout his life, altering his opinions as he was led to change by experience or observation.

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A paperback edition of two novels by Diderot, published with a preface by Michel Hérubel. La Religieuse is an epistolary novel inspired by Diderot's admiration of Richardson's novels.

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A letter which discusses the psychology of the blind along with Diderot's reaction to the Molyneux problem. After its publication in 1749, Diderot was imprisoned on charges of supporting atheism.

. Paradoxe sur le comédien. In Oeuvres esthétiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1959. Pp. 299-381.

A dramatic criticism which Diderot wrote in 1773-78, that was not published until 1830. It contains Diderot's ideas about the theater, which include his belief that a sublime actor has no sensitivity.

. Pensées philosophiques. In Oeuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964. Pp. 9-49.

A collection of thoughts which were published in 1746. In this work Diderot borrowed freely from the writings of Shaftesbury.

. Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature. In Oeuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964. Pp. 175-244.

A commentary on science published in 1754. In this work Diderot was greatly influenced by Bacon's writing.

. Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé l'Homme (extraits). In Oeuvres philosophiques, ed. Paul Vernière. Paris: Editions Garnier Frères, 1964. Pp. 563-620.

A refutation of Helvétius' book, De l'Homme, in which Diderot wrote of Shakespeare's originality and Hobbes' materialistic ideas of man. Diderot finished this work in 1775, but it was not published until 1875.

B. OTHER BOOKS USED

Anthony, Earl of Shaftesbury. A Letter concerning Enthusiasm. In Vol. I of Characteristicks of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times. London: James Purser in Bartholemew-Close, 1737. Pp. 1-55.

A discussion of the negative and positive aspects of the passion of enthusiasm.

. An Inquiry concerning Virtue and Merit. In Vol. II of Characteristicks of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times. London: James Purser in Bartholomew-Close, 1737. Pp. 1-176.

A discussion of morality, which Diderot translated in 1745.

. The Moralists: a Philosophical Rhapsody. In Vol. II of Characteristicks of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times. London: James Purser in Bartholomew-Close, 1737. Pp. 177-443.

A work written in dialogue form, a style which Diderot used many times in his writings.

. Miscellaneous Reflections on the said Treatises, and other Critical Subjects. In Vol. III of Characteristicks of Men, Manner, Opinion, Times. London: James Purser in Bartholomew-Close, 1737. Pp. 1-344.

Additional commentary and explanations of ideas which Shaftesbury had previously discussed in earlier writings.

Barton, Margaret. Garrick. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949. Pp. 174-179.

A biography of the famous English playwright, actor, and director, David Garrick. The part concerning his visits in Paris showed his influence on Diderot.

Baudry, Jean. L'OEuvre de Diderot, Extraits. Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1966. 118 pp.

A paperback edition of extracts from Diderot's works with commentary by Jean Baudry, a professor at Strasbourg. The book contains chronological tables of Diderot's private life, his works, contemporary historical events, and literary and artistic events in France and the rest of Europe paralleling those of Diderot.

Burt, Edwin A. (ed.). The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill. New York: Random House, 1939. Pp. 1-123.

Translations from the Latin by Edwin A. Burt of The Great Instauration and Novum Organum, works of Bacon which are included in a compilation of works of English philosophers.

Cresson, André. Diderot: Sa Vie, Son OEuvre. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1949. 130 pp.

The life and works of Diderot with an exposé of his philosophy.

Crocker, Lester G. The Embattled Philosopher. The Michigan State College Press, 1954. 436 pp.

A biography of Denis Diderot, written in an exciting yet scholarly style. Diderot is presented in all his inconsistency, with a sympathetic interpretation of his life and writing.

Cru, R. Loyalty. Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought. New York: Columbia University Press, 1913. 489 pp.

A scholarly study of the influences of English thought on Diderot.

"Diderot", Grand Larousse encyclopédie en dix volumes (1961 ed.), IV, pp. 69-70.

An article about Diderot's life and work, which has pictures accompanying it.

Dobrée, Bonamy. English Literature in the Early Eighteenth Century. Vol. VII of The Oxford History of English Literature. Edited by F. P. Wilson and Bonamy Dobrée. Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1959. Pp. 274-76, 424.

A study of English literature from 1700 to 1740, a part of the study of English literature from before the Norman Conquest through modern times. The volumes are published separately rather than as a unit.

Durant, Will and Ariel. The Age of Voltaire. Part IX of The Story of Civilization. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965. 798 pp.

A history of civilization in Western Europe from 1715 to 1756, with special emphasis on the conflict between religion and philosophy.

Fellows, Otis E. and Norman L. Torrey (ed.). The Age of Enlightenment. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1942. Pp. 206-333.

An anthology of Eighteenth-Century French Literature which includes introductory notes and biographies of the authors.

Fraser, Alexander Campbell. Berkeley and Spiritual Realism. London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1908. 84 pp.

An interpretation of Berkeley's life and philosophy.

Fredman, Alice Green. Diderot and Sterne. New York: Columbia University Press, 1955. 210 pp.

A study of Diderot and Sterne which was written for the author's degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Columbia University.

Green, Stanley. Shaftesbury's Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. Ohio University Press, 1967. 263 pp.

A study of the life and philosophy of the third Earl of Shaftesbury, which the author subtitled "A Study in Enthusiasm".

Green, Frederick Charles. Diderot's Writings on the Theatre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936. Pp. 227-242.

A scholarly discussion of Diderot's ideas about the theater as shown in his works.

Guérard, Albert Leon. The Life and Death of an Ideal. New York: George Braziller, 1956. 346 pp.

A study of France in the Classical Age -- 1500 to 1815 -- in which the ideal was "One Faith, One Law, One King".

Guyot, Charly. Diderot par lui-même. Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1953. 180 pp.

A study of Diderot's life as revealed in his writings with many reproductions of portraits, paintings, and pages of Diderot's writing.

Havens, George R.. The Age of Ideas. New York: The Free Press, 1955. Pp. 293-370.

A study of the period from reaction to revolution in eighteenth-century France, which includes four chapters about Diderot.

Hedgcock, Frank A.. David Garrick and his French Friends. London: Stanley Paul and Co., n.d.. Pp. 213-41.

A biographical study of David Garrick which tells of the contact of Garrick with Diderot in Paris.

"Hobbes", Encyclopaedia Britannica (1964 ed.), XI, 566-67.

An article about Thomas Hobbes with commentary concerning his philosophy of government, morality, and materialism.

Hughes, Leo. "Theatrical Convention in Richardson: Some Observations on a Novelist's Technique", Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Edited by Charles Carroll Camden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963. Pp. 239-250.

A collection of essays in honor of Alan Dugald McKillop of Rice University at Houston, Texas. This essay about Richardson described the technique which Diderot so greatly admired in Richardson's novels.

Landa, Louis A.. "The Shandean Homunculus: The Background of Sterne's 'Little Gentleman'", Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Edited by Charles Carroll Camden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963. Pp. 49-68.

This essay discussed the dispute between the ovists and animalculists in the science of embryology in Diderot and Sterne's time. It was this dispute that Sterne used for humor in Tristram Shandy.

Locke, John. "Of Perception", Essay concerning Human Understanding. In vol. I of The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes. London: C. Baldwin, Printer, 1824. P. 124.

Locke stated the problem which Molyneux had written to him concerning the man born blind, then being made to see, which Berkeley and Diderot discussed in their writing.

Luce, A. A. and T. E. Jessop (ed.). Essay towards a New Theory of Vision and Theory of Vision Vindicated. In vol. I of The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948. Pp. 143-279.

The writing of Berkeley which Diderot had studied before writing his Lettre sur les aveugles.

Moore, John Robert. "Daniel Defoe: Precursor of Samuel Richardson", Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Edited by Charles Carroll Camden. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963. Pp. 351-369.

This essay points out influences of Defoe on Richardson's writing.

- Morley, John. Diderot and the Encyclopaedists. 2 vols. London: Macmillan and Co., 1891. Vol. I, 365 pp. Vol. II, 351 pp..
An interesting and scholarly analysis of Diderot's life, work, and times.
- Short, Ernest. Introducing the Theatre. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1949. 343 pp.
A history of the theater along with a discussion of the factors which make for "good theatre". Diderot's paradox and the English actor, Garrick, are included.
- Sterne, Laurence. The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1925. 526 pp.
The novel by Sterne which was the model for Diderot's novel, Jacques le Fataliste.
- Texte, Joseph. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature. Translated by J. W. Matthews. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1899. Pp. 89-291.
A study of the literary relations between France and England during the eighteenth century.
- Tuveston, Ernest. "Locke and Sterne", Reason and Imagination. Edited by Joseph Anthony Mazzeo. New York: Columbia University Press, 1962. Pp. 255-77.
Studies in the history of ideas from 1600 to 1800, published in honor of Marjorie Hope Nicolson. This essay shows the influence of Locke's writing on the thinking of Sterne.
- Ward, Sir A. W. and A. R. Waller (ed.). From Steele and Addison to Pope and Swift. Vol. IX in The Cambridge History of English Literature. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1962. 462 pp.
A comprehensive commentary on English literature during the first half of the eighteenth century.
- _____. The Age of Johnson. Vol. X in The Cambridge History of English Literature. Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1961. 463 pp.
A comprehensive commentary on English literature during the last half of the eighteenth century.
- Wilson, Arthur McCandless. Diderot: The Testing Years, 1713-1759. New York: Oxford University Press, 1957. 346 pp.
A biography of Diderot written for the general reader and the specialist, covering the first forty-six years of Diderot's life.
- Wright, C. H. Conrad. "Diderot and the Encyclopedia", A History of French Literature. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1912. Pp. 536-45.
A survey of French literature from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. It includes a chapter concerning Diderot.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF DIDEROT'S MAIN WORKS*

COMPOSITION DATE		PUBLICATION DATE
1745	<u>Principes de philosophie morale ou Essai sur le mérite et la vertu, par Mylord S***</u> , <u>traduit de l'anglais</u>	1745
1746	<u>Pensées philosophiques</u>	1746
1747	<u>Promenade du sceptique</u>	1830
1747	<u>De la Suffisance de la religion naturelle</u>	1770
1748	<u>Les Bijoux indiscrets</u>	1748
1748	<u>Mémoires sur différens sujets de mathématiques</u>	1748
1749	<u>Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient</u> . .	1749
1750	<u>Prospectus de l'Encyclopédie</u>	1750
1746-65	<u>Encyclopédie, tomes I-XVII; Planches, tomes I-V</u>	1751-65
1765-72	<u>Encyclopédie, Planches, tomes VI-XI</u>	1772
1765-77	<u>Encyclopédie, Suppléments, tomes I-V</u>	1777
1751	<u>Recherches philosophiques sur l'origine et la nature du beau</u> (article "Beau")	1751
1751	<u>Lettre sur les sourds et muets à l'usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent</u>	1751
1752	<u>Suite de l'Apologie de M. l'abbé de Prades</u>	1752
1754	<u>Pensées sur l'interprétation de la nature</u>	1754
1753-57	<u>Le Fils naturel ou les épreuves de la vertu</u>	1757
1758	<u>Le Père de famille</u>	1758

* This table has been adapted from the table in Appendix II, pp. 480-83, of R. L. Cru's book, Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought, which is listed in the Bibliography.

COMPOSITION DATE		PUBLICATION DATE
1759	<u>Salon de 1759</u>	1813
1761	<u>Salon de 1761</u>	1819
1763	<u>Salon de 1763</u>	1857
1765	<u>Salon de 1765</u> -- <u>Essais sur la peinture</u>	1795
1767	<u>Salon de 1767</u>	1798
1769	<u>Salon de 1769</u>	1819
1771	<u>Salon de 1771</u>	1857
1775	<u>Salon de 1775</u>	1857
1781	<u>Salon de 1781</u> -- <u>Pensées détachées sur la peinture</u>	1857
1759-74	<u>Lettres à Mademoiselle Volland</u>	1830
1760	<u>Le Joueur</u> , drame imité de l'anglais	1819
1760	<u>La Religieuse</u>	1796
1761	<u>Eloge de Richardson</u>	1762
1773	<u>Jacques le Fataliste et son maître</u>	1796
1762-73	<u>Le Neveu de Rameau</u> -- German translation by Goethe	1805
	-- translated from the German, by De Saur	1821
	-- from the manuscript, by M. Monval	1891
1765-69	<u>Lettres à Mademoiselle Jodin</u>	1821
1766-73	<u>Lettres à Falconet</u> (thirteen letters published)	1831
1767	<u>Lettre historique et politique sur le commerce de la</u> <u>librairie</u>	1861
1769	<u>Entretien entre d'Alembert et Diderot.</u> <u>Le Rêve de d'Alembert. Suite de l'entretien.</u>	1830
1770	<u>Les deux amis de Bourbonne</u>	1773
1772	<u>Regrets sur ma vieille robe de chambre</u>	1772
1772	<u>Supplément au Voyage de Bougainville</u>	1796

COMPOSITION DATE		PUBLICATION DATE
1773-78	<u>Paradoxe sur le comédien</u>	1830
1773	<u>Entretien d'un père avec ses enfants</u>	1773
1773-75	<u>Réfutation suivie de l'ouvrage d'Helvétius intitulé</u> <u>l'Homme</u>	1875
1775-76	<u>Plan d'une Université pour le gouvernement de Russie</u> . .	1875
1776	<u>Entretien d'un philosophe avec la Maréchale de * * *</u> . .	1776
1778	<u>Essai sur la vie de Sénèque le philosophe, sur ses</u> <u>écrits, et sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron.</u>	1778
	(Second edition, much enlarged).	1782
1781	<u>Est-il bon? est-il méchant?</u>	1834