This book started with some questions about Rousseau. Did he think anger was ever an appropriate emotion, one it was good to feel and right to express? His writings present two diametrically opposed positions on the subject. The educational treatise Émile cites with approval Seneca’s definition of anger as a disease of the soul and the enemy of reason. By detaching himself from external goods and cultivating self-sufficiency, the Stoic sage limits his vulnerability to frustration and insult. Impervious to offense, he will not succumb to anger but rather maintain the equanimity of a rational being. Yet, Rousseau adopted as his motto a line from one of Juvenal’s angriest satires. Appealing in the Lettre à d’Alembert to the authority of the Roman satirist, he declared that in a corrupt society only righteous indignation proves the writer’s personal commitment to truth and justice. To call for philosophical calm was to excuse complacency. As I explored the contexts in which these declarations are made and the intellectual traditions on which they draw I was intrigued by the ways in which the tension between them illuminates other aspects of Rousseau’s thought. Indeed, looking at the ways anger is
discussed and dramatized by Rousseau and other writers of his day opened up fresh perspectives on conceptions of self and sociability in the broader French Enlightenment.

Important insights might be gained from a similar study of other passions or emotions, but in this study I have selected only one, the positive counterpart to anger that is gratitude. If, as de Jaucourt writes in the *Encyclopédie* article ‘Passions’, ‘la haine que nous sentons envers ceux qui nous font du tort, c’est la colère’ (the hatred we feel toward those who do us wrong, is anger), the opposite of anger is ‘reconnaissance’, or ‘l’amour que nous avons pour quelqu’un, à cause du bien qu’il nous a fait, ou qu’il a l’intention de nous faire’ (the love we have for someone because of the good he has done us or that he intends to do us). As we shall see, Enlightenment writers take positions on gratitude that are as richly ambivalent as those they adopt on anger. Placing discussions of gratitude alongside those of anger gives us, I believe, a focused and economical way of framing what is new in Enlightenment debates about human interaction. Declarations of anger and gratitude often do more than illustrate a range of reactions to specific situations. They include judgments about whether the world as a whole favors or frustrates human happiness. In the face of evils offensive to reason, can the universe still be understood as the creation of a benevolent personal divinity to which we owe gratitude? Does it make sense, do we in fact owe it to our dignity as moral beings, to get angry with the world as it is? Or should we free ourselves from anger or gratitude altogether and dismiss such questions as reflecting a fundamental mistake about the nature and origin of the universe?

This debate has a long history, of course, as we can see from the Book of Job, and more generally from the tension between the wisdom and the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible. Contrasting assessments of emotion and equanimity also feature prominently in classical antiquity. ‘Anger’ is the first word of the *Iliad*, and discussions of anger and

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3 Lists of contrary emotions have varied widely over the centuries, indeed what counts as an emotion or passion, of the body or of the soul, is a longstanding subject of dispute. For the discussion in early modern France, see Anthony Levi, *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions 1585 to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964). Most emotions are probably too multi-dimensional to have simple opposites. See Robert C. Solomon, *True to our Feelings: What our Emotions Are Really Telling Us* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176. Yet, anger and gratitude are often paired, beginning with Epicurus in his ‘Letter to Herodotus’. See *Hellenistic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, tr. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (2nd edn, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998), 13. In terms of our relationships with other people, at least, there is a good case for viewing anger and gratitude as opposites. Another pair of emotional dispositions that would be relevant for the kind of study I propose would be trust and suspicion.
gratitude are a recurring feature in Greek and Roman writers, of whom Lucretius is perhaps the most important for the French Enlightenment. However, the philosophers of antiquity focused primarily on helping thoughtful individuals come to terms with their anxieties, not on changing the practices of society at large. Hellenistic thinking about emotions, for example, for all its conceptual boldness, never challenged the system of benefaction and gratitude pervasive in Mediterranean civilization, nor did it undermine the role of honor and status-consciousness in defining and defending social hierarchies. There were resources for such a challenge in Christian scripture and tradition, but these were blunted by the church’s political establishment, and counterbalanced by the otherworldly emphasis of its spirituality. In the cultural situation of Enlightenment Europe, however, insulating the inner lives of privileged souls from the general life of the world seemed a less appealing ideal, and one which in any case was proving difficult to sustain. The confessional wars that followed the Reformation had fostered widespread skepticism about religious certainties. Late seventeenth-century debates over theodicy, for example, engaged a broad section of the reading public. Scientific advances made large-scale transformations of the world conceivable, while the emergence of new conceptions of human association based on natural rights, consent, and contract invited—at least potentially—the involvement of all men in the legitimization and critique of political associations. Enlightenment analyses of emotions in individuals are thus often colored by questions about the religious or metaphysical underpinnings of human interaction, and concerns about the implications for social and political practices of unleashing or disciplining the emotions.

As a literary scholar, I am interested in the ways the resources of form, language, and genre of a text shape the articulation, illustration, and

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imaginative testing of ideas in the text as what might be called a structure of feeling. This book does not, therefore, seek to present a comprehensive account of Enlightenment philosophies of emotion. Nor does it focus on the historical patterns of gift-giving or other forms of symbolic exchange that called for grateful or (in the case of failure or misfire) angry response. There is a burgeoning literature on these topics, and I can only refer the reader to some works I have found to be particularly relevant to this study. Instead, I examine the ways in which the themes of anger and gratitude are presented in some key texts of the French eighteenth century. I also look at the role of these emotions in writers’ reflections on the resources (literary, cultural, or social) available to them as authors, and on the public for which they write. I argue that because writers in eighteenth-century France were gaining new importance as public intellectuals and representative cultural figures, the exploration of anger and gratitude as themes in their works also reflects evolving attitudes toward the society that nurtures or frustrates their status claims. The way these emotions are appropriated, denounced, or transcended, I would argue, is more than a matter of individual psychology. It engages larger questions about the cultural life of their time. Sustained attention to key works of literature, broadly defined as including any work displaying a concern for shaping its material and the reader’s response to it, can, I believe, offer a distinctive contribution to historical understanding.

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7 Scholarship on this question has until recently focused mostly on the Enlightenment’s ‘rehabilitation’ of the passions in general, in opposition to Augustinian critiques of the irrationality of emotion as a sign of humanity’s fallen state. See Roger Mercier, *La Réhabilitation de la nature humaine 1700–1750* (Villemonble: La Balance, 1960). As mentioned below, we do not find French equivalents to Hume’s or Smith’s reflective analysis of particular passions as part of an overall moral philosophy.

The chapters that follow look at writings in a variety of genres: narrative fiction, satirical dialogue, philosophical treatise, and polemical discourse. In each case, I have focused on the relationship between the discussion of anger or gratitude in the text, and the dramatization of these emotions in the rhetorical stance of the work as a whole. The emphasis throughout is on the singularity of each text, but my readings have naturally been prompted by a number of initial hypotheses about the contexts—historical and philosophical—within which the text might best be understood. The framing of these contexts has in turn been influenced by the work of reading, and so in what follows I sketch the approach to Enlightenment anger and gratitude that I have found fruitful in the work of interpretation. I hope it will show how attending to the discourse about emotions can be a valuable heuristic tool in studying aspects of eighteenth-century French culture which continue to shape the ways we understand our own.

ANGER AND CULTURAL STATUS

When is anger justified, and who may claim the right to be angry? Slights may be ignored or overlooked, wrongs may be redressed through negotiation, and either may be forgiven, but what makes them offensive in the first place, such that anger becomes an expected and appropriate emotional response? The answers to such questions as these tell us a lot about the ethos of a particular society. How the questions themselves are formulated, and whether the answers given are themselves matters of consensus or contest, can be important indicators of cultural self-understanding. The same is true for a related but different question: when and for whom is anger thought to be a good in itself and not merely a circumstantially justified emotion? The capacity to experience and express anger, on another’s behalf, but also on one’s own, might be a desirable feature of the kind of personality a society admires, at least in some of its members—a warrior nobility, for example—or, in an agonistic society like that of ancient Athens, in the citizen body as a whole. On the other hand, and even in that same culture, the ability to resist or transcend anger may be made a marker of spiritual status; it may be viewed as a crucial qualification for a ruler, a judge—or a writer,

as illustrated by the famous *sine ira et studio* in Tacitus’ preface to his *Histories*.  

In eighteenth-century France, the terms in which anger was discussed were inherited from a variety of sources. These included the poets and philosophers of classical antiquity, as well as the Bible and Christian tradition. The traditional vocabulary of the humors continued to play a role alongside the language of the new natural sciences, as we see in a work such as Descartes’s *Passions de l’âme*.  

However, ‘enlightened’ writing presents a number of distinctive features in its reflections on the relationship between emotion and sociability. The first is a growing tendency to give significant moral weight to the anger expressed by people of inferior status: to commoners, to women, even occasionally to children. This trend was by no means comprehensive. In literature, the anger of peasants, servants, and the like was still largely confined to comedy, since it was a traditional target for mockery. That such people might have the right to take offense, especially at the behavior of their betters, was still seen as absurd. For all their ironic questioning of social attitudes, Diderot’s novel *Jacques le fataliste* and his satirical dialogue *Le Neveu de Rameau* continue to reflect this assumption in their depiction of the lower classes. Women’s anger, too, was a longstanding object for derision, and it is still presented as such in the Mme Dutour episode of Marivaux’s *La Vie de Marianne*, although here, as in other instances, it is the character’s social status more than her gender that makes her anger comic. There was one important exception to the treatment of female anger: in noble heroines whose love was spurned anger took on tragic grandeur. Yet, if the heroine’s anger led her to become implacable in revenge, pathos could easily shade into horror. Traditionally, the depiction of such horrors was mostly confined to theatrical tragedy, as in Corneille’s *Médée*, where it is kept at a distance by strict conventions of speech and decorum. In the eighteenth century, however, it finds more contemporary and unfettered expression in novels such as Laclos’s *Liaisons dangereuses* or Sade’s *Juliette*, where the frustrations of women’s

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10 Tacitus, *Histories* I.1, variously translated as ‘without hatred or affection’ or ‘without either bitterness or partiality’. The Latin *ira* has of course a somewhat different range of meanings than does the modern *anger* or *colère*, and the same may be said for the Greek *thumos* or *orgê*, but these complexities of historical semantics (and the vexed question of how they were understood by French writers in our period) cannot be pursued here.

lives were portrayed in more familiar domestic and social settings. In these works the woman’s anger is directed not only at an unfaithful lover but at anyone who limits the scope of her action or the fulfillment of her desires, whatever form they take. Such novels represented a more direct challenge to readers’ assumptions about gender roles than did tragedy or opera. Yet their subversive intentions only confirmed the longstanding view that female anger threatened the very fabric of society—a prospect that delighted Sade even as it made Laclos shudder. The exceptions to this paradigm are not always found where one would expect them. In his *Emile*, Rousseau, often decried as an anti-feminist, gave his ideal woman Sophie a legitimate claim to anger. ¹²

The main novelty of the period, however, was to pay serious attention to the anger of men who believed their intelligence and sensibility entitled them to social recognition above and beyond what was warranted by their birth. Rousseau, again, is the outstanding case. His angry response to perceived slight, even on the part of those who offered to be his patrons and friends, and even more, his claim to determine for himself what counted as a slight, offended many people in return, but it also puzzled and intrigued them by the force of its conviction. Rousseau’s protest at being wronged spoke to a slowly developing appreciation among traditional elites for the social, and not just the intellectual or artistic, dignity of talented commoners. Just as important was a corresponding shift in the attitude of the reading public. By virtue of their own felt capacity to respond with sensitivity and sympathy to the works of writers like Rousseau, ordinary readers saw themselves as sharing in the author’s status—a claim manifested in their decision to take up the pen themselves and write to the author.¹³ In their identification with the writer, they also appropriated for themselves his newfound entitlement to anger. In the generation of Robespierre which grew up reading Rousseau, this sense of justified indignation at the circumstances that blocked the careers of a growing class of educated but underemployed young men helped transform a revolt into a revolution. Anger at slights to the self and indignation at injustice done to the people as a whole were fused into one great emotion endowed with quasi-sacred significance. In the past, only a traditional authority figure

such as the king bore general symbolic weight in his person; now intellectuals also viewed their lives as invested with a representative value they had a duty to honor.

An equally significant development can be observed in religion, where anger ‘from below’ also took on new significance. That human anger at God had a legitimate place in religious faith is explicitly recognized in the Bible. Job’s angry outbursts, however, like those of the Psalmist, were always set within an ongoing personal relationship with God, and indeed drew their legitimacy from God’s own covenant promises. Getting angry at the way things were on earth made no sense outside that context of answerability. The anger of ‘the nations’, like their appeal to their arbitrary and ineffective gods, was only meaningless agitation. This paradigm still held sway in eighteenth-century France, and nowhere more clearly than in that notoriously anti-Christian work, Sade’s *Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795). The hero of the dialogue, the atheist Dolmancé, is so angry at the God whose existence he denies that he wishes he could summon the divinity back into being ‘pour que ma rage au moins portât sur quelque chose’ (so that my rage might at least fall on something). At the same time, many *philosophes* far less radical than Sade, and even some clerics, adopted a view of humanity’s relationship to God that left no place for anger even within a religious worldview. Building on the views of the natural right lawyers of the seventeenth-century thinkers, they declared that the basis of moral law lay in the visible order of the universe rather than in God’s personal will. This conviction arose in part as a reaction to the emphasis on the absoluteness of divine sovereignty in late medieval theology. In seeking to preserve the freedom of God’s will from the constraints of human expectations or the claims of human merit, theologians of the late Middle Ages, followed after the Reformation by Calvinist and Jansenist writers, made it appear more arbitrary in its operation, less intimately attached to a stable earthly order. For other thinkers dealing with the aftermath of the religious

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15 Acts 4: 25, adapting Ps. 2: 1.


wars, eternal reason, manifested in the marvelously complex but regular laws of natural science, seemed to constitute a more dependable, and widely acceptable, reference point than a divine revelation mediated through texts based on special historical experiences. Various forms of a simple, ‘natural’ religion emerged as alternatives to a Christianity whose understanding of God was increasingly considered, not to transcend everyday reason, but to contradict it.

Ironically, however, the greater the trust invested in nature’s ordered regularity, the more natural disasters, wars, and the perverse effects of good intentions became an affront to reason itself, an absurdity rather than a mystery. Since most enlightened thinkers still generally believed that the world was created by divine power, they continued to direct their frustration and anger at God, if only because there was no other obvious target. As Margaret Jacob puts it in a study of dissident writers of the early Enlightenment, ‘to become a seeker given to heterodoxy required first a deeply personal anger’. Yet, if moral dignity was no longer the free gift of a personal God but was grounded in humanity’s own capacity to comprehend the natural order, then anger at disorder lost its relational dimension. Anger at the way of the world had nowhere to go, except to the bitter irony of Voltairean satire.

This was not a development entirely to be deplored. For the same logic that rendered anger pointless applied to the other side of the divine–human relationship. The prospect of divine wrath also lost much of its hold over the human imagination. Enlightenment writers were acutely conscious of the ways in which secular as well as ecclesiastical authorities could brandish the image of an angry God to instill fear and obedience in their subjects. ‘Quel personnage fait-on jouer à Dieu?’ (What character do we make God play?) exclaimed Du Marsais in his Examen de la religion, implicitly comparing the angry God to the undignified barbon of theatrical comedy. Scientific investigation could also be inhibited by warnings that God would be offended if, repeating the sin of Adam and Eve, humanity overstepped the bounds supposedly set on human knowledge.

Since in biblical tradition God’s anger was prompted not only by human pretensions to divinity, but even more by the worship of other gods,\(^{20}\) removing anger from the list of God’s attributes also opened the way to greater tolerance of other religions. It made room for accommodating cultural practices (notably in the realm of sexuality) at odds with the beliefs of one tradition but considered natural in others. In all these cases, God is not necessarily banished from the scene; it is simply no longer plausible to think of him as taking offense at human waywardness, now largely redefined as cultural variety. Thus, while rational theodicy deprived human anger at God of much of its point, there was some compensation in that divine anger lost much of its sting.

On the level of human interaction, widening the right to take offense might ultimately serve the cause of equality, but restricting the range of acceptable justifications for anger had the more immediate benefit of reducing the level of social violence. Over the course of the seventeenth century, the advocates of politesse, haunted by the violence of France’s civil wars, sought to limit the giving and taking of offense by those engaged in the worldly interactions of court and salon.\(^{21}\) In some respects this effort paralleled the monarchy’s efforts to limit the nobility’s opportunities to defend its status outside the limits set by monarchical order. The outlawing of duels, an attempt not just to limit individual acts of revenge but to regulate the code of honor itself, is perhaps the best-known instance of this convergence of monarchical interest and civilizing concern. Yet, precisely because the ethic of politeness was formulated in universal terms, it challenged all forms of violent reaction to offense, even on the part of the sovereign. It did so by drawing on two widely influential currents of thought. The first of these is the neo-Stoic ideal of self-mastery, illustrated by Corneille’s tragedy *Cinna* (1640). In this play, the Roman emperor Augustus meets the man who conspired against him with an offer of friendship instead of a threat of revenge. He declares that the mark of the truly noble person is his capacity to transcend his anger by an effort of will. Cinna is so impressed by this unexpected generosity that his rebellious anger

\(^{20}\) Exod. 34: 6, 14.

evaporates as he is moved to emulate his rival. In a somewhat less sublime vein, Rousseau’s *Lettre à d’Alembert* cites the story of Louis XIV throwing his cane out of the window to avoid striking one of his gentlemen (v. 66).

A more disenchanted form of thinking, often called Jansenist but more properly labeled Augustinian since it was not limited to one particular sect, maintained that the passions were essentially irrational impulses and so unamenable to the kind of education that would allow them to contribute to genuine well-being. We see this view reflected in the tragedies of Racine and novels such as Lafayette’s *Princesse de Clèves*. As Pierre Nicole argued in one of his influential essays, even anger society considers to be appropriate, such as that of noble persons, is a form of sin. Yet, as historians have shown, this Augustinian outlook could paradoxically encourage secular efforts to protect society against anarchy. Even if the sin itself could never be eradicated, earthly authorities should do what they could to limit anger’s occasions and effects. While in other respects Augustinian pessimism stands in opposition to the more optimistic voluntarism of neo-Stoicism, here the two discourses converge in delegitimizing vehement emotion.

The discourse of civility lost some of its urgency as the threat of internal strife receded and as the pessimism of the seventeenth-century moralistes gave way to the more optimistic naturalism of the Enlightenment. References to anger, prominent in Montaigne and Charron, fade away in later theorists of *honnêteté* such as the Chevalier de Méré. They

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22 Corneille is drawing a contrast with the relationship between Brutus and Caesar. According to Seneca, ‘it is commonly debated whether Marcus Brutus should have allowed our deified Julius to grant him his life, having decided to kill him’—which he later did anyway. *Seneca, De beneficiis*, III.2, *Moral and Political Essays*, 228.

23 For Nicole, human beings are not ‘aimables’, and it is unjust to want to be loved and respected. ‘La civilité nous gagne. L’incivilité nous choque. Mais l’une nous gagne, et l’autre nous choque, parce que nous sommes hommes, c’est-à-dire, tous vains et tous injustes’ (Civility wins us over. Incivility offends us. But the one wins us over, and the other offends us, because we are men, that is to say, all of us vain and all of us unjust). Pierre Nicole, ‘Des moyens de conserver la paix avec les hommes’, in *Essais de morale* (1733–71; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1971), i. 293, 310. For the connections between Augustinianism and Epicureanism in seventeenth-century France, see Jean Lafond, *La Rochefoucauld: Augustinisme et littérature* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1977), and Michael Moriarty, *Fallen Nature, Fallen Selves: Early Modern French Thought II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). On the other hand, Nicole’s position would seem to be incompatible with the Aristotelian tradition of ethics and its ideal of a proper mean between opposite dispositional extremes. In the works I will be discussing, references and even allusions to the language of the *Nicomachean Ethics* are notably absent, but accounting for this fact lies beyond the scope of this study.
are not to be found at all in paradigmatic discussions of sociability in the following century such as Charles Duclos’s *Considerations sur les mœurs de ce siècle* (1750). It is as if violent reactions to slight were no longer viewed as an active possibility. No doubt Duclos assumed that the prospect of ostracism from polite company would deter any potential offender. It is significant, however, that, unlike Adam Smith in his almost contemporary *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1758), Duclos should not mention anger at all. Perhaps the threat of anger had not so much disappeared as gone underground. The mid-eighteenth-century discourse of sociability preferred to celebrate the achievements of French civilization rather than draw attention to its fragility. The ideology of the salon, with its discourse of equality and friendship, could not, for example, openly admit any frank admission that the constraints of patronage might generate resentment on the part of its beneficiaries. Until late in the century, outsiders such as Rousseau who did take offense or who chafed at the obligations of gratitude were met with incomprehension and reproach.

If we turn from Duclos to the great eighteenth-century novelists, however, we find a tension between willed belief in the triumph of conflict-free sociability over hierarchy of status and a more skeptical view, which acknowledged an intractable conflict between the pressures of social opinion and the emotional autonomy of the self. As Jerrold Seigel has pointed out, Smith’s notion of an ‘impartial spectator’ within the self, serving as a mediator between individual sensibility and the generality of social and moral norms, does not have a counterpart in French writers of the period. The latter tend to be more polarized in their conceptions of the self’s interaction with society than their British counterparts. Shaped, perhaps, by the legacy of absolutism, or by the persistence, even into the Enlightenment, of Augustinian thought, they tend to view that interaction more in terms of domination and resistance to domination than as reciprocal enhancement. ‘That selfhood was formed by social relations was evident, but some who observed it also felt that the reflective component of the self needed to be shielded from oppression and untrustworthy social powers, lest it become the


25 The issue would re-emerge, of course, with the French Revolution. For a suggestive treatment of anger in this period, see Andrew Stauffer, *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
entry-point thought which domination and corruption insinuated themselves into the interior of persons.\textsuperscript{26} For example, the Clarens community portrayed in Rousseau’s \textit{Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse} (1761) is presented as a model of mutual consideration, but the reader cannot forget the violent anger Julie’s father displayed earlier in the book. When he discovered her affair with a commoner, he hit his daughter so hard she miscarried the baby she hoped would make her parents change their minds about forcing her to marry another man. In \textit{La Vie de Marianne}, Marivaux also shows how in the absence of genuine bonds of affection the \textit{égards} of polite sociability would never override hard-nosed assessments of social status. Once the smooth surface of politeness was cracked, the appeal to ‘public opinion’ lost some its power, since its authority was seen to rest, not on some universal consensus, but on the interests of a dominant elite.

The emancipatory potential of an ethic of polite sociability had no doubt been exaggerated to begin with, but disenchantment with it opened the door to an alternative but equally idealized conception of how offenses, and the anger they provoke, might be eliminated from social interaction. Instead of being disciplined by an ethic of propriety, mutual consideration, and self-control, the generation of unruly emotions could be checked at the source by creating a society governed by laws enforced equally on everyone in an entirely impersonal way. This is the solution Rousseau adopts in the first part of \textit{Émile}. As a young child, the hero of the book will be free from anger because his environment is from the first so arranged by his tutor that the frustration and hurt he inevitably experiences never appears to him to be the result of another person’s will, but only the effect of natural and necessary causes. When he is punished for misbehavior, Émile will feel no resentment because he can detect no hostile intention directed against him. Rousseau’s vision of a world free from personal dependence, artificial and even oppressive as it may seem to us, had a powerful appeal for readers living in a society in which everyone was bound by ties of obligation to benefactors and clients of one kind or another and had to keep careful track of favors given and received. Even so, Rousseau will gradually abandon this approach to education as the boy grows up and enters society. The mature Émile must possess a capacity for anger if, as he should, he is to respond energetically to injustice in human interaction.

\textsuperscript{26} Jerrold Seigel, \textit{The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 37.
On the level of the community as a whole, the institution of a rule of law powerful and pervasive enough to eliminate personal dependence and forestall the discomfort of its attending emotions could be imagined in at least two different ways. It might be focused, as in Rousseau’s *Social Contract*, on a political compact in which obligation was founded on the general will of the citizens. The true general will is distinguished from the sum total of personal wills and intentions by its impersonal character. It is not simply what I (or we) want, but what ‘one’ wants when the passions are ‘silenced’ and the self recognizes his deepest and truest interests. For Rousseau these interests will always be aligned with those of his fellow citizens, as long as the fundamental equality of citizens and the generality of law are respected.

Other Enlightenment writers, such as Morelly or d’Holbach, emphasized the ongoing regulation of behavior by philosophical rulers guided by their knowledge of natural laws. In a well-ordered society as these writers imagined it, there would be little occasion for anger in response to personal offense. Immediate physiological reactions to frustration could not of course be eliminated, but they would be correctible or at the very least containable, originating from the inevitable frictions of the social system rather than from expectations of personal consideration. That enlightened *dirigisme* of this kind would not provoke resentment in those whose behavior was being regulated is simply assumed. That the people might take offense at being disciplined, or that they might take exception to the regulators’ claims to impartiality, is not a possibility these works imagine, let alone a right they are willing to grant, so intent are they on removing the burden of dependence on other people’s will in the details of social organization, and so confident are they in the psychological relief that will result.

It is easy to see today how such schemes suffer from simplistic notions about the malleability of human nature. After the Revolution, the

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27 See the first draft of the *Contrat social*, I.2 (OC:i. 284).
28 This is not true of Montesquieu, however, who occupies in this as in other respects a curious intermediate position. He is of course concerned to ensure that positive law is in harmony with the various kinds of natural and circumstantial laws that inform the spirit of a particular nation, but the latter may include patterns of angry or grateful behavior which are to be integrated into a complex whole rather than eliminated entirely. It would still be true, however, that offenses and obligations that deviated from those regulated patterns, and thus presumably more disruptive to selves otherwise culturally conditioned to expect them, would be eliminated. His view may be said to anticipate the nineteenth-century re-conceptualization of informal bonds in sociological rather than moral terms.
froissements: they neglect to theorize will become an object of sustained attention by liberal constitutionalists such as Constant. Materialist though he was, Diderot already had his doubts, expressed most memorably in his Neveu de Rameau. Yet, once again, we should not minimize how attractive these schemes might appear to eighteenth-century subjects of a regime still riddled by arbitrary authority. The books that proposed them appealed to the imagination and the affections as much as to the reason of contemporary readers. As in the case of natural religion, to see one’s condition as the product of impersonal laws rather than of personal will could be experienced as emotionally liberating. We tend to think of deism as a halfway house between belief and unbelief, an intellectual attitude rather than a living faith, but it was for a time a worldview that fully engaged the sensibility of someone like Voltaire. Similarly, the prospect of a earthly life in which one owed obedience to impersonal laws, and not to persons, could be embraced as a relief from arbitrary rule and from invidious distinctions of status. We tend to forget how enthusiasm for the principle of obedience to laws, not men, was rooted in a crisis in the emotional regime of the period that gave that principle a particular affective coloration, and led some to overlook the oppressive potential even of the most rational system of laws.

We also tend to neglect another aspect of political thinking in the period. While the application of rational principles to social organization might be unproblematic once the opportunity to do so exists, those writers who considered the matter agreed that seizing that opportunity might require the decisive initiative of a founding genius or Legislator, as Rousseau called him. One consequence of this idea, acknowledged with varying degrees of explicitness, is to reintroduce emotion into political life. Anger might disappear, but the Legislator’s founding act would place his fellow citizens in his debt and call for their gratitude. In the meantime, writers who showed potential legislators the way forward deserve the gratitude of their readers. Indeed, it might be argued that the historical originality of Enlightenment writers or intellectuals lies not only in articulating new entitlements to anger, but in staking new claims to public gratitude—even if, paradoxically, the burden of their proposals is to limit the salience of both these emotions in social and political life. Not for nothing could Paul Bénichou speak of a ‘sacre de l’écrivain’.

in this period. The writer’s role in mediating social emotion can be seen as a secular version of the priest’s mediation of social tensions through his access to a higher level of reality in which they can be reconciled or transcended. Yet, we should not too quickly accuse Enlightenment writers—even Rousseau—of narcissism or delusions of grandeur. In their writings, gratitude is no less problematic an emotion than anger, and the object of no less ambivalence.

GRATITUDE AS BURDEN AND GIFT

Like anger, gratitude can be seen as straddling the boundary between affective response and social interaction. In many traditional societies, such as those of the ancient Mediterranean, informal, personal favors were not clearly separated from the codified system of benefaction, material and symbolic, that cemented the relationships between patrons and clients. As a consequence, classical writers such as Cicero and Seneca did not draw a sharp distinction between gratitude as a free response to a freely given favor, and gratitude as a formal obligation, the failure to fulfill which brings justified reprobation, and which may even provoke anger in the benefactor. In our post-Kantian world, moral and emotional obligations are two very different things, but this was not the case in pre-modern societies, which had other concerns. For example, in antiquity, patrons bestowed favors to display their liberality to the public at large and so enhance their social prestige. Failure to

31 Richard P. Saller, Personal Patronage under the Early Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, ed., Patronage in Ancient Society (London: Routledge, 1989). It is more difficult for us to imagine anger as a systemic phenomenon, since such a system would seem to be incompatible with social cohesion, but our idealization of classical Greece and Rome may have led us to underestimate the pervasiveness of anger as an element of ordinary interaction in those societies. See William V. Harris, Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Susanna Braund and Glenn W. Most, eds, Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Aristotle to Galen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
32 As for example, in Cicero’s De officiis, the varying translation of whose title (as ‘duties’, ‘obligations’, or ‘good offices’) already indicates some of the difficulty. As P. G. Walsh suggests, Cicero is more interested in the contrast, at once aesthetic and moral, between the honorable and the dishonorable than in the difference between formal and informal obligation. Cicero, On Obligations, tr. P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), liv.
acknowledge their benefaction constituted a serious slight to their honor. A similar dynamic of benefaction and gratitude can be found in feudalism, but with the gradual emergence of centralized states, obligation came to be based on the impersonal bonds of political sovereignty or civil contract rather than on personal fealty. Patronage did not of course disappear. As Natalie Zemon Davis has reminded us, gift-giving and benefaction on a significant scale coexists with economic modes of exchange in any society, and thus one cannot identify any point in history at which the second can be said to replace the first. Still, the assumption that the self’s relationships with others should be understood in terms of a thick network of mutual consideration, of favors given and returned, began to be challenged by the idea that, at least in the public realm, these relationships should be subject only to general and impersonal laws. This would seem to leave little room for gratitude. Was this development a good or a bad thing? To eighteenth-century writers, the answer was not as obvious as some of the classical twentieth-century scholarship on the Enlightenment liked to believe. Were Enlightenment writers, for example, obligated to society for the new prestige they were beginning to enjoy? Should they expect gratitude from their readers for their efforts to benefit the public? Or was the acknowledgment of merit a matter of impersonal reason only, and not of personal recognition?

Here again, Rousseau offers the paradigm case. Rousseau’s friends and patrons often criticized his ingratitude. They were certainly justified in doing so, but Rousseau was also correct in thinking that such accusations missed a crucial point. His revolt against the burden of gratitude may have stemmed in part from a sense of his own entitlement, but it was also a principled protest against the whole system of benefaction that governed the life of anyone without enough status or income to give them a margin of independence. In an earlier era,

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33 Whether ingratitude constituted a slight, and the nature of the angry reaction to it, might depend in part on the status of the parties involved. The ingratitude of an equal, that is to say, of someone who should understand the subtleties of personal obligation, is not the same as that of a base person from whom one expects only material appreciation.


35 I think here of the works of Ernst Cassirer and Peter Gay.
Rousseau’s protest would have been futile, even nonsensical, and his tortured responses to his friends’ accusations show how difficult it was to separate the temperamental from the rational grounds for his discomfort. Still, in the context of the modern discourse of rights, and with the growing emphasis on intellectual achievement as a criterion for social advancement, it was possible for the ‘republican’ Rousseau to declare with some plausibility that rewards and recognition should be distributed on the basis of objective merit, rather than granted as favors. The rule of law and reason would lift the burden of personal dependence that made social inequality so hard to bear—and thereby, as in the ideal Geneva of Rousseau’s Lettre à d’Alembert (1758), inspire in the citizens a free response of gratitude to their country for securing their freedom, and to each other for the unconstrained reciprocity in which that freedom finds its highest expression.

Rousseau’s insistence on liberation from the obligation of personal gratitude may have irritated some of his friends, but his Enlightenment contemporaries shared a similar determination when it came to religion. Just as the philosophes had sought to banish the specter of divine wrath, they attacked the doctrine of personalized divine favor, especially as dramatized in the biblical account of a ‘chosen’ people. Such election was incompatible with the impartiality of divine justice. Likewise, the notion of particular Providence obscured the more truly divine institution of a natural order regulated by laws amenable to comprehension by human science. It was of course still important to acknowledge the supremacy of God’s will, but this was less a matter of personal obligation than of unconstrained appreciation for the sublime rationality of the cosmic order. The Vicaire savoyard of Rousseau’s Émile may seem to be an exception to this general trend in that he experiences an impulse of gratitude for his philosophical insights, which he views, not just as the product of his reasoning, but as God’s personal gift. As we shall see, however, the favor for which he gives thanks is the paradoxical one of liberation from any anxiety about what personal obligation God might expect from him in return. In this respect, his attitude almost certainly mirrors Rousseau’s own.

The role played by the Vicaire’s God may be likened to the one adopted, more or less explicitly, by the writer himself in relation to his public of grateful readers. Rousseau did his readers a favor by opening

36 The most sustained effort to reconcile the two ideas is Malebranche’s Traité de la nature et de la grâce (1680).
their eyes to social realities hitherto obscured from their view, and by giving expression to their own repressed or inchoate feelings. Instead of imposing a burdensome obligation on the recipient, this favor stimulated a free response from those who felt their reading experience had enhanced their capacity to think and feel for themselves. Rousseau owed his popularity among ordinary people to his independent spirit, to his refusal to acknowledge the humiliation of obligation. Yet, especially after the publication of his novel Julie, that acclaim was not based solely on esteem for his person or his philosophy. In unprecedented numbers, readers wrote to the author to express their gratitude for the way he helped them appreciate their own agency as feeling selves. This agency found confirmation of its vitality in the eager pleasure with which Rousseau’s readers took up their pen and sent a letter to someone they did not personally know, but who seemed to offer a welcoming space for, indeed invite, their personal response.

This feature of Rousseau’s relationship with his readers reminds us that gratitude is not always, or not only, a burden. Acknowledging one’s obligations provides opportunities for displaying one’s moral awareness, or at least one’s good breeding. To express gratitude appropriately in many social situations, one must discern and conform to unwritten and often subtle rules. This cannot be done without some refinement of sensitivity and judgment. The classical theorists of gratitude always insisted on distinguishing the giving and returning of favors from the simple calculations of economic exchange, the world of civility from that of mere need. The kind of gratitude they single out for special praise is that which involves an activity of the mind and sensibility above and beyond the mechanical. Recipients may legitimately consider the quality of the gesture and the character of the giver in calibrating their response. The benefactor who acts only out of duty certainly imposes an obligation, yet he deserves no special credit, and one’s gratitude may be measured accordingly. Favors done to humiliate the recipient are not really favors at all. Returning a favor too quickly, as La Rochefoucauld points out, is also a form of insult, since it indicates the recipient’s unwillingness to live with his obligation any longer than absolutely necessary.37

37 ‘Le trop grand empressement qu’on a de s’acquitter d’une obligation est une espèce d’ingratitude’ (Too much eagerness to discharge an obligation is a form of ingratitude). La Rochefoucauld, Maximes no. 226, in Moralistes du XVIIe siècle: de Pibrac à Dufresny, ed. Jean Lafond (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1992), 154. The English translation is from La Rochefoucauld, Collected Maxims and Other Reflections, tr. and ed. E. H. and A. M. Blackmore and Francine Giguère (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 65. This edition also contains the French text. The numbering used in both these works is that of the fifth edition of the Maximes (1678).
The capacity to return a favor with properly calibrated expressions of gratitude was not something every man or woman could be assumed to possess. Like delicacy in benefaction, it depended on gentle birth, education, good fortune, an exceptional temperament, or some combination of these. Indeed, the ability to feel and express gratitude appropriately was an important factor in the establishment or reinforcement of cultural hierarchies. For the classical moralists, demonstrating the right kind and degree of gratitude evidenced a noble character, in which the advantages of birth had been refined by philosophical education. For theologians, of course, the capacity for gratitude was itself a gift, a sign of a prior divine favor that alone enabled a fallen human being to receive the particular grace now being bestowed. In short, to acknowledge obligation was, paradoxically, not only to display one’s agency, but also to illustrate one’s status.

In eighteenth-century French novels from Manon Lescaut (1731) to Les Liaisons dangereuses (1782), the capacity to appreciate favors and to return them with finesse are marks of high sensibility, sure signs of a character’s distinction. In these stories, however, the relation of that distinction to other indicators of social worth has become problematic. The chevalier Des Grieux possesses an exquisite sensibility that prompts him to effusions of gratitude for M. de T’s help in securing Manon’s release from jail, and yet his cheating at cards, not to mention outright thefts, indeed the very fact of his relationship with a woman of Manon’s class, violate the code of honor and propriety that should govern his conduct. Which form of moral refinement is to be given greater weight? Les Liaisons dangereuses is even more subversive of conventional morality. After Valmont seduces the young Cécile, he speaks of her with contempt, but not for giving in to his advances. Rather, by failing to learn from her experience how to play the libertine game to her own advantage, she shows a disappointing inability to appreciate the favor he has done her except at the level of physical pleasure. Whatever gratitude she might feel toward Valmont is thus of no value to him. She

38 ‘Tous ceux qui s’acquittent des devoirs de la reconnaissance ne peuvent pas pour cela se flatter d’être reconnaissants’ (Not everyone who discharges the duties of gratitude can flatter himself that he is really being grateful by doing so). La Rochefoucauld, Maximes, no. 224, in Moralistes, 154; Collected Maxims, 63.

39 Compare Sade’s Juliette, who scorns the idea of charity, since its only return is the ‘cold gratitude’ of the person who is helped. While that person may express genuine feeling, the gratitude means nothing to someone who enjoys self-sufficient power. See Sade, Œuvres, iii. 305.
therefore deserves to be scorned. The notion that Cécile’s failure to become a self-conscious libertine might be a sign of her fundamental innocence is dismissed out of hand, and not only by the book’s immoral characters. In both books, the exchange of personal favors is at odds with the larger system of moral and social interaction. They no longer rest on a common and coherent set of underlying values.

While Prévost and Laclos show how high-born figures distort and debase the merit of acknowledging a favor, other novels of the period focus on the unexpectedly refined forms of gratitude displayed by characters of humbler origin. The heroines of Challe’s *Illustres Françaises* and Marivaux’s *La Vie de Marianne* perform, and as narrators of their stories redefine, their expressions of gratitude in such a way as to secure recognition of their moral and social worth from the very people on whom they depend. In contrast with other characters in the same books, who acknowledge their debts in conventional and mechanical ways that confirm their low status, the heroines display in word and deed such a mastery of the subtleties of informal obligation as to expand their scope for autonomous action.\(^{40}\) Marivaux’s Marianne and Challe’s Angélique convince their (male) benefactors that the free and gracious acknowledgment of their obligations is in itself the highest possible form of return for the favors done to them. To claim any more tangible, especially sexual, compensation would turn benefaction into a sordid and humiliating quid pro quo.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, arguments of this kind are most often employed by women characters, and appeals to female virtue as setting a limit to obligation had long been a familiar literary trope, although it could serve as a symbol for a wider protest against the oppressive side of gratitude. In the seventeenth century, writers such as Mlle de Scudéry insisted, for example, that a woman should not be expected to fall in love with her rescuer merely out of gratitude.\(^{41}\) Passion could never be an obligation, and this theme was later echoed in a more pathetic mode by Prévost in his *Histoire d’une Grecque moderne* (1740). But in the eighteenth century, the claims of the weaker but virtuous character, male as well as female, began to include recognition of their social

\(^{40}\) On the importance of the characters’ reframing of their personal stories in their social advancement, see William Ray, *Story and History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990).

\(^{41}\) Madeleine de Scudéry, *Clélie*, cited in Magendie, *La Politesse mondaine*, 663. On the other hand, the word ‘ingrat’ in the literature of the period is often used by women to condemn the man who has betrayed or ceased to love them.
dignity as well as of their moral integrity. This new emphasis can be seen in Rousseau’s novel Julie. Its principal male character, St Preux, exemplifies that class of educated but underemployed intellectuals we have mentioned earlier in relation to resentful anger. With certain significant exceptions, the virtuous St Preux is rarely angry. At the same time, he never retracts his bold claim to possess a sensibility as refined as that of any nobleman. Later, when he is adopted into the ideal community of Clarens, his gratitude to Wolmar is depicted not only as compatible with his moral independence; it is a mark that he truly belongs among the ‘belles âmes’. In other works as well, Rousseau was by no means as categorical in his condemnation of gratitude as his prickliness would lead one to think. The last of his Rêveries du promeneur solitaire, which is also probably the last text he wrote, is a tribute of gratitude to Mme de Warens. He could never have become the writer he was had he not been empowered by the favors she had done him.

Like anger, therefore, gratitude could be a means of challenging as well as confirming status hierarchies. At the very least, the language of gratitude, encompassing as it did unforced reciprocity between intimates as well the obligations binding clients to patrons, was flexible enough to allow hierarchical relationships to be redefined in more egalitarian terms. Antoine Lilti has examined this phenomenon in his study of eighteenth-century salon life. In the relationships between writers and influential salon hosts, he writes, ‘the key notion is that of protection’. Such protection differed from older forms of patronage: ‘worldly protection draws its power and its utility for each of the participants from the fact that it borrows the language of friendship and sociability, of benefaction and gratitude’ that characterizes relationships between moral equals. This allowed both hosts and writers to view themselves as disinterested parties rather than as seekers after glory. Just as Enlightenment writers explored the emancipatory potential of a wider entitlement to anger while working to minimize the damaging effects of unbridled wrath, they also pondered the possibilities as well as

42 For male characters, turning dependence to advantage is most often a strategy of the picaresque hero, whose gratitude generally operates on a more self-interested level. However, the Jacob of Marivaux’s Paysan parvenu, while remaining within the comic mode and colloquial linguistic register, displays a gratitude of a more sensitive and refined kind.

the limitations of adopting what the self-help books of today call ‘an attitude of gratitude’ as a means of enhancing individual agency.

EMOTIONS AS RELATIONS AND JUDGMENTS

The approach taken in this book to Enlightenment discourses on anger and gratitude builds on important recent philosophical and historical work on the role of the emotions in human life. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, emotion was primarily viewed in terms of individual psychology and biology. Indeed, as Thomas Dixon has shown in an illuminating recent book, the very use of the term ‘emotion’ in English as a category for what in earlier times was known variously as ‘passions’, ‘affections’, and even ‘sentiments’ dates to the early nineteenth century. This shift in vocabulary was part of a broader reconfiguration of knowledge in which psychology in the modern sense emerged as a discipline distinct from philosophical or theological approaches to human nature. As Dixon notes, the classification of feelings, dispositions, and drives has a very complex history, linked to shifts in the basic frameworks within which human nature is understood. ‘The words “passions” and “affections” belonged to a network of words such as “soul”, “conscience”, “fall”, “sin”, “grace”... “lower appetites”, “self-love”, and so on.’ They were intimately linked to the discourses of Christianity and of the classical philosophers. This gave these terms a particular religious coloration, but at the same time they opened onto a comprehensive view of human action at its various levels: body, intellect, and will. ‘The word “emotions” was, from the outset, part of a different network of terms such as “psychology”, “laws”, “observation”... “behavior”, and “viscera”.’

There continued, of course, to be other, more philosophical approaches to human action. In France, Descartes had introduced the

44 Thomas Dixon, From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.
45 One can also see in theology from the seventeenth century onwards a significant dissociation of affective emphases from rationalistic dogmatic systems, in ways at odds with both the mystical theology of earlier centuries and the patterns of biblical faith. See Mark A. McIntosh, Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 1998).
term *émotion* to designate the passions, but his ‘scientific’ use of the term did not catch on at the time, or even later, with the development of modern psychology. 46 The historical semantics of emotion terms in France remain to be explored, but the influence of *ancien régime* usages seems to have been more lasting than in Britain. The *moralistes* and novelists of the later seventeenth century continued to speak of the ‘passions’, appealing in varying degrees to the moral judgment implicit in a word that in religious discourse was associated with humanity’s fallen condition. ‘Passions’ are feelings to which human beings are subjected against their will; the central question is whether they can be mastered by the exercise of virtue. Eighteenth-century writers, on the other hand, employed the word ‘sentiments’ when they wanted to emphasize a closer relation between feeling and reasoned opinion, and between sensibility and enlightened sociability. The use of ‘sentiment’ in this broad sense by eighteenth-century British writers such as Adam Smith has become obsolete, but like the moralizing use of ‘passion’ it remains current in French. This difference of configuration may go some way toward explaining why the recent surge of philosophical interest in the emotions in the English-speaking world does not have an exact counterpart in francophone scholarship, despite a long-standing if heterogeneous tradition of writing on this topic from Staël’s *De l’influence des passions* (1795) to Sartre’s *Esquisse d’une théorie des émotions* (1939). 47

The situation is very different today. While some scientists continue to view emotions primarily in terms of reactions to stimuli affecting the

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46 The word continues to be used to designate intense feeling in general, rather than a member of a class of feelings.

47 The most comprehensive recent French-language work on the subject is Michel Meyer, *Le Philosophe et les passions: esquisse d’une histoire de la nature humaine* (Paris: Librairie générale française, 1991). For a discussion (which I cannot address here) see the review by Jack Abecassis in *MLN* 110 (1995), 918–42. Joan DeJean’s *Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), draws attention to the French rejection of Descartes’s terminology and suggests that one of the reasons for it was the determination of writers such as Scudéry (in, for example, the ‘Carte de Tendre’ of Clélie) to keep the discussion of feeling within the framework of moral psychology, the better to highlight women’s concerns about the gendered nature of personal and social relationships. As DeJean herself recognizes, however, the question is a complex one, involving theological as well as scientific and moral literature. DeJean herself does not engage the complex and politically fraught theological debates on the passions that (for example) so exercised Fénelon and his opponents. For an overview of some of the issues, see Susan James, *The Passions and the Good Life*, in Donald Rutherford, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 198–220.
balance of physical forces within the body, the ‘object-relations’ school of psychology has come to exercise important influence on the field. Without denying the reality of psycho-physiological processes, this approach considers the self’s interactions with real or imaginary others to be more crucial for understanding human development than the more ‘hydraulic’ model of drives within the self. Psychoanalyst Melanie Klein’s late work *Envy and Gratitude*, which describes the working of these emotions in the construction (and destruction) of psychic integrity, inspired my first explorations of emotion in eighteenth-century literature and is echoed in the title of this book. More recent psychologists such as Carol Tavris have sought to combine an object-relations perspective with investigations into the broader social psychology of emotions such as anger. According to Tavris, anger is fruitfully understood as ‘a process, a transaction, a way of communicating . . . Most angry episodes are social events. They assume meaning only in terms of the social contract between participants. The beliefs we have about anger, and the interpretations we give to the experience, are as important to its understanding as anything intrinsic to the emotion itself.’ Tavris’s sensitivity to social contexts derives in part from her awareness of how earlier psychologists were influenced by stereotypes about the female mind, and she shows how manifestations of anger depend to a great extent on culturally conditioned ideas about gender roles. A similar approach is exemplified on a broader scale by the late Robert C. Solomon, whose work, based on a philosophically informed existentialist psychology, has some affinities with the object-relations school, and is also sensitive to the situational context of emotional transactions.

Historians and anthropologists have also begun to look at the ways emotions have been defined, and their expressions evaluated, in the writings and other cultural productions of distant times and places.

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50 Solomon, *True to our Feelings*, and, among his other works, *The Passions* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), and *Dark Feelings, Grim Thoughts: Experience and Reflection in Camus and Sartre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
We have come to appreciate how remote from the categories of our own thinking are the ways in which certain emotions are named and acted out (or not) in different societies. Some scholars have even claimed that emotions are entirely constructed and regulated by norms arising from the cultures in which they are embedded, that there are no universals in human emotional life. In an important recent study, however, William Reddy argues that to say that emotional reactions are culturally constructed is to deny that they might serve instead to expose the stress-points and inadequacies of the cultural status quo, inspire reflective critique, and drive social change. Yet, this is in fact what happens. Emotions, Reddy writes, are ‘badges of deeply-relevant goals’, some of which are rooted in bodily needs while others are shaped by a complex of circumstances that vary even within a given culture. The emotional suffering that results from conflict between individual and social goals may often be accepted and endured when it is given symbolic meaning and value, but it can also, in certain circumstances, lead people to demand a greater degree or different form of satisfaction from their marriage or career, to change the criteria for ascribing social honor and shame, or to modify other aspects of what Reddy calls the ‘emotional regime’ of the culture. Conversely, individuals are also sometimes led by emotional conflict to redefine their own high-level goals, ‘converting’ for example from one religion to another because they felt they ‘had to’ do so in order to preserve the unity or integrity of their self.

Such changes in overarching points of view indicate that cultural construction does not provide a sufficient explanation for the dynamic of emotions. Reddy insists, therefore, that without ‘some conception of the universal features of emotional life’ it is ‘impossible to account for

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52 William Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55. For the cultural constructionists, change would mostly be the product of outside forces such as colonialism and imperialism, or, as in Foucault, of paradigm shifts in an *episteme* largely inaccessible to reflection, since it provides the terms for reflection itself.
emotional change. Using the findings of cognitive science, Reddy suggests we look at emotions as a way of processing contradictions between learned habits or internalized norms and fundamental human impulses. His concern is to defend the legitimacy of criticizing the emotional regime of a society other than one’s own. While he is mindful of the dangers of judging other cultures by the standard of a single conception of human nature, itself culturally conditioned, Reddy insists on the legitimacy of judging the success or failure of these emotional regimes in minimizing emotional suffering. A key factor here is the degree to which individuals are allowed to adjust their higher-level goals, their definition and pursuit of overall values, in order to resolve contradictory thoughts and desires for themselves. In this respect, Reddy’s work stands in the best Enlightenment tradition. A closer look at that tradition may, in turn, help to refine Reddy’s project.

Historically informed philosophers are also exploring the cognitive and relational dimensions of emotions. Retrieving the somewhat neglected contributions of the Stoic and Epicurean thinkers of the Hellenistic age to this debate, writers such as Martha Nussbaum affirm that emotions are indeed evaluations. As Nussbaum puts it, emotions are ‘intelligent responses to the perception of value’; they ‘involve judgments about the salience for our well-being of uncontrolled external

53 Ibid. 45.
54 Reddy defines an emotion as ‘a range of loosely connected thought material, formulated in varying codes, that has goal-relevance and intensity . . . that may constitute a “schema” (or a set of loosely connected schemas or fragments of schemas); this range of thoughts tends to be activated together (as in the examples . . . “angry at sister” or “in love”) but, when activated, exceeds attention’s capacity to translate it into action or into talk in a short time horizon. Its loose or variegated character is a reflection of the complexity of translation tasks (including the formulation and application of goals). Episodes of particular complexity give rise to the emotionally configured thought material in the first place; renewed episodes reactivate such configurations.’ Ibid. 94.
For a detailed account of mental processing that dovetails with Reddy’s, but reacting to deterministic rather than to constructivist extremism, see Nancey Murphy and Warren S. Brown, Did my Neurons Make Me Do it? Philosophical and Neurobiological Perspectives on Moral Responsibility and Free Will (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
55 There is an analogy here to what political theorists call the opportunity for ‘exit’ in social or political regimes. See Albert O. Hirschman, Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).
Nussbaum, whose work spans Greek and Roman antiquity as well as contemporary moral and legal philosophy, is well aware that cultural variables influence the ways particular emotions are defined and conceptualized. She therefore wants to analyze how human flourishing depends on certain kinds of emotional cognitions and judgments without committing herself to an overarching metaphysical conception of human nature. She contends it is possible to articulate normative conceptions about emotional regimes while still respecting the legitimacy of cultural variation. In this respect, Nussbaum’s work departs from other contemporary appropriations of Hellenistic thought such as Michel Foucault’s work on the ‘care of the self’ and Pierre Hadot’s conception of philosophy as a way of life rather than a system of doctrine. It shares with them an emphasis on the ‘techniques’ and ‘therapies’ that foster the kind of emotional equilibrium sought by selves who might have very different ultimate goals and values. But it acknowledges more frankly the challenges of reconciling an emancipatory appeal to normative liberal values with respect for cultural diversity. This dilemma also confronted the philosophes of the Enlightenment, although it was not always articulated so explicitly. Nussbaum’s work can help us appreciate how writers in the period struggled with the implications of ascribing cognitive significance to feeling.

This approach to moral philosophy has some affinity with the ‘virtue ethics’ that has recently gained in popularity in comparison with Kantian and utilitarian theories. Virtue ethicists highlight the importance of tradition-formed practices in shaping moral norms and in giving moral vocabulary concreteness of meaning. In arguing for the importance of character-formation and the acquisition of practical wisdom, virtue ethicists such as Alisdair MacIntyre and Jean Porter also assign a key role to emotional dispositions in the discernment of appropriate action. Thinkers in this tradition disagree, however, on whether a tradition-transcendent philosophical framework is required in order to

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meet the challenges of critique from within and without that tradition. Also in dispute is whether an overall religious or other meta-narrative is needed to reconcile the demands of the different virtues—including the emotions associated with them—and to sustain moral conviction and agency when they clash. These debates give us a new perspective on tensions within Enlightenment writing, and in turn critics as well as defenders of what today is often dismissively called the ‘Enlightenment project’ may benefit from closer attention to the ways these tensions were acknowledged by writers of the period.

Nor are these debates purely theoretical. They open onto practical issues about what constitutes the range of behaviors and conceptions of the good life that are compatible with a cohesive society, and about the legitimacy of regulating the ‘emotional regime’ of that society. As Robert Solomon puts it, defining and describing emotions is ‘a political discussion. That is, it is part of a much larger discussion about how people relate and respond to each other, how they understand themselves, how they manipulate both themselves and others, in part by the very language they use in ascribing and describing the emotions.’

The eighteenth-century writers who are the subject of the following chapters are keenly aware of this broader context. The relation between theory and practice is illuminated by the interplay between analytical and dramatic examinations of anger and gratitude in their works. It is also a central issue in the writers’ struggle to gain social recognition for themselves as authors as well as literary appreciation for their works.

My study opens with Robert Challe. His *Difficultés sur la religion proposées au Père Malebranche* (c.1710), while unpublished, circulated widely in different versions throughout the century, and has long been judged to be one of the most important critiques of Christianity in the

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60 This is true even within the Thomist tradition, with Porter taking rather a different approach to the relation of virtue to law than other prominent writers such as John Finnis. For the general issue of how public debate in such matters should be conducted, see Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

61 A question related to virtue ethics is the extent to which one can ever acquire genuine virtues through the imitation of them. On the history of this debate, including an incisive discussion of ethical thinking in early modern France that is relevant to the issues I raise in this study, see Jennifer A. Herdt, *Putting on Virtue: The Legacy of the Splendid Vices* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008). This book appeared too late for me to do more than refer to it here.

French Enlightenment. The recent discovery of the original and complete text, however, shows that this is no ordinary deist tract but a remarkably self-involving attempt to define the grounds, limits, and affective tenor of religious belief, the most searching work of its kind in the period after Bayle. Challe’s novel *Les Illustres Françaises* (1713) was one of the most popular fictions of the first half of the eighteenth century, and is now acknowledged to be the most formally inventive and thematically wide-ranging novel of its age. Not only does it weave seven separate stories into an intricate pattern of contradictory and convergent voices, it addresses social and religious questions in more realistic and emotionally varied detail than any other French novel of the period. By analyzing the rhetoric of anger, and the less salient, but no less significant articulations of gratitude in each work, I argue that the novel and the tract are complementary explorations of the relationship between the writing self and the various dimensions of his world, a relationship at once unmistakably individual and broadly resonant with changes in the culture at large.

I then turn to Marivaux, a less mercurial writer than Challe but an even keener observer of the complex interplay between emotional states and the negotiation of social convention. In his novel *La Vie de Marianne* (1731–42), the eponymous narrator tells the story of her rise from her beginnings as an orphan of uncertain parentage to the status of a well-married noblewoman. In her reflections on what she owes to those who helped her along the way, not just materially but by agreeing to see her as she wished to be seen, the emotional connotations of *reconnaissance* in the sense of gratitude are inseparable from the word’s dramatic and epistemological uses to designate the ‘recognition’ or ‘acknowledgment’ of a person or a situation in Marianne’s story. By also reflecting on the term’s semantic complexity in the narrative commentary on that story, Marivaux’s novel proves to be just as wide-ranging in its diagnosis of the philosophical and cultural complexities of gratitude as Challe’s works are of anger.

The following two chapters are devoted to Rousseau, whose works and public personality are obviously central to any exploration of emotion in the Enlightenment. No eighteenth-century writer rivals Rousseau as a bellwether for the changes in sensibility occurring during this period, or as a catalyst for their mediation to a wide French, indeed European, readership. The extraordinary range of Rousseau’s writing allows us to see how attitudes about anger and gratitude inform his conceptions of political no less than of personal life. Rousseau’s self-
consciousness about the precariousness of his position as a writer in France, about his duties as a citizen of Geneva, about the potential of his interventions to provoke outrage as well as appreciation in his public, to undermine as well as shore up the foundations of social peace in any country in which he is read, drives him to incorporate into his works an acute awareness—sometimes coolly strategic, sometimes anxiously defensive—of the emotional dimension in the relationship between author and reader. Instead of focusing in detail on one or two works, these chapters offer a more synthetic view of the role of the two emotions across the span of Rousseau’s career. They examine the thematic role of anger and gratitude in his writings while at the same time attending to the ways the emotions appear in the author’s articulation of his claims to cultural authority.

I conclude with Diderot, whose satirical dialogue *Le Neveu de Rameau* offers the fiercest exploration of sociability and emotional temperament in the late Enlightenment. The modulation of indignant anger into resentment, already present in Rousseau, constitutes a major development in the history of the relation between emotion and social status, one which will echo throughout the following century, from Tocqueville to Baudelaire and of course to Nietzsche. It is likely that Diderot had Rousseau in mind when he wrote or revised the book in the 1770s, and so *Le Neveu de Rameau* can be read in part as a commentary on the provocative role of anger in shaping Rousseau’s career, as well as a reflection on Diderot’s own contrasting position as what his friends called *le philosophe*. We see clearly how ‘Lui’s’ envy and amoral conduct provoke anger in ‘Moi’. As many critics have pointed out, the latter’s claims to virtuous self-sufficiency are undermined by Lui’s success in exposing the compromises Moi has had to make over the years, and they are even more severely challenged by the seductiveness of Lui’s pantomimes of vice and corruption. We can see how Moi is tempted to counter Lui’s resentments with a resentment of his own, and how Diderot’s character seeks to shake off that emotion. But the dialogue is equally significant for the way it modifies the problematic of gratitude. More disturbing even than Lui’s insidious resentment is the suggestion, implicit in the framing of the dialogue, that Moi should be grateful for the material Lui provides him, for without it he would fail to experience the full reality of the world around him. The idea of being obliged to someone like Lui is a source of acute moral as well as epistemological discomfort. Diderot’s dialogue suggests that these tensions between dependence
and independence cannot be resolved. They may, however, be trans-
cended by adopting an aesthetic, and ironic, point of view. In this
respect, *Le Neveu de Rameau* marks the literary culmination of French
Enlightenment reflection on the writer’s role as a mediator of emo-
tional recognition-claims to and for the culture at large.