

THEORY AND CRITICISM 9347B – French Enlightenment Thought and the Rise of Materialism

Revised Course Description:

This course explores how the Epicurean notion of matter as *the* fundamental substance in nature was re-discovered in the eighteenth-century by the French Enlightenment thinkers La Mettrie, Helvétius, Diderot, D'Holbach, and Destutt de Tracy. The French interpretation of materialism – especially its anti-Christian and atheistic components – was further advanced in the early nineteenth century in Germany by Bauer and Feuerbach, before being critically transformed by Marx and Engels into what we know today as 'materialist' thought. Starting from Cartesian rational doubt, the French Enlightenment thinkers radically combined Epicurean natural philosophy with a Humean anthropology of human interests and desires, a Hobbesian view of mechanistic utility, and a Lockean notion of a mortal soul without spiritual substance or Providence. The second half of this course will discuss many French texts written by historians, philosophers, and even theologians on this subject, many of which have not yet been translated into English.

Reading List:

Blom, Philipp. 2011. *A Wicked Company: The Forgotten Radicalism of the European Enlightenment*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart. ISBN 978-0-7710-1649-3.

Descartes, René. 1986. *Meditations on First Philosophy with Selections from the Objections and Replies*. Translated by John Cottingham. Introduction by Bernard Williams. Cambridge: University Press. ISBN 0-521-33857-3.

Diderot, Denis. 1976. *Rameau's Nephew and D'Alembert's Dream*. Translated and Introduced by Leonard Tancock. London: Penguin Books. ISBN-10: 0140441735 or 13: 978-0140441734 (not sure which number corresponds to the paperback edition; both are listed in my paperback edition).

Engels, Frederick. 2018. *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy*. Edited by C. P. Dutt. No translator listed. New York: International Publishers. ISBN 10-0-7178-0120-9 or 13-978-0-7178-120-6

Epicurus. 1994. *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*. Translated and Edited by Bard Inwood and L. P. Gerson. Introduction by D.S. Hutchinson. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. ISBN-13:978-0-87220-241-2.

Feuerbach, Ludwig. *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings*. Translated and Introduced by Zawar Hanfi. London: Verso Books. ISBN 978-1-78168-021-6.

Helvétius, Claude Adrien. 2018. *De l'Esprit, or Essays on the Mind, and Its Several Faculties*. No translator listed. London; Forgotten Books, Ltd. ISBN 978-1-334-93413-1

D'Holbach. Baron. 1999. *The System of Nature, Volume One*. Translated by H.D. Robinson. Introduction by Michael Bush. Manchester: Clinamen Press. ISBN 1-903083-02-8.

D'Holbach, Baron. 2018. *Good Sense*. No translator listed. Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. ISBN 978-1974530755.

Marx, Karl. 1998. *The German Ideology*. No translator listed. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books. ISBN 978-1-57392-258-6.

Marx, Karl. 2012. *The Holy Family*. Translated by R. Dixon. Middletown, DE: ULAN Press. ASIN B009UEC488 (no ISBN listed).

La Mettrie, 2003. *Machine Man and Other Writings*. Translated and edited by Ann Thomson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-47849-9.