

COMMERCE AND GOVERNMENT
Considered in Their
MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP



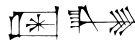
COMMERCE AND GOVERNMENT
Considered in Their
MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP



Étienne Bonnot,
Abbé de Condillac

TRANSLATED BY SHELAGH ELTIS

With an Introduction to His Life
and Contribution to Economics
by Shelagh Eltis and Walter Eltis



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PREFACE



WE BOTH read *Commerce and Government* for the first time in 1990, and we were astonished that such a brilliantly written and powerfully argued book had made so little impact, and that it had never been translated into English. We resolved then, six years ago, that we would produce the first English language edition.

Commerce and Government was published in the same year as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and their analysis and implications for policy have much in common. It was presented with the comparative brevity and precision of a distinguished philosopher of the French Enlightenment, who was one of the first to base value on utility, an achievement which was recognised after the marginal revolution of the 1870s.

Eighteenth-century France was not fertile ground for the demolition of dirigisme, and the advocacy of the universal benefits of competition was resisted everywhere by vested interests. The physiocrats who controlled an economic journal in which the book was reviewed took exception to Condillac's powerful demonstration that industry and commerce and not merely agriculture contributed to the wealth of France. The reviews were dismissive, the great preferred Colbert, so *Commerce and Government* made little headway in France, and British political economists of the eighteenth century were unaware of it, so there was no demand for an immediate translation. The abbé Morellet sent a copy to the Earl of Shelburne, the future British Prime Minister, with the accolade that "in every part of it you will find freedom of commerce sustained." There may have been an occasional nineteenth- or twentieth-century British Prime Minister who could plausibly be expected to wish to read 90,000 words of French political economy in French, but the eighteenth century was another world.

After 1990 we pursued detailed research, on Condillac's life: Chapter 1 (by Shelagh Eltis) is the result; and on the impact of his economics, which is outlined in Chapter 2 (by Walter Eltis). This was preceded by conference papers on his economics in the École Normale Supérieure in St-Cloud, Paris, and in the University of Birmingham, with the subsequent publication of articles on Condillac's economics in French and English language journals.

Condillac's life is a revelation. He combined the respect and friendship of Voltaire and Rousseau (he is prominent in the *Confessions*) with the high regard of the King and the Church. He was appointed Director of Studies to Louis XV's grandson, the Bourbon heir to the throne of Parma, and after the success of that assignment, he was invited to go on to supervise the education of the three royal children who subsequently reigned in France: Louis XVI, Louis XVIII and Charles X. He declined that invitation which could have changed the world if he had had any impact.

In 1796, after the Revolution, the Minister of the Interior, no less, believed that education in France would be advanced by a complete edition of Condillac's works which made use of all his posthumous papers. Orders were given for the preparation of an edition which appeared in 1798 in twenty-three volumes and included *Commerce and Government*. The story is outlined in Chapter 3. It takes a certain kind of genius to earn the admiration of liberal philosophers, a monarchy and a post-revolutionary government.

It will give us great pleasure if this first English language translation increases the attention which Condillac's economics deservedly receives. We have had valuable help from the Taylorian Library in Oxford, the Direction des Archives Municipales in Grenoble, Professor Ramon Tortajada of the University of Grenoble, Professor Gloria Vivenza of the University of Verona, Dr Adam Brown, and the participants at the conferences in St-Cloud and Birmingham.

SHELAGH ELTIS

WALTER ELTIS

Oxford

*THE LIFE AND CONTRIBUTION
TO ECONOMICS OF THE
ABBÉ DE CONDILLAC*



➤ I Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac, 1714–1780

BIRTH AND FAMILY

Étienne Bonnot, known to posterity as the abbé de Condillac, was born in Grenoble on 30 September 1714.¹ He was the youngest child of a large family. His parents both came from families of lawyers and officials which entered the *noblesse de robe* in the early eighteenth century. The *noblesse de robe* was an aristocracy built on the purchase of offices under the monarchy. Such offices could be very expensive to purchase. In 1705, Gabriel Bonnot, Étienne's father, paid 10,000 livres for that of Secretary of the King in the Court of the Parlement of the Dauphiné, which brought him noble rank with the title vicomte de Mably. Local importance, tax exemptions, freedom from having soldiers billeted on one's household, and the income from fees payable to such officeholders all made such investments worthwhile. For the monarchy it brought desperately needed short-term income and an opportunity to recruit fresh talent.

Gabriel Bonnot amassed a fortune through this and other posts such as receiver of *tailles*—the main land and personal tax—and as registrar of births, etc., for the Oisan; he was also a royal castellan, though jealousy probably forced him to resign the latter two offices in 1714. He invested heavily in royal stock and in land: it has been calculated that he invested more than 85,000 livres in government stock, and, significantly, he seems to have reached the peak of his fortune in 1720. In 1719 he bought the domain of Mably for 300,000 livres and the following year that of Condillac, near Romans.

Gabriel Bonnot died in September 1726 leaving his wife and dependent children comfortably off, despite losses in his investment income following the collapse of Law's system. Each son was bequeathed the sum of 25,000

1. Condillac's birth date is established beyond question by his baptismal certificate, which says on 1 October 1714 that he was born on the previous day (see Jean B. Sgard, ed., *Corpus Condillac* [Geneva and Paris: Slatkine, 1981], 31). Yet many accounts of his life, such as that in Auguste Lebeau, *Condillac: Économiste* (Paris, 1903), erroneously give the year of his birth as 1715.

livres on attaining the age of twenty-five. Their mother also held a life interest in annuities in their names. The income from both these sources, reckoned at 1,300 livres a year, would have given Condillac a modest competence. It also meant that he was not to be forced into the Church as a younger son whose family lacked means.

At his father's death Étienne was nearly twelve years old and, according to the 1836 *Encyclopédie des gens du monde*, unable to read because his very weak eyesight had forbidden study. The same source states that he then began his studies under a good curé and learnt fast. On 29 August 1728 Étienne acted as proxy godfather to his sister Anne's firstborn. The baptismal certificate is interesting as the first record of his using the title de Condillac, marking him out as a noble.² Condillac's eldest brother Jean was known as M. de Mably from 1727 at least, and his brother Gabriel became famous as the abbé de Mably.

THE YOUNG PHILOSOPHER

Condillac's life is largely obscure until he emerges as a very successful philosopher in the 1740s. The *Encyclopédie des gens du monde* says that aged sixteen he joined Jean de Mably at Lyons where the latter held the office of Provost General of the Maréchaussée, or constabulary, for the Lyonnais, Forez and the Beaujolais, purchased in 1729 with his mother's assistance. Lyons was the second city in France, and Condillac's brother a man of standing in it. However, by 1733 Condillac had joined his brother Gabriel, six years his senior, in Paris, a new world for the young provincials, and uncharted territory for the family.

Condillac registered in the Faculty of Arts at Paris. At his graduation as an MA two years later, he is described as a *clericus* of Grenoble, so he will have received the tonsure in that diocese. This should not lead to the assumption that a career in the Church was already inevitable as many of the literary confraternity began as tonsured clerks, including Marmontel who

2. The above account of Condillac's family and early years is drawn from Sgard, *Corpus Condillac*, which also has a family tree and much more detailed information about his wider family.

married late in life, and many eighteenth-century abbés led secular lives after entering orders. Indeed, it was with this background in mind that in 1910 his family biographer, Count Baguenault de Puchesse, was eager to stress Condillac's proper wearing of clerical garb, regular attendance at mass and general orthodoxy in a century when to some the name *philosophe* seemed synonymous with free-thinker.³

The stages of his studies in Philosophy, Physics, Mathematics and Theology and his studies for the priesthood have been traced across documents by the authors of *Corpus Condillac*, a group of scholars who have assembled all the documentary evidence they could find for his life.⁴ It seems probable that Condillac was at the Collège Mazarin, also known as the Four Nations, for his first two years, pursued theological studies at the Faculty of the Sorbonne and was in a Paris seminary, perhaps St Sulpice, for his preparation for the priesthood. He became a priest in 1741, though he never held cure of souls and is thought never to have said a mass.

Diderot and d'Alembert, distinguished *philosophes* with whom Condillac was to have close ties, had a similar education but finished their theological studies after three years and did not proceed, as did Condillac, Turgot and Morellet, to the "licence" in Theology, which required another two years' study and the day-long defence of a thesis.

This account of his studies shows that Condillac was the very opposite of a self-taught man as his own comment that one had to begin one's studies afresh on leaving the schools led some to suppose falsely. His remark indicated rather that he saw education as a life-long process, a view underlined when he wrote to his former pupil, the prince of Parma:

It is for you Monseigneur, to instruct yourself alone from now on. I have already prepared you for that and even made you used to doing so . . . for the best education is not that which we owe to our teachers; it is that which we have given ourselves. (Condillac, *Oeuvres de Condillac*, 20:540–41)

3. Count G. Baguenault de Puchesse, *Condillac, sa vie, son oeuvre, son influence* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1910), 9, 20.

4. This is under the editorship of Jean Sgard and is referred to as Sgard, *Corpus Condillac*.

In April 1740 Jean-Jacques Rousseau entered the household of Condillac's eldest brother, Jean Bonnot de Mably, at Lyons, as tutor to his small sons, and it is from his *Confessions* written in the late 1760s that some human detail about the abbé de Condillac and his brothers, Jean and Gabriel, emerges.

Many of Rousseau's friends and acquaintances commented on his prickliness and persecution complex. His time in the Mably household saw him caught pilfering wine from the cellar, in addition to which he says he was a failure as a tutor and fell in love with Mme de Mably. Yet he left voluntarily a year later and revisited the family in 1742. He says of M. de Mably that he behaved honourably and sensibly in the matter of the wine, that "he was a very courteous man; beneath a severity of manner in keeping with his employment he concealed a really gentle disposition and a rare kind-heartedness. He was just and equitable and—strange though this may seem in a police officer—he was also most humane" (Rousseau, *Confessions*, 255). Rousseau struck up a friendly acquaintance with the two abbés in Lyons, and their contacts continued over many years, in Condillac's case until about a year before Rousseau's death.

Through their recommendation of Paris lodgings to him we learn that at some point Condillac and his brother had lodged in the rue des Cordiers near the Sorbonne in what Rousseau called "a wretched room, in a wretched house, in a wretched street" (*ibid.*, 266), student life no less! More interesting is his comment in *Émile* that "at a fairly advanced age" Condillac passed within his family and among his friends as of limited intelligence (*esprit borné*). Considering the great success of the abbé Mably, who gained European fame for his writings on history and government, and the worldly success of Jean and François Bonnot, intellectual and conversational standards must have been high in their company. It will not be surprising that Étienne, the much younger brother whose education had been delayed, preferred to keep his own counsel. Rousseau added, "Suddenly he showed himself as a philosopher and I do not doubt that posterity will mark out an honourable and distinguished place for him among the best reasoners and the most profound metaphysicians of his century" (Rousseau, *Émile*, 102).

Referring to the year 1745, Rousseau said in his *Confessions*:

I had also become intimate with the abbé de Condillac, who, like myself, cut no figure in the literary world, but who was born to be what he has be-

come-to-day. I was the first, perhaps, to see his stature, and to estimate him at his true worth. He seemed also to have taken a liking to me; and whilst I was confined to my room in the Rue Jean-Saint-Denis near the Opera, writing my Hesiod act, he sometimes came to take a solitary Dutch treat of a dinner with me. He was then engaged on his *Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines* which was his first work. When it was finished, the problem was to find a bookseller who would undertake it. Paris booksellers are hard and overbearing with authors who are just beginning; and metaphysics, not then in fashion, did not offer a very attractive subject. I spoke to Diderot about Condillac and his work; and introduced them to one another. They were born to agree, and they did so. Diderot induced Durand the bookseller to take the Abbé's manuscript, and that great metaphysician received from his first book—and that almost as a favour—a hundred crowns [300 livres], which perhaps he would not have earned but for me. As we all lived in widely different quarters the three of us met once a week at the Hôtel du Panier-Fleuri. These little weekly dinners must greatly have pleased Diderot; for though he almost always failed to keep his appointments, even with women, he never missed one of them. (324)

Their friendship must have become less close for a while, since a decade later Rousseau says, “Lacking a single friend who would be entirely mine, I required friends whose energies would overcome my inertia. It was for this reason that I cultivated and strengthened my relationship with Diderot and the Abbé de Condillac” (ibid., 387).

In the 1740s Condillac saw much of his brother Gabriel, the abbé de Mably, himself the author of a very successful work, *Parallèle des romains et des français par rapport au gouvernement*, published in 1740. The abbé de Mably worked as secretary for the minister, Cardinal de Tencin, from 1742 to around 1747. The Cardinal's sister, Mme de Tencin, a former nun and mistress of the Regent Orléans, held a renowned salon where the two brothers met such distinguished men of letters as the baron de Montesquieu, the abbés Prévost and de St Pierre, the playwright Marivaux and the historian Duclos, who was still close to Condillac twenty years later.⁵ D'Alembert, the

5. Puchesse, *Condillac*, 15.

mathematician and *philosophe*, a Member of the Académie from 1754, was her unacknowledged, illegitimate son.

Until the publication of Condillac's first book in 1746, his brother will doubtless have seemed his mentor. However, the abbé de Mably separated himself increasingly from the *philosophes* and moved out to Marly, while Condillac with his further philosophical publications was in close contact with Diderot and d'Alembert.

In 1748 Condillac had published anonymously the dissertation *Les monades*, with which he won a prize awarded by the Academy of Berlin. Maupertuis, the French President of the Academy of Berlin, may have been influential in securing Condillac's election to the Academy in 1749. Condillac wrote to him on Christmas Day 1749 to express his pleasure and gratitude at being elected to that body. Their correspondence corrects the mistaken later date of Condillac's election given by Puchesse.⁶

In the letter Condillac said that it was a friend, M. d'Alembert, who had given him the news. In two more letters in 1750 to Maupertuis, Condillac refers to d'Alembert, saying in a postscript to that of 12 August from Segrez, "We shall just make one parcel of our letters, M. d'Alembert and I: we are at the home of Monsieur the Marquis d'Argenson where one meets the best society" (Condillac, *Oeuvres de Condillac*, 2:535). D'Alembert was known to all as the wittiest of guests, so those later writers who have wished to show Condillac as dry, retiring and boring have to explain away their pleasure in each other's company. Marmontel, speaking of Mme Geoffrin's salon wrote, "Of that gathering, the gayest, most animated man, the most amusing in his gaiety, was d'Alembert . . . he made one forget in him the philosopher and scholar, to see only the lovable individual" (Marmontel, *Mémoires*, 1:300). When a false rumour of Condillac's death circulated in 1764 d'Alembert wrote to Voltaire that had it been true, "for my part I should have been distraught" (Voltaire, *Correspondance*, 57:4).

An important correspondent of Condillac's in the late 1740s was the Genevan mathematician and philosopher Gabriel Cramer. Cramer was ten years

6. L'abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Oeuvres philosophiques de Condillac*, ed. Georges Le Roy, vol. 33 of *Corpus générale des philosophes françaises* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1947-51), 2:533.

older than Condillac and had an international reputation: he was a member of the Royal Society of London and of the Academy of Berlin. Condillac welcomed his comments on his philosophical ideas and hoped to visit him in Geneva in the autumn of 1749, but events precluded this.

Their correspondence mentions an especially close friend of Condillac's, Mlle Ferrand, a mathematician who commanded respect.⁷ It has been suggested that she may have been the model for Mlle de la Chau, Diderot's "*femme savante*," shown by Laurence Bongie to be a fictitious character, though her salon is one that Puchesse had Condillac and Mably attending.⁸ Condillac gave Mlle Ferrand the credit for exposing logical problems in his early work, and said that, though she had no pretensions to authorship, hers was the major contribution to his *Traité des sensations*, published in 1754, after her death.⁹ This work has been the most highly regarded of Condillac's philosophical writings. It received favourable scholarly attention in the Jesuit *Journal de Trévoux*, while the readership of the *Gazette littéraire* was informed of it by the Chevalier Grimm whose generally hostile and patronising tone may reflect cooling relations between his close friend Diderot and Condillac. Reviewing this work Grimm attacked Condillac's celebrated device of gradually giving life to a statue, saying, "This idea, in itself poetic, has not been embellished in this Treatise by the decoration of poetry, nor by the wealth of a brilliant imagination. Our author has treated it with all the wisdom of a philosopher, and all the subtlety of a metaphysician" (Raynal et al. *Correspondance Littéraire*, 2:438). Buffon too had a statue in his *Histoire naturelle* which Grimm preferred, "The first movement of M. de Buffon's statue is to stretch out its hand to seize the sunshine. What a notion! what poetry!" (ibid., 442).¹⁰

7. L'abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Lettres inédites à Gabriel Cramer*, ed. Georges Le Roy (Paris, 1953), 35, 52, 59, 77.

8. Laurence L. Bongie, "Diderot's femme savante," in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1977), 166:149–63, and Puchesse, *Condillac*, 13.

9. L'abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Traité des sensations*, in *Oeuvres de Condillac* (Paris, 1798), 3:52.

10. Eighteenth-century taste valued poetry very highly, and Turgot wrote a lot of it, while it launched Marmontel on his career when he won a prize which brought him

None the less Grimm was clearly moved by Condillac's dedication of the work. He wrote, "If we believe M. l'abbé de Condillac, Mlle Ferrand had a very large hand in the *Traité des sensations*, and I do not know if this admission does more honour to her or to the person who makes it. What is certain is that the introduction is not the least interesting part of the *Traité*. Our Philosopher, in speaking of Mlle Ferrand, delivers the eulogy from his own heart, and one likes to read an author who has the fortune to know the price of friendship" (*ibid.*, 438).

The dedication of the 1754 book was to the comtesse de Vassé who lived in the same house as Mlle Ferrand, her close friend, and held a salon alone after Mlle Ferrand's death. The two women sheltered the Young Pretender, who was supposed to have been expelled from France as a term of the 1748 peace treaty between Britain and France. We are told that he listened in concealment to the conversations at their salon.¹¹ Mlle Ferrand left Condillac 6,000 livres in her will in 1752 to buy books. Mme de Vassé was to die in 1768 in Condillac's Paris home.

The salon of the wealthy bourgeoisie Mme Geoffrin was for the 1750s what Mme de Tencin's had been a decade earlier. Puchesse relied on Lemonnier's painting entitled *Une soirée chez Mme Geoffrin en 1755* to assert that Condillac attended her salon in the distinguished company shown. Unfortunately, this picture is worthless as an historical record and was only composed for the Empress Josephine half a century later. It may simply be taken as indicating those who were regarded as the most distinguished Frenchmen of the mid-century.¹²

PHILOSOPHER WITH AN INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

By the mid-1750s Condillac was a philosopher with an international reputation. He was an admirer of Locke, whose works he had only read in trans-

to Voltaire's attention (Jean François Marmontel, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, *Mémoires* [Paris: Amable Costes, 1819], 87, 118).

11. L'abbé Raynal, baron Friedrich Melchior Grimm, and Denis Diderot, *Correspondance littéraire*, ed. Maurice Tourneux (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1877), 12:343.

12. John Lough, "Lemonnier's painting, *Une soirée chez Mme Geoffrin en 1755*," *French Studies* 45, no. 3 (1991): 268–78.

lation, as he himself stated.¹³ He demanded a scientific approach based on observation.

In 1749 his *Traité des systèmes* appeared. This, we learn from Condillac, in a letter to Cramer, particularly impressed Diderot.¹⁴ In 1755 his *Traité des animaux* was published, seen primarily as an attack on Buffon. His dissertation on freedom of December 1754 is often not separately mentioned, as it was described as an extract from his *Traité des sensations*. Jacques Proust deals at length with the controversy on human free will as against determinism which involved many men of letters at the time and ended with the publication of Voltaire's *Candide* in 1759. He concludes, "Condillac like Locke and Diderot absolutely rejects the traditional theory of freedom . . . But while Diderot, in reaction, radically affirms determinism, Condillac keeps the notion and the name of freedom, without however making the useful distinction Locke made between freedom and free-will." Proust regards Condillac's position as "lame, philosophically contradictory, and in addition lacking in clarity" (Proust, *Diderot et l'Encyclopédie*, 321).

This was all dangerous territory. Diderot was imprisoned for some time in Vincennes by order of a *lettre de cachet* after the publication of his *Lettre sur les aveugles* in 1749. So one may wonder whether Condillac was thinking in part of the censorship. Yet here one might quote what Condillac wrote of himself in 1747 to Cramer, "I follow experience, when it leaves me, I no longer have a guide and I stop. That is all I can do as a philosopher. As a theologian, faith comes to my aid when experience ceases to enlighten me" (Condillac, *Lettres inédites*, 82).

The best known publication of these years in France was the *Encyclopédie* which was principally Diderot's undertaking, though d'Alembert and a host of other scholars were involved. The first volume appeared in 1751. It has been reckoned on grounds of style and content that many entries could be by Condillac, but all that is certain is that in the entry *Divination* Diderot gives a free résumé of Condillac's *Traité des systèmes*, and refers to him by name.¹⁵

13. L'abbé Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Oeuvres de Condillac*, vol. 1, *l'Essai sur l'origine des connoissances humaines* (Paris, 1798), 230.

14. See Condillac, *Lettres inédites*, 54.

15. Denis Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 15 (Paris: Le Club Française, 1973), 224.

Bongie comments that Condillac's and Diderot's friendship lapsed soon after the mid-century. However, they were closely studying each other's work during the 1750s, and Diderot commended Condillac's later *Cours d'études* to the Empress Catherine of Russia in 1775, calling it an excellent work of an excellent instructor (Diderot, *Oeuvres complètes*, 15:814–15).

Bongie comments that Diderot himself said of his *Lettre sur les sourds et muets*, addressed to the abbé Batteux, that it could just as well have been addressed to the abbé de Condillac or to M. du Marsais. He regards Diderot as having let Condillac down by not defending him against the charges of plagiarism levelled at him by Grimm, Buffon and Fréron. He points out that Condillac's letter of 12 August 1750 to Maupertuis shows that he was already working on his statue. Condillac's own words to Maupertuis in the same letter indicate how his way of going about his writing could have delayed publication. He wrote:

I have several works that I set about in turn: the one I am concerned with at present deals with the origin and generation of feeling. It is a statue which I bring to life step by step. I have found some problems in it, but I think I have overcome them. I am going to leave it to one side for a few months in my usual way. (Condillac, *Oeuvres philosophiques*, 2:535)

CONDILLAC AND THE CENSORSHIP

The intellectual excitement of that decade alarmed the orthodox and conservative. The case of the abbé Prades alerted the censorship, not all hostile to the encyclopedists and *philosophes*. The thesis of the abbé Prades had been accepted by the Sorbonne in December 1751, but in early 1752 the Parlement of Paris, or supreme law court, hastened to attack it as undermining the miracles of the Gospels. The thesis was condemned to be burned, and the abbé had to leave France. Since the abbé's earlier theses had won golden opinions and he had been seen as a promising theologian, the Parlement's reaction might seem strange. The abbé's known collaboration in the *Encyclopédie* is plausibly thought to have brought the censorship troubles upon him.¹⁶ Mo-

16. John S. Spink, "Un abbé philosophe: l'affaire de J.-M. de Prades," *Dix-huitième siècle* 3 (1971): 157–59.

rellet commented that after the Prades incident he continued to see Diderot, but in secret.

Voltaire wrote to Helvétius in 1766, when falsely denying that he was the author of a book attributed to a long-dead abbé, “It is doubtless better to be ignored and in peace than to be known and persecuted” (Helvétius, *Correspondance générale*, 3:264–65). Rousseau was about to be arrested when he fled France in 1762 after the publication of *Émile*, and Voltaire spent many years abroad, fearful to return to France, though his reputation and readership grew in his absence.

Condillac himself had some trouble with the censorship: the abbé de Mably wrote to a friend in May 1744 that the censor was holding up Condillac’s first book, *Essai sur l’origine des connoissances humaines*, for a long time. But it was not only the government censorship that had the power to have books banned, confiscated or burned and their authors pursued. In 1759, following the uproar over Helvétius’s book *De l’esprit*, seen as atheistic, the Parlement of Paris undertook a general revision of all the “dangerous” books that had appeared in the previous ten years. The Procurator General, Joly de Fleury, intended to denounce the *Encyclopédie*, *De l’esprit*, Diderot’s philosophical works *Lettre sur les sourds et muets* and *Lettre sur les aveugles*, some works by Voltaire, Rousseau’s *Discours sur l’origine et la fondation de l’inégalité*, and Condillac’s *Traité des sensations*. On further reflection he omitted Diderot’s and Condillac’s works, and the Parlement’s decree was declared inoperative for encroaching on the Chancellor’s authority. The Chancellor was none other than the father of Malesherbes, who was in charge of the printing houses and whom he had appointed.

The legislation in force in eighteenth-century France regarding the production and distribution of books was draconian. As an example, the declaration of April 1757 punished with death all authors, editors, printers or bookcarriers of works tending to attack religion, to excite opposition and undermine the king’s authority. It condemned to the galleys for life or for a period of time anyone who had not obeyed all the formalities. All authors were supposed to submit their completed manuscripts to a royal censor and to obtain letters of privilege for them, or, in the case of cheap works or short leaflets, from the lieutenant of police. The privileges were registered, and printing was not permitted until all the written formalities had been com-

pleted. There were more than a hundred censors, all in Paris, who were supposed to have specialist knowledge. Diderot and Condillac themselves worked as censors.¹⁷ After the censor had given his approbation he could be in trouble as much as the author if the work caused a stir.

Practice modified the law. Already towards the end of Louis XIV's reign, tacit permissions were introduced. They were given by the censor who signed the approval and signed the manuscript or a printed copy. The list was held at the Syndical Chamber of the Parisian booksellers. But as they were not sealed with the Great Seal, and as they were not printed at the end of the work, the public did not know who had given the approval. This was the only way for foreign printers to bring themselves within the law. As Belin said, in general the censors were not very hard on these foreign editions which it was difficult to modify and often cruel to prohibit. Often the author's nationality and his religion were taken into account, and a book was authorised which would not have been approved if its author had been French, because it was the work of a non-Catholic republican. And then certain over-bold passages were ignored in consideration of the difficulty of asking for corrections.

The practice of French authors to pretend that their works had been printed abroad or were even by pretended foreign authors can be understood in the light of this. Malesherbes explained the "simple tolerances":

Often the need to allow a book was felt and yet one did not want to admit that one was permitting it; so one did not wish to give any express permission: for example that was what happened when a foreign edition had been made of some books which displeased the clergy and hence some cardinal minister, and this edition had spread in France despite obstacles placed in its way.

In that case and in many others one took the course of saying to a bookseller that he could undertake his edition, but secretly; that the police would pretend to be unaware of it and would not have it seized; and since one could not foresee just how far the anger of the clergy and the law would go, one warned him always to be on the ready to make his edition disappear as soon as he was warned, and he was promised advanced warning before his premises were searched. (Malesherbes, *Mémoire*, 254)

17. See Sgard, *Corpus Condillac*, 63–64.

It is not known how Condillac navigated these treacherous waters, but he obtained warm reviews from the Jesuit *Journal de Trévoux* for all his philosophical works. About his 1749 *Traité des systèmes* the reviewer wrote, “This essay bears all the characteristics of works which deserve to pass to posterity, great clarity in style, much force and exactness in reasoning, and an exact and rigorous analysis” (*Journal de Trévoux*, 44:469). Though the reviewer did not share Condillac’s aversion to systems, he praised him for his examples, which he said did more than prove: “they enlighten, instruct and develop very tricky questions which needed to pass through the crucible of the metaphysical and geometrical spirit of M. l’abbé de Condillac.” Described as “An avowed partisan of Locke, he has attacked the thought of Descartes and Malebranche with more method, clarity and success than the English philosopher; but like the English philosopher he is happier destroying than building.” By 1755 the *Journal* notes that Condillac’s *Traité des sensations* is seen by some critics as exuding materialism, “a hateful suspicion” which the reviewer does not share and which should not be advanced without the strongest proof (*ibid.*, 60:165). In Condillac’s defence he says, “Besides the author holds forth so learnedly on the Creation and on revelation that in all these respects his orthodoxy seems beyond attack.” However, in the same year at the end of a very long review of Condillac’s *Traité des animaux* the reviewer concludes, “One hopes that he will set out in full what one finds here in the two chapters, the one on ‘The existence and attributes of God’ and the other on ‘Principles of Morality’; and that he will also work on a truth which is only stated at the end of the seventh chapter of the second part, namely that *true Philosophy cannot be contrary to Faith*” (*ibid.*, 726).

DIRECTOR OF STUDIES TO THE PRINCE OF PARMA

Don Philippe, the Duke of Parma, was the husband of Louis XV’s eldest daughter, Louise Élisabeth. He was also son of the Bourbon King of Spain by his second wife, Elisabeth Farnese. The appointment of a tutor to their son was therefore of interest to both courts. Enlightenment had secured a hold in the French court where, in Mme de Pompadour’s time as official royal mistress, Quesnay and Marmontel were among those who benefited from her patronage. Official Spanish and Italian circles were less receptive. Madame Élisabeth was well aware that the Jesuits would be put out at Con-