

THE CASE FOR THE  
ENLIGHTENMENT

*Scotland and Naples 1680–1760*

JOHN ROBERTSON



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## *Contents*

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
1 The case for the Enlightenment	I
2 Scotland and Naples in 1700	52
3 The intellectual worlds of Naples and Scotland 1680–c.1725	94
4 The predicament of ‘kingdoms governed as provinces’	147
5 Vico, after Bayle	201
6 Hume, after Bayle and Mandeville	256
7 The advent of Enlightenment: political economy in Naples and Scotland 1730–1760	325
Conclusion: the Enlightenment vindicated?	377
<i>Bibliography</i>	406
<i>Index</i>	439

## CHAPTER I

### *The case for the Enlightenment*

By the end of the twentieth century, the Enlightenment was beleaguered. In the eyes of many philosophers as well as of a wider, educated public this eighteenth-century movement of ideas was still regarded as having laid the intellectual foundations of the modern world. By its confidence in the power of human reason, its commitment to individual freedom of expression against clerical or royal tyranny, and its optimistic assumption that these were the values that would improve the human condition everywhere, it was believed to have inspired and justified the nineteenth- and twentieth-century achievements of industrialisation, liberalism, and democracy. But this lay-philosophical view of the Enlightenment easily acquired another, darker face. For the Enlightenment was also charged with fostering ideals, of rationalism, universalism, and human perfectibility, to which could be traced the modern world's greatest evils. The charge was pressed particularly by those who held the Enlightenment responsible for the violence of the French Revolution, which followed so quickly upon it. In this perspective it was argued that Nazi genocide, Western imperialism, and Soviet communism all had their intellectual origins in the Enlightenment. Not surprisingly, it became increasingly fashionable to conclude that if this was where the Enlightenment had led the modern world, it was time to repudiate it, and to create a postmodern world on new intellectual foundations. The Enlightenment stood condemned as a misguided 'project' to establish a single, universal, rational standard of morality.<sup>1</sup> Against it, postmodernists argued that different cultures should be left to determine their own ends, and refused to discriminate morally or politically between them. At best the Enlightenment had been one of those cultures, peculiar to

<sup>1</sup> The concept of an 'Enlightenment project' appears to have been coined by Alasdair MacIntyre, in *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory* (London, 1981), esp. chs. 4–6. MacIntyre's definition of the 'project' was strictly philosophical, as 'the project of an independent rational justification of morality' (p. 38); subsequent usages have often been much more expansive.

eighteenth-century Europe; it was a terrible mistake ever to have accepted its claims to universal significance.

The crisis of the Enlightenment was compounded by the shifting interests of scholars themselves. As criticism of the 'Enlightenment project' gathered force, it seemed that scholars were less and less able to say what the Enlightenment had been. Thirty years earlier, they too had understood it in straightforward terms. The Enlightenment was identified principally with a group of French philosophers, the *philosophes*, who, along with a few curious foreign visitors, gathered in Paris in the middle decades of the eighteenth century to talk and to write about ways of improving the world. While the subjects which the *philosophes* discussed were many and varied, they shared and expounded a common set of intellectual values, prominent among which were reason, humanity, liberty, and tolerance. The Enlightenment, in other words, had existed in a certain time and place, was identified with a particular group of men, and was characterised by specific ideas. Since the 1960s, however, virtually all of these assumptions have been questioned. The Enlightenment has been extended far beyond France, and has been associated with a wider range of intellectual interests than those which formed the staple of the Paris *salons*. Still more scholarly energy has been devoted to writing its social history, enlarging our knowledge of its institutional and cultural contexts, doing justice to the contribution of women, and giving credit to the part played by its publishers and booksellers.

Not surprisingly, the result of all this activity was to open an ever-widening gulf between the public idea of the Enlightenment and that of the scholars. The clichés of the former had come to seem seriously misleading, and sometimes downright false. But instead of simply correcting popular error, the scholars themselves suffered a crisis of confidence. Faced with the mounting complication of their accounts of the Enlightenment, and the disagreements which ensued, many were inclined to conclude that a single, cohesive account of the Enlightenment could no longer be written. The loss of confidence was especially marked in English-language scholarship. The last major synthesis in English was Peter Gay's *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, published in two volumes in 1966 and 1969.<sup>2</sup> Even though it sought to combine a social with an intellectual history of the Enlightenment, Gay's work was immediately found wanting by Robert Darnton.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation*, 2 vols. 1: *The Rise of Modern Paganism*; II: *The Science of Freedom* (New York, 1966–9).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Darnton, 'In search of the Enlightenment: recent attempts to create a social history of ideas', *Journal of Modern History*, 43 (1971), 113–32.

Very soon Gay's insistence on the unities of the Enlightenment had come to seem either irrelevant or untenable in the face of a new emphasis on its diversity. The demands of textbook publishing did eventually ensure that short, single-volume studies of the Enlightenment reappeared in the 1990s. But if their authors still wrote of 'the' Enlightenment, they now did so in a loose and inclusive way, characterising it as a series of debates and concerns, rather than as a unified intellectual movement.<sup>4</sup> More ambitious but even more accurately reflective of the fragmented state of Enlightenment studies has been the series of dictionaries and encyclopaedias devoted to the subject. These now exist in English, German, French, and Italian, the largest as well as the most recent being the four-volume *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* (2003).<sup>5</sup> With scholars from all over the world contributing their specialist expertise to entries in these volumes, it seems that pluralism has triumphed. The monolithic edifice which the lay-philosophic view holds responsible for modernity has crumbled; but in its place scholars have refashioned Enlightenment as a postmodern kaleidoscope of diversity and difference. *The Enlightenment is dead; but many Enlightenments may yet flourish.*

By far the most powerful scholarly exponent of this position has been John Pocock. Pocock first made the case for a distinct 'conservative Enlightenment' in the early 1980s, referring particularly to eighteenth-century England, but extending its reach to include the moderate Protestant

<sup>4</sup> Dorinda Outram's *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995) was apparently the first textbook on the subject written in English for almost thirty years, since Norman Hampson's *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth, 1968). (It was narrowly preceded by Ulrich Im Hof, *The Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1994), but this was translated from German.) Outram has been followed by Thomas Munck, *The Enlightenment: a Comparative Social History 1721–1794* (London, 2000), where the Enlightenment is defined as 'an attitude of mind, rather than a coherent system of beliefs' (p. 7). But as the subtitle indicates, Munck is not attempting to give an intellectual history of the Enlightenment; and he resists its fragmentation more than most. Two shorter, pamphlet-length introductions are Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (London, 1990; second edn 2001), and Margaret C. Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston and New York, 2001). Porter was an early and always enthusiastic proponent of diversity. A thoughtful contrast to these, which continues to take the ideas of the Enlightenment seriously while recognising that a comprehensive textbook is now impossible to write, is Edoardo Tortarolo, *L'Illuminismo. Ragioni e dubbi della modernità* (Rome, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Beginning with J. W. Yolton and others (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1991), and continuing through W. Schneiders (ed.), *Lexikon der Aufklärung* (Munich, 1995), to Vincenzo Ferrone and Daniel Roche (eds.), *L'Illuminismo. Dizionario storico* (Rome and Bari, 1997), French translation: *Le Monde des Lumières* (Paris, 1999), and M. Delon (ed.), *Dictionnaire européen des lumières* (Paris, 1997), before culminating (for the moment), in A. C. Kors (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, 4 vols. (New York and Oxford, 2003). For comment on the significance of the phenomenon: Tortarolo, *L'Illuminismo*, p. 12, and Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'New approaches towards a history of the Enlightenment: can disparate perspectives make a general picture?', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, 29 (2000), pp. 171–6.

philosophers of contemporary Scotland and north Germany.<sup>6</sup> A preoccupation with the difference of England continues to drive Pocock's enquiries;<sup>7</sup> but his most recent and eloquent statement of his case, in *The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon*, ranges much further. Here not only is English Enlightenment set off against that of the French *philosophes*; other major contexts for the intellectual formation of Gibbon are identified in a Socinian Enlightenment, itself with English and Swiss variants, and in the 'Utrecht Enlightenment', whose adherents took their cue from the peace settlement of 1713 to defend a conception of Europe as a 'system of states' regulated by commercial interest rather than confessional allegiance. Pocock acknowledges that there was 'a process of Enlightenment' (in the singular) at work across the multiple Enlightenments with which he is concerned; but he insists that a process must be grounded in specific historical contexts, national or other, and that accordingly it is only in the plural that Enlightenments can be understood by the historian. There can no longer be any question of studying 'the Enlightenment', with the definite article.<sup>8</sup>

To some observers, the new pluralism of the scholars is itself a sufficient response to those who have equated the Enlightenment with a single doctrinaire 'project'. Historians, they point out, have shown that there was no such thing.<sup>9</sup> Taking the point, some of the Enlightenment's critics have been willing to temper their hostility and draw distinctions. Richard Rorty believes that the Enlightenment philosophical project, which he defines as the search for a comprehensive worldview which would replace God with nature and reason, must be discarded for good. But its political project, 'a world without caste, class or cruelty', remains valid, and ought still to be

<sup>6</sup> John G. A. Pocock, 'Clergy and commerce: the conservative Enlightenment in England', in Raffaele Ajello and others, *L'età dei lumi. Studi storici sul Settecento europeo in onore di Franco Venturi*, 2 vols. (Naples, 1985), pp. 523–62.

<sup>7</sup> For example, his contribution, 'Gran Bretagna' to Ferrone and Roche, *L'Illuminismo*, pp. 478–92.

<sup>8</sup> John G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 3 vols., to date (Cambridge, 1999–2003): 1: *The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737–1764*, p. 13: 'it is a premise of this book that we can no longer write satisfactorily of "the Enlightenment" as a unified and universal intellectual movement'; also pp. 5–10, 292–308. See also, most recently, 'The re-description of Enlightenment', Isaiah Berlin lecture, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, forthcoming. For comment, John Robertson, 'The Enlightenment of J. G. A. Pocock', *Storia della storiografia – History of Historiography*, 39 (2001), 140–51.

Another to object to the definite article has been P. N. Furbank, in *Diderot: a Critical Biography* (London, 1992), pp. 450–1. Furbank's standpoint is that of the literary critic, for whom invocation of 'the Enlightenment' draws attention only to the commonplace themes of the period, at the expense of what was particular to an individual text. His concern is with the interpretation of individual texts, not with the existence of plural Enlightenments.

<sup>9</sup> Most notably, James Schmidt, 'What Enlightenment project?', *Political Theory*, 28 (2000), 734–57, quoting Outram and Pocock with approval on p. 737; followed by an exchange with Christian Delacampagne in *Political Theory*, 29 (2001), 80–90.

pursued.<sup>10</sup> Other observers believe that the compromise with postmodern pluralism has gone much too far. As one working mainly on the twentieth century, David Hollinger argues that if intellectual history is to be of any use in trying to understand where we are today, ‘the Enlightenment is extremely difficult to avoid’. In his view its historians have done remarkably little, at least in ‘venues which count’, to resist the proliferation of ‘cardboard-character representations of the Enlightenment mind’. Intellectual historians studying the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries should by no means abandon the attempt to provide their more modern colleagues with ‘a sound and stable sense of the Enlightenment to work with’.<sup>11</sup>

Among Enlightenment scholars themselves, one or two voices have already been raised in defiance of the retreat into pluralism. Perhaps unexpectedly, one of these was Robert Darnton’s. In an essay for the *New York Review of Books* (which may, perhaps, qualify as ‘a venue which counts’) in 1997, the one-time scourge of Peter Gay upheld the existence of the Enlightenment as ‘a movement, a cause, a campaign to change minds and reform institutions’. Throughout he characterised it in the singular. The Enlightenment was ‘a concerted campaign on the part of a self-conscious group of intellectuals’ to advance certain *idées-forces*, including liberty, happiness, nature, and nature’s laws. As such the Enlightenment was not guilty of the charges now being levelled against it: of cultural imperialism on behalf of the West, of racism, of moral nihilism, or of an excessive faith in reason. It championed, rather, respect for the individual, for liberty, and for all the rights of man; it stood, in short, for progress with a small ‘p’, in an age when the pain of toothache was one of life’s most constant, pervasive blights.<sup>12</sup>

Refreshing – and well placed – as Darnton’s essay was, it has not convinced fellow scholars. There is puzzlement at the apparently very traditional terms of its argument, which seem to slight the social-historical approach to the Enlightenment of which Darnton himself has been such a distinguished exponent. It is also clear that Darnton’s is an Enlightenment

<sup>10</sup> Richard Rorty, ‘The continuity between the Enlightenment and “Postmodernism”’, in K. M. Baker and P. H. Reill (eds.), *What’s Left of Enlightenment? A Postmodern Question* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 19–36.

<sup>11</sup> David A. Hollinger, ‘The Enlightenment and the genealogy of cultural conflict in the United States’, in Baker and Reill, *What’s Left of Enlightenment?*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘George Washington’s false teeth’, originally in *The New York Review of Books* (27 March 1997), pp. 34–8; reprinted as ‘The case for the Enlightenment: George Washington’s false teeth’, in the author’s collection of essays, *George Washington’s False Teeth: an Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (New York and London, 2003), pp. 3–24.

closely linked to the American and French revolutions, which he regards, in their better parts, as its fulfilment. His is not, therefore, an Enlightenment which stands or falls on its own independent merits.

A second, much more substantial restatement of the case for the Enlightenment as a coherent intellectual movement is Jonathan Israel's 800-page *Radical Enlightenment* (2001). As its subtitle, *Philosophy and the Making of Modernity*, would indicate, Israel's claims for the Enlightenment in shaping the modern world are as high as if not higher than those of Darnton. But here the case is specifically for a 'radical' Enlightenment, occurring in the period 1650–1750, before the Enlightenment as it is conventionally thought of, which is associated with the period after 1750. In Israel's view, historians need to put much more emphasis on what was happening in the hundred years before 1750. The subsequent, so-called 'High' Enlightenment cannot compare with its radical predecessor in its impact – in the depth and extent of the changes it brought about; by the end of the 1740s, he writes, 'the real business was over'.<sup>13</sup> The importance of the early Enlightenment has been missed, according to Israel, because its most powerful and provocative intellectual force has been overlooked. This was the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza. Spinoza's ideas were already notorious by the time of his death in 1677, but their impact, Israel argues, was greatly magnified by the publication immediately afterwards, in Latin and Dutch, of his *Opera Posthuma* (1677–8), and by the debates which they provoked among his Dutch contemporaries. From the United Provinces his ideas spread outwards, through the writings of Pierre Bayle and Bernard de Fontenelle, to be discussed in France, England, Germany, and Italy. Israel does not deny the simultaneous existence of a 'moderate mainstream', whose leading spokesmen included Isaac Newton and John Locke, Newton's Dutch popularisers, and the German philosopher Christian Thomasius. But lacking the radical edge of the Spinozists, their impact, it is implied, was rather less than we have been taught to suppose.<sup>14</sup>

Israel's emphasis on the early or radical Enlightenment is not without good precedent. The classic discussion of that period's seminal significance was Paul Hazard's *La crise de la conscience européenne* (1935), in which the moment of decisive intellectual upheaval was located in the three and a half decades following 1680.<sup>15</sup> Israel acknowledges Hazard's insight, but

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 6–7.

<sup>14</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> English translation: Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680–1715* (1953; Harmondsworth, 1964).



relocates the period of the crisis to the three decades before 1680.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Israel builds on the work of scholars who have studied free-thinking, *libertinage érudit*, and irreligion in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries: Ira O. Wade and J. S. Spink in France, Margaret Jacob and Justin Champion in the Netherlands and England, Franco Venturi, Giuseppe Ricuperati, Vincenzo Ferrone, and Silvia Berti in Italy.<sup>17</sup> None of these, however, had directed the spotlight quite so emphatically on to Spinoza and his Dutch followers. Jacob had earlier made large claims for the Newtonians; Venturi had emphasised the importance of the English republicans, not all of whom were Spinozists.<sup>18</sup> Most striking, however, is the extent to which Israel's focus on Spinoza obliges him to play down the significance of Hobbes and of Bayle. Besides being an absolutist in his politics, Hobbes was 'philosophically less bold and comprehensive' than Spinoza: therefore he could not have had the latter's radical, intellectually transforming impact.<sup>19</sup> Yet Hobbes's work, as Noel Malcolm points out, was both more widely available and more generally discussed, within the mainstream as well as by radicals.<sup>20</sup> Bayle, meanwhile, is reduced to following in Spinoza's slipstream, a secret Spinozist – despite being the author of what was generally regarded as the most critical discussion of his philosophy.<sup>21</sup> In diminishing the intellectual contribution of Bayle, Israel also places less weight than he might have wished to do on the innovations by which Bayle transformed the Republic of Letters, not least

<sup>16</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 14–22.

<sup>17</sup> See the commentary by Giuseppe Ricuperati, 'In margine al *Radical Enlightenment* di Jonathan I. Israel', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 115 (1) (2003), 285–329. The works of Israel's predecessors include Ira O. Wade, *The clandestine Organisation and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1700 to 1750* (Princeton, 1938); J. S. Spink, *French Free-thought from Gassendi to Voltaire* (London, 1960); Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons, and Republicans* (London, 1981); Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: the Church of England and its Enemies 1660–1730* (Cambridge, 1992); Franco Venturi, *Saggi sull'Europa illuminista*. 1: *Alberto Radicati di Passerano* (Turin, 1954); Giuseppe Ricuperati, *L'esperienza civile e religiosa di Pietro Giannone* (Milan and Naples, 1970); Vincenzo Ferrone, *Scienza natura religione. Mondo Newtoniano e cultura italiana nel primo Settecento* (Naples, 1982), transl., *The Intellectual Roots of the Italian Enlightenment: Natural Science, Religion, and Politics in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1995); Silvia Berti (ed.), *Trattato de tre impostori. La vita e lo spirito del signor Benedetto Spinoza* (Turin, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689–1720* (Hassocks, 1976); Franco Venturi, *Utopia and Reform in the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1971).

<sup>19</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 159, 602.

<sup>20</sup> Noel Malcolm, 'Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters', in the same author's *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 457–545, discussing Israel's treatment of Hobbes on pp. 535–7.

<sup>21</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 331–41. Bayle discussed Spinoza in his article 'Spinoza' in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (Rotterdam, 1697; second edn 1702), translated in part by Richard H. Popkin, in Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary: Selections* (Indianapolis, New York and Kansas City, 1965), pp. 288–338. Israel, however, proposes to return to the relation between Spinoza and Bayle in a sequel to *Radical Enlightenment*.

his pioneering of the literary review in the *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684–7), and his subsequent use of its successors for controversial purposes.<sup>22</sup>

Yet when these features of *Radical Enlightenment* have been noted, there is no denying that Israel's is a case for the Enlightenment to be reckoned with. In mounting another case for the Enlightenment in this book, I will also be reckoning with Israel's. Here too, much attention will be given to the period before 1750: this book shares the conviction that developments between 1680 and 1740 hold the key to the intellectual history of the Enlightenment which followed. But there are also critical differences between our arguments. The most important should perhaps be indicated at the outset.

In the first place, 'the Enlightenment' as it is understood in this book remains the movement which began in the 1740s and ended in the 1790s. There is no need to go so far as to eliminate use of the terms 'pre', 'early' or even 'radical' Enlightenment to distinguish the period between 1680 and 1740; but by no means do I accept Israel's view that 'the real business was over' by the 1740s. What was over by then, in all but a few privileged enclaves, was the radical assault on the foundations of the Christian religion; it was over because the authorities, Protestant as well as Catholic, had effectively suppressed it, or at least curtailed its expression. Instead, what characterised the Enlightenment from the 1740s onwards was a new focus on betterment in this world, without regard for the existence or non-existence of the next. For such betterment to be achieved, it was indeed important that those who claimed to exercise authority in this world on the basis of their knowledge of the next should be removed to the sidelines. But intellectual effort was now concentrated on understanding the means of progress in human society, not on demolishing belief in a divine counterpart.

Underpinning this different understanding of the Enlightenment is a different assessment of its intellectual history, and of the relation it sought to develop between thought and society. It is not Spinozism which will be at the centre of this study, but the convergence between Augustinian and Epicurean currents of thinking about the nature of man and the possibility of society which occurred after 1680. This is an intellectual

<sup>22</sup> Israel surveys the learned journals, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 142–55, underlining the necessarily limited opportunities for the expression of radical ideas in their pages. He misses the way in which Bayle used them to develop the art of controversy, providing readers many decades later with a rich source for his arguments. See below, ch. 6, 'Hume, after Bayle and Mandeville', pp. 303–4 for an example.

history in which Hobbes, Gassendi, and especially Bayle will feature more strongly; but the frameworks in which Augustinian and Epicurean ideas were combined and developed were various, and claims on behalf of individual influence are not my primary concern. It will also be suggested that the Enlightenment's conception of the progress of society was intimately connected to a novel view of how men of letters should seek influence over it, by appealing to public opinion rather than to rulers and their ministers.

Finally, the present case for the Enlightenment differs from Israel's in being comparative rather than universal in scope. In Israel's *Radical Enlightenment* it is as if ideas were free to fly at will across international borders, before coming down to land more or less directly in individual minds. By contrast, this study seeks to ground the Enlightenment in specific historical contexts, the better to establish whether we can indeed still speak of one Enlightenment. Two contexts are singled out, for an explicitly comparative study: Scotland and Naples, both historically subordinate or 'provincial' kingdoms on the margins of Europe, which between them produced some of the most original thinking about man and society of the entire period from 1680 to 1790. Pocock appears to suggest that even if a process of Enlightenment can be observed in two places, the differences of context would lead to the emergence of distinct Enlightenments; by contrast, it will be the contention of this book that while Scotland and Naples were two contexts, there was only one Enlightenment.<sup>23</sup>

Before explaining the choice of contexts to study, however, I shall review in more detail the development of Enlightenment studies since they became a major scholarly preoccupation in the mid-twentieth century. It is important to see why the Enlightenment has come to seem so fragmented before an attempt is made to reconstitute it. Having offered a fresh account – or model – of the Enlightenment, I shall then outline why Scotland and Naples have been chosen to test it, and what I hope to achieve by the comparison.

<sup>23</sup> *The Case for the Enlightenment* is thus, in one of its meanings, the case that there was one Enlightenment, not several Enlightenments. I will not, however, labour the case by always placing the definite article before Enlightenment: 'Enlightenment' and 'the Enlightenment' will hereafter be used to denote the same European-wide intellectual movement. An argument that there was one Enlightenment permits but does not require use of the definite article, and I do not wish to reduce the issues involved in discussing the unity and coherence of Enlightenment thinking across different countries to a dispute over that article. A further meaning of 'the case for the Enlightenment', referring to the terms in which eighteenth-century Scots and Neapolitans framed their argument for betterment in this world, will be clarified in due course.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF LITERARY AND  
PHILOSOPHICAL SCHOLARSHIP

‘The Enlightenment’ was never simply a scholarly abstraction. It existed in the eighteenth century in three languages, as *les lumières* or *i lumi*, and as *Aufklärung*. In both its French and German denominations it was a fiercely contested concept for most of the nineteenth century, the animosities created by the French Revolution ensuring that any historical investigation of its character was bound to have an ideological charge. By contrast, it was not until the late nineteenth century that ‘Enlightenment’ came into use in English as a translation for *Aufklärung*; *l’Illuminismo* followed in the early twentieth century. In both cases the translation reflected the spread of interest in German idealist philosophy.<sup>24</sup> Gradually, this diffusion of the concept seems to have dissipated the ideological charge which it had carried, even in its original languages; as several have recently remarked, any ideological intention was muted (or at least well hidden) in Ernst Cassirer’s classic account of Enlightenment philosophy, *Die Philosophie der Aufklärung*, published in 1932.<sup>25</sup>

The Second World War was the turning point. Its immediate outcome, it is true, was a revival of the philosophical concept of *Aufklärung*, made the subject of a fierce new critique by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno in *Die Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947). Later this work would be an inspiration to the postmodern critique of Enlightenment; at the time, however, its impact was blunted by a quite different response to war and the horrors of Nazism – a turn, even a rush, to scholarship. Though not without ideological motivation, nor, in important individual cases, without roots in work begun before the war, the new turn in Enlightenment studies put scholarship first. The underlying object might be to demonstrate that France, Germany, and Italy possessed an intellectual heritage older, stronger, and utterly antagonistic to the ideals of Nazism and Fascism; but the means

<sup>24</sup> On the introduction of the term in English, see James Schmidt, ‘Inventing the Enlightenment: Anti-Jacobins, British Hegelians, and the *Oxford English Dictionary*’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 64 (2003), 421–3 – an object lesson in the dangers of relying on a dictionary for a definition of a concept.

<sup>25</sup> For an account of the Enlightenment as a concept and subject of study (as well as a prospectus for its future), Daniel Roche and Vincenzo Ferrone, ‘Postfazione’ to their *L’Illuminismo*, pp. 513–92; separately published as Vincenzo Ferrone and Daniel Roche, *L’Illuminismo nella cultura contemporanea. Storie e storiografie* (Rome and Bari, 2002). Likewise, though with most emphasis on the ideological uses of Enlightenment: Lynn Hunt with Margaret C. Jacob, ‘Enlightenment Studies’, in Kors, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*.

On Cassirer, the informative article by Johnson Kent Wright, “A bright clear mirror”: Cassirer’s *Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, in Baker and Reill, *What’s Left of Enlightenment?*, pp. 71–101; and Fania Oz-Salzberger, ‘Cassirer’s Enlightenment and its recent critics: is Reason out of season?’, in Jeffrey Barash (ed.), *Ernst Cassirer: Symbol, Science, and Culture* (Madison, Wis.: forthcoming).

chosen to demonstrate this were those of research and scholarship. Initially two approaches were dominant: the literary and the philosophical. Together they had established the existence and the reputation of the Enlightenment as a subject of historical study by the 1960s; at the beginning of the twenty-first century, both are still very much alive.<sup>26</sup>

The literary historians identified the Enlightenment almost exclusively with *les lumières*, and thus with a small circle of *philosophes* and their supporters in France. They were content, in short, to take *les lumières* at their literary face value. On this understanding the Enlightenment had consisted of a number of writers, who had made their way to Paris between the 1730s and 1780s, were admitted to the *salons* of free-thinking but well-connected women to discuss their ideas, and then or later made these ideas public in an array of books and pamphlets. Since the *salon* conversations were not recorded, it was the *philosophes'* books which were taken as defining the intellectual content of the Enlightenment. The dates of their publication also served to determine the Enlightenment's chronology. Thus the founding fathers were Montesquieu, whose *Lettres persanes* appeared in 1721, and Voltaire, whose *Lettres philosophiques* of 1734 inaugurated a stream of publications ended only by his death in 1778. The appearance of Montesquieu's masterpiece, *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) narrowly preceded the earliest works of the second, central generation of *philosophes*: the great, collaborative *Encyclopédie*, edited by Diderot and D'Alembert, whose publication began in 1751, and the early *Discourses* of the profoundly original if rebellious political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Between the 1750s and the 1780s there followed successive volumes of the *Encyclopédie* (the last, of illustrations, in 1772) as well as Rousseau's most famous books, *Du Contrat Social* (1761) and *Emile* (1762). These were accompanied by the works of the philosophers Condillac, Helvétius, and D'Holbach, the last two unusual in expressing an increasingly aggressive hostility to revealed religion, and of the political economists Mirabeau, Quesnay, and Turgot, who would have the free market imposed on French agriculture. The end came in the 1790s, with the posthumous publication in 1797 of Condorcet's statement of faith in humanity's capacity for progress, the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, Condorcet himself having died three years earlier, horrified by the Terror.

The scholars who adhered to this view of *les lumières* were aware of the need for nuance. It was acknowledged that many *philosophes* spent

<sup>26</sup> Though raging against almost everything that had happened in Enlightenment studies up to the time of writing, John Lough, "Reflections on "Enlightenment" and "Lumières", in Ajello and others, *L'età dei lumi*, 1, pp. 33–56 (also in *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 8 (1985), 1–15), confirms that scholarly development of the subject only took off in the 1950s.

more time out of Paris than in it. After 1755 Voltaire was safely resident near the Swiss border, at Les Délices and later at Ferney; Montesquieu did his work at La Brède, his chateau outside Bordeaux; Rousseau was soon alienated by the *salons*, and took to wandering within and beyond France. Nor was this Enlightenment ever entirely a French preserve. Visitors from as far afield as Scotland and Naples were drawn to Paris and admitted to the *salons*, where a David Hume or a Ferdinando Galiani was welcome to contribute to the conversations. The *philosophes'* discussions, moreover, were by no means always harmonious: a common set of values did not preclude sharp disagreement on specific issues. Rousseau's differences with D'Alembert, Diderot, and Hume became so many and bitter that it was hard to think of him as remaining within the Enlightenment at all; but disputes could arise between its surest adherents, as when Galiani, supported by Diderot, unexpectedly attacked the physiocrats in 1770. Even when these qualifications have been entered, however, the Enlightenment of the literary scholars has remained focused on the thoughts of a limited number of writers, and on France.<sup>27</sup>

A second line of scholarly enquiry was pursued by scholars trained in the history of philosophy. For many of these, especially in the United States, the starting point was the translation of Cassirer's pre-war study, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1951). It was also assumed that Kant's philosophy could be regarded as a systematic summation of the entire intellectual project of the Enlightenment, and thus used as a framework in which to place and assess the contributions of other thinkers across a range of fields, including metaphysics, aesthetics, morals, and politics. Cassirer himself had not gone so far. He did not treat Kant directly in his book, and he implied that Kant's philosophy had been both the climax and the definitive critique of the philosophy of the Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, his own allegiance to Kantianism as well as Kant's enduring reputation ensured that the history of Enlightenment philosophy was generally written in a Kantian perspective. There was an obvious difficulty in combining this perspective with the francocentric focus of the literary scholars: Kant lived and taught in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), on the Baltic coast in East Prussia, and never once visited Paris. But the philosophic historians of the Enlightenment were prepared to concede that its works were otherwise overwhelmingly French: the point of their approach was that it enabled the thought of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and others to be discussed

<sup>27</sup> Alphonse Dupront, *Qu'est-ce que les lumières?* (Paris, 1996) – but written as lectures in the 1960s – is a classic statement of *Les lumières* as a French literary phenomenon.

<sup>28</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, 1951); on the place of Kant in its argument: Wright, "A bright clear mirror", pp. 81–96.

systematically, and their values of reason, liberty, and tolerance to be given philosophical substance.

Despite the awkwardness of Kant's geographical dislocation, the combination of literary and philosophical approaches was successful in giving the Enlightenment a clear historical identity. It had an accepted name, as *les lumières* and *Aufklärung* came to be treated as virtual equivalents, and both were translated as 'the Enlightenment' or *l'Illuminismo*. It had been placed chronologically and geographically, and the texts containing its thought had been established and accommodated within a philosophical framework.<sup>29</sup> With such recognition came a danger of relegation: the Enlightenment could safely be regarded by most historians as a subject best left to specialists in the history of literature and philosophy. But once they were confident that they knew what it was and what, in general terms, it thought, ordinary historians could also proceed to determine the Enlightenment's relation to other important developments in the eighteenth century. One obvious question concerned the Enlightenment's influence on contemporary European rulers, a question too quickly reduced to the problem of so-called 'enlightened despotism', and now better understood as that of enlightened absolutism.<sup>30</sup> Another, still more important, concerned the relation between the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Attempts to answer the question still lay under the shadow of the contemporary accusation, first heard in the 1790s, that the Revolution had been the result of a *philosophe* conspiracy (an accusation which continues to resonate in the postmodern charge that the Enlightenment was responsible for the disasters of the twentieth century). But given a secure definition of the Enlightenment, historians could in principle be confident that the question was answerable by determining whether or not there was positive evidence of the influence of Enlightenment ideas on those who criticised the *ancien régime*, or who joined in designing the revolutionary constitutions.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Intellectually, this was the point reached by Peter Gay in his two-volume study *The Enlightenment*, although he also anticipated several of the lines of enquiry which the social historians of the Enlightenment were later to champion.

<sup>30</sup> H. M. Scott (ed.), *Enlightened Absolutism: Reform and Reformers in Later Eighteenth-century Europe* (Basingstoke and London, 1990): the editor's 'Introduction: the problem of enlightened absolutism', pp. 1–35, traces the shift from 'despotism' to 'absolutism'.

<sup>31</sup> A classic example, measuring the influence of the *philosophes* as less than that of Locke, was Alfred Cobban, 'The Enlightenment and the French Revolution', in his *Aspects of the French Revolution* (London, 1968); another was Norman Hampson, *Will and Circumstance: Montesquieu, Rousseau, and the French Revolution* (London, 1983). By contrast Gay suggested that the Enlightenment had already been implemented by the American Revolution, and thus prudently avoided entangling it in the French Revolution: *The Enlightenment*, II: *The Science of Freedom*: 'Finale: the programme in practice'.



## NEW DIRECTIONS IN ENLIGHTENMENT SCHOLARSHIP

The ground had begun to shift under Enlightenment scholarship by the 1960s. Enlightenment studies then began to move in several new directions, which were pursued with increasing enthusiasm through the last three decades of the century. Although the divisions between them are not hard and fast, the new directions can be grouped under three headings – intellectual, social, and national. Each of these has led to a better understanding of the Enlightenment; but they have also been taken to lengths which have made it very difficult to maintain a coherent view of the Enlightenment as a whole.

The first of these new directions has been towards a much more complex appreciation of Enlightenment thought. Most fundamental, the old shibboleth that the Enlightenment was the ‘Age of Reason’ has long since been abandoned by historians of philosophy. If anything, it is now suggested, Kant was attempting to rehabilitate the concept of reason in response to the criticism to which it had been subjected by other Enlightenment philosophers. The idea that reason was humanity’s key to knowledge of the external world and of moral value was after all a commonplace of Christian Aristotelianism; dissatisfied with this, almost all serious philosophers since the seventeenth century, from Descartes, Gassendi, and Hobbes to Locke, Berkeley, and Hume, had insisted on the need to accept the challenge of scepticism. As sceptics, they conceded that knowledge of the external world was acquired through the senses, and that the passions dominated human nature. If reason still counted, it was within these limits.<sup>32</sup> Attempts were certainly made, by Descartes and his followers, by natural jurists, and by rational theologians, to place reason’s role on a more secure foundation. But the devastating intervention of Bayle at the turn of the century ensured that scepticism’s inroads would be impossible to reverse. This was especially clear in moral philosophy, where ‘the passions and the interests’, in Albert Hirschman’s phrase, became the starting point for enquiries in this and the related fields of political economy and historical theory.<sup>33</sup> Even Kant had to start from there: while insisting that reason was conceivable *a priori*, and even attainable by men, he acknowledged that it was interest,

<sup>32</sup> Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley, 1979, but first published in 1960 as *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Descartes*); and the same author’s *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*, edited by R. E. Watson and J. E. Force (1980; repr. Indianapolis, 1993), carrying the story of scepticism into the eighteenth century.

<sup>33</sup> Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism before its Triumph* (Princeton, N.J., 1977).



‘the crooked timber of humanity’,<sup>34</sup> which shaped their behaviour in the existing world.

As the simple equation of the Enlightenment with a philosophy of reason was discarded, it became apparent that no single philosophical system had given intellectual unity to Enlightenment thinking. It also became clearer that the relation between Enlightenment thought and religion was not simply adversarial. The challenge of scepticism might be unavoidable, but scepticism did not necessarily lead to disbelief. As Israel has reminded us, the currents of radical heterodoxy and irreligion flowed fast and variously; but heterodoxy was not incompatible with faith. Even Pierre Bayle emerged from the magisterial researches of Elizabeth Labrousse a serious believer.<sup>35</sup> Unbelievers there were at the heart of the Enlightenment: David Hume and, more aggressively, Baron d’Holbach and his coterie. But they were a small minority.<sup>36</sup> Many more Enlightenment thinkers retained some religious beliefs, even if they were unorthodox, and many remained comfortably in clerical orders, both Protestant and Catholic. To explain this, what Hugh Trevor-Roper called ‘the religious origins of the Enlightenment’ have increasingly been recognised. On the Protestant side his suggestion that those origins were to be found in the ‘liberal’ traditions of Arminianism and Socinianism has been widely accepted – if not yet intensively researched. On the Catholic, his (briefer) remarks on the contribution of the Oratory have been supplemented by attention to the other great Catholic dissidents of the late seventeenth century, the Jansenists of Port Royal.<sup>37</sup> Encouraged by the identification of such antecedents, historians have been further inclined to divide the Enlightenment along confessional lines, into distinct Protestant and Catholic Enlightenments.<sup>38</sup> Some would even challenge the traditional depiction of the Enlightenment as a

<sup>34</sup> Isaiah Berlin’s translation of a phrase in Kant’s *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose* (1784), Sixth Proposition: Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas* (London, 1991) with the passage from Kant cited on p. [v].

<sup>35</sup> Elisabeth Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle*, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1963–4).

<sup>36</sup> A. C. Kors, ‘The atheism of D’Holbach and Nageon’, in Michael Hunter and David Wootton (eds.), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992). Visiting Paris in 1763, the young Edward Gibbon was shocked to find d’Holbach and his coterie ridiculing the timidity of Hume’s unbelief: *The Autobiographies of Edward Gibbon*, ed. John Murray (London, 1896), p. 204.

<sup>37</sup> H. R. Trevor-Roper, ‘The religious origins of the Enlightenment’, in his *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967; second edn 1972). Socinian origins of Enlightenment have been pursued by Pocock, in *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon*.

<sup>38</sup> On the Protestant side, John G. A. Pocock, ‘Settecento protestante? L’Illuminismo riconsiderato’, *Quaderni storici*, 94 (1997), 315–37: the argument is closely connected with its author’s case for an English Enlightenment. On the Catholic side, Mario Rosa, ‘Introduzione all’Aufklärung cattolica in Italia’, in Mario Rosa (ed.), *Cattolicesimo e lumi nel Settecento italiano*, Italia Sacra, Studi e documenti di storia ecclesiastica 33 (Rome, 1981), 1–47.

secularising force, maintaining that ‘the religious Enlightenment’ should be taken as seriously as any other Enlightenment.<sup>39</sup>

The loss of an overarching philosophical framework, together with a new appreciation of the complexity of the Enlightenment’s relation to religion, have made possible a much more credible account of Enlightenment intellectual activity. But they have also created an unprecedented uncertainty over what should count as Enlightenment thinking. For one thing, intellectual historians are liable to wonder where the Enlightenment is supposed to begin and end. Given the extent to which eighteenth-century philosophers continued to engage with the works of seventeenth-century predecessors, should it not be taken to start by 1650? Since political economy developed continuously after Adam Smith, should we not think of the Enlightenment as carrying over into the early nineteenth century? On these extended time-scales, ‘the Enlightenment’ may remain a handy periodisation, but its historical particularity is much attenuated. On the other hand, scholars whose subjects have not hitherto been regarded as central to the Enlightenment have scented an opportunity. If no single philosophy characterises Enlightenment thinking, they ask, why should any area of intellectual activity be excluded? Not content with the seventeenth-century ‘scientific revolution’, historians of science have been especially keen to see their subject raised to a central place in the Enlightenment as well. Literary scholars, especially in the anglophone world, have likewise pressed the claims of a much wider range of writers who seem to share Enlightenment values. Ultimately it becomes impossible to exclude any not obviously reactionary form of thought from the Enlightenment’s liberal embrace. But there is a price to pay: an Enlightenment so inclusive is in danger of losing any coherent, distinctive, intellectual identity.

For Enlightenment scholarship, the price has been high. Many intellectual historians have found that they have less and less stake in the Enlightenment as such. Important studies of individual thinkers and of their contexts continue to be written, but the question of their contribution to the Enlightenment has become secondary. It is hardly surprising that many intellectual historians have left the field to their colleagues working in social and cultural history, allowing these to refashion the Enlightenment in their own images, to the detriment of its once primary intellectual character.

When Robert Darnton repudiated the approach to the Enlightenment embodied in the work of Peter Gay, he did so in the name of a new,

<sup>39</sup> David Sorkin, *A wise, enlightened and reliable piety: The Religious Enlightenment in Central and Western Europe, 1689–1789*, University of Southampton, Parkes Institute Pamphlet, 1 (2002). Sorkin takes his cue from Pocock’s endorsement of plural Enlightenments.

social-historical approach, which quickly established itself as the second major new departure in Enlightenment studies. First in the field was the French *Annaliste* historian Daniel Roche and his *équipe* of researchers. Making full use of statistical methods, Roche explored first the problem of literacy and the readership of books, and then the membership of provincial French academies.<sup>40</sup> Since 1980 Roche has persistently championed study of the Enlightenment as the social history of culture, potentially extending its reach to include every social practice, every material object, in which ideas may be seen to be represented.<sup>41</sup>

Darnton himself took a different – and more dramatic – approach. Discovery of the riches of the archive of the Société typographique de Neuchâtel made possible a comprehensive reconstruction of the publishing history of the *Encyclopédie* in the 1770s and 1780s. Chronicling an extraordinary tale of entrepreneurial collaboration and rivalry between the editors, publishers, smugglers, and sellers of the quarto and octavo editions of the *Encyclopédie*, he demonstrated that while its price remained beyond the labouring poor, it came within reach of many of the middle and professional ranks.<sup>42</sup> But Darnton became best known for his thesis that by the last quarter of the century a divide had opened up between the ‘high’ Enlightenment and the ‘low’ life of literary journalism. The first was the Enlightenment of the *philosophes* and their immediate associates: despite their struggles with the censors, Darnton argued, these had eventually secured their position in society, gaining recognition and remuneration in the official royal academies. Just as this ‘high’ Enlightenment settled complacently into a niche in the *ancien régime*, however, it was challenged by those it now excluded, who were left to eke out a living as Grub-Street journalists. It was these, Darnton suggested, who would shortly turn the ideals of the ‘high’ Enlightenment into the simplified slogans which would drive the Revolution.<sup>43</sup> In subsequent work on the ‘forbidden literature’ of pre-revolutionary France

<sup>40</sup> Daniel Roche and others, *Livre et société dans la France du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris and The Hague, 1965–70); Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des lumières en province. Académies et académiciens provinciaux 1680–1789* (Paris and The Hague, 1978).

<sup>41</sup> Daniel Roche, *France in the Enlightenment*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1998; original French edn, 1993), part III, and many other works. A recent programmatic statement is ‘Dell’Illuminismo. Per una storia sociale della cultura’, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 113 (2001), 86–106: the message is as oracular as could be expected from an inaugural lecture to the Collège de France.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Business of the Enlightenment: a Publishing History of the Encyclopédie* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979).

<sup>43</sup> Robert Darnton, ‘The high Enlightenment and the low-life of literature in pre-Revolutionary France’, *Past and Present*, 51 (1971), 81–115. Note that the distinction is between the ‘high’ Enlightenment and the ‘low-life’ of literature: Darnton was not being inconsistent when in ‘George Washington’s false teeth’ he restricted the Enlightenment to a high intellectual movement of *philosophes*.

Darnton has continued to illuminate the interconnections between high and low culture, between the mechanistic philosophy of D'Holbach and the mechanistic pornography of *Thérèse Philosophe*.<sup>44</sup> More recently he has pursued the low life of literature further back, through the archives of the Paris police, into the world of newsvendors and songwriters who were spreading reports damaging to the crown, the court, and royal ministers well before 1750.<sup>45</sup>

Much of this, as Darnton would certainly admit, has very little to do with Enlightenment. Another reference point takes precedence: the Revolution. There is a fundamental respect in which Darnton's concerns, like those of Roger Chartier, remain those of Daniel Mornet, whose *Les origines intellectuelles de la Révolution française* (1933) had sought to give a scholarly answer to Tocqueville's question about whether ideas were responsible for the Revolution. Neither Darnton nor Chartier believes that this can any longer be reduced to a question of the influence of the Enlightenment. In asking 'Do books make revolutions?', and exploring a French equivalent of Grub Street, Darnton is deliberately casting the net much wider.<sup>46</sup> But the danger, as several critics have pointed out, is that in the process the Enlightenment itself is diminished, being reduced to a small and discrete role in the lead up to revolution.<sup>47</sup>

Not surprisingly, a younger generation of Enlightenment historians is now contesting Darnton's approach. Adapting the suggestion of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas that the Enlightenment marked the emergence of a new 'public sphere', in which literate men and women could engage in independent public discussion, these historians argue that Darnton has missed the connection between the Enlightenment and the emergence of a new 'public', practising a broad-based culture of 'sociability'. This 'public' was made up of middle, professional, and even noble classes who wished to live their lives independently, without constantly deferring to standards set for them by courts, churches, and officials. They adopted sociability as a culture which valued 'politeness' in conversation, correspondence, and literary exchange, and which deprecated religious or

<sup>44</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers of Pre-Revolutionary France* (London, 1996), esp. ch. 3, 'Philosophical pornography'.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Darnton, 'The news in Paris: an early information society', in *George Washington's False Teeth*, pp. 25–75.

<sup>46</sup> Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-Sellers*, part III, 'Do books cause revolutions?'; cf. Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (Durham, N.C. and London, 1991), chs. 4, 'Do books make revolutions?' and 8 'Do revolutions have cultural origins?'

<sup>47</sup> Haydn T. Mason (ed.), *The Darnton Debate: Books and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (Voltaire Foundation, Oxford, 1999), gives the critics their opportunity; especially vigorous were Jeremy Popkin, Daniel Gordon, and Elizabeth Eisenstein. But Darnton was accorded space to reply, in 'Two paths through the social history of ideas', and gave at least as good as he got.

political partisanship. First articulated in the widely admired and frequently copied English journals *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, this was a culture which could be practised in any forum in which men and women were free to meet of their own accord, unregulated by any authority higher than themselves. In a novel way sociability was a culture of citizenship, but a citizenship by no means narrowly republican or revolutionary.<sup>48</sup>

Two phenomena often associated with Enlightenment seem particularly amenable to explanation in terms of this culture of sociability. One is freemasonry. As a self-conscious creed and set of rituals this had originated in later sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Scotland, and had migrated to England in the early eighteenth century; thence it spread rapidly across the continent, offering its 'lodges' a variety of rites. By no means every adherent of Enlightenment was a freemason. But in many parts of Europe, and particularly in the 1770s and 1780s, membership was common, with strong concentrations in France, the German-speaking lands, and Naples. Quite why such a secretive, ritualistic creed should have appealed to men (and a few women) who were otherwise committed to the free, public discussion of ideas remains a puzzle: but it is at least plausible to suggest that its internal egalitarianism was in accord with the new ideals of sociability, while its secrecy asserted (if it did not always secure) its autonomy from religious and governmental authorities. Whether its sociability also embodied the modern political values of liberty or equality, or whether it was apolitical, and hence dangerously utopian, are questions which continue to divide historians. But those who have doubted its significance for the Enlightenment are now in a distinct minority.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989; first published in German in 1962). US scholars have been among the most enthusiastic: Dena Goodman, 'Public sphere and private life: towards a synthesis of current historiographical approaches to the Old Regime', *History and Theory*, 31 (1992), 1–20; Margaret C. Jacob, 'The mental landscape of the public sphere: a European perspective', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28 (1994), 95–113; Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought 1670–1789* (Princeton, 1994). But Germans preceded them: Ulrich Im Hof, *Das gesellige Jahrhundert. Gesellschaft und Gesellschaften im Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Munich, 1982); Richard van Dülmen, *The Society of Enlightenment: the Rise of the Middle Class and Enlightenment Culture in Germany* (Cambridge and Oxford, 1992; first published in German in 1986). An excellent new synthesis, by a US scholar who has worked in Germany, is James van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-century Europe* (Oxford, 1991), emphasises the political implications of Enlightenment freemasonry. The accusation that freemasonry fostered a dangerously apolitical utopianism was advanced earlier by Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Oxford, New York and Hamburg, 1988; originally in German, 1959). The most substantial recent account treats freemasonry and the Enlightenment as distinct but interrelated manifestations of eighteenth-century culture: Giuseppe Giarrizzo, *Massoneria e illuminismo nell'Europa del Settecento* (Venice, 1994). Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, pp. 252–72, provides an up-to-date conspectus.

The Paris *salons* offer a second example of Enlightenment sociability. In a thought-provoking study, Dena Goodman has argued that the *salonnières* were not mere hostesses, but the directors and arbiters of a distinctive Enlightenment culture, enforcing the rules of polite conversation and mediating epistolary exchange. Here sociability was female centred, the Enlightenment gendered as feminine. Unfortunately, Goodman suggests, it was a culture which men were to undermine when they insisted on taking their disagreements into print, and then devised new institutions which excluded women. Typically these were the *musées*, the literary clubs of the 1780s, from which a direct line can be traced through to the *Cercle Social* and the Jacobin clubs of the 1790s.<sup>50</sup> Superficially, this argument may seem analogous to Darnton's: the polite Enlightenment of the *salons* challenged by the rougher, more radical assemblies of ideologically motivated young men. But Goodman's argument avoids tying the question of Enlightenment directly to that of revolution, offering instead an analysis of the place of the *salons* in the development of the Republic of Letters during the Enlightenment. No longer, she argues, were men of letters content simply to address each other, confining themselves to the existing of the Republic of Letters. Instead the *philosophes* sought to engage with a much wider 'public' of readers and consumers of ideas. The long-running collaborative enterprise of the *Encyclopédie* was one means of doing so, the *salons* were another. When the *salons* broke up and were superseded by the *musées*, it was because the character and orientation of the Republic of Letters had changed. By the 1780s political, revolutionary objectives were substituted for the meliorist goals of the Enlightenment, and access to the increasingly politicised Republic of Letters was redefined and, at least for women, narrowed. So arguing, Goodman can distinguish what she calls the 'culture' of the Enlightenment from the revolutionary culture which followed, without suggesting that there was any necessary, causal relation between them.<sup>51</sup>

For all their differences, the work of scholars such as Roche, Darnton, and Goodman is widely regarded as among the most exciting in recent Enlightenment studies. There is still much to be done to apply its insights beyond France: publishing and the role of censorship in Enlightenment Italy, for example, are subjects only beginning to be explored. Nor are these scholars necessarily hostile to or dismissive of the Enlightenment. Darnton, as we have seen, is happy to make the case for a very traditional version of the

<sup>50</sup> Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: a Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> The relation between Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters is discussed at greater length below, pp. 38–41.

Enlightenment; Goodman's cultural history of the French Enlightenment is intended to provide a strong defence of its unity and significance. But a defence of the Enlightenment on the terms offered by these historians carries a price. In setting out to write a 'cultural' rather than an intellectual history of Enlightenment, they have encouraged a view that the ideas themselves were of secondary importance. As it is, many less sophisticated exponents of the social historian's approach to the Enlightenment barely disguise their opinion that a focus on ideas is unacceptably elitist. Yet it is as a movement of thought that the Enlightenment possesses historical significance, for good or ill: to marginalise study of its intellectual content, as its social and cultural historians tend to do, is to lose an indispensable dimension of the subject.

The third new direction in Enlightenment studies has been towards writing its history in national context. The traditional account of *les lumières* was of course concentrated on one nation, France. But this, to its proponents, was precisely what made the Enlightenment universal, not national. The first to question such an assumption was the Italian historian, the late Franco Venturi. In Paris in exile during the 1930s, Venturi began by writing on the young Diderot and the *Encyclopédie*; and he never denied the centrality of France to the Enlightenment. But from the first he was also alert to the existence of thinkers with similar ideas in his native Piedmont and elsewhere in eighteenth-century Italy.<sup>52</sup> This realisation was transformed after the war into a full-scale programme of research, as Venturi called for a new account of the relation between the eighteenth century and the Risorgimento. The programme soon yielded several volumes of selections from the writings of individual Italian *illuministi*, with biographical introductions, and culminated in his own multi-volume narrative of Enlightenment activity in Italy, *Settecento riformatore* (in five volumes, 1969–90).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Franco Venturi, *Jeunesse de Diderot (1713 à 1753)* (Paris, 1939), closely followed by a thesis on the Piedmontese reformer *Dalmazzo Francesco Vasco (1732–1794)* (Paris, 1940). On Venturi's intellectual formation, Edoardo Tortarolo, 'La rivolta e le riforme. Appunti per una biografia intellettuale di Franco Venturi (1914–1994)', *Studi settecenteschi*, 15 (1995), 9–42.

<sup>53</sup> The programme was announced in 1953, and published as 'La circolazione delle idee', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 41 (1954), 203–22. Venturi himself edited two volumes of *Illuministi italiani*. III: *Riformatori lombardi, piemontesi e toscani* (Milan and Naples, 1958), and V: *Riformatori napoletani* (Milan and Naples, 1962); and he contributed with Giuseppe Giarrizzo and Gianfranco Torcellani to a third, VII: *Riformatori delle antiche repubbliche, dei ducati, dello Stato Pontificio e delle isole* (Milan and Naples, 1965).

The five volumes of *Settecento riformatore*, all published by Einaudi in Turin, appeared as I: *Da Muratori a Beccaria 1730–1764* (1969); II: *La chiesa e la repubblica dentro i loro limiti 1758–1774* (1976); III: *La prima crisi dell'Antico Regime 1768–1776* (1979); IV: *La caduta dell'Antico Regime 1776–1789*, in two parts, 1. *I grandi stati dell'Occidente*, and 2. *Il patriottismo repubblicano e gli imperi dell'Est*



Venturi's point of departure was the realisation that the traditional account of the Enlightenment, which treated Italians such as Ferdinando Galiani and Cesare Beccaria as 'visiting members' by virtue of their stays in Paris and reception in the *salons*, had overlooked the extent of their activities and connections in their own country. In Milan Beccaria had formed the *Il caffè* group along with the brothers Pietro and Alessandro Verri; in Naples Galiani had been the contemporary of Antonio Genovesi, holder of the first chair of political economy in Europe, and the teacher of a school of younger reformers headed by Gaetano Filangieri and Francesco Mario Pagano. Similar groups of *illuministi* were to be found in Piedmont, Venice, Tuscany, and even the Papal States. All did indeed look to Paris for inspiration; but their thinking also had indigenous roots, in the works of an earlier generation of reformers headed by Ludovico Muratori, and they forged their own bilateral connections with reformers elsewhere in Europe, from Spain to Germany, and even Russia. In charting the course of Enlightenment in Italy Venturi was always appreciative of the variety imposed by the political division of the peninsula, and particularly sympathetic towards the radical and embattled Neapolitans. But while this enhanced the political focus of his work, it did not compromise the integrative, national character of his treatment of the Enlightenment in Italy. *Settecento riformatore* is a work of Italian history, in which less weight is attached to the intellectual contributions of the *illuministi* than to their practical, reforming ambitions. As such, its perspective shaped and inspired scholarship devoted to Enlightenment in Italy over the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>54</sup>

The perspective is not without its critics. Their quarrel, however, has been with what they regard as the prematurely 'Italian' scope of Venturi's Enlightenment. The proper subjects of study, Mario Mirri insisted, were rather the

(1984); v: *L'Italia dei lumi 1764–1790*, again in two parts, 1. *La rivoluzione di Corsica; Le grande carestie degli anni sessanta; la Lombardia delle riforme* (1987), and 2. *La repubblica di Venezia 1761–1797* (1990). Even then, the work was unfinished when Venturi died in 1994; what he had written has been published posthumously as *Saggi preparatori per Settecento riformatore. L'Italia dei lumi: La repubblica di Genova (1761–1797)* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rome, 2002). Volumes III and IV (both parts) of *Settecento riformatore* have been translated into English in three volumes by R. Burr Litchfield, as *The End of the Old Regime in Europe 1768–1776: the First Crisis* (Princeton 1989), and *The End of the Old Regime in Europe 1776–1789*, 2 vols. (Princeton 1991), the translation a heroic enterprise in itself. For reviews of these volumes and guides to Venturi's great enterprise: John Robertson, 'Franco Venturi's Enlightenment', *Past and Present*, 137 (1992), 183–206 and Giuseppe Ricuperati, 'The historiographical legacy of Franco Venturi (1914–1994)', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 2 (1997), 67–88.

<sup>54</sup> For accounts in English: D. Carpanetto and G. Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason 1685–1789* (London, 1987); and the excellent chapter by Anna Maria Rao, 'Enlightenment and reform', in John A. Marino (ed.), *Early Modern Italy*, in the series Short Oxford History of Italy (Oxford, 2002), pp. 229–52.



‘ancient Italian states’ – the individual kingdoms, principalities, duchies, and republics into which the peninsula was still divided. For these critics, in short, Venturi’s focus was not specific enough: in eighteenth-century Italy the true national contexts were Tuscan, Milanese, Neapolitan, and many others even lesser in scale.<sup>55</sup> Even scholars close to Venturi have begun to emphasise the peculiarities of Enlightenment in different Italian contexts. In the case of Naples, for example, Giuseppe Galasso has drawn attention to the extent to which the kingdom’s ‘original characteristics’ provided a distinctive setting for the reception and development of Enlightenment thinking.<sup>56</sup>

Post-war German historians were understandably less inclined to study the Enlightenment in a specifically national perspective. They have been much more inclined to take their cue from Habermas and the *Annals* school in exploring the Enlightenment’s social underpinnings. Nevertheless, the attractions of adopting an approach similar to that developed in Italy have become increasingly clear. The political structure of eighteenth-century Germany most closely resembled that of Italy: it too was fragmented into a variety of principalities and even smaller states, whose courts and administrations provided openings for the educated and reforming. Out in Königsberg Kant may have remained aloof from political entanglements, confining himself to writing in oblique praise of his king, Frederick II; but Frederick’s capital Berlin was a centre of debate over issues of tolerance, freedom of the press, and economic reform. Other, smaller German courts facilitated a greater or lesser degree of discussion of these and other issues among officials and university teachers. In Hanover, whose prince was also the king of Great Britain, the professors at the new university of Göttingen were in the forefront of developments in the *Staatswissenschaften* or ‘state sciences’ and in philosophical history. In the Catholic south, Enlightenment ideas (and freemasonry) entered the principality of Bavaria both from

<sup>55</sup> Mario Mirri, ‘Della storia dei “Lumi” e delle “riforme” alla storia degli “antichi stati italiani”’, in M. Verga and A. Fratoianni (eds.), *Pompeo Neri* (Castelfiorentino, 1992), pp. 401–540. The merits of this perspective are discussed with particular reference to Tuscany and Milan by Till Wahnbaeck, *Luxury and Public Happiness: Political Economy in the Italian Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> Giuseppe Galasso, *La filosofia in soccorso de’ governi. La cultura napoletana del Settecento* (Naples, 1989), pp. 15–66; ch. 1: ‘Illuminismo napoletano e Illuminismo europeo’. A useful and representative recent collection in English of contributions by younger Italian scholars is Girolamo Imbruglia (ed.), *Naples in the Eighteenth Century: the Birth and Death of a Nation State* (Cambridge, 2000). Imbruglia’s own contribution, ‘Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Naples’, pp. 70–94, tests Venturi’s categories against the Neapolitan evidence. Among those writing in English, Melissa Calaresu has pointed to the potential of a national context approach to the Neapolitan Enlightenment: see e.g. ‘Images of ancient Rome in late eighteenth-century Neapolitan historiography’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58 (1997), 641–61.

France and, more congenially, from Italy. German *Aufklärer*, indeed, were political in a sense different from that associated with the Italian *illuministi*: more willingly employed by their princes, their thinking tended in return to be more practical and less critical.<sup>57</sup> It has been argued too that the 'national' character of the Enlightenment in Germany was evident in the translation and reception of foreign books: concepts which in other, more open, political cultures denoted participatory activism were rendered into German equivalents associated with individual striving and political acquiescence.<sup>58</sup>

But the most wholehearted in their adoption of the national approach to Enlightenment have been English-speaking scholars, British and North American. The presence and nature of Enlightenment in North America became the subject of intensive discussion among historians in the later 1970s.<sup>59</sup> At the centre of their discussions lay, unavoidably, the relation between Enlightenment and the revolution which began in 1776. It was clear that many of those who rebelled against British rule did so believing themselves to be members of a wider Enlightenment Republic of Letters; and subsequent French enthusiasm for their cause only strengthened the conviction. When Benjamin Franklin and later Thomas Jefferson took up residence in Paris as the American minister, they were more *fêted* by the *philosophes* than any visiting Scot or Italian. But the sense of belonging to the European world was offset by the force of local circumstance. Political necessity, and the remarkable intellectual inventiveness which was its offspring, combined to give American Enlightenment thinking a quite distinctive character. What that character was, whether it was republican or liberal, and how it related to colonial religious traditions, continues to be a subject of fierce dispute among historians; but the value of a national approach to the Enlightenment in America is unquestioned.

Still greater, however, has been the enthusiasm with which Enlightenment has been discovered and studied in eighteenth-century Scotland. Before 1960 it was scarcely recognised at all. Few remembered even that David Hume and Adam Smith were Scottish; that their contemporaries included Francis Hutcheson, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Thomas Reid, Lord Kames, and John Millar was long forgotten by all except a

<sup>57</sup> For recent guides in English: Johan van der Zande, 'Prussia and the Enlightenment', in Philip G. Dwyer (ed.), *The Rise of Prussia 1700–1830* (Harlow and London, 2000), pp. 89–107; on states other than Prussia, Charles Ingrao, 'The smaller German states', in Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, pp. 221–43.

<sup>58</sup> Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment: Scottish Civic Discourse in Eighteenth-century Germany* (Oxford, 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Notably Donald H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York, 1976), and, perhaps the most influential, Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976).

handful of specialists. In very different contributions, Duncan Forbes and Hugh Trevor-Roper then brought 'the Scottish Enlightenment' to scholarly attention. Though they disputed priority in use of the term – mistakenly, because it had been coined by W. R. Scott in 1900 – they agreed in giving it a definite intellectual content, focusing on the Scottish thinkers' intense preoccupation with what they called 'the progress of society'.<sup>60</sup> Their explanations for the phenomenon were by no means confined to Scotland, emphasising rather the renewal early in the eighteenth century of Scottish connections with continental European thinking. By the 1980s, however, an approach to the Scottish Enlightenment in more strictly national context had become popular. Nicholas Phillipson led the way, the better to write a social history of ideas after the French model.<sup>61</sup> Quickly the scope of enquiry widened to include the social milieu of the philosophers, the universities and voluntary societies which provided them with careers and an appreciative audience for their ideas.<sup>62</sup> The extent to which Aberdeen and Glasgow were centres of intellectual activity alongside Edinburgh has increasingly been emphasised, underlining the 'national' character of this Enlightenment.<sup>63</sup> By 1990s, the grinding of patriotic, even 'nationalist' axes was becoming audible in the determination of some scholars to give priority to national origins of a national achievement.<sup>64</sup> Given that the Scots had accepted the loss of their Parliament at the Union with England in 1707, their Enlightenment could not have had the political focus provided by the independent states of Italy and Germany, or by the rebellion in the North American colonies. But the intensity of the Scots' discussions of moral philosophy, political economy, and history may have reflected an attempt to come to terms with their new political situation, and even to

<sup>60</sup> H. R. Trevor-Roper, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 68 (1967), 1635–58. Duncan Forbes's major published contribution was *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge, 1975). But before that he had drawn the attention of a generation of young scholars to its significance through his Cambridge history special subject, 'Hume, Smith and the Scottish Enlightenment', which ran during the 1960s; its takers included Quentin Skinner and Nicholas Phillipson.

<sup>61</sup> Nicholas T. Phillipson, 'Culture and society in the eighteenth-century province: the case of Edinburgh and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *The University in Society*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1974), II, pp. 407–48, and 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (eds.), *The Enlightenment in National Context* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 19–40.

<sup>62</sup> Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: the Moderate Literati of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh and Princeton, 1985) being the outstanding study, complete with a comprehensive bibliography of the subject to that date.

<sup>63</sup> J. J. Carter and J. H. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987); Andrew Hook and Richard B. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Alexander Broadie, *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1990); David Allan, *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment: Ideas of Scholarship in Early Modern History* (Edinburgh, 1993).

contribute to the creation of a new, British political identity.<sup>65</sup> If Enlightenment in Scotland was only indirectly political, this was itself a function of its national setting.

By 2000, however, the Scottish Enlightenment was in some danger of being eclipsed – or (worse) subsumed – by a surge of interest in Enlightenment in England. Before the 1980s English historians had been inclined to accept Tocqueville's view that the Enlightenment was something England had not needed, since its public life was already open to the participation of men of letters. England had been spared that unhealthy separation of speculative thinking from the realities and responsibilities of active politics which was so characteristic of the Enlightenment in *ancien régime* France. But with the waning of English historical isolationism, there was a new interest in finding common ground with the continent. If eighteenth-century England were itself to be regarded as an *ancien régime* society, as one historian forcibly argued it should,<sup>66</sup> there ought at least to be the compensation of discovering that it also had an Enlightenment. The most likely candidates for membership of such an English Enlightenment seemed to be the dissenters, especially the rational dissenters who took up the cause of religious liberty and the rights of the colonists in the last quarter of the century.<sup>67</sup> But a powerful alternative case has also been mounted, by John Pocock and Brian Young, for the development over the century as a whole of a distinctively conservative, anglican Enlightenment. This Pocock would treat as the English variant of the Protestant Enlightenment, comparable with similar Enlightenments in Scotland, North Germany, and Switzerland in its Erastian and Socinian tendency.<sup>68</sup> Even more enthusiasm for the cause was displayed by the late Roy Porter. Having first announced that there was Enlightenment in England in an essay published in 1981, Porter finally set out his case in full in *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* in 2000. As his title indicated, Porter's premise was the opposite of Pocock's: eighteenth-century England (and, by osmosis, Britain) was a modern, not an *ancien régime* society. Since it was modern, it followed that it must have had an Enlightenment to articulate its modernity. This

<sup>65</sup> Phillipson, 'Culture and society'; Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish Whig Historians and the Creation of an Anglo-British identity 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge, 1993).

<sup>66</sup> J. C. D. Clark, *English Society 1688–1832* (Cambridge, 1985).

<sup>67</sup> The dissenting Enlightenment is reviewed from various points of view in Knud Haakonssen (ed.), *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>68</sup> John G. A. Pocock, in 'Clergy and commerce: the conservative Enlightenment in England'; 'Sett-cento Protestant?' and *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon*. By contrast, Brian W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), has little time for Pocock's disquieting suggestion that the Anglican mainstream was Erastian and Socinian.

simple proposition asserted, Porter was free to include in his account of the British Enlightenment any and every aspect of eighteenth-century British intellectual and cultural life which took his expansive and inclusive fancy.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever the merits of his case for Enlightenment in England, it is Porter, along with his Cambridge colleague Mikulas Teich, who deserves the credit for spotting the potential of the national approach to the Enlightenment. It was their collaborative volume *The Enlightenment in National Context* (1981) which gave the approach a name and a focus. As a collection of articles devoted to Enlightenment in England, Scotland, and North America, as well as in the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Bohemia, and Russia, the volume quickly proved its usefulness for teaching (where its success made it the model for a whole series of thematic collections ‘in national context’). But it also marked a turning point in Enlightenment scholarship. Although its title still acknowledged one Enlightenment, its implication was that each national Enlightenment could be studied as a separate phenomenon. In his opening plea for the recognition of Enlightenment in England, Porter himself confidently pronounced that the unity of the Enlightenment was a ‘hallucination’: the enquiry into Enlightenment in its national contexts should not be constrained by the belief that there must be common features in every case.<sup>70</sup> Although the editors left open the question of what counted as a ‘nation’, the tendency to divide the Enlightenment along political and confessional grounds was more or less explicitly endorsed.

That the national turn in Enlightenment studies has been enormously fruitful is beyond doubt. It has enlarged our understanding of the extent of Enlightenment activity across Europe, burying for ever the assumption that it was simply a movement of French *philosophes*, afforded by the occasional foreign visitor to Paris and the distant genius of Kant. The importance of Italian, German, and Scottish contributions to Enlightenment is now clearly established, and the contributions themselves are much better understood. As a result, a much more thoroughly historical account of Enlightenment across Europe can now be written, one which not only relates ideas to their political and social contexts, but which is sensitive to the various pre-existing settings in which ideas were received and developed in particular regions and states. The once clear division of labour between those who studied the Enlightenment’s thinking through literature and philosophy and those who explored the ideas’ application by absolutist rulers and their

<sup>69</sup> Roy Porter, ‘The Enlightenment in England’, in Porter and Teich, *The Enlightenment in National Context*; and *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Porter, ‘The Enlightenment in England’, pp. 4–5.

revolutionary antagonists has long since dissolved. But the consolidation of the approach under the rubric of 'the Enlightenment in national context' has also clarified its dangers. Its natural tendency has been to fragment the Enlightenment into a series of more or less distinct Enlightenments, each defined as best suits national historiography. Given that intellectual historians are no longer certain what counts as Enlightenment thought, while the social historians seek Enlightenment wherever they can identify a sociable, 'public' culture, it seems prudent to concede national variety; conversely, it seems unreasonable to deny Enlightenment to any individual nation, even to England. It is not the outcome which Venturi had in mind when he pointed to the importance of the Enlightenment for Italy; indeed he regarded England as proof that Enlightenment was not to be found everywhere, remarking that 'in England the rhythm was different'.<sup>71</sup> But as we shall see, Venturi never imagined that Enlightenment could be understood in national context alone.

The volume and richness of the scholarship which has resulted from the new directions in study of the Enlightenment since the 1960s plainly make any return to a simple, traditional account of it impossible. But if the implications of this work are to deprive the Enlightenment of a coherent intellectual identity, to reduce its ideas to the discursive practices of sociability, and to fragment it into separate, national units, is there any prospect of restoring to it the character of a connected intellectual movement?

#### RECONSTITUTING THE ENLIGHTENMENT

If a case for the Enlightenment is to be made at all, it must begin with ideas. It is clear that an account of Enlightenment thought can no longer be based simply on the contents of the *philosophes'* books, and given a greater or lesser degree of philosophic coherence by reference to Kant. But the intellectual coherence of the Enlightenment may still be found, I will contend, in the commitment to understanding, and hence to advancing, the causes and conditions of human betterment in this world. The first part of this formula is as important as the second: the Enlightenment was committed to understanding, that is to analysis on the basis of good argument, leading to reasoned conclusions. There was a core of original thinking to the Enlightenment: it was not simply a matter of common aspirations

<sup>71</sup> Venturi, *Utopia and Reform*, p. 132.

and values. Within that core the understanding of human betterment was pursued across a number of interdependent lines of enquiry.

For many the starting point was human nature itself – the connected study of the understanding, the passions, and the process of moral judgement which David Hume christened ‘the science of man’. In systematic study of the understanding and the passions, as, still more, in the sceptical subordination of reason to the passions, eighteenth-century philosophers were of course the heirs of several predecessors in the seventeenth century. The Enlightenment philosophers were original, however, in the deliberate attempt to join mental and moral philosophy in a single science, in which the framework for the investigation of individual behaviour was provided by human society rather than divine authority.

A second line of enquiry was into the conditions specifically of material betterment, the subject matter of political economy. Sophisticated writing on economic affairs of course predated the Enlightenment, being increasingly widespread from the later seventeenth century. But from the 1740s there can be seen a conscious attempt on the part of French, Italian, German, and Scottish thinkers to render political economy a distinct, systematic field of investigation. No longer concerned with the aggrandisement of governments at each other’s expense, this was a political economy whose goals were the wealth of nations (in the plural) and the improvement of the condition of all of society’s members. Understood in these terms, political economy was the key to what the Enlightenment explicitly thought of as ‘the progress of society’.

But the progress of society was not simply a matter of material improvement. Accompanying the enquiry into political economy was a third, more general concern to investigate the structure and manners of societies at the various stages of their development, to trace and explain the historical process as a passage from ‘barbarism’ to ‘refinement’ or ‘civilisation’. The scope of this enquiry was potentially wide, ranging across manners in all their variety, the rise and refinement of the arts and sciences, moral relations, including those between the sexes, forms of property-holding, including the exercise of property rights over the labour of others, and the means and ends of punishment. In turn many of these were closely related to the question of which forms of government were associated with different stages of development. Given a capacity on the part of humanity to ‘polish’ or even (as many followed Rousseau in supposing) to ‘perfect’ its nature, it was widely believed that the progress of society should culminate in the achievement of a new state of civilisation. But given too that the progress of many actual societies had by no means been uninterrupted, few thought



they had good reason to suppose that progress would end in a state of perfection; like Rousseau, many continued to doubt whether civilisation could ever be made fully secure against 'corruption' or 'degeneration'.

Together these three lines of enquiry converged upon the concept of 'sociability'. In the study of human nature, the starting point was the question so dramatically put by Hobbes, whether sociability was natural to man, or his artificial construction. Political economy was founded on the premise that self-interested exchange, based on a division of labour, was the first and most essential social activity. On these foundations, the critical question for those who studied the progress of society was whether that progress (or its reverse) was the product of human design, or the outcome of unintended consequences. Across the three spheres of enquiry, in short, the objective was to establish the material and moral conditions and mechanisms of sociability, the better to clear the path for human betterment, and to assess the prospects of its realisation. If sociability was also a culture, as the social historians of Enlightenment would suggest, it was as a contested idea that it concentrated the minds of Enlightenment thinkers.

A case for the Enlightenment's intellectual originality in these terms requires a number of qualifications. To identify the integrated study of human nature, of political economy, and of the progress and refinement of society as the connecting threads of the Enlightenment's commitment to understanding human betterment is not to suggest that they constituted a single, seamless intellectual project, pursued by all the Enlightenment's adherents. Few thinkers were equally interested, let alone competent, in each of the fields of enquiry. At the same time, few confined their interests to these fields. Many Enlightenment thinkers were also students of the natural world; others were passionately interested in music. It was a matter of priorities; what characterised the Enlightenment was the new primacy accorded to human betterment, to the possibility – not the inevitability – of progress in the present world. Even then there remained wide scope for disagreement over the means to achieve progress, as well as over the definition and compatibility of its ends. Philosophers continued to argue over the powers of the mind, its capacity to apprehend the external world and to establish moral truths. Political economists differed over whether agricultural and commercial societies should follow distinct paths of development. Strongest of all, perhaps, were the disagreements among those concerned with manners and culture, between those who heeded and those who rejected Rousseau's warnings that refinement would lead to corruption, and that progress must end in decline. Yet even those most fearful of decline accepted a central proposition: societies are subject to change, and



humans can better their condition. Enlightenment enquiries, moreover, adapted and developed in response to fresh intellectual stimuli: the debates of the 1770s and 1780s were often markedly different in their concerns from those of the 1750s.

It is also important to emphasise that the intellectual coherence of the Enlightenment was not predicated upon a complete denial of the possibility of revealed religion. It is here, as I have already indicated, that the perspective of this book differs from that of Israel's *Radical Enlightenment*. The boldness with which Spinoza, Toland, and Giannone had criticised the authority of Scripture continued to be an inspiration to many well after 1750. But Spinoza's materialism did not exhaust the philosophical resources available to Enlightenment thinkers; a far more common reference point was the works of Bayle, whose scepticism seemed, at least, to stop short of revelation, leaving it to his readers to decide what weight they wished to place on it. In Catholic Europe the notorious fate of Giannone, kidnapped, imprisoned, and suffering the confiscation of his writings, was an exemplary warning that open irreligion would not be tolerated. Even in Protestant countries there were boundaries which could not be crossed with impunity. Radicals like Toland and Radicati were marginalised and isolated, while the ecclesiastical and civil authorities in both the United Kingdom and the United Provinces remained vigilant against overt manifestations of Socinianism, still regarded, with its elder cousin Arianism, as the most dangerous of heresies. By the 1740s, therefore, it was clear that radical heterodoxy and open irreligion – Israel's 'radical Enlightenment' – had failed to break down the barriers which the authorities had erected against them, and could not expect to dictate the intellectual agenda.

This is not to say that Enlightenment criticisms of organised religion were of marginal significance. As an institution in this world, the church – any church – was all too likely to be the target of criticism for the intolerance of its clergy towards the beliefs of those who disagreed or dissented. Additional criticism was levelled at the Roman Catholic church for the scale and nature of its property-holding, widely perceived as an obstacle to economic development in the backward regions of Europe. Any pretension to exercise power over the affairs of this world on the basis of an authority derived from the next had become unacceptable. But such criticism did not automatically touch revelation itself: a focus on betterment in this world carried no necessary implication about the existence of the next. A small number of sceptical Enlightenment philosophers did indeed openly question its existence; but many more retained their faith. What the latter did have to be concede was the inadequacy, indeed inhumanity, of the doctrine which

held out the pleasures of the next world as consolation for the hardships of the present. Whatever might be awaiting the redeemed in the world to come, improvement of the human lot was possible in this world, here and now.

Equally, to claim that the intellectual originality of the Enlightenment lay in its commitment to the study of human betterment does not entail that its choice of intellectual interests was unprecedented, without roots in the concerns of later seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century thinkers. The conviction that it should be possible systematically to investigate human social and economic relations and the course of their historical development clearly owed much to the example of the revolution wrought in the study of the natural world over the seventeenth century. The confidence of Galileo and Newton that nature was governed by observable laws was transferred to the study of society, along with the Baconian aspiration to apply this knowledge to the benefit of mankind. This did not mean that the investigation of nature itself remained central to the Enlightenment, or that Enlightenment thinkers can be characterised simply as ‘Baconian’ or ‘Newtonian’ in their methods. Nevertheless the ideal of scientific method continued to be a source of inspiration, its potential perhaps most fully realised in the *science sociale* projected by one of the last of the *philosophes*, Condorcet.<sup>72</sup>

In this book, it is other ideas inherited from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which receive most attention as inspiration of Enlightenment enquiries. Prominent among these will be found to have been the encounter between the Augustinian rigorism of Pascal and Port Royal and the revived, supposedly Christianised Epicureanism championed by Gassendi and his followers. From this encounter developed the realisation, articulated most provocatively by Bayle, that a society of self-interested men, driven by their passions rather than their reason, could nevertheless survive and meet its needs with no external assistance from divine providence and only limited intervention by government. Together with the growing corpus of economic writings and the increasingly historical cast of the natural jurists’ accounts of the formation of society, the development of this Augustinian–Epicurean understanding of man goes far to explain why the Enlightenment thinkers focused their interests in the way they did. But it does not mean that their enquiries should simply be assimilated to those which went before. In their systematic ambition as well as in their

<sup>72</sup> Keith M. Baker, *Condorcet: from Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago and London, 1975).

scope, the Enlightenment's enquiries into human nature, political economy, and the progress of society were a profoundly original contribution to the development of European thought.

A renewed emphasis on the primacy of ideas to the Enlightenment does not mean that the questions raised by its social historians can simply be set aside. Its adherents had to live in the world as well as think about it, and needed careers and recognition, along with outlets for their writings. Outwith France there are still many countries where the material and cultural infrastructure of the Enlightenment remains little studied. But the social history of Enlightenment cannot simply be left to its 'social historians'. A case for the Enlightenment which restores the primacy of its intellectual contribution also needs to reconsider the perspective in which its social history is written. It is too often assumed that the integrity of ideas will be compromised by any evidence of material or institutional dependence on the part of a writer.<sup>73</sup> But Enlightenment thinkers were by no means hostage to their careers and institutional backgrounds. On the contrary, it may be argued, their distinguishing social characteristic was their claim to an independent status in society, by virtue of their intellectual leadership.

It is true that no single term quite captures the status to which the Enlightenment thinkers aspired. It was most confidently assumed by the *philosophes*, whose success as authors, often underpinned by private means and a sympathetic female patron, enabled them to assert their independence from the ecclesiastical, university, and academic authorities. But the term *philosophe* had too many connotations specific to its Parisian origins to be used of all the Enlightenment's adherents: David Hume, though he knew the *philosophes* well, and shared many of their interests, would not have welcomed that appellation. To get round the problem, it has been suggested, notably by Venturi and Darnton, that the *philosophes* were prototypical 'intellectuals', and that this term may be extended to their counterparts elsewhere. Venturi may well have borrowed the term from the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia, the focus of his study of Russian populism;<sup>74</sup> but there appears to be no such proximate rationale for Darnton's bald statement that 'the *philosophe* was a new social type, known to us today as the intellectual'.<sup>75</sup> Pocock has justifiably objected to this retrospective

<sup>73</sup> The issue has dogged Darnton and his critics, notably Daniel Gordon: see the latter's contribution, 'The great Enlightenment massacre', in Mason, *The Darnton Debate*, esp. pp. 138–45; and Darnton's reply, 'Two paths', esp. pp. 267–72.

<sup>74</sup> Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: a History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth-century Russia*, transl. F. H. Haskell (London, 1960); originally published in Italian in 1952.

<sup>75</sup> Darnton, 'George Washington's false teeth', p. 5.

conceptualisation, with its connotation of alienation from the states and societies in which Enlightenment thinkers lived. In his view, we must accept the much looser contemporary designation ‘men of letters’, and admit that men of letters played different Enlightenment roles in different contexts.<sup>76</sup> But the usage of a term which was both older than the Enlightenment and adopted by many with quite different interests did not prevent adherents of Enlightenment from asserting an independent identity within and beyond their respective societies. They might not be able to declare themselves a single, unified corps; but they made very similar claims to recognition from their societies, claims founded on the authority of their ideas, rather than on that of the established institutions.<sup>77</sup>

Many men of letters, especially in Protestant countries, also enjoyed careers in clerical orders or in the universities. The universities in particular continued to offer one of the securest and most congenial employments any man of letters could hope for. But it does not follow that the Enlightenment in those countries should be treated as an academic, university phenomenon.<sup>78</sup> That there was a difference between universities and Enlightenment was the point made by Kant, himself the finest ornament of the Prussian university system, when he addressed the question *Was ist Aufklärung?* in 1784. In their ‘private’ capacity as clergymen or professors, he conceded, individuals were bound to accept the restrictions on their freedom to speak which the institutions they served might impose. It was in their ‘public’ capacity, as members of society at large, that they should expect to advance the goals of Enlightenment.<sup>79</sup> In practice the point had been made forty years earlier, when David Hume was denied the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh in 1745, at least partly because of the suspicion that he would refuse to accept that his teaching must endorse certain theological propositions. But it was not simply a matter of religious restrictions: both Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson, who conformed to the religious requirements of teaching moral philosophy, seem to have chafed at the intellectual restrictions which their chairs imposed. Dominated as they were by natural and civil jurisprudence, the lecture courses of Protestant as

<sup>76</sup> Pocock, *The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon*, pp. 6–7, 299.

<sup>77</sup> For a characterisation of the Enlightenment man of letters: Roger Chartier, ‘The Man of Letters’, in M. Vovelle (ed.), *Enlightenment Portraits* (Chicago and London, 1997), pp. 142–89.

<sup>78</sup> As suggested, for example, by Pocock, ‘Settecento protestante?’, pp. 328–9.

<sup>79</sup> James Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1996), pp. 58–64; Immanuel Kant, ‘An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment?’ (1784). The volume includes other contributions to the debate which had been instigated by the *Berliner Monatsschrift*, and an excellent commentary by John Christian Laursen, ‘The subversive Kant: the vocabulary of “public” and “publicity”’, pp. 253–69.

well as Catholic universities were not necessarily well adapted to the sorts of enquiry in which Enlightenment thinkers were engaged, or to the forms in which they wished to publish their conclusions.<sup>80</sup>

Instead of the churches and universities, the source of authority to which the Enlightenment thinkers most frequently appealed was 'public opinion'. The phenomenon of public opinion has been the subject of intensive recent discussion by historians, particularly those of France. Following Keith Baker, many now believe that it holds the key to explaining how ideas became a political force, and hence offers a new opportunity to re-assess the cultural and ideological causes of the Revolution.<sup>81</sup> But the phenomenon has also attracted the attention of historians of the Enlightenment in France. These historians have asked the prior question of the way in which Enlightenment thinkers themselves understood and sought to use public opinion in support of their claim to intellectual leadership.<sup>82</sup>

Exactly what constituted 'the public' and its 'opinion', and how it should be addressed, were most thoroughly discussed in France. The advantage to writers of addressing 'the public' rather than a more specific audience was clear: it enabled them to retain the intellectual initiative, setting the terms on which they engaged with their readers. Through the *Encyclopédie* and in their individual works, the *philosophes* made inventive use of literary form as well as intellectual content in the effort to encourage readers to respond critically to what they were reading. That this response might not be the one expected was disconcerting and sometimes frustrating, but the fact of the response itself was confirmation that the public recognised the writers' intellectual leadership.<sup>83</sup> What could compromise their position, however, was too close an association with politics. On specific issues of injustice,

<sup>80</sup> For a study of teaching in Catholic universities, in a state whose civil rulers were anxious to control education without alienating the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Patrizia Delpiano, *Il trono e la cattedra. Istruzione e formazione dell'élite nel Piemonte del Settecento* (Turin, 1997).

<sup>81</sup> Keith M. Baker, 'Public opinion as political invention', in his *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 167–99. See also Mona Ozouf, "'Public Opinion" at the end of the Old Regime', *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (1988), supplement, 1–21; Chartier, *Cultural Origins*, pp. 20–37; Darnton, *Forbidden Best-Sellers*, pp. 232–46. For an assessment of Darnton's use of the concept: Thomas E. Kaiser, 'Enlightenment, public opinion and politics in the work of Robert Darnton', in Mason, *The Darnton Debate*, pp. 189–206. Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, ch. 2, 'Opacity and transparency: French political culture in the eighteenth century' is an excellent recent overview of the subject.

<sup>82</sup> Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, pp. 199–208; Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, pp. 118–19, 235–42.

<sup>83</sup> See the earlier study by Dena Goodman, *Criticism in Action: Enlightenment Experiments in Political Writing* (Ithaca and London, 1989); also, on a specific case where public opinion was invoked, and gave an unexpected response, 'The Hume–Rousseau affair: from private *Querelle* to public *Procès*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (1991–92), 171–201.

such as the great judicial *causes célèbres* of Jean Calas and the Chevalier de la Barre, public opinion might be invoked as a court of appeal. But the fate of Turgot's carefully orchestrated campaign to mobilise opinion on behalf of a liberalisation of the grain trade, a measure whose failure brought down his ministry, was a warning against tying intellectual authority too closely to a particular political cause.

Elsewhere, the scope for treating public opinion as an independent tribunal of intellectual authority was often much less. It was perhaps least in England, the country in which, as the French acknowledged, the idea of public opinion had originated, for the reason that there it was already politicised. Hume's attempts to use the essay as a vehicle for raising the level of public discussion of economic and political subjects met with limited success in London, where he was initially received as another opposition partisan.<sup>84</sup> Fortunately, there was more scope for such discussion in Scotland, where the loss of the Scottish Parliament in 1707 had removed the focus of politics, and made it easier for men of letters to claim independent standing. In Germany and Italy, by contrast, the problem was the opposite: many rulers were reluctant to allow public debate beyond the confines of the court and the administration. They might be more or less willing to offer men of letters the opportunity to exercise a direct influence on policy through government office. But office could not be a substitute for public opinion as a source of intellectual authority, and was all too likely to lead to the obscuring of the Enlightenment's larger objectives in the struggle to enact specific reforms. In the kingdom of Naples, as we shall see, it was a conviction that effective reforms were far more likely to follow the raising of public expectations of economic and social change which inspired Antonio Genovesi's remarkable attempt to create a public opinion independent of the court and the administrative tribunals.

Even if the public opinion to which Enlightenment men of letters appealed was sometimes little more than a figment of their imagination, a point was still made by invoking it. For it signalled a deliberate breaking with the traditional, humanist model of the philosopher as the private counsellor of kings and ministers, whose advice was given in secret. By choosing instead to address an educated 'public', Enlightenment men of letters took an independent intellectual initiative, and broadened the scope of debate.

<sup>84</sup> M. M. Goldsmith, 'Faction detected: ideological consequences of Robert Walpole's decline and fall', *History*, 64 (1979), pp. 14–19.

This was not simply self-promotion: the Enlightenment thinkers had good intellectual reason to value public opinion above direct political influence. For implicit in their commitment to the study of the laws of political economy and of the progress of society was a recognition of the limits which they set upon politics. In a world in which commerce was becoming ever more widespread and important, decisions which affected the lives and well-being of many were being taken by individual economic agents out of a prevailing motive of self-interest, with little or no regard for what rulers wished to happen.<sup>85</sup> When the Enlightenment thinkers set themselves to identify the regularities in the patterns of men's commercial activities, or in the historical relations between forms of property-holding and stages of social organisation, they were explaining why the powers of politicians and statesmen over society were by no means as great as they supposed. By failing to appreciate this, moreover, the politicians were far more likely to obstruct than to facilitate the workings of society. These conclusions did not lead Enlightenment thinkers to discount the possibility of reform; the Enlightenment was by no means apolitical. Even the most sceptical of Enlightenment thinkers left room at least for remedial political action. But the purpose of reform should be the removal of obstacles to the optimal course of development, not the imposition of ambitious schemes of the politician's own devising. Enlightenment thinking thus ran counter to the traditional doctrine of 'reason of state', by which rulers and their advisers had claimed to know what was good for their subjects, and had presumed to manipulate their affairs accordingly. Instead the point of appealing to 'public opinion' was to exert an external, constraining influence on governments. By invoking 'the public' as their tribunal, the Enlightenment thinkers could hope simultaneously to establish their own credentials as an independent source of intellectual authority, and to educate government and society at large in the forces which were shaping the modern world. By the end of the 1780s, writers in several parts of the continent were confident enough to address their rulers directly, and not merely through public opinion. But they did so with the confidence that they now spoke *for*, not simply to, 'the public', and were thus entitled to expect rulers to heed their opinions.

<sup>85</sup> On this fundamental theme, Istvan Hont, 'Free trade and the economic limits to national politics: neo-Machiavellian political economy reconsidered', in John Dunn (ed.), *The Economic Limits to Modern Politics* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 41–120; reprinted in Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation State in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005).

Without recourse to the anachronism of calling them ‘intellectuals’, therefore, it is possible to regard Enlightenment men of letters as having engaged with their societies from a position of independence, an independence earned by intellectual standing and expressed by addressing a public opinion distinct from the policy of rulers and their ministers. But if their energies were devoted to their publics, does this not suggest that Enlightenment men of letters were indeed, as Pocock maintains, bound closely to their national or state contexts? Can we speak of one Enlightenment in the absence of a common European ‘public’? Plainly there can be no going back to the traditional view of an Enlightenment cosmopolitan simply by virtue of being French. A formula which would encompass both the unity and the variety of the Enlightenment was, however, suggested some time ago by Franco Venturi, the pioneer of the ‘national’ approach. To Venturi the point of the Enlightenment lay in its successful combination of the cosmopolitan with the patriotic. Adherents of the Enlightenment were cosmopolitan in their awareness of the similarity of their intellectual interests and goals, and in taking it for granted that they should communicate these across frontiers and language barriers. But they were equally patriotic in their commitment to harnessing the common stock of ideas to the improvement of their own individual societies.<sup>86</sup> Of itself, Venturi’s formula was generic; but it clearly informed his own work on the Italians, and it will be one of the purposes of this study to give it renewed substance.

An infrastructure of intellectual cosmopolitanism was already in existence, in the institutions and practices of the Republic of Letters. By 1700 the term *respublica literaria* was three centuries old; what it and its direct vernacular equivalents represented has been the subject of increasingly intensive investigation by historians.<sup>87</sup> What is still a topic for debate is the extent to which the Enlightenment marked a fresh phase in its development.

While the term itself has been found in use in 1417, a Europe-wide Republic of Letters was effectively the creation of Erasmus a century later. The key to its character as a network for correspondence and the exchange of books, manuscripts, antiquities, and specimens was its independence of the church. The Republic of Letters was from its inception a lay institution, not in the sense that it excluded clergymen, but in that it was designed to operate outwith the structures of the church, preventing the ecclesiastical hierarchy from dictating the terms of intellectual exchange.

<sup>86</sup> Franco Venturi, *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, ed. Stuart Woolf (London, 1972), preface.

<sup>87</sup> On both the term and what it represented: Françoise Waquet, ‘Qu’est-ce que la République des Lettres? Essai de sémantique historique’, *Bibliothèque de l’École des chartes*, 147 (1989), 473–502.



When, within decades, the Western church broke up as a result of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the Republic of Letters survived as the only genuinely international framework for intellectual communication. Rising above confessional polarisation, the Republic continued to grow and develop in the seventeenth century. The first phase of expansion came with the emergence of individuals, most famously Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc and Marin Mersenne, who were prepared to act as focal correspondents, connecting others across Europe; later their heroic labours were taken over by the secretaries of learned academies, keen to establish connections with each other.<sup>88</sup> But the most dramatic phase in the Republic's development came in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when enterprising minds in the Huguenot exile community in the United Provinces pioneered new means for the dissemination of knowledge. One was the journal of book reviews (usually containing substantial extracts from the book under review as well as critical comment). Bayle's *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres* (1684–7) led the way; even more assiduous was Jean le Clerc, whose *Bibliothèque Universelle* (1686–93) was succeeded by two more ventures.<sup>89</sup> Bayle, meanwhile, had turned aside to transform another instrument for the dissemination of knowledge by his *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697, with a second edition in 1702). Underpinning these new forms of publication lay a growing infrastructure of printers, publishers, authors' agents, and booksellers, whose living depended on the Republic's existence and continued development.<sup>90</sup>

What is less clear is the extent to which the Republic of Letters had come to embody a distinct set of values. Its operation certainly depended on a set of conventions, to which letters of introduction and a willingness to accept reciprocity in the exchange of books and objects were fundamental. For many, perhaps the majority, of the Republic's members, this was all: the pursuit of scholarly, erudite interests required an etiquette, not an ideology.<sup>91</sup> But the leading role taken in the Republic's transformation from the 1680s onwards by the Huguenot exile community invested the idea of the *république des lettres* with a greater significance. For many of its members it became, self-consciously, a refuge, even a bastion, of intellectual and religious tolerance. In their communications members of the

<sup>88</sup> Maarten Ultee, 'The Republic of Letters: learned correspondence 1680–1720', *The Seventeenth Century*, 2 (1987), 95–112.

<sup>89</sup> Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, pp. 142–55: 'The Learned Journals'.

<sup>90</sup> Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven and London, 1995).

<sup>91</sup> One point on which Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, is in broad agreement with Laurence Brockliss, *Calvet's Web: Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters in Eighteenth-century France* (Oxford, 2002).

Republic expected each other to rise above confessional differences, and in their foreign correspondence to step outside of whatever constraints their local rulers might place them under. In this there may have been an echo of the universalism of the *respublica christiana* – though tolerance would require that the content of that potentially aggressive ideal was not examined too closely.<sup>92</sup> Strongly as these cosmopolitan values were felt, however, the autonomy they asserted remained inward looking. The Republic of Letters existed to facilitate the exchanges of its members, but it was not – yet – a platform from which to address a wider ‘public’.

This, it may be suggested, was what the Enlightenment added to the Republic of Letters later in the eighteenth century. Determined to address a wider public as well as each other, Enlightenment men of letters took advantage of an increasingly adaptable publishing industry to achieve their ends. By collaborating with enterprising publishers, they were able to realise the project of the *Encyclopédie*, to make available many more translations into and out of French, and to reach different levels of reader and different sizes of pocket by reissuing books in cheaper formats. Improvement and reform, rather than erudition for its own sake, were the watchwords.<sup>93</sup> None of these developments would make it possible to override all differences of inherited religious or national intellectual culture. Even the process of translation was liable to modify meaning, sometimes substantially.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that the Republic of Letters now gave Enlightenment men of letters access to an unprecedented range of means of communication, enabling them to set themselves a common intellectual agenda directed towards human betterment, at the same time as they educated their publics on the means to its achievement. Intellectual cosmopolitanism could be combined with an outward-looking, public-conscious patriotism.

Laurence Brockliss has gone so far as to suggest that the Enlightenment and the Republic of Letters may be regarded as one. But as he acknowledges

<sup>92</sup> Waquet, ‘Qu’est-ce que la République des Lettres?’, pp. 494–500, offers a relatively generous assessment of the Republic’s ideals; Lorraine Daston, ‘The ideal and reality of the Republic of Letters in the Enlightenment’, *Science in Context*, 4 (1991), pp. 370–5, emphasises the new ‘gregarious sociability’ of ‘intellectuals’ from the later seventeenth century onwards. A more cautious note is struck by Malcolm, ‘Hobbes and the European Republic of Letters’, pp. 539–41.

<sup>93</sup> Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, pp. 12–52, charts the transformation of the Republic of Letters in relation to the new public sphere; Goldgar, *Impolite Learning*, pp. 219–50, contends that the Enlightenment Republic of Letters represented a sad decline after its scholarly predecessor, substituting polite manners – ‘talking about nothing’ – for erudition.

<sup>94</sup> On ‘the hazards of translation’, Oz-Salzberger, *Translating the Enlightenment*, pp. 77–85, 138–66; more recently (and more positively), her article on ‘Translation’, in the *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*. For another, subtly stated case: László Kontler, ‘William Robertson and his German audience on European and pan-European civilisations’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 80 (2001), 63–89.

in his study of *Esprit Calvet*, an assiduous Provençal member of the Republic in the later eighteenth century, it was perfectly possible to participate in the Republic of Letters as a correspondent, antiquary, natural historian, and bibliophile – and remain contentedly ignorant of Enlightenment thinking.<sup>95</sup> It seems better to think of the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters as being adapted, not absorbed, by the Enlightenment. Adherents of Enlightenment worked within it, the better to use it for their own distinctive intellectual and public purposes.

An Enlightenment reconstituted on the terms I have suggested does not include everything which many recent scholars have wished to associate with it. There were limits, first of all, to its intellectual range. Although individual Enlightenment thinkers had a variety of interests, the focus of their enquiries, and subject of their most original contributions, was human society and the physical and moral well-being of individuals in this world. As such, Enlightenment by no means encompassed every area of intellectual activity in the period, and it excluded or marginalised several other original lines of thought. To limit the intellectual range of Enlightenment in this way is also to narrow its possible chronological extent: though beginning at different times in different places, it was broadly between the 1740s and the 1790s that the investigation of the progress of society and the accompanying confidence in the prospects of its betterment were concentrated. It bears repeating that to set Enlightenment within chronological limits is not to imply that it was cut off from the intellectual worlds which preceded and followed it: both the form and the content of its enquiries were profoundly shaped by several currents in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century thought, and in turn shaped the intellectual culture of the nineteenth century. What is being suggested, however, is that the Enlightenment should be understood as a distinct episode in European intellectual history. At the same time, the Enlightenment as it has been reconstituted here was also confined geographically to the European world (which still included colonial America). If historians find it convenient to speak of ‘Enlightenments’ in other civilisations, they were not extensions of the European original. Even within Europe, the reach of the Enlightenment was uneven. There were areas in which individuals bravely pursued the intellectual commitments of the Enlightenment, but were too isolated to be active participants in the wider movement. Greece and the Balkans, whose connections with the Enlightenment

<sup>95</sup> Brockliss, *Calvet's Web*, *passim*. Calvet knew of Voltaire and Rousseau by reputation, but owned only one small pamphlet by Voltaire, and nothing by Rousseau, Diderot, d'Holbach, or Helvétius.

have been studied by Paschalis Kitromilides, appear to have been such a region.<sup>96</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum was the case of England. As it has been characterised here, the Enlightenment did not have a significant presence in England. The ideas of the early eighteenth-century English deists and anti-trinitarians, Collins, Clarke, and (by association) Toland, reinforced by the anti-clerical writings of the neo-republicans Walter Moyle and John Trenchard, were indeed an inspiration to heterodoxy among continental Catholics as much as Protestants. More generally, the works of the great philosophers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Newton, Locke, and Shaftesbury, would contribute much to the intellectual formation of Enlightenment thinkers across Europe. Yet the commitments which were central to the Enlightenment itself, the development of the sciences of man and of political economy, the historical investigation of the progress of society, and the critical application of ideas for human betterment to the existing social and political order – these were not at the forefront of English intellectual life between 1740 and 1780. Each of these fields of enquiry had its devotees; but they were not in England, as they were in France, Germany, Italy, and Scotland, the focus of concerted, systematic attention among the country's leading minds. The one Englishman whose Enlightenment interests led to a major work, the historian Edward Gibbon, looked to Scotland for recognition, and retreated to Switzerland to write. Nor did English men and women of letters lay claim to a position of intellectual leadership comparable with that assumed by their continental or even their Scottish counterparts. Instead they had to compete with writers and journalists of every level of talent and none in the great literary marketplace of London. To adapt Roy Porter's terms, there is a sense in which in England modernity pre-empted Enlightenment. Most English men of letters were already confident of their liberty, and of enjoying the benefits of commerce; they evidently felt no pressing need to study them systematically. If there was an English contribution to the Enlightenment, it may be found among the radical and unitarian minority who doubted whether liberty and the gains of commerce were quite what they seemed. These came to the fore between the 1770s and 1790s, and included Richard Price, Joseph Priestley, Jeremy Bentham, Mary Wollstonecraft, and William Godwin. Alert to developments in the rest of Europe, early supporters and anguished observers of the Revolution in France, they may

<sup>96</sup> Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment as Social Criticism: Iosipos Moisiodax and Greek Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1992).

well be regarded as belonging in the late Enlightenment whose leaders were Condorcet and Gaetano Filangieri. But their very radicalism excluded them from a central role in English public life; they could not make up for the absence of Enlightenment thinkers in the previous four decades. It was an absence which left a lasting gap in the history of English intellectual and public life.

The Enlightenment depicted here was limited in one further respect. It was, unavoidably, a movement of an intellectual elite. Its adherents were indeed committed to the wider dissemination of their ideas; they were keen to engage 'the public' in discussion. But their priorities remained intellectual, and they looked to public opinion to confirm their intellectual authority. As an intellectual movement, in short, the Enlightenment was not equivalent to a culture of sociability, however it may have encouraged one to develop.

To insist on these limits to the Enlightenment is to set aside much that recent scholarship has suggested is of great interest. (It is not, of course, to suggest that what is set aside should not be studied in its own right.) But it is equally the case that the unrestricted definition of Enlightenment, or its alternative, the admission that there were multiple Enlightenments, has rendered the subject so blurred and indeterminate that it is impossible to reach any assessment of its historical significance. Even if this is an effective response to those who imagined that there was a clear-cut 'Enlightenment project', it is a response close to conceding that the Enlightenment is no longer worth arguing over. By contrast, the Enlightenment for which I have made a case here is one whose significance it is possible to assess as a historical phenomenon rather than as an arbitrary philosophical construct. It is an Enlightenment which took root in very different intellectual, social, and political settings across eighteenth-century Europe (and North America), and whose adherents thus addressed themselves to a wide variety of economic and social conditions. It is not an Enlightenment whose horizons extended beyond the world of the *ancien régime*; if many of its younger adherents found themselves taking responsibility for its ideas in the revolutionary decade of the 1790s, that responsibility does not extend, in any direct way, far into the nineteenth let alone the twentieth centuries. Far too much history lies in between for it to make sense to hold the Enlightenment accountable for the horrors, any more than the advances, of the twentieth century. But as a specific intellectual movement of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment can be matched against the conditions which faced it in its own time. Its contribution to the modern world may then be judged on the intellectual interest of its reflection on the societies it observed, and

on the cogency of its recommendations for the improvement of the human condition as it found it. It is as a small step towards making such an assessment possible that this book proposes to undertake a comparative study of the Enlightenment in Scotland and Naples.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY: ENLIGHTENMENT IN  
SCOTLAND AND NAPLES

Why a comparative study? In his pioneering discussion 'For a comparative history of European societies', Marc Bloch observed that historical comparison presupposes both common ground and difference between the subjects to be studied. There must be a certain similarity between the facts observed, and a certain dissimilarity between the milieus in which the facts occurred. The similarities are likely to be stronger between neighbouring or contemporary societies, which can mutually influence each other; but actual connections are not essential to establish similar facts. The possible objectives of comparative study of the facts are various: among them Bloch himself included the discovery of unexpected similar facts, the identification of the general causes underlying similarities, and the establishment of hitherto unnoticed differences.<sup>97</sup> With some rephrasing, each of Bloch's objectives may be adapted to the present case.

First, the discovery of unexpected similar facts in dissimilar milieus. For the purposes of this study, it is not so much a matter of discovering facts which are unexpected as of testing their existence where they are disputed. What is to be explored is the extent to which a similar Enlightenment – Enlightenment in the singular, with or without the definite article – was present in the separate and dissimilar milieus of eighteenth-century Scotland and Naples (by the latter being indicated the kingdom as well as the city). *Prima facie*, there is evidence of the presence of Enlightenment in the two societies. In both Scotland and Naples we can find major thinkers interested in the study of human nature, political economy, and the progress of society, and committed to the betterment of life on earth regardless of the next. Scotland was perhaps especially fortunate to have two thinkers of the stature of David Hume and Adam Smith. But Enlightenment could not have been of their making alone (any more than it could be of Gibbon's in England). The contributions of Francis Hutcheson, Lord Kames, Adam Ferguson, William Robertson, Thomas Reid, John Millar,

<sup>97</sup> Marc Bloch, 'Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes', in his *Mélanges Historiques*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1963), 1, pp. 16–40.

and several others were substantial in their own right, broadening the scope of intellectual enquiry beyond the interests of Hume and Smith. In Naples the two most powerful minds of the century, Pietro Giannone and Giambattista Vico, were active before the Enlightenment, but their works provided the generation of the Enlightenment with a rich intellectual base. Antonio Genovesi and Ferdinando Galiani, Giuseppe Maria Galanti, Gaetano Filangieri, and Francesco Mario Pagano were no less absorbed than the Scots by the questions which were exercising their Enlightenment contemporaries across Europe. In both cases, moreover, thinkers may be seen to have participated actively in the affairs of their societies, setting themselves to address and influence a wider 'public' than those actually wielding power.

It was Bloch's observation that similarities are likely to be more evident between neighbouring or contemporary societies where there was scope for mutual influence. The societies considered here were contemporary, if hardly neighbouring. Yet we shall encounter very little evidence of connection, let alone influence, between them in the period with which this study is chiefly concerned. Later in the eighteenth century the Neapolitans did begin to read their Scottish contemporaries, but the Scots barely returned the favour. What follows will not, therefore, be other than incidentally a study of connections and influences; it is a straightforward comparison. The absence of connection may well reflect the distance which separated the two countries; it certainly reinforces the impression that the apparent similarity between the interests of their thinkers occurred in quite dissimilar milieus.

The dissimilarities of milieu are indeed striking. These were two countries at opposite ends of Europe, differing in their natural resources, economic and social structures, political arrangements, confessional allegiances, and intellectual traditions. Given such differences, the need to give due weight to national context in any study of Enlightenment in either Scotland or Naples is undeniable; indeed it might reasonably be anticipated that the subjects of study would be distinct Scottish and Neapolitan Enlightenments, in the plural, rather than one common Enlightenment. Such, as we have seen, has been the tendency of much recent scholarship devoted to Enlightenment in Scotland. The tendency has been less marked among students of Enlightenment in Naples, whose agenda remains broadly that set by Venturi; but here too there has been a recognition that specific, 'national' features of the Neapolitan situation should be given more weight. The first and most important objective of the present comparative study, therefore, is to determine whether it is still



possible to identify the existence of a similar Enlightenment, understood as a single, coherent intellectual movement, in two such different 'national' contexts.<sup>98</sup>

Bloch's second objective for comparative history was the identification of general causes underlying similarities. In the present case two such general causes may be observed. One derives from the apparent similarity of social and political predicament in which the two kingdoms were placed at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In the two decades either side of 1700, the kingdoms of Scotland and Naples found themselves independently facing the prospect of a radical adjustment of their position within the larger composite monarchies to which they had hitherto belonged. Faced with this predicament, which in both kingdoms was characterised as that of a dependent 'province', Scottish and Neapolitan thinkers can be seen to have sought explanations for it in the political and economic developments which they observed in Europe around them. In the debates which ensued, thinkers in both countries may be observed to focus on the causes of their perceived economic backwardness, and on the possibilities for escaping from it, by testing for themselves the concepts available for the purpose.

The second general cause to be observed concerns the intellectual resources available to Scottish and Neapolitan thinkers. First in Naples, and later in Scotland, concepts deriving from the encounter between Augustinian moral rigorism and a revitalised Epicureanism would seem to have been particularly helpful in the investigation of human nature, the conditions of sociability, political economy, and the possibility of 'progress' in the history of societies. In both cases, it appears, access to the legacy of late seventeenth-century francophone philosophy was crucial in enabling Neapolitan and Scottish thinkers to move beyond investigation of their countries' initial predicament, to explore what would be the central questions of Enlightenment intellectual enquiry.

Bloch complicated his prospectus for comparative history, however, when he insisted, as his third objective, that the comparative historian remain alert to the discovery of hitherto unnoticed differences. The identification of similar developments in dissimilar milieus may be explained by

<sup>98</sup> I have previously commented on the issues in three articles: 'The Enlightenment above national context: political economy in eighteenth-century Scotland and Naples', *The Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), 667–97, esp. 667–75; 'The Scottish contribution to the Enlightenment', in Paul Wood (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment: Essays in Reinterpretation* (Rochester, N.Y. and Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2000), pp. 37–62 (a revised version of 'The Scottish Enlightenment', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 108 (1996), 792–829); and 'The case for the Enlightenment: a comparative approach', in Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler (eds.), *Isaiab Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment*, published as *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 93, part 5 (Philadelphia, 2003), pp. 73–90.



the observation of general causes at work in both; but these causes are unlikely to have been identical in their operation. In the present case significant differences are indeed observable when the similarities of economic and political predicament and of sources of intellectual inspiration are subjected to closer scrutiny. On the one hand, the apparently similar predicaments of the two kingdoms in 1700 were belied by an underlying divergence in their economic prospects – a divergence which became more and more marked as their political status changed in the following decades. By 1750 development of the economy of the newly independent kingdom of Naples seemed to require a very different approach from that appropriate to Scotland, which had earlier renounced its pretension to independence, and agreed to join England in a single united kingdom. On the other hand, the Scots' access to the resources of Augustinian–Epicurean moral thinking was significantly delayed. Widely available and discussed in Naples by 1700, such thinking was effectively excluded (perhaps by design) from Scotland until the 1720s. It may not be quite true to say that the absence of this line of thought from Scotland before then has gone unnoticed; but the contrast with its active presence in Neapolitan intellectual culture is striking in its implications. Specifically, the comparison has the effect of returning the spotlight to David Hume, suggesting that his was the crucial initiative in bringing Enlightenment to Scotland.

The outcome of the comparison, therefore, is intended to be the demonstration of similarity amid difference: the presence of a common Enlightenment in the two very different 'national' contexts of Scotland and Naples. To use comparison to demonstrate the unity of the Enlightenment across Europe is not to devalue difference. On the contrary, the value – and, for me at least, the fascination – of the comparison lies precisely in the extent and depth of the differences of context. What I hope to achieve by the comparison is a richer, 'thicker' historical description of Enlightenment in both places. But in so doing I also wish to vindicate the existence of Enlightenment as a coherent, unified intellectual movement of the eighteenth century, whose adherents engaged in original enquiry into the fundamentals of human sociability, and were committed to the cause of bettering the human condition in this world without regard for the next. The case for the Enlightenment as a single intellectual movement, in other words, is argued on the basis of the case for Enlightenment made by Scottish and Neapolitan contemporaries, for whom the means to better man's condition on earth was an improved understanding of economy and society.

Whether this will be enough to give historians of more recent periods a 'sound and stable sense of the Enlightenment to work with'<sup>99</sup> is not, perhaps, for a historian of the eighteenth century to judge. By drawing particular attention to two of the eighteenth-century settings in which Enlightenment flourished, this study may well be read as emphasising the distance which separates the Enlightenment in its own contexts from its intellectual legacy as that was understood and developed in much later periods and settings. If Enlightenment is to be equated with 'modernity', then we will need to recognise that its vision of modernity has been stretched and shaped to fit very different circumstances, in its own time as well as since. We may also need to admit that its 'fit' to different contexts was neither uniform nor equally convincing, even in its own century. Given the very different fortunes of the two countries as they emerged from the eighteenth century, one at the forefront of industrial revolution, the other apparently locked into economic backwardness by its reliance on latifundist agriculture and the export of primary commodities, it might even be asked whether Enlightenment 'succeeded' in Scotland but 'failed' in Naples. This is not a question which this book will attempt to answer, and perhaps not a question a historian should ever expect to be able to answer. What is to be explored here is simply the extent to which the movement of ideas known as the Enlightenment did take hold in two such dissimilar contexts. But by observing how Enlightenment came to be established in both Scotland and Naples, we may at least be better placed to understand the appeal of its ideas, the nature of its intellectual achievement, and, perhaps, why it should continue to be taken seriously.

In the chapters which follow, the comparison will move from contexts to ideas, culminating in the moment when a distinct set of ideas was applied to the two contexts to make the case for Enlightenment. The contexts will be reconstructed from the bottom up, beginning in ch. 2 with an account of the political and social settings from which the intellectual movement of Enlightenment would emerge. The focus of this chapter will be political, social, and economic: ideas themselves will rarely be mentioned. It is included because a grasp of the political circumstances, social structures, and economic potential of the two kingdoms is essential to understanding the concerns of Scots and Neapolitans as they sought to explain and find ways of bettering their condition from 1700 onwards. More than this, the chapter reflects the conviction that a comparative, contextual approach to

<sup>99</sup> The formulation of David Hollinger, 'The Enlightenment and cultural conflict', p. 18. See above p. 5.

intellectual history presupposes the 'grounding' of ideas in specific political and social settings. Without an appreciation of these settings, the study of the ideas themselves is liable to become divorced not only from the experience of their own time, but from the concerns of other historians seeking to understand different aspects of the two societies in the same period.

Reconstruction of the political, economic, and social contexts of intellectual life in the two countries will be followed in ch. 3 by closer examination of the intellectual worlds of Scotland and Naples at the end of the seventeenth century. Here the focus will be on the immediate settings of intellectual life: on universities and academies, on libraries and their contents, on publishing and bookselling. The critical questions concern the availability of ideas in the two countries, and the facility with which they could be communicated. Of vital importance were the connections of Neapolitan and Scottish men of letters to the wider European Republic of Letters, through access to the new review journals as well as by personal correspondence and visits. The ideas which were communicated will be considered here in broad rather than specific terms: we need to identify the intellectual currents available to Scots and Neapolitans before we can explore their treatment in particular texts by individual authors. As we shall see, the existence of certain currents of thought in Europe at the time was no guarantee that they were equally available in both contexts: fundamental to the comparative analysis is an assessment of the extent to which Scots and Neapolitans did have access to the same ideas.

Ideas, or more accurately arguments, are the subject of the remaining four chapters. In two of these, chs. 4 and 7, the ideas are directly related to the contexts reconstructed previously, and specifically to the political and economic contexts discussed in ch. 2. The subject of ch. 4 is the debates which occurred contemporaneously in the two kingdoms in response to the succession crises within the Spanish and British monarchies in the years immediately before and after 1700. In both Scotland and Naples commentators sought to come to terms with the political and economic predicaments of their kingdoms; as they did so, they tested the terms then available to them, exploring their limitations as instruments for the analysis of the modern, commercial world. This chapter in turn provides the starting point for ch. 7, in which the introduction of political economy will be seen to transform the analysis of the economies of Scotland and Naples, by setting them in a much broader analytical framework.

Between chs. 4 and 7 are two whose subject matter is at a higher level of intellectual abstraction, and which take off from the intellectual contexts

set out in ch. 3. Chapter 5 is devoted to the *New Science* of Giambattista Vico, in both its first and in its third editions, and ch. 6 to the philosophy of David Hume, as set out in the *Treatise of Human Nature* and related later works. In these chapters the reader may well experience a change of gear, and find her- or himself on a much steeper intellectual gradient. For the chapters differ in two important respects from the others. In the first place the Neapolitan and the Scottish thinkers are considered separately: where in other chapters comparison is developed within the individual chapter, in these the subjects are treated apart, and the threads of comparison are explicitly picked up only at the end of ch. 6. Second, each of these chapters includes an enlargement of the intellectual context appropriate to its principal subject. Where ch. 3 was concerned to identify the main currents of thought in the two kingdoms, and to establish the broad intellectual agenda of Scottish and Neapolitan philosophers in the decades before and after 1700, the focus of chs. 5 and 6 is on the specific arguments of Vico and Hume, and on their relation to the arguments of particular predecessors. In Vico's case the predecessors who will receive closer attention are Hobbes, Spinoza, and especially Bayle; in Hume's they are Mandeville (himself read in the light of Bayle) and, to a lesser extent, Warburton and Hutcheson. Consideration of these predecessors, it is contended, is crucial to understanding how Vico and Hume received and responded to the intellectual agenda identified in ch. 3. Space is therefore devoted early in each of chs. 5 and 6 to an exposition of the arguments of the selected predecessors, as a basis for the close textual analysis of the works of Vico and of Hume which follows. Given the difficulty of Vico's and Hume's principal works, the frequently gnomic propositions of Vico's *New Science* being set off by the technical refinement of Hume's *Treatise*, the demands on the reader will not be light. But intellectual history which spares its readers the complexity of its subjects' arguments cannot expect to do justice to their achievements. However much they owed to the institutions which educated and supported them, to the libraries, publishers, and booksellers where they found the books they needed, the thinkers themselves put ideas first. They wrote for the sake of their arguments, and it is these arguments which are the primary focus of the two chapters.

In subject matter ch. 7 takes up where ch. 4 left off, with the renewal of debate over the economic and social condition of the two countries in the three decades between 1730 and 1760. But this phase of debate was markedly different, for it rested on the intellectual foundations explored in the intervening two chapters. In political economy the Scots and the Neapolitans found a conceptual resource which allowed them to bring to

bear on their own countries lessons from Europe's most successful commercial societies, as well as a body of argument which could be addressed to a 'public' far wider than the ministerial circles previously concerned with such matters. But more than that, they found a set of ideas itself grounded in the most powerful currents in contemporary philosophy, currents whose potential to illuminate the operation of human sociability Vico and Hume, in their contrasting ways, had done so much to clarify. For this reason political economy had an intellectual authority lacking in the arguments which the previous generation of political and economic commentators had used in the debates of 1690–1710. This intellectual authority was not diminished by the presence of sharp disagreement between the Neapolitans and the Scots over the appropriate model for their economies – disagreement which reflected the increasingly divergent political and economic experience of the two kingdoms. For the disagreement also highlighted a commitment in common: the choice of political economy as the primary intellectual discourse with which to address a wider 'public' among their fellow countrymen, because it held the key to understanding the conditions of betterment in this world. It was the decision of leading Scottish and Neapolitan thinkers in the early 1750s to take up political economy and to publicise its lessons which marked the advent of Enlightenment in the two countries. In this way, it will be argued, out of two very different 'national' contexts came one Enlightenment.