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Theme and form in Voltaire's alphabetical works

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Our prime concerns are the content, pattern, and presentation of the ideas which enter into the several editions of the alphabetical works. As Voltaire's project unfolds from, first, the 1752 Berlin proposal for a dictionary to its realization in the years 1764-1769 and 1770-1774, many significant transformations appear in the numerous versions of the texts. The most abundant format, the *Questions sur l'encyclopédie* (1774), shows the richness of the growing edifice of articles, which may be classified under eleven headings: arts and letters; history; laws, customs, ethics; linguistics, lexicography; mythology; natural sciences; orientalia; philosophy, psychology; politics; public economy; religion. If these groups are useful, they are not the dynamic building blocks of Voltaire's thought with which we shall in large part be concerned. It has been helpful to assemble certain articles under politics, for example, but that category is not a theme. It is a general analytic tool which could be applied to almost anyone's thought, whereas a Voltairean theme, as we use the term, relates to propositions, doubts, and feelings deeply rooted in his psyche and expressed or implicit in his language: his desperate questioning about the nature of man and his endless probings into the meaning of liberty. These two motifs and others, personal and therefore essential to the orientation of his syntheses, underlie and influence his message as the successive stages of his alphabetical writings take shape.

To present the findings of this inquiry within as short a space as possible, I have organized my study according to the following plan: 1. the beginning and developing concept of Voltaire's

alphabet; 2. his contribution to the *Encyclopédie*; 3. his definitions for the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*; 4. the period 1764 to 1769, when unifying patterns of thought have definitely emerged in the several editions of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*; 5. the *Questions sur l'encyclopédie*, 1770-1774; 6. the *Opinion en alphabet*¹.

1. *The concept of dictionary in Voltaire's correspondence*

The genesis of the alphabetical writings shows an unswerving preoccupation, education, and some of the precise meanings Voltaire gives to this term are often associated with the advantages and characteristics he comes to attach to an alphabetical format. Writing 5 September 1752 from Potsdam to Frederick in Berlin, he refers to his project for advancing human reason (Best.D5008). He has seen copies of the *Encyclopédie* and is proposing no doubt his own kind of alphabet. Topics like soul, baptism, Abraham, atheist, and apostate would be treated, and we can safely say that they were selected to permit philosophic daring. Frederick in his reply stresses 'l'unité du but qu'il faut se proposer dans un ouvrage de ce genre' (Best.D5052). He suggests the choice of a series of headlining articles, none of them subordinate to others, and the avoidance of excessive detail. In the exchange of ideas there is also emphasis on agreeable style and utility.

A dictionary can be useful in two main ways. It may be a rich source of information, or taking a more active role may strive to form the minds of its readers. Voltaire seems early to have chosen the latter course. When he begins his collaboration with the Encyclopedists, he tells Alembert that he wants his first three contributions ('Élégance', 'Eloquence', 'Esprit') to be well documented, but then he indicates that his chief concern is very different². Defining, explaining, and giving examples are more important than discussing everything one has ever written on a subject

¹ this report describes only briefly one aspect of studies in progress on Voltaire's alphabetical works.

² for a detailed account of the collaboration see Raymond Naves, *Voltaire et l'Encyclopédie* (Paris 1938).

(Best.D5832, May/June 1754). After personal contact with Alembert at Les Délices during the months of August and September 1756, Voltaire insists more and more on philosophic honesty: 'Il est bien cruel d'imprimer le contraire de ce qu'on pense' (Best.D7018). Truth must be presented with care and conscience. He asks Alembert to set up definite criteria which all contributors must follow (Best.D7093). Since he may not speak freely in a dictionary which seeks the approval of the authorities, he feels he must refuse an article like 'Généalogie', which if properly done would underline the discrepancies in the different genealogies of Christ (Best.D7067, 29 November 1756). There is, however, another possible editorial posture. A partially compromised truth which has passed the censors in spite of subversive elements could be more of a triumph and have more influence than a direct, but unapproved attack. Voltaire does not think so. Preserving the integrity of the message would seem to be his deepest motivation in the events that are to follow in his relations with the Encyclopedists.

If Voltaire refuses to play the game of cat and mouse with the authorities, he is willing to name a replacement, Polier de Bottens. This indiscreet priest does not understand the restrictions which must be put on his efforts, and Voltaire finds himself in the unpleasant position of censuring the articles of his own substitute (Best.D7165, 19 February 1757; Best.D7247, 26 April 1757). Reactions to Alembert's 'Genève', the Cacouacs episode, the pressures placed on Diderot convince him it is futile to appease fanatics, whether Calvinist or Papist (Best.D7512, 12 December 1757). Gradually Voltaire assumes even more the role of moral leadership and measures the journalistic efforts of others by his own criteria. Alembert is commended for the support he gave Voltaire in the Servet case (Best.D7499, 6 December 1757). Diderot must not let the article 'Genève' be compromised (Best.D7570, 28 January 1758). Voltaire assumes that the French political leaders are enlightened enough to side with the Encyclopedists, who should go to the government as a group and have the priests put in their place. Alembert soon explains that the libels are 'protégés, autorisés,

commandés même par ceux qui ont l'autorité en main' (Best.D7595, 20 January 1758), and the complaint that Voltaire has made all along is echoed in Alembert's words, 'il est devenu impossible de l'achever [*l'Encyclopédie*] dans le maudit país où nous sommes' (Best.D76071, 28 January 1758).

Alembert may have been giving too dismal a picture, and he was Voltaire's chief informant. Under the circumstances Voltaire's own call for a mass resignation from the enterprise seems consistent and more of a pressure tactic than an indication of faint-heartedness. His argument that the government cannot afford to abandon the *Encyclopédie* is twofold. The work has a long-range value and function close to the nation's interest, and pressure would be exerted from 'trois mille souscripteurs' (Best.D7666, 7 March 1758, to Alembert). His objective is to reestablish the enterprise under new more favorable conditions permitting freedom and openness. Diderot was a fool to have wanted to continue the *Encyclopédie* and Alembert wise to have withdrawn from 'ce bourbier' (Best.D8129, 19 February 1759).

To speak at this point of any influence of the *Encyclopédie* on Voltaire's concept of his own dictionary seems far-fetched. He has held since 1752 that clandestineness with boldness and unity of message was the best approach, and this view was confirmed by his adventure with the Encyclopedists. The verbal leadership which he had assumed by his demands that there should be no compromise had now to be made real and his convictions tested by the production of a dictionary of his own. He sensed his moral isolation. He had accepted unworthy leaders: 'Il faut se contenter de penser pour soi' (Best.D8202, 21 March 1759). After the appearance of his own *Dictionnaire philosophique* in 1764, he continues to blame the failure of the Cleves project on Diderot and others who have lost the taste for liberty; 'on demeure tranquillement sous le glaive' (Best.D13500, 18 August 1766). Regret at not having formed a nucleus of scholars abroad is mentioned in a letter to Alembert, 23 July 1769 and again to Frederick, 12 October 1770.

His rejection of the project to publish a supplement to the *Encyclopédie* again amounts to a refusal to compromise his enduring concept of what a dictionary should be. Writing to Panckoucke 6 December 1769, he notes that he has more than a hundred articles ready, but that they may be too bold. By 31 January 1770, he has already decided to supplement his *Dictionnaire* (1764-1769) with his own more ambitious *Questions sur l'encyclopédie* and writes to Diderot that this new work will be 'sur un autre plan qui ne conviendra pas peut-être à la gravité d'un Dictionnaire encyclopédique,' but that once his articles have appeared they may be used in the *Encyclopédie*: 'Alors ils pourront corriger, élaguer, retrancher, amplifier, supprimer tout ce que le public aura trouvé mauvais'³.

In this brief account of Voltaire's concept of a philosophical dictionary I have tried to find the features which even during the collaboration explain his continuing and deep independence from the Encyclopedists. His ideas are in opposition to Diderot's on very important points. First, we must conclude that Voltaire's notion of the reader is different. Diderot assumes the presence of the censor and must avoid embarrassing him. His reader must be expert in finding hidden meaning, a *philosophe* already when he starts to read. Voltaire's reader is assumed to be a *Candide*, person of good native intelligence, yet untrained, who must be led to form new perspectives and introduced to liberty of thought by the very courage and forthrightness of his teacher-author. Second, Voltaire's leadership, unlike Diderot's, assumes the idea of tight intellectual control. He has a definite personal vision to express. If he were to admit contributors to his dictionary, it would be with the understanding that all views would be subordinated to the overall plan of one author and subject to severe editing. The argument, the emphasis, the sense of unity, the style, the conscience of the work would have to be his.

³ in a letter to Cramer, c. 20 February 1770, Voltaire, abandoning the Panckoucke project, tells Cramer to go ahead with the *Questions*.

II. The 'articles pour l'Encyclopédie'

A close study of form in these forty-three articles destined to be fitted with hundreds of others into a larger work would be unproductive. We can best proceed by an effort to understand which aspects of them may have been useful in the later more personally planned *Dictionnaire* and *Questions*.

In the area of linguistics and lexicography the theme underlying its eighteen articles⁴ is the value of the word, the need for precise usage by a writer and careful analysis by the reader if the meaning of a text is to be clear. The emphasis is on sense more than erudition, the 'acceptions diverses' of a term 'selon qu'on l'emploie', and Voltaire states firmly that 'il importe plus de savoir la signification des mots que leur source' ('Habile'). With this more synchronic than diachronic point of view he explores the shades of meaning between related words, how 'faveur' differs from 'grâce', 'fausseté' from 'mensonge', for example. His insistence on the need for finding the exact word to fit the ambience created by any given verbal complex means in a sense that there are no synonyms ('Faction', 'Fécond'). Voltaire distinguishes between familiar words of ordinary conversation and the technical words of science. The first have 'beaucoup de nuance qu'il est difficile de démêler: les mots techniques ont une signification plus précise et moins arbitraire' ('Galant'). He has pointed to a problem critical to the mainstream of life and the average man, for it is the familiar word, not the technical, that often carries weight in human affairs.

Fifteen articles classified under arts and letters⁵ treat broad problems of literature: nature and art, faculties of the writer, style, taste. In 'Eloquence' and 'Elégance' three concepts are in opposition, nature (enthusiasm, passion), the art of rhetoric, and a more

⁴ 'Faction', 'Fantaisie', 'Faste', 'Faveur', 'Favori', 'Fausseté', 'Fécond', 'Félicité', 'Fermeté', 'Fierté', 'Fornication', 'Franchise', 'François', 'Galant', 'Gracieux', 'Grand', 'Grave', 'Habile' (*Encyclopédie*).

⁵ 'Elégance', 'Eloquence', 'Esprit', 'Facile', 'Feu', 'Figuré', 'Finesse', 'Fleuri', 'Foible', 'Force', 'Froid', 'Genre de style', 'Goût', 'Grâce', 'Hémistiche'.

subtle art, the choice of words, *élégance*. Voltaire is inclined to downgrade natural expressiveness produced by temperament and circumstance. Acceptable eloquence is natural enthusiasm enhanced by rhetoric's appeal to reason and the effects of stylistic shading: 'remuer les esprits de toute une nation polie, plaire, convaincre et toucher à la fois, cela ne fut donné qu'aux Grecs' ('Eloquence'). Love of liberty is the sentiment inspiring sublime eloquence, which consists in speaking 'des vérités hardies, à étaler des raisons et des peintures fortes'. Although no speech (and no poetry generally) can be 'bon sans être élégant', this quality is not to stand in the way of the subject, 'il ne faut pas que l'élégance se remarque' ('Elégance'). Themes which have run through Voltaire's criticism of the *Encyclopédie*, truth compromised and artistic mediocrity, reappear positively expressed now as the ideal, an art arising from great natural sentiments, but always with an appeal to reason and taste.

Studying the gifts of the author, Voltaire in 'Esprit' builds his definition around the idea of 'pensées ingénieuses' and refers to Aristotle's belief that 'il faut employer une métaphore, une figure dont le sens soit clair et l'expression énergique'. He then expands the idea and adjusts it to his own experience with a warning: 'Les allusions, les allégories, les comparaisons sont un champ vaste de pensées ingénieuses. . . . Le grand art est dans l'à-propos . . . toute beauté hors de sa place cesse d'être beauté'. The article 'Imagination' similarly associates judgment and imagination, but at the level of plot and character. The view that through imagination the writer finds conceptions not in nature is formally rejected: 'toutes vos connaissances . . . sont fondées sur des images tracées dans votre cerveau'.

The many insights Voltaire gives about style and versification are all related to a central theme provided by the article 'Genre de style': 'assortir toujours son style à la matière qu'on traite'. The true genius has flexibility of mood and style. La Fontaine in his operas is unfortunately also the La Fontaine of the short-stories and fables.

The article 'Goût' introduces in a general way the problem of opening the arts and letters to a wide audience. The feeling for beauty is 'un discernement prompt comme celui de la langue et du palais'. Taste is acquired slowly, but Voltaire remains optimistic. Gradually a young man's ears 'apprennent à entendre, et ses yeux à voir'. But taste depends very much, too, on the cultural level of a nation: 'Il est de vastes pays où le goût n'est jamais parvenu . . . ceux où la société ne s'est point perfectionnée'.

The articles related to lexicography seem designed to train us to verify meanings. Those on arts and letters encourage men to read widely and discriminate among authors by exacting standards. The four articles classified under history produce a more varied impact. 'Garant' introduces several insights. In the past entire peoples were involved in treaties, a recognition of their moral contribution as counterweight to the ambition of rulers, but remaining realistic, Voltaire concludes that in international relations 'on a reconnu que la force est le meilleur garant qu'on puisse avoir'. 'Gazette' describes briefly and with some disfavor the origins and practices of this political and literary organ. 'Histoire' and 'Idole' are more substantial. The central thesis of the first, that history deals in probabilities, opens most recorded history to question. He would also prepare historians to move out of their local frame of reference and give 'des instructions sur les mœurs, les lois, les usages de ces nations nouvelles pour l'Europe'. A consequence of this view is developed in 'Idole'. The comparative study of numerous religions can lift the mind above convention and tradition and allow self-criticism.

The group laws, customs, and ethics offers redefinitions of several terms in its articles⁶. Glory is to be associated, not with vanity, but with important actions which foster the well-being of a people and of mankind. Past deeds and words are used to illustrate the difference between *hauteur* and *hautain*. 'Heureux' finds that happiness depends not on our will, but on the quality of our

⁶ 'Gloire', 'Hautain', 'Hauteur', 'Heureux'.

faculties and organs, and these 'ont été arrangés sans que nous y ayons la moindre part'.

'Imagination' and 'Gens de lettres', although they relate to arts and letters, belong also to the group philosophy and psychology. In the first article Voltaire's approach to a theory of learning is thoroughly sensualist and nominalist. 'Gens de lettres' describes the writer's valuable function of destroying 'les préjugés dont la société était infectée'.

If we have set aside the question of unity in our review of these articles prepared for the *Encyclopédie*, we have nevertheless found in evidence an attitude already expressed in the correspondence. The most basic level of Voltaire's attack is the word. Terms must be continually redefined. The reader must learn to see what words have actually come to signify rather than accept what tradition says they mean. The approach makes men ponder and doubt what has been taken for granted, the accounts of earlier historians, their sources, the concepts of what civilization can and should be. The true connoisseur in any field cannot be impressed excessively by local standards and opinions. He is dedicated to the great sentiments of mankind and to the distinguished expression of them.

Voltaire treats only five categories of subject-matter in his contribution. Because of the predominance of his concern with words, the artist, and taste, his articles for the *Encyclopédie* seem guided by and most substantially informed by one central theme, the value of arts and letters in their relationship to the progress of the human spirit.

III. *The 'Articles pour le Dictionnaire de l'Académie'*

Before turning from the implications of Voltaire's redefinitions to the actual results as they appear in the more complete alphabetical works, we must discuss briefly the articles he wrote for the

⁷ the source of all citations is J. Vercauteren, 'Articles inédits de Voltaire française,' *Studies on Voltaire and the eighteenth century* (1965), xxxvii.7-51. pour le dictionnaire de l'Académie

Académie (1760). His 115 definitions again show Voltaire the student of words expressing his personality and interests through the associations and emphases he establishes. Three definitions particularly, 'tant', 'tenir', and 'terre', have a richness of detail that indicates the seriousness with which this assignment was treated. He sustains interest in other articles by relating his own and the reader's study of terms to several basic pursuits: correctness of usage, discovery of semantic change, a resulting improvement in communication. He uses examples from the proverbs of the people and from a variety of authors, including Ovid, Corneille, Racine and lesser figures.

The lexicographical intent which characterizes all of the articles is accompanied at times by traces of philosophic overtone from about eight of our categories, but only occasionally is a definite point of view expressed. 'Tarif' has a reference to war and condemns the Fronde for its mad waste. Speaking of 'sainte table' under 'Table', Voltaire alludes to the 'pains enchantez' which the priest uses in giving communion. 'Tartuffe' raises the matter of religious corruption and rivalry. 'Tenir' mentions Locke and tabula rasa. 'Terre' typically indicates Voltaire's reticence about seeking answers to basic questions (if the earth is an element or not): 'il faudrait sçavoir d'abord ce que c'est qu'un élément'. The same article refers to the Promised Land and the doubtful nature of its promise. 'Taureau' deals with man's cruelty to man. At times an element of amusing vulgarity and personal experience appears in the explanations: 'un homme qui s'était brouillé avec deux rois, écrivait plaisamment, je me trouve entre deux rois le cu à terre'. There is little need here for further discussion of these articles. They show flashes of Voltaire's philosophic interests, of his temperament and humour. There can be little doubt that lexicography is for him a serious part of his effort to inform and guide the public toward the truth as he knows it.

IV. *The Dictionnaire philosophique*

Voltaire's comments about alphabetical writings in the correspondence between 1752 and 1770 stressed one goal above others, a format permitting the content and persuasive thrust needed to form the mind of his reader in an ambience of truth-telling. His articles for the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* gave further indication of his method, clear, succinct, penetrating definition, concrete illustration, commentary designed to raise standards of taste, a general, summarizing view of the topic under discussion. Yet the treatment, except for arts and letters, lacked depth, and the many avenues opened for new vision remained largely unexploited. Only with the *Dictionnaire philosophique* is the reader invited to explore the many-sided approach to problems used by Voltaire when at the peak of his alphabetic form. In this work the range of categories is almost at the maximum, rising to nine.

The 1764 *Dictionnaire*⁸ has three articles discussing arts and letters. According to 'Beau', taste varies from country to country and jokingly from species to species. 'Critique' attaches to this relativist and sensualist view the additional theme of rivalry, which has discounted many of the beauties of Tasso, Quinault, and Racine. Voltaire regrets that in these conflicts the public, preoccupied with its pleasures, remains indifferent. The final article, 'Joseph', gives an example of criticism as it should be, free of pettiness and practicing discernment. Seen as 'un objet de curiosité et de littérature', this story is 'un des plus précieux monuments de l'antiquité'. The intent of all three articles is philosophic in the sense that they ask men to read without being bound by local standards, prejudices, and emotions.

⁸ the editions to which I shall refer are: *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (Londres [Genève] 1764); *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (Londres 1765 [Décembre 1764]); *Dictionnaire philosophique portatif* (Amsterdam, Varberg, 1765); *Dictionnaire philosophique por-*

taf (Londres 1767); *La Raison par alphabet* (s. l. [Genève] 1769). I shall at times refer to these respectively as 1764, 1765, 1765V, 1767, 1769. See also the readily available edition of Julien Benda and Raymond Naves, *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1961).

History in the 1764 edition includes three articles⁹. 'Apis' offers the example of a people with radical vices. The pyramids, serving no useful purpose, reveal a superstitious and slavish nation. 'Christianisme' stresses the confusion, variations, and errors in the explanations of the origins and growth of Christianity. Adding perspective from the pagan world, 'Idole' uses ignorance to explain the enslavement of most peoples to the fanatics who by superstition destroy the potential of persons and citizens. This theme of the far-spreading and deep roots of superstition permeates the fabric of the entire work, reappears in all of the categories.

Laws, customs, ethics has nineteen articles with the following main themes: friendship 'Amitié; Amour nommé socratique'; ego or amour-propre, the means to self-preservation 'Amour-propre'; cannibalism, less of a crime against man than blood sacrifice 'Anthropophages'; the reduction of good and evil to the pleasure and pain relative to our bodily organization and condition 'Bien, Souverain bien'; virtue as 'bienfaisance' ('Fausseté des vertus humains; Vertu'); tolerance as a social attitude necessary to the wealth and power of a modern nation, like England 'Catéchisme du Japonais; Tolerance I'; the meaning of just law 'Lois; Lois civiles'. The unifying principle of all the themes under this category is humanity, what is relative to man in his feeling, desiring, and suffering, rather than to his good described by the rationality of some higher law, whether of prince, philosopher, or divinity 'Gloire'¹⁰.

The most general theme of the four articles listed under the heading Mythology is that man is the originator of myth. He has always sought to decrease the distance between himself and god, and Christian devices for accomplishing this have been derived in large part from the ancient myths 'des bons et des mauvais génies' 'Ange'. The Indian belief that our souls pass into various bodies,

⁹ articles added in this category after 1764: 'Julien' (1767), 'Inquisition' (1769). See page 21 for a general statement about such additions.

¹⁰ articles added in this category after 1764: 'Philosophe', 'Tolérance II' in 1765; 'Dogmes', 'Juste', 'Orgueil' in 1765 v; 'Délits locaux', 'Lois II', 'Morale' in 1767; 'Torture' in 1769.

Ovid's account of metamorphoses, the Jewish myth of Edith turning into salt, the belief about god becoming man are all related to phenomena man has observed in nature 'Fables; Métamorphose; Miracles'.

The category history had faced the problem of man's distortion of the human record. Orientalia, with its three main articles, tries to move the European mind outside its western framework. In his evocation of the far east Voltaire places the burden of religious strife on the dogmatists of the west, their efforts to proselytize whole countries, including China, which we are made to see has a civilization older and institutions often superior to its European counterparts 'Catéchisme chinois; Chine; Fraude'.

The group philosophy, psychology has twenty-three articles¹¹. Their purpose is to explore the human faculties and dispel misconceptions about man's thinking processes. Love is not Christian charity or sentimental communion with god, but relates to the pleasures and pains of this world 'Amour'. Animals are not machines deprived of knowledge and sentiment. In fact all plants, beasts, and men have their functional structure. If we want to call a part of them 'soul', it must be in operational terms and on that basis we may speak of the soul of a bellows 'Ame; Bêtes'. The senses are the basic organs of perception, and there are no innate ideas 'Sensation'. Our dreams are an indication that we have an intellectual life independent of will 'Songes'. Consistent with all of these attitudes is the conclusion that the soul is not pure and a separate entity, but is subject 'au dérangement comme les autres sens' ('Folie').

Man has illusions, too, about the nature of the knowledge he may acquire. Intuitions are mathematical or philosophical certainties, what we take for granted, my existence for example, which is certain knowledge only in the sense that we refuse to doubt. The rest

¹¹ articles added after 1764: 'Enthousiasme', 'Nécessaire', 'Sens commun' in 1765; 'Esprit faux', 'Idée', 'Lettres (gens de)' in 1765v. 'Préjugés' (1764) is discussed on pages 26-27.

of our knowledge, based on examination and interpretation of facts, the calculation of probability, is subject to error 'Certain, Certitude'. But such investigation yields the only valid knowledge and must replace metaphysical systems, whether materialism, idealism, or the monadology 'Corps'. The only metaphysics required by science is the intuition of an orderly universe with laws which are 'immuable' and beyond the power of man and god to change 'Destin'. The effect of Voltaire's position is to indicate the limitations of science and at the same time to encourage scientific investigation.

Finalism is approached, too, in a very practical way. We are asked to find the rational limits of the doctrine by two criteria: 1. the effects must be invariably the same in all times and places and 2. the effects must arise from the beings or objects themselves and not from an outside agent. It follows that 'un ver à soie n'est donc pas fait pour couvrir mes jambes, comme votre bouche est faite pour manger' ('Fin, Causes finales'). Eliminated are anthropocentric and revealed causalities, but not the notion of functional purpose tested by the restrictions given 'Bien, Tout est; Bornes de l'Esprit humain'.

These redefinitions relating to man's faculties, knowledge, and the universe in which he lives open to question the traditional concept of liberty of will. Liberty becomes 'le pouvoir de faire ce que je veux', but man is not free to control the ideas that determine what he wills, 'Vous voulez nécessairement, en conséquence des idées qui se sont présentées à vous' ('Liberté'). Men are deprived of liberty by sickness, injury, the force of other men, by nature or the laws of the universe 'Caractère'. Liberty is thus the gauging and mustering of strength to overcome obstacles in terms of what necessity allows. Original sin, religious faith have nothing to do with the question 'Matière; Méchant'.

The category Politics introduces themes on human rights, government, and foreign policy. Voltaire's status quo doctrine 'Egalité' is accompanied by ideas which could be unsettling for complacent governments: progress through education, preference

for rule by law, the union of private and general interest, opposition to dynastic wars 'Etats, gouvernements; Guerre; Luxe; Patrie; Tyrannie'¹².

Religion has the greatest number of articles¹³. After pointing out the dangers of atheism 'Athée', Voltaire directs his main attack against revealed religion, particularly Christianity, which is found wanting because of its sources 'Histoire des rois juifs, Jephthé'; its scriptures 'Abraham, Ezéchiel, Moïse, Salomon'; its doctrine 'Apocalypse, Enfer, Grâce, Messie, Résurrection'; its practices and ceremonies 'Baptême, Circoncision'. The clergy must be made useful to the nation 'Catéchisme du curé', and Voltaire's anticlericalism is extended to the Pope in the article 'Pierre'. Contrasting definitions of religion form a thread: the simplicity, humanity, and logic of natural religion 'Dieu, Religion' are from beginning to end of the work placed in opposition to the anthropomorphic folly of fanaticism 'Convulsions, Fanatisme, Superstition'.

The articles under natural sciences throw doubt on a universe conceived in terms of fixed gradations and hierarchies. If there is a chain of being, 'c'est certainement celle que Newton a découverte' ('Chaîne des êtres créés'). Eternal physical laws reign in the universe, but this does not support a system of total materialistic necessity 'Chaîne des événements'. Science, not bound by a philosophic system, will decide on a utilitarian basis which phenomena merit investigation. 'Ciel des anciens' describes ancient beliefs about the universe long since proved in error. 'Inondation' uses science to dispute beliefs that have hardened into doctrine, for example, the story of the universal flood.

As I have described each category of articles I have tried to indicate its major themes and impact. The additions to the text in new editions (1765, 1765v, 1767, 1769) reinforce the message. It would prove digressive to treat these changes exhaustively here, but a few examples will contribute positively to our presentation. I shall take them only from the category religion.

¹² articles added after 1764: 'Liberté de penser' (1765); 'Maître' (1767).

¹³ forty-eight for all the editions; for articles added after 1764, see page 22.

'Abbé' (1765v) becomes a brilliant opening for the entire *Dictionnaire*. New articles or supplements to old ones emphasize the shaky grounds of the Church's authority, since its policy opposes the national interest 'Confession, Religion, Secte, Superstition, Théologien, 1765v; Papisme, 1767'. Doubt is cast upon the spiritual leadership of the clergy for other reasons. It has been responsible for great crimes 'Persécutions, 1765; Martyrs, 1765v'. The Jewish sources of Christianity are themselves borrowings 'Abraham, Adam, 1767'. The Councils originated dogmas in contradiction with the Scriptures 'Antitrinitaires, Arius, Conciles, 1767'. Christian teachings are often unbelievable in their substance 'Ezéchiel, Résurrection, 1765v; Athée II, Babel, Baptême, Divinité de Jésus, Evangile, Judée, Pêché originel, Prophètes, 1767; Carême, 1769'. Religious figures of the *Bible* often represent the worst in human nature 'Paul, Salomon, 1765v; David, 1767'. The good of the nation requires the subordination of Church to state 'Prêtres, 1765v'. 'Foi' (1765v) questions the value of faith by the meaning it has come to assume in Voltaire's updated definition: 'non ce qui semble vrai, mais ce qui semble faux à notre entendement'. A new 'Foi' (1767) dramatizes in a dialogue between Pic de Mirandola and pope Alexander VI the mental warping required by faith. 'Transsubstantiation' (1767) attacks that dogma with terrible ferocity. In other articles Voltaire continues to outline the advantages of a deistically oriented civil religion 'Catéchisme du jardinier, 1765; Théiste, 1765v; Credo, 1769'.

Each of the nine categories of articles we have analyzed in the 1764 edition of the *Dictionnaire* contributed to a definite and positive goal: to free man's mind by a deliberate broadening of his perspectives through the use of widely varying subject-matters rich in thematic content. The additions made in most of the categories between 1764 and 1769 show, too, a persisting effort to reinforce all of the aspects of this programme. The message of the 1769 *Dictionnaire* seems coordinated, more structured than is normal in an alphabetical format, and this

observation forces us back to Voltaire's views expressed in the correspondence. He assumed the need for unity, and we must now deal directly with that notion as it affects several aspects of his work.

The length of the articles has a unifying effect. Without going too far with statistics, we should indicate that of the total of 118 articles, 106 are very short (one page to four); 10 of average length (six to thirteen pages); and two are long, 'Catéchisme chinois' and 'Christianisme' (twenty-one to twenty-five pages). For the most part the reader is able to digest each article quickly and move on, whether he reads in sequence or browses.

Interest is sustained by a stimulating variety within the article. Each has usually a clear shift in emphasis, a flow from 1. description or definition, to 2. emotions either of indignation, hope, or pity, to 3. positive proposals or frontal attack. 'Abbé' begins with the image of the 'abbé', then changes to mounting indignation, as with brief strokes a summary of accumulating papal power is drawn, and ends with hate and a threat directed against the plundering ambition of priests.

Across the work, too, there is a clear alternation of two tones. A positive mood is sustained by about fifty-five articles which may be called predominantly didactic, like 'Catéchisme chinois, Chaîne des événements'. The destructive effect is attributable to roughly forty-two articles which offer intense elements of frontal attack, for example, 'Athée II, Histoire des rois juifs, Inquisition'. I do not intend to imply any strict separation of these tones. Didacticism and destructiveness may appear in the same article. At times also there is a mixture of these elements with other moods which we shall call comic, romanesque, epic, and tragic. The comic is often used by Voltaire to undermine the opposition. His devices range from subtle to rather heavy-handed deflation. In 'Abraham' the comic appears at times in ironic ambiguity, 'comme l'histoire de ce peuple a été visiblement écrite par le Saint-Esprit lui-même, nous avons pour elle les sentiments que nous devons avoir'. In 'Ame' weighty philosophical verbalism is depreciated by contact with the

vulgarly concrete: 'votre entendement aurait beau dire à votre estomac: 'Digère', il n'en fera rien s'il est malade'.

Other articles seem primarily coloured by the romanesque. 'Amour-propre' reports an exchange between a passer-by and the 'fier gueux' and then between a spectator and the fakir in order to show the various meanings of vanity, ego, and pride. 'Dogmes' uses first-person narration to set in motion a voyage of fantasy in which the narrator sees the wicked dead judged by men who in life have practised *bienfaisance*. 'Des Lois I', beginning its story in the time of Vespasian, draws lessons from the flight of an Israelite and his family.

When we referred to the tragic and the epic we meant those qualities as they appear in Voltaire's view of man's condition. Repeatedly in his writings, whether in the *Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne*, *Candide*, and many of the plays, certainly *Zaïre* and *Mahomet*, the tragic arises from man's torment in the presence of an unavoidable intuition: God's creation has left him without sure guidance to face monstrous evils and make moral decisions which may augment those evils. Tragedy in this sense is expressed frequently in the *Dictionnaire*, as in these lines of 'Tout est bien': 'Il faut avouer du moins que ce chétif animal a droit de crier humblement, et de chercher à comprendre'.

At times Voltaire gives a more positive interpretation of man's condition. Great men are seen to transcend in epic stance the flow of events, give it meaning, and try to control the outcome by their sense of proportion and right. In spite of his crimes, the emperor Constantine tries heroically to prevent the 'guerre civile des cervelles scolastiques' and in defeat has nevertheless opposed the disastrous course of much subsequent history 'Arius'. Bayle and others like him are the intellectual and moral hope of the race and in this sense have epic stature, 'âmes inébranlables, justes, et tolérantes' ('Lettres; Philosophes').

Through his tragic and epic passages Voltaire involves his reader directly in emotions he felt intensely himself. The comic shows the hollowness of certain ideas and institutions or makes his own ideas

seem benign, simple common sense, and acceptable. Placing a fictional screen between the reader and the text, the romanesque gives the distance needed for a consideration of new ideas. These four tones supply relief from the predominant group of articles and passages which are either didactic or destructive.

We must turn now to the thematic relationship of articles. At times Voltaire directly encourages the reader to join up topics separated alphabetically. The last sentence of 'Chaînes des événements' refers to 'Destinée', which in turn calls attention to the letter 'L', where under 'De la liberté' the meaning of freedom of will is discussed. Often the titles compel us to find other articles. 'Abraham', 'Adam', and 'David' whet the appetite for what may be said under 'Divinité de Jésus, Joseph, Paul, Salomon'. 'Abbé' prepares the reader for 'Papisme', 'Inquisition', and 'Théologien', each of which carries connotations of ambition, greed, power, and persecution. Titles thus serve as guideposts and reminders.

Such obvious linking is accompanied by another, the juxtaposition of thematically related articles. 'Carême' contrasts innocent human needs with the religious rules which deny them. 'Catéchisme chinois' follows with a description of the beliefs and laws men really need. 'Dieu' condemns anthropomorphic gods; 'Divinité de Jésus' gives evidence that Jesus is simply man. 'Evangile', 'Ezéchiel', and 'Fables' have an effect and cause relation. According to the first the Gospels may be apocryphal. The next makes the stories about Ezechiel fictional. 'Fables' explains how such stories become part of the human outlook. The sequence 'Foi' through 'Guerre' has a connecting thread: 'Foi' (belief in the impossible); 'Folie' (the contradiction inherent in a spiritual soul, a pure and separate entity, which can nevertheless go mad requires belief in the impossible); 'Fraude' (conclusion that the people need, not fables, but 'une créance raisonnable'); 'Genèse', 'Gloire', 'Grâce', 'Guerre' (the traditional meanings of these terms are by Voltaire associated with deception). With 'Idée', 'Idole', 'Inondation', and 'Inquisition' the linking is at a deeper level. Man derives abstractions from experience 'Idée'. Such an abstraction is for example the

invisible force or god behind the sun, but then man gave the abstraction palpable shapes, went down the abstraction scale and created anthropomorphic gods, 'les figurer d'une manière sensible' ('Idole'). Imagination thus replaces experience and power-hungry leaders deliberately encourage the people in this divorce of the mind from reason, feed them with fabrications, miracles in order to gain persecuting power 'Inondation, Inquisition'.

All of the kinds of relationships we have described, tone, 'renvois', linking through title or juxtaposition, occur within the framework of another unifying element, a pattern of thought the reader is induced to accept. 'Préjugés', present in all editions of the *Dictionnaire*, describes the characteristics of this instruction. For Voltaire there are three kinds of seeing, natural, conditioned, and critical. Simple observation may make one jump to the conclusion that the sun is two feet in diameter. Upbringing may condition us, make us believe the myths accepted by parents. These two ways of seeing are prejudices or 'opinion sans jugement'. Critical or scientific seeing implies a method. By studying optics we learn to guard against gross error. By applying reason, doubting, comparing, calculating, we can better understand the physical world, the events of history, the nature of religion, the mechanism of our own understanding. Seeing phenomena with lucidity has been a unifying theme in all of the categories, but the ground rules have been explained, illustrated, and used most forcefully in the following groups of articles: arts and letters; history; linguistics and lexicography; orientalia; philosophy, psychology; natural sciences.

In conjunction with this kind of instruction, Voltaire has given many examples of his own program for reform, which includes negative and positive recommendations. The articles which we have classified under mythology and religion highlight the prejudices which must be overthrown: Judaeo-Christian tradition and doctrine; naive finalism; atheism; soul as separate entity; obedience to the religious hierarchy; and many others. The positive thrust of Voltaire's program for reform recurs throughout the work, but the heaviest concentration is in the articles, like

'Catéchisme du Japonais', 'Credo', 'Lois', 'Etats', which have been listed under Laws, Customs, Ethics and under Politics. There the emphasis is on man's needs, his association with other men, the goals of legislation and government, the meaning of liberty.

A unifying framework, it would appear, coordinates and permeates all of the categories of articles, gives them a progressive movement with three phases, one primarily didactic discussing the new tools of definition and perspective the reader must learn to use; another strongly, sometimes violently destructive with comic or tragic shadings, the descriptions of the horrors or absurdities arising from Judaism and Christianity; and the third highly constructive, which praises the truly great men of the past and present, their often epic posture, or which foresees, sometimes within a storytelling frame, the forms that institutions must take in the future.

Implicit in the *Dictionnaire* is a struggle between destiny or necessity 'Chaîne des evenements' and science 'Préjugés'. The universe is made up of forces, pressures external to man, environmental influences which may control him completely, make him react blindly in the error of his senses and under the drives of passion. The ambition of fanatics, themselves carried along by events, makes them seek to impose their selfish goals on others, so that leaders and followers become a part of history's blind flow. Voltaire's task is to form men capable of understanding, controlling, and redirecting necessity's order to the benefit of mankind.

If this struggle is principally intellectual, human personality is not completely absent. The *Dictionnaire* has four sets of fragmented, but complementary character types who represent the ways in which men may adjust to events. The deceivers are Abraham, David, most prophets, popes, shrewd political leaders. There are men of reason, Confucius, Locke, Bayle, Newton, the fictional characters Ouang in 'Fraude', Dondindac in 'Dieu', Boldmind in 'Liberté de penser'. Simple men of good native intelligence are Théotime in 'Catéchisme du curé', Karpos in

'Catéchisme du jardinier', Osmin in 'Nécessaire'. We encounter sincere dupes, Medroso in 'Liberté de penser', Logomachos in 'Dieu', those who follow beliefs and doctrines they do not understand. No one deceiver, sage, simple man, or dupe appears more than once under the same name, but each type reappears many times, so that the intellectual confrontations to some extent take place in terms of human characters we are led to admire or pity or despise. The outcome of such conflict, usually a literary setting-to-right of evils or at least denunciation of the corrupt in power, creates an atmosphere of combative optimism which itself gives unity to the work.

v. The Questions sur l'encyclopédie

With the *Questions* the effects of the lean format of the *Dictionnaire* do not completely disappear, but the features of this new version represent a marked change¹⁴. With respect to the categories of articles for each work the following figures are helpful:

	number of articles		percentage of whole	
	DP ₁₁₈	QE ₄₄₂	DP	QE
arts and letters	3	40	3	9
history	5	39	5	9
laws, customs, ethics	19	62	16	14
linguistics, lexicography	0	19	0	4
mythology	4	21	4	5
natural sciences	5	42	5	9
orientalia	3	6	3	1
philosophy, psychology	23	67	20	15
politics	8	23	7	5
public economy	0	21	0	5
religion	48	112	40	25

¹⁴ the edition to which I shall refer is *Questions sur l'encyclopédie*, 1774 (quarto *Œuvres*, xxi-xxiv), with 442 articles. The 1770-1772 *Questions*, including a supplement, has 423. The additions for the 1774 edition are

numerous, but it is clear that the differences consist of an enhancement of topics common to both. It has proved unproductive for our thematic study to compare these two editions further.

(for the *Questions*, column 2, the numbers amount to more than the total of 442 articles because some articles with subdivisions relate to more than one category).

In proportion to the new whole arts and letters has increased threefold. History and natural sciences have almost doubled. Linguistics and lexicography, also public economy have put in a substantial appearance. Other areas have held their own: philosophy, psychology; politics; mythology; laws, customs, ethics. Religion and orientalia have declined, although religion remains the predominant group. Voltaire's approach had been many-faceted in the *Dictionnaire*. Increases providing a balanced viewpoint are even more in evidence in the *Questions*. In our analysis of this shifting of weight, we shall discuss, although far from exhaustively because of the little space allowed us, some of the articles lost, or retained, or added. I shall comment also on the effect produced by this new more abundant format.

In the area of arts and letters Voltaire's views on beauty and genius in the *Dictionnaire* were usually implicit. The *Questions*¹⁵ more clearly distinguishes between beauty that is relative and the universally beautiful which is associated with great human sentiments, 'le beau qui parle au cœur' ('Beau'). As for genius, Voltaire moves inward to what he considers the faculties and attitudes of a man who has 'beaucoup d'esprit' and finds it helpful to use the English term 'parts'. Less emphasis is placed, as a result, on wit and ingenuity and more on a psychological explanation, the combination of many faculties which produces the great man and artist 'Esprit, Génie'. There is an increase in articles offering information directly related to good and bad taste. We see the connoisseur in action explicating and judging works in various genres 'Art dramatique, Epopée, Goût, Rare'. He insists that preferences must be based, not on the reputation of an author or epoch, but on careful study of the text 'Anciens et modernes'.

¹⁵ see page 28 for total number of articles in each category of the *Questions* under discussion. For other broadly based arts and letters articles,

supplementing those mentioned in our text. see 'Aristote', 'Art poétique', 'Critique', 'Eloquence', 'Langues II', 'Style'.

Accuracy of fact, the logic of the argument, and clarity and elegance of expression determine the value of a philosophical discussion. In examining a poem, he recommends that the critic first remove its rhyme and cadence to lay bare the poverty or wealth of the vocabulary, figures, ideas, and sentiments 'Vers et poésie'. There is special pleading on behalf of poetry, which reflects a higher sensitivity 'Épopée'.

The *Dictionnaire* articles concerning History traced the origins and growth of error, superstition, and fanaticism and particularly associated them with the Jews and Christians, whose teachings are seen as cruel distortions of innocent myths derived from more ancient peoples. The message is strengthened in the *Questions*, but there are changes in emphasis. The new version of *Christianisme* and several new articles underline the purely human, not providential, reasons for Christianity's successes 'Avignon, Conspirations contre les peuples, Prétentions'. The corollary is that such an opponent may be defeated by molding public opinion. 'Inquisition' becomes 'Aranda, Inquisition', and the change is significant. The person of Aranda appears at the beginning and end of the article with evidence that the Inquisition has been destroyed and fittingly by a Spaniard. Much more ammunition is introduced to show that the truly great leaders of history were free of any influence by the Jews or Christians 'Alexandre, Cicéron'. Not only are the Alexanders, Ciceros, and Julians rehabilitated, but also the great tyrants are assigned their just place 'Auguste Octave, Théodose, Tyran'. Finally, Voltaire's theories about history are now given more complete formulation. The problem of the uncertainty of history's record is examined in much greater depth 'Ana, Annales, Antiquité, Bourges, Chronologie, Cyrus'. Other articles discuss errors of interpretation and suggest alternatives 'De Diodore de Sicile et d'Hérodote, Etats généraux, Franc, Parlement, Xénophon'. At times Voltaire's prejudices defeat his purpose, for example his attitude toward the Celts 'Celts'. 'Histoire', drawn from the *Encyclopédie* contribution and taking on new meaning in the context of many new related

articles, shows convincingly the method and need for sweeping back fable and legend and replacing them by details revealing all aspects of a nation's culture¹⁶.

In the area of laws, customs, ethics, Voltaire continues to define useful, just civil law and discredit ecclesiastical law. None of the old themes are lost. A number of the *Dictionnaire* articles for this group have disappeared, but their contents are matched by new contributions. The protest against man's victimization by stupid or over-jealous judges, an ignorant public, and arbitrary law is made more specific (e. g., 'Arrêts notables, Conseiller, Crimes, Epreuve, Loix'). Other articles have a positive thrust in their description of human nature, its potential, the efforts of man to improve his lot (e. g., 'Caton, Confiance en soi, Curiosité, Femme, Inceste, Mariage, Quaker'). The theme of the basic goodness of man is strengthened at the expense of the church, which has corrupted him 'Baiser, Bouc, Esclaves, Expiation'. In 'Droit', Voltaire moves the discussion to the international scene and the behaviour of princes. Their affairs are determined by whim and ambition more than by long-range forces such as the needs of a people, facts which Grotius and Pufendorf fail to consider 'Inaliénation'. At both the domestic and international level the documentation has been greatly increased. The ideas of Beccaria are introduced at times. Montesquieu is treated with respect, although highly unfavourable comments are made about the *Esprit des lois*. The attack on Rousseau is totally destructive 'Assassinat, Bourreau'¹⁷.

Voltaire's interest in linguistics and lexicography, appearing unobtrusively in the *Dictionnaire*, comes again strongly to the fore. In 'Franc' he discusses the particular genius, strengths, and weaknesses of French. In the second section of 'Dictionnaire' he describes what the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* should have been. He makes a point, too, of rejecting the concept of 'langue primitive' and proposes a true art and science of language. Language, he insists

¹⁶ see also 'Amazones', 'Arc (Jeanne d)', 'Eglise', 'Julien', 'Théocratie'.

¹⁷ see also for this category 'Blasphème', 'Caton', 'Confiscation', 'Droit canonique', 'Jésuites', 'Supplices', 'Vérité', 'Vertu'.

repeatedly, is the source of error, superstition, magic, and religion as well as of science 'Abus des mots, ABC, Equivoque'. Ambitious systems, then, which generate false ideas about words, grammar, and meaning can be in a real sense harmful. Linguists should proceed inductively and investigate languages directly by living in the areas in which they are used 'Langues I'¹⁸.

The theme of the mythology group that all religious dogmas are derived from myths and that all myths have human rather than revealed origins has been much reinforced. 'Ange' now has references to the 'Shasta' and to beliefs held by the Persians, Greeks and Romans. Man's penchant for creating gods and devils in his own image is further demonstrated by evidence taken from painting, sculpture, and literature 'Anthropomorphites, Asmodée'. Most of the personages and beliefs of Christian teaching are borrowings 'Bacchus, Beldium, Enfers, Hermès Trismégiste, Incubes, Oraison, Résurrection, Verge'. Voltaire also tries to describe in more detail than before the processes of the unenlightened mind 'Emblème, Fable, Figure, Initiation, Miracles, Samothrace'¹⁹.

The group orientalia in the *Dictionnaire* helped the reader find new geographical as well as temporal bearings. The down-to-earth morals of Confucius, the wisdom of a far eastern culture enhanced by age and remoteness, made China appear a land of tolerance in contrast to European persecution, bigotry, and aggressiveness. An important article, 'Catéchisme chinois', carrying this message has been dropped, but its themes reappear elsewhere. 'De la Chine' has been reworked. 'Japon', 'Lois IV', 'Puissance-les deux puissances II', and 'Sammonocodom' effectively renew the argument²⁰.

The category philosophy, psychology explored man's faculties and tried to dispel obstacles to rational thinking. The objective does not change, but the analysis of the problem is much more

thorough in the *Questions*. The theme of resistance to incompetent authority is made very concrete e. g., 'Autorité, Charlatan, Raison, Zoroastre'. 'Certain' has additions in the form of references to Danglade, Calas, Sirven, Montbailli and others. Several articles attempt to show the true sources of Western thought in the great philosophers or scientific thinkers of antiquity and modern times 'Aristote, Bayle, Filosphe, Sophistes'. There is a more complete discussion of basic conceptions relative to finalism 'Calebasse, Causes finales', materialism 'Colimaçons, Vie', the destructibility of nature 'Fin du monde', the meaning of personality 'Identité'; the traditional dichotomy between nature and art 'Nature', the limits of our knowledge 'Monde, Matière, Mouvement, Occultes'. The study of the influences upon our faculties is much expanded by additional articles on the irrational 'Enchantement, Vampires', the problem of how man sees 'Distance', his prejudices 'Apparence'. Voltaire seems more doubtful that man can free his mind of bias, automatic reactions, the weight of opinion 'Conséquence, Influence, Livres, Larmes, Opinion, Passions'²¹.

Under politics the old articles have been changed often in content and form but without substantial loss. The supplements and new articles represent important innovations: comments on English government 'Gouvernement'; discussion of the motivations of natural and social man 'Homme, Politique, Propriété', of the rights of the people 'Démocratie, Venise, Esclavage, Roi, Russie', of the influence on man of climate, government, and religion 'Climat'. Voltaire's references to warfare, the rivalry of princes, and to international affairs have reached a high point of cynicism 'Armes, Barac et Debora, Bataillon, Droit de la guerre Généalogie'²².

Public economy represents a substantial new category in the *Questions*. Voltaire examines a number of public institutions

²¹ see also 'Ame', 'Enthousiasme', 'Folie', 'Génération', 'Imagination', 'Infini', 'Instinct', 'Philosophie', 'Pourquoi (les)', 'Quisquis', 'Rire', 'Schisme', 'Serpent', 'Somnambules'.

²² see also 'César', 'Egalité', 'Guerre', 'Liberté de penser', 'Luxe', 'Maître', 'Patrie', 'Tyran', 'Vénalité'. Except for the first and last these articles repeat the themes and usually the forms of *Dictionnaire* articles.

'Gargantua', 'Terelas', 'Ventres paresseux'.

²⁰ one other article in this category ('Fraude') reproduces the *Dictionnaire* article.

¹⁸ see also 'Alouette', 'Apointé', 'Apointer', 'Apropos', 'Assemblée', 'Badaut', 'Boulevard', 'Chien', 'Cu', 'Esprit I', 'Grec', 'Jehova', 'Orthographe'.

¹⁹ see also 'Dormants (les sept)',

'Académie, Bibliothèque, Charité, Education'. The use of political arithmetic is reviewed briefly 'Age, Dénombrement, Population'. His main concern is the source of the nation's wealth, and he gives particular attention to farming 'Agriculture, Fertilisation'. He has definite views, too, about the influence on the economy of fiscal policy 'Argent, Bled, Economie, Impôt, Intérêt'. By his views on public economy Voltaire adds greater concreteness and practicality to the alphabetical works²³.

The objectives of the *Dictionnaire* articles on religion, to discredit Christianity, undermine the clergy, and foster natural religion, still underly the *Questions*, but new approaches and emphases are identifiable. More attention is given to two other religions 'Alcoran, Arabes, Arot et Marot, Bracmanes, Ezourvédam, Mahométans'. 'Arabes' insists upon the antiquity of this nation, its isolation, therefore continuity of blood and character. 'Bracmanes', with high philosophic impact, makes Hinduism the source of the Christian idea of fallen angels in revolt against the sovereign of nature. The attack on Judaeo-Christian teachings becomes more systematic, intense, and repetitious. The protest against the deeds and powers of pope, bishops, priests, and monks is heightened (e.g. 'Annates, Scandale'). 'Puissance 1' praises Catherine for having brought the Church under civil control. In the *Questions* more than in the *Dictionnaire* atheism along with revealed religion becomes the enemy²⁴.

Under natural sciences most of the old articles reappear. 'Inondation' has disappeared, but the subject is treated in greater detail in 'Déluge universel' and 'Coquilles'. The amplitude of Voltaire's statement about science now permits the reader to find

²³ see also 'Avarice', 'Banqueroute', 'Chemins', 'Fêtes des saints', 'Gueux mendiant', 'Poste', 'Soldat'.

²⁴ many of the old articles have been repeated from the *Dictionnaire* some of them largely unchanged, others modified through amplification or rearrangement. Our discussion concerns principally the innovations made

through new articles. See also 'Adorer', 'Affirmation par serment', 'Athéisme', 'Austérités', 'Beker', 'Biens d'église', 'Clou', 'Démoniaques', 'Donations', 'Ignace de Loyola', 'Juif', 'Lèpre et vérole', 'Paradis', 'Purgatoire', 'Ravail-lac', 'Rome (cour de)', 'Vision', 'Volonté'.

many more aspects of his reasoning in this field: the importance of demonstration 'Système', utility and feasibility 'Alchimiste, Astronomie, Amérique, Anatomie, Géométrie'; the attention he gives to practical results 'Almanach, Arbre à pain, Arbre à suif, Asphalte, Figure, Force en physique, Géographie'; his use of science to discredit unsound systems 'Anguilles, Cartésianisme, Polipes'. Many new articles seem designed to increase the readers' understanding of the universe. 'Changements arrivés dans le globe' admits a world in constant change, not as particular acts of a willful god, but according to eternal physical laws. Voltaire sides with Newton and against Descartes on the question of the vacuum 'Cohérence, Espace'. Other articles discuss the atom, the notion of air as separate substance, the need for investigating other phenomena 'Air, Atomes, Feu, Tonnerre, Anneau de Saturne'. 'Axe' and 'Ciel matériel' show a preoccupation with accurate accounts of the movement of earth and sun, offer a heliocentric view of the universe, and open the vision of a world lost among many other universes. The result of these many articles in terms of reader impact should be demystification of nature at the expense of revealed religion, yet Voltaire's need to ask the question of cause in an ultimate sense never completely disappears, particularly if an event relates to human suffering and misery, to the enigma of man's place in this orderly universe 'Monstres'²⁵.

In the change from the *Dictionnaire* to the format of the *Questions* we have seen the disappearance of numerous important articles, about thirty-one in all, but the gain has been immense and creates the impression that there is overwhelming evidence for Voltaire's point of view. Yet several factors contributing to the disintegration of the old format have appeared. Many of the categories of articles have escaped from the unified philosophic framework. They are no longer simply parts subordinated to Voltaire's overall view. The articles on arts and letters, for example,

²⁵ see also 'Abeilles', 'Bacon', 'Barbe', 'anciens', 'Déjection', 'Denis l'Aréopagite', 'Chaîne des êtres créés', 'Chaîne ou Empoisonnements', 'Fièvre', 'Génération des événements', 'Ciel des Fleuves', 'Onan', 'Testicule'.

represent an extensive account of his theories and attitudes about esthetics and criticism. They are important now in their own right. The role of history in the *Dictionnaire* was helpful in moving the reader away from Judæo-Christian culture and from the Biblical time frame. That effect is still present in the *Questions*, but more important, Voltaire has given a new status to history's place in the work. It has become a subject-matter. The same enrichment is to be found in other groups: laws, customs, ethics; philosophy, psychology; politics; natural sciences. Religion had already reached that status in the *Dictionnaire*. Only public economy, linguistics and lexicography, mythology, and orientalia remain relatively underdeveloped.

The effect of this fragmentation into autonomous subject-matters may be felt, too, at the level of the individual articles. In the *Dictionnaire* these had some variety in length, but few of them were long enough to submerge the reader. This is less generally true of the *Questions*. Some of the articles even when subdivided tend to become an end unto themselves, for example, 'Art dramatique' (39 pp.); 'Athéisme' (27 pp.); 'Conspirations contre les peuples' (16 pp.); three consecutive articles on 'Droit' (34 pp.); 'Epopée' (34 pp.); 'De l'histoire' (43 pp.); 'Juifs' (19 pp.); 'Loix' (29 pp.).

Within its individual articles and across its entire length the *Dictionnaire* displayed a variety of tones. In the *Questions* this feature is still present, but there has been a build-up in the didactic element. The large amount of materials which appeals primarily to curiosity tends to hide the frontal attacks, the tragic, epic, romanesque, or comic tones. The result is a weakening of the emotional unity which characterized the earlier work.

The linking of clusters of articles by cross-references is still evident. Similarly, too, the titles encourage the reader to relate articles. This explicit kind of linking is accompanied by the juxtaposition of articles which bear a cause and effect, question and answer, or thesis and illustration relationship. For example, with regard to the question 'What should lawcourts and judges be?', the

articles 'Confiscation', 'Conscience', and 'Conseiller' are joined. The answer, given in the last, could have alphabetically fallen under J and the title 'Juge', and in fact Voltaire's title is double, 'Conseiller ou juge'. He placed the article in meaningful context.

Another pattern referred to in our discussion of the *Dictionnaire* was centered around the ideas of prejudice and new vision. Voltaire told us how to see by opposing natural and conditioned seeing to critical or scientific seeing. The objective was to show the folly of many beliefs and institutions and prepare the way for positive standards with which to create new laws. The pattern is still present in the *Questions*, and the framework is much reinforced with many additional articles under philosophy, psychology. We find a new triumphant note in the belief that the victory has been in part won over the Jesuits, that errors and injustices in the courts have been corrected or exposed. There is a massive increase in materials relating to persecution. The positive side is reinforced by carefully argued articles dealing with human rights. Still present are other devices: the suspense generated by the search for answers; the theme of a seemingly inevitable chain that guides events; the hope that human will and science may at times overcome evil; the use of complementary characters.

But after admitting the presence of these many kinds of unifying elements, it must be immediately added that the unity we sensed in the *Dictionnaire* has largely disappeared. This judgment is in no way intended as unfavorable to the *Questions*. The two works simply have different designs and impacts. The *Dictionnaire* is a primer of free-thinking with a format suitable for molding thought, creating a *philosophe*. The reader is still being led in the *Questions*, but less obviously so, for the philosophic structure of Voltaires thought has become diffuse, heavily weighted with detail, concrete fact, lists, explanations. Voltaire's ideal of a dictionary which would combine information within an artistic whole has gradually evolved by the very nature of the alphabetical genre into a more comprehensive work ready to absorb the ever-expanding wealth of materials which must be brought to the reader's attention.

vi. *The Opinion en alphabet*

Voltaire intended no doubt to use the articles of the *Opinion en alphabet* in the *Œuvres complètes* he was planning with Panckoucke after 1777. It was his practice to renew the alphabetical works by revising, dropping and adding articles. Just what he wanted this new edition to become is not certain, perhaps a return to the lean thematic structure of the *Dictionnaire*, more probably a revised version of the comprehensive format of the *Questions*. It seems clear, given Voltaire's interest in form, that the new edition would not have become in his hands the clumsy assemblage of texts finally gathered in the Kehl edition.²⁶

Although most of the same categories and perspectives reappear in the *Opinion*, what we have of them is too small an effort to permit useful comparison as to form and content with the earlier works. Our approach is reduced to the examination of various categories in search of possible changes in Voltaire's thought.

'Goût' and 'Poètes' indicate once again Voltaire's faith that men of taste in the long run may raise the quality of a people, but the programme must be long-range and an obstacle is the spontaneous exuberance of any crowd in popular movements. Control of such emotionality is an ideal: 'le sot enthousiasme', 'une ivresse qui ne sent rien' ('Goût'). Against Rousseau, Voltaire argues that Peter the Great 'est admirable de l'avoir [son peuple] fait mûrir' ('Pierre le grand et Jean-Jacques Rousseau').

Under public economy, 'Quête' explains in detail how monastic orders have become a financial burden to the nation, an old theme. 'Banque' describes credit imbalances between nations in simple terms: 'C'est que l'Allemagne a plus tiré de marchandises

²⁶ authenticity is a problem; we should keep in mind the Kehl *Avertissement* (xxxvii.[8]): 'Cet alphabet est extrait des ouvrages les plus estimés . . . l'auteur ne cite pas toujours les sources

où il a puisé . . . il ne doit pas être, soupçonné de vouloir se faire honneur du travail d'autrui, puisqu'il garde lui-même l'anonyme'.

qu'à l'ordinaire de la Hollande: l'Allemagne est débitrice'. Voltaire explains also why John Law's system had to fail in the long run and finds a disadvantage for France and Spain in the fact that they have no 'banque d'état', as do Sweden, Venice, England, and Holland.

The category history has nine articles. Several of them return to the old themes of papal power, the Inquisition, and false messiahship, the claims of princes, uncertainty and error in the discussion of events, the power of opinion 'Bulle, Hérésie, Inquisition, Pourquoi, Prétentions, Vision de Constantin, Yvetot'. 'Université draws the conclusion that because of the Church's control over the University the Popes are 'les maîtres de l'instruction des peuples'. 'Juifs III' appears to give a less propagandistic impression of the Jews. They, too, have been victims of persecution. We find the answer to the question of how they have managed to survive in their exemption from bearing arms, interest in early marriage, their marriage and divorce laws, sober lives of abstinence, work, and exercise, their use of letters of exchange to save their fortunes in times of flight.

Lexicography offers in 'Conquête' a witty contrast between the meaning of the term when applied to a nation and to a woman. In the one new article, 'Suicide', under the group laws, customs, ethics, the contribution seems equally slight. There is also no true innovation in 'Bœuf Apis' under mythology. If another article, 'Sibylle', is startling in its claim that the principle dogmas of Christianity came from a poem of the sibyl of Cumae, again the idea is no more than the variation of an old theme.

The articles under philosophy similarly offer little that is new. 'Ame' and 'Locke II' are again a denial of the spirituality of the soul. In 'Athée II', 'Bien', and 'Dieu I', Voltaire by his definition of deism tries to steer a course away from both atheism and revealed religion while keeping matter and god reconciled: 'Dieu et la matière existent par la nature des choses' ('Dieu'). 'Franc arbitre' covers the old ground that freedom of will is 'puissance d'agir'.

The group politics, with 'Beker' and 'Fanatisme', again deals with trials for sorcery and propagation of the faith by methods of

persecution. Little change has occurred in the twenty-five articles on religion. Most of them continue to discredit Judæo-Christian tradition by arguments already used in the *Dictionnaire* and the *Questions*. As for the natural sciences, 'Augustin' offers little of significance. Voltaire perhaps does stress more than before the physical, mental, and sexual precociousness of Augustin and its possible relationship to climate.

Any new philosophic content in the *Opinion* is extremely small. Voltaire had already covered the ground thoroughly in the *Dictionnaire* and *Questions*.