CHAPTER 4

Making the *Encyclopédie*: On the Enlightened Roots of Public History

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Abstract This chapter positions France's eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie* within the early development of public history. By analyzing the compilation process, its intended use and the dissemination of the text, it demonstrates how *philosophés* (philosophers), taking on the role of historian, employed early renditions of modern public history practices in their pursuit of providing enlightened education to the public. Here, I set forth an examination considering the motivations and methods guiding the text, arguing the *encyclopédic* project employed the notion of "academics" working with the public for the public in the eighteenth century, which is fundamental to understanding the evolution of the discipline and its praxis over time. Such a perspective anchors an early configuration of public history praxis within the social and political fabric of France's early modern period, the rise of public work and the democratization of historical knowledge.

1 Introduction

In the fourteenth volume of the *Encyclopédie*, an anonymous author described the ideal model of French kingship envisioned by the contemporary public, writing:

> He should govern them according to the laws of the state, as God governs the world according to the laws of nature. Rarely should he employ his omnipotence to interrupt and change the normal course of things, that is to say, that exceptions and novelties should be like miracles in the order of good policy.[1]

The entry advocates for a just king who rules their people with respect, restraint and submission to governing systems, one who will intervene only when necessary to preserve, protect and improve the well-being of the state,

1 "Roi," *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 14 (Paris, 1765), 321.

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rather than compound suffering. Such a concept of kingship, however, directly contrasted with the tradition, religious doctrine and the mystery and romance surrounding the cult of the Bourbon kingship governing early modern France, particularly from the late sixteenth to eighteenth century.[2] Under Louis XV, as with his predecessors, a long-established ideology of absolutism and its deeply rooted social, political and cultural norms, born out of the historical traditions of royal lineage, privilege and religious and political authority, both structured and dictated citizens' everyday lives. Subjects were expected to exhibit unquestioned obedience, as it was the king's will, wisdom, insight and instinct that determined and guided the condition and harmony of the nation and its people.[3] Yet the evolving principles driving the French Enlightenment were in direct opposition to the absolutist state. Enlightened thought, which championed reason and rationality as guiding forces rather than faith, superstition and tradition, fractured the enduring monarchical authority, loosening its grip on society, culture and politics. As a result, enlightened thinkers created new social and political spaces and projects to question and challenge the royal institution and the overarching control of absolute power.[4]

A number of intellectual projects emerged from this fracture devoted to "the exchange of information and ideas, often in the service of reform" and the social and political utility of knowledge against the Church and Crown.[5] The *Encyclopédie*, one such venture, capitalized on the momentum of the growing Enlightenment ethos of the early and mid-eighteenth century, embracing its concepts and practices. Editors and contributors rallied for change by compiling and disseminating the history of knowledge across disciplines, seeking not only to educate the public about the past, but also to advocate for and inspire readers to challenge and (hopefully) overturn royal tradition with progressive thought. Knowledge was, in essence, a tool for change. It carried transformative power that could fundamentally change society for the better.

This chapter examines and positions the production and function of the eighteenth-century *Encyclopédie* as an early project of public history. Through

2 Peter Burke, "Introduction," in *The Fabrication of Louis XIX* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1992), 5. Burke refers to the "cult of the king" as the program used to elevate the myth of the king. Burke argues artists and writers employed images of Louis XIV to present a narrative of the history of the king in paintings, tapestries, medals, engravings, etc. as well as in official histories, all of which generated a public "theater" of the king.

3 David J. Study, "Louis XIV and French Monarchy," in *Louis XIV* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 10.

4 Dorinda Outram, "What is the Enlightenment?" in *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

5 Colin Jones, "Institutions Old and New," in *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 47.

analyses of its intended function, compilation and dissemination, I detail how *philosophes* (philosophers), taking on the role of the historian, employed early variations of contemporary public history practices, including the application of historical method as activism, public participation and public access to historical knowledge, to situate the praxis involved as an early rendition.[6] By promoting a dissemination of knowledge to a large audience and facilitating the public role of history, philosophes contributed to broadening the framework of history making. In what follows, I explore the motivations and methods behind the text, arguing that the *encyclopédic* project embraced the idea of "academics" working with and for the public in the eighteenth century, a fundamental concept to the discipline of public history and its praxis. Such an assertion expands the framework for understanding the prehistory of contemporary public history practice and anchors an early configuration within the social and political fabric of France's early modern period, the rise of public work and the public's access to historical knowledge.

2 Knowledge as Power: The Transformative Impact of Ideas

First published in 1751, French philosopher Denis Diderot and mathematician Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (Figure 4.1) was a large-scale intellectual project guided by notions of free thought, making enlightened knowledge accessible and educating the wider public. With the assistance of approximately 150 documented and countless anonymous contributors, the project editors disseminated a vast collection of intricate and systematized knowledge conveying the intellectual and social history of the "facts and principles of knowledge" to create a communication system fostering knowledge, critical thinking and dialogue.[7] With high social and political hopes, Diderot wrote of the educational intent behind the *Encyclopédie*, stating the text was created to:

6 My decision to situate the *Encyclopédie* as a point of origin falls in line with Paul Hanson's argument within his book, *Contesting the French Revolution*. While the text certainly influenced and inspired similar projects since 1751, to situate the *Encyclopédie* as the sole site of origin does disservice to the long history and interdisciplinary nature of public history. See also Paul Hanson, *Contesting the French Revolution* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publications, 2009).

7 I define knowledge as "intricate and systematized" according to French historian Peter Burke's notion of knowledge. To read more, see also Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 11–12.

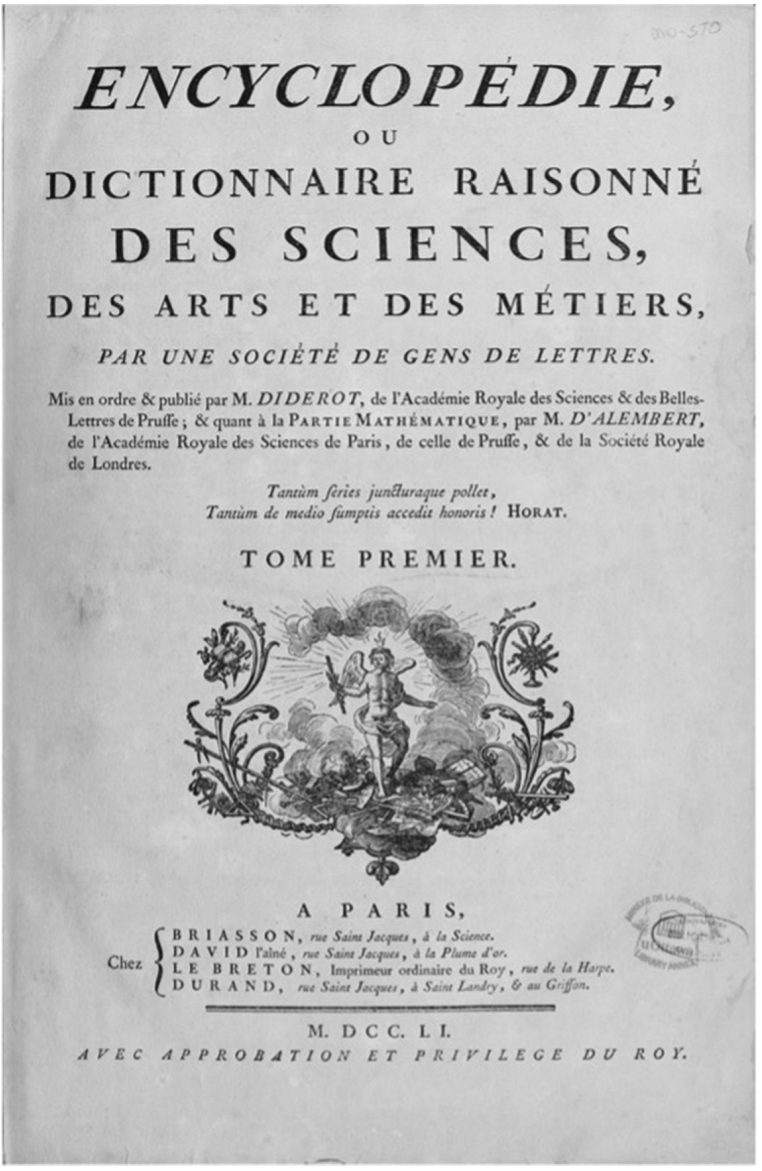


FIGURE 4.1 Title page of *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* edited by Denis Diderot and Jean la Ronde d'Lambert, Paris, France, c. 1751–1780.
(© Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, France)

> [...] collect knowledge disseminated around the globe; to set forth its general system to the men with whom we live, and transmit it to those who will come after us, so that the work of preceding centuries will not become useless to the centuries to come; and so that our offspring, becoming better instructed, will at the same time become more virtuous and happy.[8]

Likewise, in a letter written to Madame du Deffand a year later, d'Alembert echoed Diderot's sentiments for preserving and sharing knowledge for change, declaring, "[...] I can assure you that while writing this work, I had posterity before my eyes at every line."[9] As evidenced in both Diderot's and d'Alembert's quotes, the editors aimed for their prolific project to both educate and provide the literate contemporary and future publics with the intellectual tools to reform societies' current condition of life.[10] Their goal was not simply to catalogue information for the present, but to use it as a tool for intellectual and social change. Thus, the intentions behind the *Encyclopédie* were, at its core, an endeavor meant to champion the liberty and empowerment of the public – one emancipating people from an absolute monarchy and transforming them into a free-thinking democratic body politic through the "chain of knowledge."

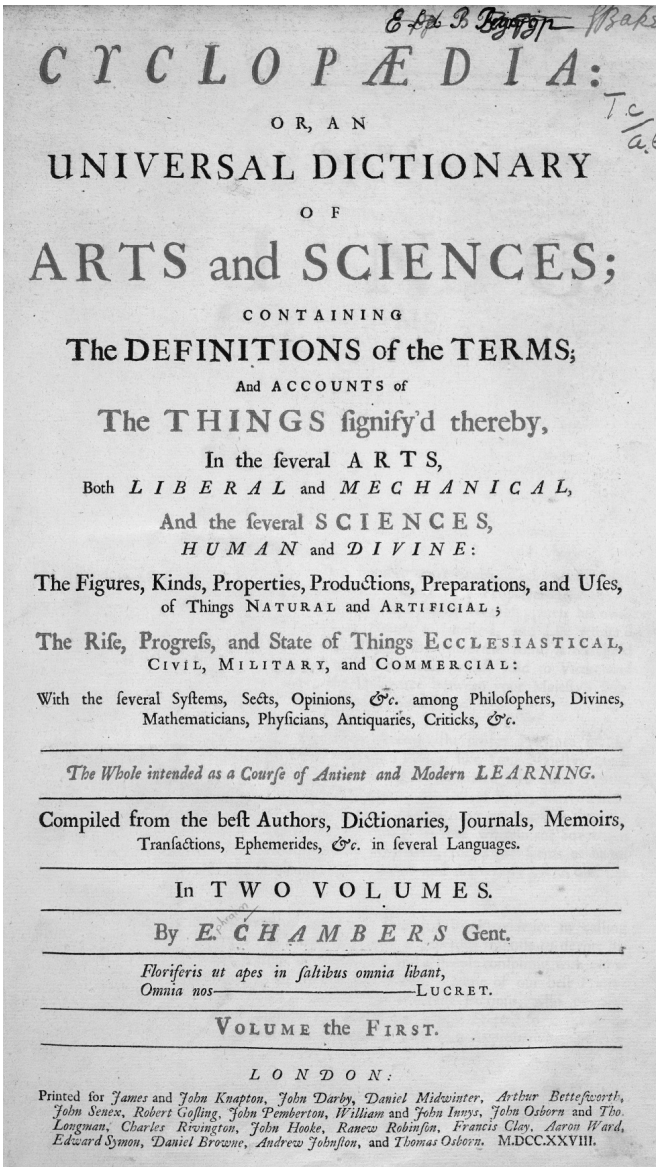
The French *Encyclopédie* encouraged readers to think critically about the understanding, representation and retelling of the past, or as Diderot termed the "progress of reason," in order to foster social and political change and "overturn so many statues, and redress some which have been overturned."[11] While not initially a reformative tool, the French *encyclopédic* project originated as a translation project for Ephraim Chambers' English-based two-volume *Cyclopedia* (1728) (Figure 4.2), passing through various hands before ending up with co-editors Diderot and d'Alembert. Under their direction, the project evolved from a brief understanding of the artificial and technical arts and natural sciences into a compendium of the many diverse and interrelated systems of information, illustrating the history of "both the politics and the

8 Denis Diderot, "Encyclopédie," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1751).

9 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Letter to Madame du Deffand* (Paris, France, 1752), December 22.

10 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 1–2.

11 Ibid.



CYCLOPÆDIA:

OR, AN

UNIVERSAL DICTIONARY

OF

ARTS and SCIENCES;

CONTAINING

The DEFINITIONS of the TERMS;

And ACCOUNTS of

The THINGS ſignify'd thereby,

In the ſeveral ARTS,

Both *LIBERAL* and *MECHANICAL*,

And the ſeveral SCIENCES,

HUMAN and *DIVINE*:

The Figures, Kinds, Properties, Productions, Preparations, and Uſes, of Things NATURAL and ARTIFICIAL;

The Riſe, Progreſs, and State of Things ECCLESIASTICAL, CIVIL, MILITARY, and COMMERCIAL:

With the ſeveral Syſtems, Sects, Opinions, *&c.* among Philoſophers, Divines, Mathematicians, Phyſicians, Antiquaries, Criticks, *&c.*

The Whole intended as a Courſe of Antient and Modern LEARNING.

Compiled from the beſt Authors, Dictionaries, Journals, Memoirs, Tranſactions, Ephemerides, *&c.* in ſeveral Languages.

In TWO VOLUMES.

By *E. CHAMBERS* Gent.

Floriferis ut apes in ſaltibus omnia libant,
Omnia nos——————LUCRET.

VOLUME the FIRST.

LONDON:

Printed for *James* and *John Knapton*, *John Darby*, *Daniel Midwinter*, *Arthur Bettesworth*, *John Senex*, *Robert Goſling*, *John Pemberton*, *William* and *John Innys*, *John Osborn* and *Tho. Longman*, *Charles Rivington*, *John Hooke*, *Ranew Robinſon*, *Francis Clay*, *Aaron Ward*, *Edward Symon*, *Daniel Browne*, *Andrew Johnſton*, and *Thomas Osborn*. M.DCC.XXVIII.

FIGURE 4.2 Ephraim Chambers, *Title page of the Cyclopedia ...*, c. 1728, (London, England). University of Wisconsin-Madison, public domain, https://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/4C5AV6Q7LZ5DY8E

economics of knowledge."[12] Over the course of twenty-nine years, French *encyclopédistes* produced seventeen folio volumes of entries, eleven folio volumes of plates, and five supplemental volumes to fill in the gaps of past *encyclopédistes*' works, setting forth the origin and progress of ideas through the systematic implementation of the "order and connection of the parts of human knowledge."[13] With such a vast collection of information, each folio, on average, measured "41.5 cm high, 27 cm wide, and 7 cm thick," a testament to the extensive research, expertise and comprehensive nature of the project and its 70,000-plus entries and nearly 3,000 plates.[14]

Certainly, there are similarities between the *Cyclopedia* and the *Encyclopédie*; however, editors deviated from Chambers' past abridged approach, or "a sort of summary of the whole," and, instead, implemented an individualized alphabetical folio arrangement to accommodate a more nuanced, comprehensive and all-encompassing study of the whole history of thought.[15] Editors instituted a broad cross-reference system within each folio to not only structure the information provided, but to also instruct and guide readers through the historical development and advancement of thought by retelling the history of the ideas and theories across the sciences, liberal arts and mechanical arts, and the "chains that bind them together."[16] Each volume presented a

12 Peter Burke, "Sociologies and Histories of Knowledge: An Introduction," in *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 11. See also Richard Schwab, "Translator's Introduction," in *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), xxxi. Chambers' *Cyclopedia* arranged knowledge alphabetically to exhibit its relations and dependencies, but lacked historical, geographical or biographical information (see Arthur M. Wilson, *Diderot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 74).

13 Richard N. Schwab, "Introduction," in *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), 11–12.

14 Library of Parliament, "Collection Spotlight: Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers," Parliament of Canada, accessed June 14, 2024, https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/About/Spotlight/RareBooks/Archives/Encyclopedie. See also Colin Jones, "An Enlightening Age: At the Moment of the Encyclopédie," in *The Great Nation: France from Louis XV to Napoleon* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 171.

15 Ephraim Chambers, "The Preface," in *Cyclopedia*, vol. 1 (London, England, 1728), iii.

16 Richard N. Schwab on Jean le Rond d'Alembert's *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 4–5. Peter Burke also writes of the alphabetical organization, stating "The arrangement of the articles was alphabetical, though it was countered up to a point by the elaborate system of cross-references. Independently of the practical reasons for which it was adopted, the use of alphabetical order both reflected and encouraged a shift from a hierarchical and organic view of the world to one which was individualistic

collective narrative of information, as Diderot recounts in the "*Encyclopédie*" entry, "defined or described by those who have long studied them [entries]."[17]

Given the variety of authorial expertise, numerous editors and contributors drew upon the eighteenth-century French *philosophe* and historian François-Marie d'Arouet, M. de Voltaire's (hereafter Voltaire) concept and practice of the "art of writing history" as both a structural tool and methodology for retelling knowledge. Authors composed entries according to Voltaire's notion of the "philosophy of history," moving away from simply chronicling various historical facts for an analytical history that served a didactic purpose in promoting the greatness of the contemporary moment.[18] Entries were padded with descriptive overviews built upon Voltaire's call for the "true account of facts" and his demand for knowledge produced with "more detail, more certifiable facts, precise dates, *autorité* [authority], greater attention to customs, laws, morals, commerce, finance, agriculture, and population."[19] In the case of the *Encyclopédie*, the historical past served, on the one hand, as a methodological tool for *philosophes* to construct informative narratives detailing the origins and evolution of entries using change over time as a framework. Yet, on the other hand, it also functioned as a primary praxis for a public-facing education project that presented contextualized knowledge and historical explanations detailing the "causes that brought the topic into being and the characteristics that distinguish them."[20]

As members of the Republic of Letters, Enlightened principles of reason and truth guided Diderot, d'Alembert and their contributors. Their intellectual community fostered the exchange of ideas and innovative discourse, providing a foundation for their collaborative efforts on the *Encyclopédie*. Their work – born out of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century intellectual culture wars – mirrored their affiliation with the *Modernes* (Moderns), championing civic progress through the democratization of literature and the supremacy of a national culture over the *Anciens*' (Ancients) push to preserve intellectual tra-

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and egalitarian." See also Nelly Noémie Schargo, "Types of History: 'Literary'," in *History in the Encyclopédie* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 154.

17 Denis Diderot, "Encyclopédie," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 5 (Paris, France, 1755), 637–38.

18 David Carrithers, "Montesquieu's Philosophy of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47, no. 1 (1986): 61.

19 Voltaire, "Histoire," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 8 (1765), 220–25.

20 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 5. See also Daniel Brewer, "The Encyclopédie: Innovation and Legacy," in *New Essays on Diderot*, ed. James Fowler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 47.

dition of the past and, in their opinion, the superiority of ancient culture.[21] Like the *Modernes*, *Encyclopédie* contributors conceived of bringing knowledge out of the largely elite, private spaces of *Salons* and into the hands of the literate public. They believed democratizing knowledge would evolve society into an autonomous civic body characterized by "rational, scientific, religiously tolerant, and reform minded" individuals ready and able to challenge the entrenched and oppressive hierarchies of the Crown.[22]

3 Knowledge as Reform: Transforming Minds and Societies

The editors of the *Encyclopédie* set out, by all accounts, to accomplish such a transformation through the creation of a visualized map of learning that gathered "scattered knowledge" from the "surface of the earth" to present to the public:

> A general system to the people with whom we live, and to transmit it to those who will come after us. This is so that the work of past centuries will not become useless to the succeeding centuries; and so our descendants, becoming better educated, also become more virtuous and happier, and that we do not die without having truly benefited humanity.[23]

As noted in the *Encyclopédie* passage, for *encyclopédistes*, harnessing the past as a historical chain of knowledge would secure and ensure a generational education leading to the progression and happiness of the people. Yet, this notion of the past was not one that fell in line with traditional thought; rather, as historian Jonathan I. Israel argues, editors and collaborators alike created a new framework of knowledge and understanding, and one that was emancipated from the control of state-sponsored elite academies and the private spaces of the Republic of Letters.[24] With open access at the fore, the *Encyclo-*

21 Helena Taylor, "The Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns," *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 74, no. 4 (2020): 605. For an in-depth look at the quarrel between the Anciens and the Modernes, see also Joan DeJean, *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of the Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

22 John Robertson, "The Enlightenment," in *The Enlightenment: A Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1–2. See the Ancients versus the Moderns in eighteenth-century France.

23 Diderot, "Encyclopédie," 635.

24 Jonathan I. Israel, "The War of the Encyclopédie: The First Stage (1746–1752)," in *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man, 1670–1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 842.

pédie had a social purpose wherein the text communicated the elite's intellectual ideas concerning human curiosity, duty, needs and pleasures as, according to d'Alembert and Diderot, such were the source of society and a tool for self-preservation from systemic oppression.[25] Reform was, therefore, paramount to the project and essential for its success.

Because the primary function of the *Encyclopédie* was to serve the greater good of the people, the monarchy vehemently resisted and rejected its publication, imposing harsh restrictions and, eventually, censorship to suppress the text.[26] For instance, the king's royal mistress, Mme de Pompadour, recounting the Crown's disdain for the *Encyclopédie* in her *Mémoires*, noted that they perceived a threat in the text's "suspicious reflections on religion and politics" and its proclivity for inciting "doubt" about current social and political structures.[27] Because an intellectual attack on religion was also an attack upon the Crown, they likely saw the potential hazards of democratizing enlightened knowledge and recognized its purpose as a public tool for reform, which could ignite hostility and instigate a rupture to their established power. *Encyclopédistes*' intention to disrupt, for example, is evidenced in the anonymous author of the "*Réforme*" entry, who wrote of its subversive social and political goals, stating:

> Reform, re-establishment of a former discipline that has been neglected, or correction of abuses that have been introduced into it. Taken in its ecclesiastic meaning, this word signifies the *reduction* of a religious order or congregation from keeping the ancient severity of the rule from which it has gradually wandered away; or the disavowal of the ancient rule and the very institution, in order to follow a more severe one.[28]

As noted in the entry, confrontation with and the correction of royal and religious abuses were central to *philosophes* cultivation of an enlightened society. To *réforme* meant a diminishing of religious order, a key component of the

25 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 11.

26 The publication of the *Encyclopedié* was revoked in 1759 and its production was then shifted to Switzerland to subvert the French ban.

27 Marquise de Pompadour, *Mémoires de madame la marquise de Pompadour. Ou l'on découvre les motifs des guerres et des traités de paix, les ambassades, les négociations dans les différentes cours de l'Europe; les menées & les intrigues secretes, le caractere des généraux, celui des ministres d'Etat, la cause de leur élévation & le sujet de leur disgrace; & généralement tout ce qui s'est passé de plus remarquable à la cour de France pendant les vingt dernieres années du regne de Louis XV* (Liege: Tome Premier, 1776). 32.

28 Anonymous, "*Réforme*," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 13 (Paris, 1765), 891.

Bourbon monarchy's absolutist reign. Yet the entry also presented an opportunity for readers to question state traditions and consider an alternative, modern approach to the current state of society. For *philosophes*, the entries and their historical explanations could chip away at and crack the foundation of a monarchy built upon tradition, privilege and divine lineage in exchange for a new, reformed democratic system. They recognized power could be transferred, and knowledge itself wielded, subverted, and transferred power; it could reconfigure the relationship between the governed and the governing.

As enlightened reformers, eighteenth-century *philosophes* employed the practice of creating a chain of knowledge to advocate for free thinking and actively confront and rectify systemic erasures and traditional biases. They took aim at systemic injustices in conflict with personal and collective liberty by confronting religious order and challenging the status quo of a monarchical Christian-based society using the philosophical concept of science. For eighteenth-century *philosophes*, science, as noted in its entry, was deemed "clear and certain knowledge [...] founded on self-evident principles or systemic demonstration."[29] Along with history, it was the bedrock of their project and a compass for seeking intellectual truth. *Philosophes* dared to create a text that could "overturn the sacred boundaries established by religion" and break "the shackles by which faith bound their reason."[30] Those involved were bound by their responsibility to bring causes to light in the search for science-based truth.[31] And their goal to publish this "truth," at least in the sense of the *Encyclopédie*, as historian Richard Schwab writes, was born out of the response to a growing demand since the seventeenth-century to produce a synthesis of the branches of knowledge, one "based upon secular and naturalistic principles rather than upon the traditional theological teleology."[32]

4 The History of Knowledge: Learning from the Past

In *philosophes*' mission to democratize knowledge, they encouraged contributors to use *encyclopédie* entries to challenge the *Old Régime*'s conditioning

29 Anonymous, "Science," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 14 (Paris, 1765), 787.

30 César Chesneau Du Marsais, "Philosophe," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 12 (Paris, 1765), 509.

31 Ibid.

32 Richard N. Schwab, "Translator's Introduction," in *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, trans. Richard N. Schwab (Indianapolis/New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), xxxi.

and religious ordering to deconstruct their long standing social and political hierarchies. To achieve such lofty goals, contributors' retelling of the history of thought set forth an "*encyclopédic* tree," or a historiography (of sorts), of the detailed system of human knowledge using a classification system (Figure 4.3). Within this network, they categorized each entry under the primary branches of understanding: Memory, Reason and Imagination. Such a categorization displayed, according to d'Alembert, how individuals "act on the senses," making impressions that "stimulate perceptions" and, therefore, create understanding, or knowledge.[33] For example, editors classified history under Memory, viewing it as a human method of understanding that "makes a pure and simple enumeration of its perceptions through memory."[34] Within Memory, history pertained to the "facts that concern either God, or man, or nature," making up three distinct types: sacred (God), civil (man) and natural (nature).[35] From there, each type of history was further broken down into additional sub-categories. For instance, Civil history, encompassing "Ancient and Modern" facts, was split into two sub-groups, "Civil History" (Proper) and "Literary History," and three additional sub-groups, "Memoires," "Antiquities," and "Complete History," were established to further classify civil-based historical facts. Such a structured classification produced a comprehensive and ordered scaffolding for retelling the history of society, its evolution and its understanding of the production of knowledge thus far.[36]

In making the *Encyclopédie*, the *philosophes*' methodology not only focused on the classification of knowledge into branches, but they also relied upon the *utilité* (utility) of the philosophy of history, the "representation of the nature and meaning of the past," wherein it provided a framework for a comparative approach, particularly for those entries championing reform.[37] As noted in the text, the *utilité* of history was intended to help societies prevent the recurrence of past events. The author, Voltaire, notes in the *histoire* (history) entry that *utilitié* is of great use to society as,

33 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, "Detailed Explanation of the System of Human Knowledge," in *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 143.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid., 144–45. Note that *encyclopédistes* built upon Francis Bacon's classification of history as Natural and Civil by adding Sacred as a category.

36 Ibid., 146. D'Alembert writes that their classification was influenced by Francis Bacon's *De dignitate et augmento scientiarum* and his call for the combining of the history of the world with the history of scholars.

37 Keith Michael Baker, "Memory and Practice: Politics and Representation of the Past in Eighteenth-Century France," *Representations* 11 (1985): 135.

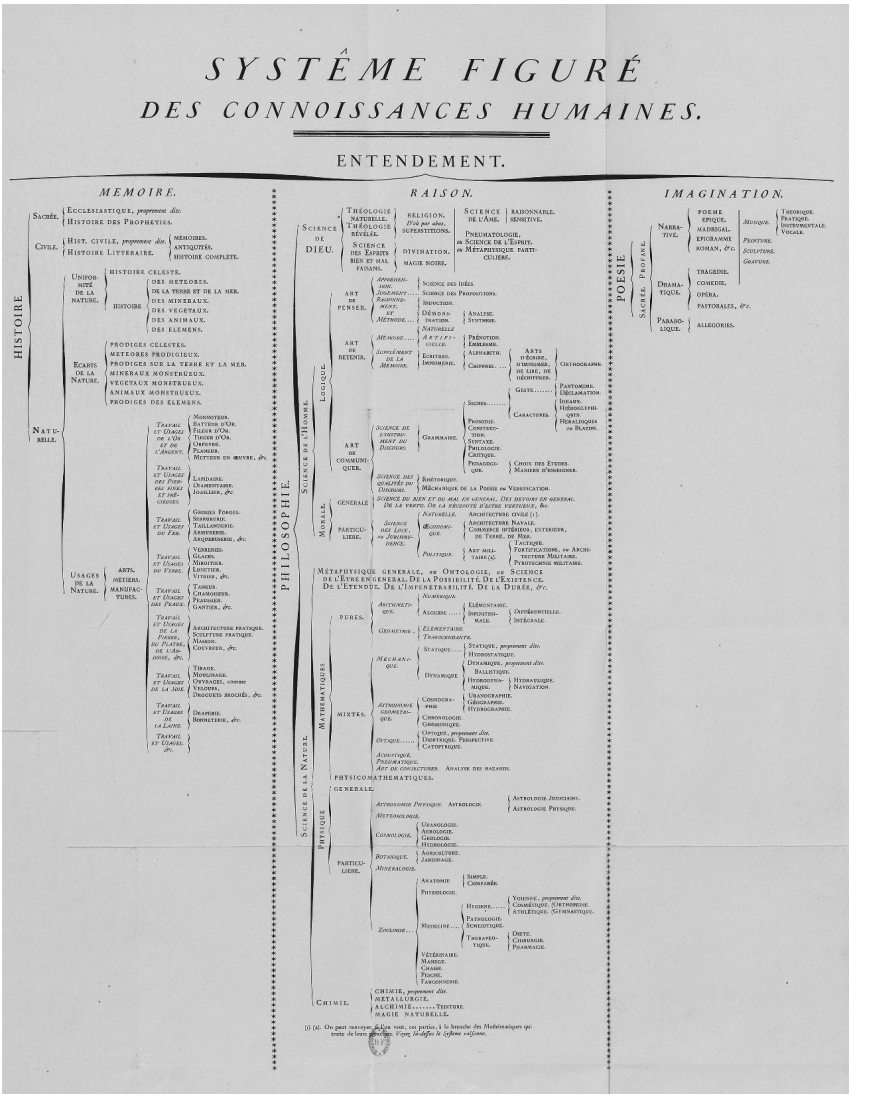


FIGURE 4.3 Jean le Ronde d'Alambert, "Système Figure Des Connoissances Humaines" in *Discourse Préliminaire*, (Paris, France, 1751). (© Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France)

Great faults of the past are useful. We are always placing in front of our eyes the crimes and the miseries caused by absurd quarrels. It is certain that by dint of

> renewing the memory of these quarrels, we can prevent them from happening again.[38]

As evidenced in the quote, Voltaire interpreted history as both a form of analytical documentation and a teaching mechanism; one that could be used to set forth fact and to compare the present with the past to avoid repeating prior mistakes or miscalculations. The social use of history, at least in a Baconian sense – wherein truth is discovered through observation and has utility – served as a tool for enlightenment by rendering the past instructive to the present. Causation became a primary focus for Voltaire, his contemporaries, and their quest for ultimate knowledge.[39] For instance, like Voltaire, Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac, promoted a historical practice premised upon an analysis of the past that highlights patterns of events rather than mere chronology of facts.[40] And revered French *philosophe* and historian Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, likewise, advocated for the importance of prioritizing causation within historical study to better understand the development of society and how they changed over time.[41] *Philosophes*' emphasis on historical causation and analytical approaches to history are thus reflected in the *Encyclopédie*'s commitment to reason and progress, as such a historical praxis aimed to guide readers to a more informed, enlightened and historical way of thinking.

Yet beyond the use of history as an instructor of reason and enlightenment, Voltaire's philosophy also regarded a "great" *utilité* of history, wherein it was a means for enlightening the monarchy and their social and political structure by teaching them how to utilize the past for the greater good. Notably, Voltaire remarked that the "advantage" of history, one that was not known to the Ancients, was in its ability to educate "autocratic rulers that since the fifteenth-century, [nations have] repeatedly united against a power that becomes too preponderant."[42] Readers, and particularly rulers, need only to read the battle strategies of Justinian or of the defense tactics behind Queen Elizabeth's naval

38 François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire), "Histoire," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 8 (Paris, 1765), 223.

39 Francis Bacon suggested the purpose of the historian was to obtain knowledge of a thing's utility and its causations, which lead to the formation of axioms. For more on Bacon's theory, see also George H. Nadel, "History as Psychology in Francis Bacon's Theory of History," *History and Theory* 5, no. 3 (1966).

40 David Carrithers, "Montesquieu's Philosophy of History," 62.

41 Ibid., 64–65.

42 Voltaire, "Histoire," 223–24.

victories to learn what worked and what did not.[43] And this was true, too, for their social and political approaches. The benefits of the *Encyclopédie* were premised upon its ability to reveal the pros and cons of the past to both elites and citizens, their causations, and the subsequent cause-and-effect relationship between the past and present. Only when such a connection was made could their project be deemed truly useful in affecting future change.

5 History as a Call to Action: An Enlightened Future

While in many ways the *Encyclopédie* aligned with past large-scale reference projects in that it produced an overview of information, Diderot and d'Alembert broke with tradition by including entries concerned with both the historical past and the current state of society and set forth connecting entries to help readers imagine where society could (or should) ultimately go; meaning, connecting readers with the past and its rights and wrongs could manifest both individual autonomy and the state's enlightened future. Louis de Jaucourt's entry for "absolute monarchy" is a case in point. Within the text, Jaucourt demarcates absolute monarchy as power conferred upon the king by the people when, historically, absolute power "resided originally in the citizens as a body."[44] Yet they expand readers' (particularly the king's) understanding of absolutism by setting forth a caveat, writing:

> One should not confuse the absolute power of such a monarch with arbitrary and despotic power, because the origin and nature of absolute monarchy is limited by its very nature, by the intent of those from whom the king has his power, and by the fundamental laws of his state.[45]

Here, the entry first sets forth a brief history, defining the monarchs' power as bestowed by the people, making the king a servant for and of the people. But it also provides a comparison between France's past and present to highlight how the laws of the past have changed over time. More specifically, Jaucourt uses the shift in absolute power from the people to their king, demonstrating the evolving nature of government, and one leaning towards despotism. With that in mind, Jaucourt's comparison functions as a double entendre: the entry

43 Ibid.

44 Louis de Jaucourt, "Absolute Monarchy," in *The Encyclopédie*, vol. 10 (Paris, France, 1765), 636–37.

45 Ibid.

is first and foremost a backhanded critique of the current monarch's misuse of power and the second aims to alter the reader's perception of the French government and incite them to venture to Jaucourt's cross-referenced entry on "despotism." There the reader learns that within *despotic* states, "a single prince governs everything according to his will, having absolutely no other law to dominate him but that of his whims."[46] With "despotism" lacking additional cross-references, readers could freely compare the rulership of Louis XV with the French viewed "despots" of the Ottoman, Mongol, Persian or Japanese empires, concluding the French monarchy, too, abused its power. This clever cross-reference between "absolute monarchy" and "despotism" created a progressive network of ideas – a map for social and political progress – and invited readers to think freely and critically about the connection and draw their own conclusions about the Crown's unchecked power and how to challenge it.

The *Encyclopédie*'s call to action and reform via free thinking also reveals the politics of history, as many *philosophes* shouldered a specific social, political or cultural purpose in the eighteenth-century, using change over time as their weapon of choice. Though diverse in topic and methodology, many of the histories produced detailed and challenged injustices of the past and present for a better future. Such an approach emphasizes the power of the historical past as intervenor and facilitator of change, highlighting *philosophes*' recognition of the value of using history – crucial to the entirety of the project – as a means for categorizing, producing and representing their genealogy of society in time, space and context.[47] The *encyclopédic* entry for "France," for instance, serves as an example of such practice. Notably, within the text, Jaucourt details the long history of the nation, stating

> [...] the history of this kingdom shows the power of the kings of France rising, dying twice, being reborn twice, languishing for centuries but slowly gathering strength, increasing, and ascending to its highest power.[48]

Following the above quote concerning the trials and tribulations of France, Jaucourt briefly chronicles nine-hundred years of French history, beginning with Philip Augustus and ending with the nation's present state, which in tandem emphasizes the abundant wealth of the crown. Yet, while the author's

46 Louis de Jaucourt, "Despotism," in *The Encyclopédie*, vol. 4 (Paris, France, 1751), 886–87.

47 Nelly Noémie Schargo, "The Method of History," in *History in the Excyclopédie* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 41.

48 Louis de Jaucourt, "France," in *Encyclopédie*, vol. 7 (Paris, France, 1757), 282.

conclusion appears to be a simple chronological retelling of fact, it also carries with it an implicit meaning. Primarily, the concluding paragraph serves as a historical contextualization of the current economic plight of the people and directs readers through the cross-reference system to the causations for their strife: "tolerance" and "taxes." Jaucourt then sets forth several general conclusions for readers to ponder, encouraging them to reconsider the link between the historical past and the socioeconomic challenges faced by contemporary society.[49] Once again the cross-reference trail ends short, but the space to ponder and form one's individual opinion remains open, inviting readers to engage critically with the text and form informed conclusions based on the historical past and the present realities under absolutism.

As demonstrated in the "France" entry and its cross-references, history not only operated as a tool for interpreting the evolutions and connections of the past, but also as an emancipatory tool for social and political change. D'Alembert writes of the social role of history in the *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie*, stating:

> Being animated by curiosity and self-esteem, we try, in our natural eagerness, to embrace the past, the present, and the future all at the same time. We wish simultaneously to live with those who will follow us and to have lived with those who have preceded us. From these desires come the origin and the study of history, which, while uniting us with past centuries through the spectacle of their vices, their virtues, their knowledge, and their errors, transmits our own (virtues and errors) to the centuries of the future. And it is from History that we learn to hold men in high regard solely for the good that they do and not for the imposing pomp which surrounds them.[50]

Thus for d'Alembert, history seemed to serve to educate, inspire and advance the public's present as well as their future in their understanding of and practice in good morals, judgment and ethics.[51] History was educational and political in nature, and disseminating its origins and connections would only "help to spread enlightenment," making the discipline a vehicle for reform and a

49 Ibid.

50 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 34–35. Released in tandem with the *Encyclopédie*'s first volume on June 28, 1751, d'Alembert published a comprehensive introduction detailing the philosophy, (subverted) political motivations, methodologies and contributors underpinning the monumental project.

51 Ibid., 35. D'Alembert wrote that history allows for the discovery of the moral universe in the "Elémens des Sciences."

weapon against present and future corrupt and oppressive governments, rulers and their despotic laws.[52]

6 Citizen History: Collaborating with the Public

With reform in mind, the philosophical application of history carried various public dimensions: as discussed thus far, it was meant to alter the course of life for citizens; on the other hand, history-making was a mediator for public-based collaborative research. The latter was particularly true for the Mechanical Arts section, which served as connective tissue between academic scholarship and the current practices and experience of workers falling under corresponding topics. D'Alembert writes of *philosophes*' need to work collaboratively and collectively due to their lack of knowledge on skilled labor, noting "never, perhaps, has there been such an accumulation of difficulties, and, to conquer them, so little help from books." With this gap in knowledge, contributors set out to gain an insider understanding of the trades through an empirical study of local artisans and skilled laborers.[53] In describing their collaborative undertaking, d'Alembert writes:

> We took the trouble of going to their shops, of questioning them, of writing at their dictation, of developing their thoughts and of drawing therefrom the terms particular to their profession, of setting up tables of these terms and of working out definitions for them, of conversing with those from whom we obtained memoranda.[54]

This quote is indicative of *philosophes*' belief that they could only provide precise information on trade work through the expertise of insiders, those laborers who carried out the work and understood the processes involved.[55] One can imagine, for example, while visiting the Butcher shop (Figure 4.4), the author witnessing the slaughter of the oxen depicted in the corresponding entry plate. The intricate details found in the vignette and their descriptions suggest that without close observation, the author would not have been able to systematically walk their readers through the step-by-step process of a suc-

52 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 60.

53 Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge*, vol. 1, 16: "E. Francis Bacon's empiricist epistemology was built on the idea that "even the learned might have something to learn from ordinary people."

54 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 123.

55 Ibid.

cessful slaughter, nor render the butcher's specific movements and their equipment, as depicted. Engaging with workers and their "essential circumstances," Diderot writes, "leads to unknown knowledge."[56] Here, the philosopher and laborer collaborate to construct the historical narrative of the work, its components, and its necessity to society. Entries, such as the "Butcher" and its plates, are exemplary of the fundamental need for collaboration, albeit limited, as not doing so would result in the loss of truthful representations of materials, tools, the machines used, the products made and the workmanship involved, and the intended "usefulness" of the *Encyclopédie* would be diminished.

While public participation was implemented in *philosophes*' production of knowledge for the Mechanical Arts section, when it comes to public participation in intellectual authority, Diderot and d'Alembert fell short. Notably, after d'Alembert's discussion of the necessity to learn through collaboration, he expresses an innate incompetence within artisans and skilled laborers, writing:

> [...] (out of almost indispensable precaution) we corrected through long and frequent conversations with others what some of them imperfectly, obscurely, and sometimes unreliably had explained [...] Most of those who engage in the mechanical arts have embraced them only by necessity and work only by instinct. Hardly a dozen among a thousand can be found who are in the position to express themselves with some clarity upon the instrument they use and the things they manufacture.[57]

The above quote, thick with classism, displays a lack of authorial equity and interpretive authority within the history-making process, which creates a hierarchy between *philosophés* and laborers. Contributions amongst *philosophés* and tradespeople are, in this case, not considered equal, as, according to d'Alembert, it is only the philosopher who can employ language to effectively convey meaning and function when constructing knowledge. Nevertheless, there is some semblance of a shared intellectual authority taking place, as the *Encyclopédie* does display a give-and-take relationship between academics, or in this case *philosophes*, and skilled laborers, and there is also a multiviewpoint examination and interpretation of the historical product throughout the design and development process, as seen with the construction of the butcher entry. So while eighteenth-century contributors do not necessarily

56 Ibid., xxxiv–xlv.

57 Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopédie of Diderot*, 125.

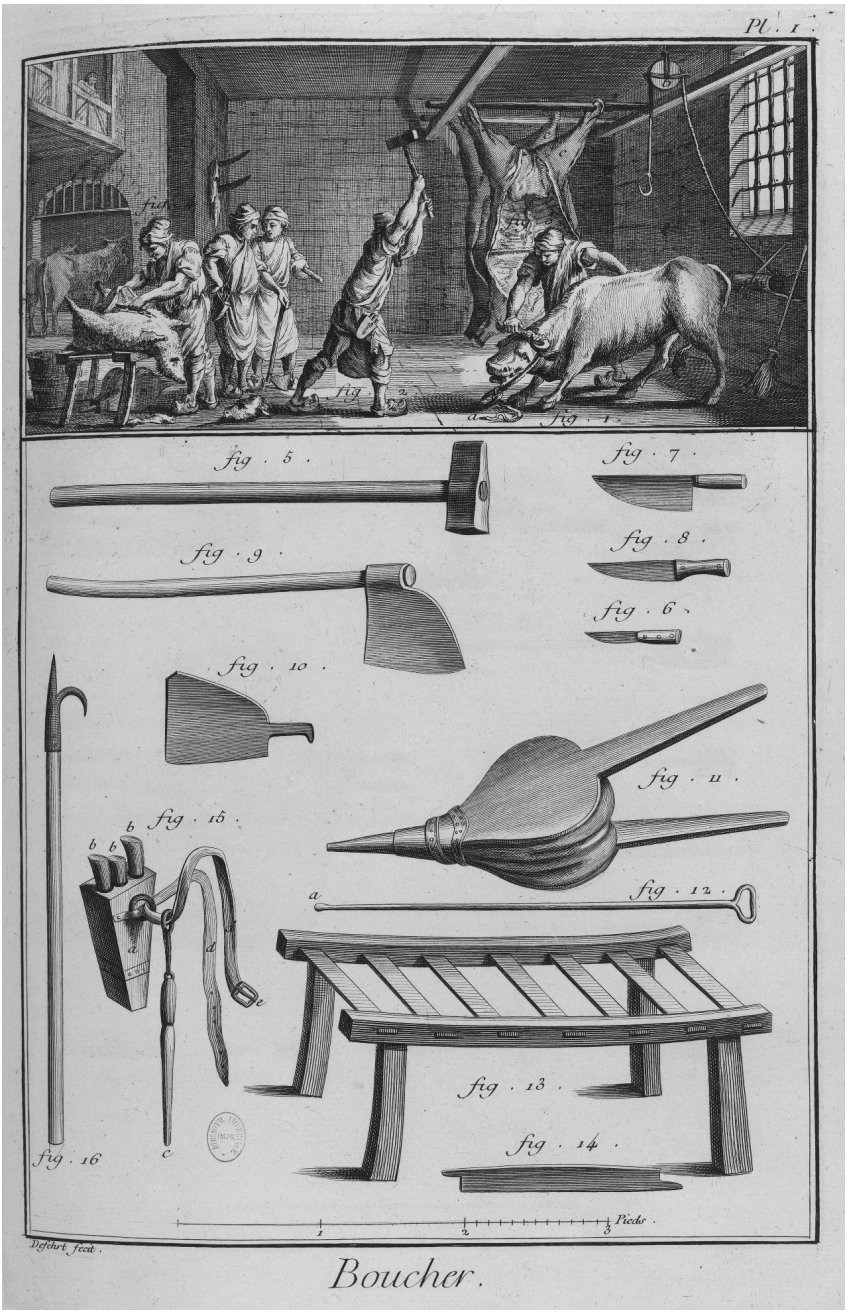


FIGURE 4.4 Butcher." Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, vol. 2 (plates) (Paris, 1765). (© Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France)

fully engage with an equal distribution of authority with collaborators, early renditions of collaborative practices were implemented to expand their academic view through "non-academic" knowledge.[58]

Despite d'Alembert's lack of recognition of artisans' intellectual contribution in the *Preliminary Discourse*, engagement and collaboration with the (so-called) "non-academic" public extended beyond class to gendered social spheres. Notably, when considering the *Salon*, the intellectual space in which *philosophes* operated and conversed during the early stages of the *Encyclopédie*'s development, their reliance upon *salonnières*, the women hosting Salons (a topic further explored in Chapter 5 on Polish aristocrat Izabela Czartoryska) reveals a dynamic, gendered relationship that was central to the fruition of their endeavors. In particular, *salonnières* provided not only a crucial venue for debates and discussion, but they also provided substantial financial and moral support for *philosophes*' intellectual projects. Historian Dena Goodman, for instance, argues for *salonnières*' pivotal role in fostering a sophisticated environment for enlightened intellectual discourse, exchange and the dissemination of modern ideas within the enlightened sphere.[59] Goodman posits that the agency and social and political ambitions of these supportive women were the heart of the *Salon*, which in turn benefitted *philosophes* and aided in creating the "right place, right time" circumstances for their project to manifest into physical matter. Prominent women, such as Mme Goeffrin, Mlle de Lespinasem and Mme Necker, transformed the *Salon* from a leisurely space to a serious democratic working environment conducive to discourse and collective intellectual projects, such as the *Encyclopédie*.[60] For instance, as scholars note, Mme Geoffrin's significant financial backing in the form of two hundred thousand livres and salon-hostess Mlle de Lespinasse's "laboratory of the *Encyclopédie*" for the Republic of Letters underscore the vital contributions of these *salonnières*.[61] Their involvement in the *Salon* transformed the space into a vital hub of communication and knowledge-making where enlightened news, discourse, dialogue and ideas

58 Quotations were added to non-academic to highlight the classist, racist and sexist early modern European notion that knowledge could only be generated by elite, university/college educated individuals, which typically translated to white, educated men.

59 Dena Goodman, "Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22, no. 3, Special Issue (1989): 332.

60 Ibid. For an early discussion on women and the French salon, see also Carolynn C. Lougee, *La Paradis de Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

61 Sara Ellen Procious Malueg, "Women and the Encyclopédie," in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. Samia Spencer (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 259–60.

were nurtured and supported by the minds, hands and pockets of women.[62] Thus, when we speak of the conditions, authors and editors cultivating the *Encyclopédie*, we must also speak of the women who hosted, funded, supported and collaborated with *philosophés* in these collaborative, intellectual spaces.

Building upon the examination of intellectual authority and gender dynamics within *Salon* culture, it is also crucial to delve into the role of gender in the production of intellectual culture to understand the evolving nature of knowledge-making authority as we know it over time. As previously noted, the *Encyclopédie* involved the intellectual elites comprising the Men of Letters as well as both acknowledged (or approved) and anonymous contributors. While many contributors sought recognition for their contributions, numerous contributors, whether by choice or coercion, remained anonymous, often due to threats from the monarchy or because of their gender. While the latter reveals a vast gender gap in the production of *encyclopédic* entries, for those women contributors included, only one was openly named. Mme Delusse, a French lute maker, produced the entry for "*lutherie*" in the fifth volume of encyclopedia plates. Procious Malueg suggests her contribution was on account of her intelligence and skill in the craft, but her sole recognition likely resulted from her being an exception to the rule as a "representative of a woman artisan who was as capable as her husband or brother."[63]

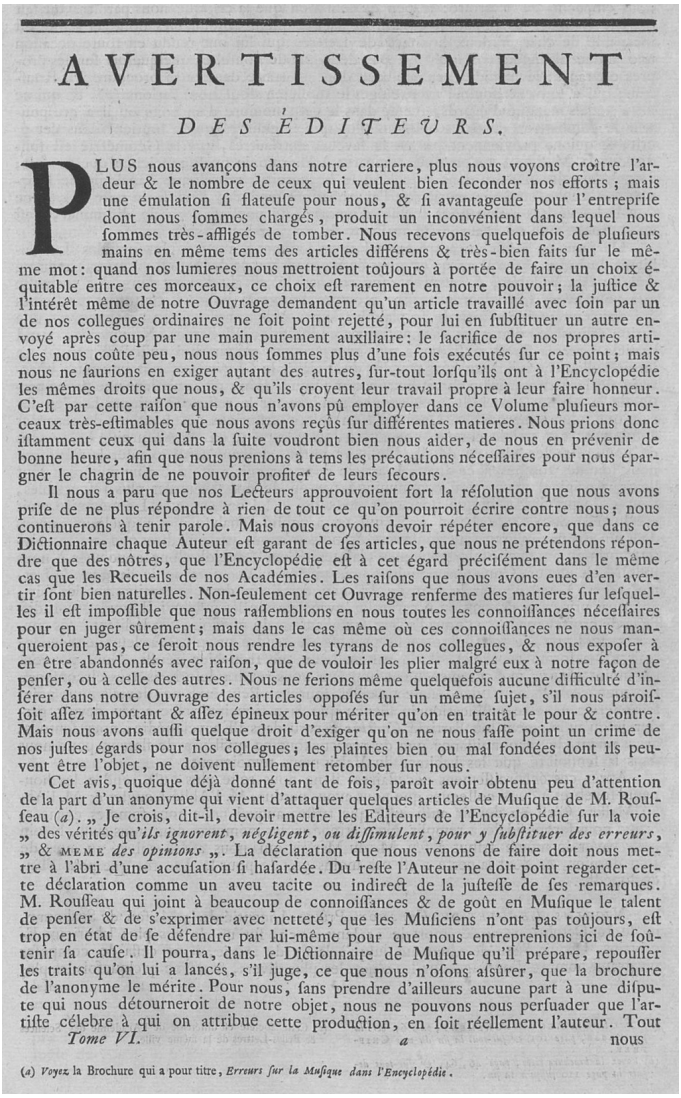
Another anonymous woman contributor, now believed to be Suzanne Marie de Vivens, the sister-in-law of Louis de Jaucourt, was noted by Diderot in the sixth volume's "Avertissement."[64] Diderot mentioned in passing that "A woman whom we do not have the honor of knowing has sent us articles for Falbala, Fontange, and others," but little else was written on de Vivens' contribution (Figure 4.5).[65] There are more deviations from the gender "norm" of the *Encyclopédie*, particularly when thinking of Mme de Pompadour and Émile de Châtelet, but the examples discussed thus far underscore the disparities rooted in class and gender, highlighting the limitations of who was an accepted public producer of knowledge and the lack of equitable authority in the production of eighteenth-century public knowledge. Moreover, such an analysis further

62 Antoine Lilti argues against Goodman's suggestion of the role of women in French salons. To read more, see also Antoine Lilti, *The World of the Salons: Sociability and Worldliness in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

63 Procious Malueg, "Women and the Encyclopédie," 260.

64 Ibid. John Lough suggested Jaucourt was the anonymous woman, see John Lough, *The Encyclopédie* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc, 1971), 59–60.

65 Denis Diderot, "Avertissement," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 6 (Paris, 1765).



AVERTISSEMENT

DES ÉDITEURS.

PLUS nous avançons dans notre carriere, plus nous voyons croître l'ardeur & le nombre de ceux qui veulent bien ſeconder nos efforts ; mais une émulation ſi flateuſe pour nous, & ſi avantageuſe pour l'entrepriſe dont nous ſommes chargés, produit un inconvénient dans lequel nous ſommes très-affligés de tomber. Nous recevons quelquefois de pluſieurs mains en même tems des articles différens & très-bien faits ſur le même mot: quand nos lumieres nous mettroient toûjours à portée de faire un choix équitable entre ces morceaux, ce choix eſt rarement en notre pouvoir; la juſtice & l'intérêt même de notre Ouvrage demandent qu'un article travaillé avec ſoin par un de nos collegues ordinaires ne ſoit point rejetté, pour lui en ſubſtituer un autre envoyé après coup par une main purement auxiliaire: le ſacrifice de nos propres articles nous coûte peu, nous nous ſommes plus d'une fois exécutés ſur ce point; mais nous ne ſaurions en exiger autant des autres, ſur-tout lorſqu'ils ont à l'Encyclopédie les mêmes droits que nous, & qu'ils croyent leur travail propre à leur faire honneur. C'eſt par cette raiſon que nous n'avons pû employer dans ce Volume pluſieurs morceaux très-eſtimables que nous avons reçûs ſur différentes matieres. Nous prions donc inſtamment ceux qui dans la ſuite voudront bien nous aider, de nous en prévenir de bonne heure, afin que nous prenions à tems les précautions néceſſaires pour nous épargner le chagrin de ne pouvoir profiter de leurs ſecours.

Il nous a paru que nos Lecteurs approuvoient fort la réſolution que nous avons priſe de ne plus répondre à rien de tout ce qu'on pourroit écrire contre nous; nous continuerons à tenir parole. Mais nous croyons devoir répéter encore, que dans ce Dictionnaire chaque Auteur eſt garant de ſes articles, que nous ne prétendons répondre que des nôtres, que l'Encyclopédie eſt à cet égard préciſément dans le même cas que les Recueils de nos Académies. Les raiſons que nous avons eues d'en avertir ſont bien naturelles. Non-ſeulement cet Ouvrage renferme des matieres ſur leſquelles il eſt impoſſible que nous raſſemblions en nous toutes les connoiſſances néceſſaires pour en juger sûrement; mais dans le cas même où ces connoiſſances ne nous manqueroient pas, ce ſeroit nous rendre les tyrans de nos collegues, & nous expoſer à en être abandonnés avec raiſon, que de vouloir les plier malgré eux à notre façon de penſer, ou à celle des autres. Nous ne ferions même quelquefois aucune difficulté d'inférer dans notre Ouvrage des articles oppoſés ſur un même ſujet, s'il nous paroiſſoit aſſez important & aſſez épineux pour mériter qu'on en traitât le pour & contre. Mais nous avons auſſi quelque droit d'exiger qu'on ne nous faſſe point un crime de nos juſtes égards pour nos collegues; les plaintes bien ou mal fondées dont ils peuvent être l'objet, ne doivent nullement retomber ſur nous.

Cet avis, quoique déjà donné tant de fois, paroît avoir obtenu peu d'attention de la part d'un anonyme qui vient d'attaquer quelques articles de Muſique de M. Rouſſeau (*a*). „ Je crois, dit-il, devoir mettre les Editeurs de l'Encyclopédie ſur la voie „ des vérités qu'*ils ignorent, négligent, ou diſſimulent, pour y ſubſtituer des erreurs*, „ & MEME *des opinions* „. La déclaration que nous venons de faire doit nous mettre à l'abri d'une accuſation ſi haſardée. Du reſte l'Auteur ne doit point regarder cette déclaration comme un aveu tacite ou indirect de la juſteſſe de ſes remarques. M. Rouſſeau qui joint à beaucoup de connoiſſances & de goût en Muſique le talent de penſer & de s'exprimer avec netteté, que les Muſiciens n'ont pas toûjours, eſt trop en état de ſe défendre par lui-même pour que nous entreprenions ici de ſoûtenir ſa cauſe. Il pourra, dans le Dictionnaire de Muſique qu'il prépare, repouſſer les traits qu'on lui a lancés, s'il juge, ce que nous n'oſons aſsûrer, que la brochure de l'anonyme le mérite. Pour nous, ſans prendre d'ailleurs aucune part à une diſpute qui nous détourneroit de notre objet, nous ne pouvons nous perſuader que l'artiſte célebre à qui on attribue cette production, en ſoit réellement l'auteur. Tout

Tome VI. *a* nous

(*a*) *Voyez* la Brochure qui a pour titre, *Erreurs ſur la Muſique dans l'Encyclopédie*.

FIGURE 4.5 Denis Diderot, "Avertissement," in *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers,* vol. 6 (Paris, 1765). (© Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France)

emphasizes *philosophes*' disregard for and omission of involving or documenting Black individuals' contributions to the *Encyclopédie*, be it through forced labor and/or empirical observation. The authorship involved, and those not involved or undocumented, in such a public-based project makes evident the inequalities baked into early modern projects built upon "public participa-

tion," and how such projects and praxis were deeply rooted in class, gender and racial biases, even in the face of growing anti-slavery sentiments and the push to liberate and enlighten society.

7 Informing the Public: Dissemination and Accessibility

While collaboration was a slippery slope in terms of creating an equitable praxis for intellectual authority, engaging in it was crucial for disseminating their project to the public for widespread accessibility. Partnering with four publishers in France, the *Encyclopédie*'s first seven volumes were printed between 1751 and 1759. Sales were conducted through subscriptions, and buyers were initially charged 280 livres for first edition copies. As the project progressed and gained momentum, the cost increased threefold to 980 livres. By the end of Diderot's involvement in the project, volumes were sold for 1,200 to 1,500 livres (15 livres was the high end of weekly wages for tradesmen and skilled laborers).[66] Analyzing the *Encyclopédie*'s various publications, historian Robert Darnton reveals the poor performance of the first edition was largely due to producing "luxurious folio publications" that alienated ordinary readers. Archival fragments show the initial 4,000 subscribers were mainly high-ranking courtiers, royal officials and members of the law and clergy, and only a small percentage of buyers were made up of merchants.[67] The idea of the public's access to knowledge, at least in a contemporary public history sense, was never true in theory, nor was it really in practice, as the text was never intended to reach a broad public due to the cost barrier, which deeply limited its accessibility and readership.

Like the relationship between public collaboration and intellectual authority, economic exclusion was not a widely held concern, as *encyclopédistes* did not view the "public" as meaning "access for all"; rather, the connection between public and accessibility largely meant members of nobility: wealthy, connected upper-class men and elite and exceptional women with access to education and the financial means to subscribe. Still, accessibility to a wider public was expanded later in the eighteenth-century through production by increasing the quantity of published *encyclopédies*, reducing their size and quality, and removing their plates. Thus, the move toward broader access

66 MIT Libraries, "Introduction to the Encyclopédie," MIT Libraries Exhibits, accessed March 30, 2023, https://libraries.mit.edu/exhibits/diderots-encyclopedia-exhibit-preview/introduction/ (Robert Darnton says the 15 livres part).

67 Robert Darnton, "The Biography of a Book," in *The Business of the Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775–1800* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1979), 17.

still carried with it a notion of inequality. Even though *encyclopédistes* and publishers recognized ordinary readers would benefit most from reading the text, the cheaper quarto and octavo reproductions were still out of reach for literate laborers, artisans and skilled workers.[68] This persistent demarcation highlights the vast difference between the eighteenth-century French notion of "public," and helps public historians to understand the meaning and realities of the "public" in early renditions of public history practice, and how they have changed over time and place.

While *Old Régime* privilege was built into the *philosophes*' notion of "public" during the publication and dissemination of the *Encyclopédie*, their progressive philosophy of reason took direct aim at nobility, religion and its hierarchical system of privileges to alter society. Their enlightened politics of knowledge, embedded into every page, bled into the minds of their readers. And their intellectual influence can be found in the core tenets of the French Revolution, particularly in the Jacobin's rally for equality, freedom and liberty, and their toppling of the *Ancien Régime*. *Philosophés*' calls for reform, likewise, were answered when revolutionaries converted restricted royal spaces, such as the Louvre, into democratic institutions accessible to all, utilizing the geographic and chronological exhibition of artworks as social tools for education and nation building. The consequences of the *Encyclopédie*, its praxis, and its revolutionary effect continued to ripple throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as seen with French philosopher and mathematician Auguste Comte's positivism and his founding of the discipline of Sociology. The *encyclopédic* legacy continued to influence various intellectual movements and professional practices, which only reinforced its impact on modern thought and the development of public history praxis.

Certainly, this analysis is not meant to set forth a perfect alignment between public history practices and the *Encyclopédie*. Rather, in analyzing the praxis and methodologies involved in the production of the *Encyclopédie*, the roots, or prehistory, of public history and its international development over time and space help to understand the evolution of the discipline. As historians, we often get caught up in pinpointing, or at least trying to determine, a site of origin, what Julia Creet calls the torment of the genealogical sublime. However, this chapter does not designate the *Encyclopédie* nor France as *the* site of origin, but rather one of many in the discipline's lengthy past. And, while such a designation situates a configuration of public history practices within France's early modern past, it also considers the nuanced understanding of the cultural, social and political circumstances shaping the development and evo-

68 Darnton, "The Biography of a Book," 273–74.

lution of such praxis. Yet, it also invites dialogue by leaving the door open for further historical explorations of the prehistory of public history to continue to develop the discipline's international genealogy and its development over time. In doing so, public historians not only enrich the historical narrative of public history, but we also expand its impact and relevance in the past as well as in the present and future.

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