Enlightenment in the Ecological Age

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This book first published 2025

Ethics International Press Ltd, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Print Book ISBN: 978-1-83711-250-0

eBook ISBN: 978-1-83711-251-7

Originally published as :

Les Lumières à l'âge du vivant, Corine Pelluchon, Seuil, 2021, 2022.

This edition: Translation by Anna Duff, Klayton Tietjen and Harry Dahms, entirely revised by Philippe Mesly

For François Cambien

"What is at stake is not conservation of the past but the fulfillment of past hopes. [...] The critique of enlightenment […] is intended to prepare a positive concept of enlightenment which liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination."

Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer[1]

[1] *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), xvii-xviii.

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Introduction

> "A meaning can be attributed to that critical interrogation on the present and on ourselves which Kant formulated by reflecting on the Enlightenment. […] The critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos."
>
> Michel Foucault[1]

Enlightenment as critical inquiry and as process

Enlightenment is characterized by the assertion of the autonomy of reason and by the resolve of individuals to take destiny into their own hands. It is essentially an attitude or a "philosophical *ethos*" which consists of critically interrogating the present by making one's own time the object of examination in order to specify the challenges it must face.[2] In recognizing itself as a part of the history of modernity, the Enlightenment is opposed to the various counter-modernisms that have appeared since its inception.

To conceive of Enlightenment in this way implies that our identity depends on how we take up or reject the heritage of the Enlighten-

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[1] "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer, trans. Catherine Porter (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 118.

[2] This is the meaning Foucault attributes to Kant's definition of the Enlightenment, as the process of escaping a self-imposed state of minority which consists of accepting someone else's authority for conducting oneself in areas of life where it is suitable to use one's reason. Cf. Immanuel Kant, "An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment? (1784)", in *Practical Philosophy*, ed. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?".

ment and the fact that it remains unfinished. The concepts it placed at the heart of philosophy (science, morality, education, politics, and aesthetics) no doubt constitute an identifiable core, but their content evolves. The Enlightenment is not static; it changes with time and according to the places where it is spread, absorbing new elements and reorganizing them following the course of events and discoveries, and under the influence of its detractors. Today, when almost no one dares speak about the progress of civilization and when, since the 20th century, modernity seems to be the expression of reason gone mad, the Enlightenment must take stock of itself.[3] The central idea of this work is that, in the current ecological, technological, and geopolitical context, a revision of its foundations that leads beyond its anthropocentrism and its dualisms, in particular the opposition of nature and culture, is the only way to pursue its work of individual and social emancipation. It is also the only way to avoid collapse and war, which appear as the inevitable consequences of our aberrant and dehumanizing development model.

The Enlightenment can continue to be presented with an insistence on its unity based on a doctrinal body that emphasizes coherence[4] or, on the contrary, by highlighting its heterogeneity and even its antagonisms.[5] Both interpretations are equally relevant. In general, when-

[3] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. See also Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

[4] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[5] Jonathan Israël, *A Revolution of the Mind. Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy,* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009). According to Israël, the radical Enlightenment, which embodies democratic ideals and is the true Enlightenment, opposes the moderate Enlightenment. Following on the Spinozist tradition, it gained momentum in the years 1770–1780. Leo Strauss also writes about a moderate Enlightenment and a radical Enlightenment, the former represented by those who believe, like Lessing, in a synthesis of reason and revelation, and the latter by Hobbes (whom Jonathan Israël places within the moderate

ever a thinker feels the need to discuss the Enlightenment, it is either because they feel the need to warn their contemporaries of the dangers lurking over them, or to remind them of the promises they must fulfill. So too, there are many histories of Enlightenment philosophy, and in the various narratives recounting the course of modernity, the same authors may be celebrated as heroes or reviled as traitors.

The Enlightenment is therefore simultaneously an era, a process, and a project. It is above all the act of recursive reflection by which a generation seeks to give birth to a new imaginary. Thought of as any era that names itself, gives itself a motto, and assigns itself a task, it is not exclusively linked to a century and a place (Europe) and cannot be reduced to the synthesis of ideas articulated from the late 17th century up to the French Revolution.[6] The Enlightenment also represents an event: to consider one's time as an era and to say that it partakes in Enlightenment is to think that certain changes inaugurate a new era that will shape history and may even open up a dimension of hope.

It was as such that the philosophers of the late 17th and 18th centuries consciously witnessed the advent of modernity, which is inseparable from the need for "self-reassurance" through reflexivity[7] and

Enlightenment) and Spinoza who affirm the human's capacity to govern itself through reason. According to him, the moderate Enlightenment was quickly absorbed by the radical Enlightenment, for the real conflict resides between the autonomy of reason (Enlightenment) and the heteronomy of, or the need for, revelation (orthodoxy). See Corine Pelluchon, *Leo Strauss and the Crisis of Rationalism: Another Reason, Another Enlightenment*, trans. R. Howse (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2015).

6 There are two schools of thought: one concentrates on crisis as challenging the foundations and the unexplored possibilities of classical thought, while the other, without denying the differences between *le Grand Siècle* and the Enlightenment, considers the latter the fulfillment of classical rationalism. The first school is exemplified by Paul Hazard, *The Crisis of the European Mind, 1680–1715,* trans. J. Lewis May (New York: NYRB Classics, 2013), the second by Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment.*

7 Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Lecture 1, esp. 16ff.

to found social order, morality, and politics on reason. They knew that despite the battles they would have to fight to defend this ideal, it would henceforth be impossible to take for granted the pillars of the old order and to defer to the authority of tradition, whether that of religion, custom, or social hierarchy. By taking its own century as object of study, the Enlightenment also initiated a new way of philosophizing, each generation of thinkers now having the possibility of directing the course of history through critique.

Thus, those who believe it is possible and even necessary to reconnect with the ideals of the Enlightenment align themselves with a process of emancipation that concerns the autonomy of thought, self-government, and the conditions of political freedom, and they seek to complete it. For all these reasons, the Enlightenment cannot be reduced to a body of doctrines which need only be adapted to different contexts, times, and continents. Born of the desire for truth and freedom that touches the heart of our humanity, it is a meeting we take with ourselves, which also means that it is not exclusively European.

Not only have the principles of equality and freedom that gradually led to the construction of democracy in Europe and the United States inspired other parts of the world, but, in fact, the cultural origins of modernity do not come exclusively from our continent.[8] Just as there is unity and diversity within the Enlightenment, there are several wellsprings where the ideals of individual and social emancipation emerged, both inside and outside Europe, before and after the 18th century. These ideals have been expressed differently in different cultural contexts, as evidenced by the English, German, French and

[8] Sebastian Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History. A Historiographical Critique," *American Historical Review* 117, no. 4 (2012): 1007. He cites several authors who attempted to "de-Europeanize" the Enlightenment, notably in Latin America and in Asia. See further Robert Bellah who situates the origins of modern Japan in Confucianism in *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

Scottish Enlightenments, but also by the contrasting ways in which the European Enlightenment spread among other populations, contributing to their emancipation or subjugating them.[9]

In addition, the idea of emancipation has taken on various forms over time, challenging some of the opinions defended by the authors considered to be the leaders of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire, Locke, and Kant. This is particularly evident in feminist discourse or civil rights and cultural and ethnic minority movements. Even as they used the philosophy of human rights to denounce the contradictions between the affirmation of the equal dignity of each person and the maintenance of slavery, the subordination of women, and discrimination against indigenous peoples, these movements disputed the supposedly neutral rationalism of the Enlightenment and its hegemonic universalism. They also exposed the sexist and racist prejudices of some of its most celebrated representatives.[10]

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[9] Conrad, "Enlightenment in Global History," 1001. The author shows that the diffusion of the Enlightenment did not happen naturally, as Kant had predicted, but more often by force and he cites, by way of example, the work of the Japanese artist Shosai Ikkei, whose painting *Mirror of the Rise and Fall of Enlightenment Tradition* (1872) portrays a violent struggle between the Enlightenment (*kaika*) and premodern Japan. Likewise, postcolonial studies highlight the link between the Enlightenment and imperialism. See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). However, other scholars have nuanced this opinion, highlighting the role played by the Enlightenment in the struggle against imperialism, such as Sankar Muthu, *Enlightenment Against Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) and Jürgen Osterhammel, *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*, trans. Robert Savage (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

[10] Voltaire and Locke defended slavery, even though the former, in *Candide*, expressed his indignation towards slavery; thus the famous passage spoken by a black slave met by Candide in Suriname who is missing a leg and a hand: "When we work in the sugar-mills and get a finger caught in the

These paradoxes, and the tension between the unity and diversity of the Enlightenment, cease to be aporias once we recall that Enlightenment does not consist in the transfer of doctrinal elements to different contexts, but in a perpetual reorganization of ideas that, through confrontation with reality, do not remain the same as those expressed in the past. Each era and each society can redefine the Enlightenment, releasing a potential that may not have been visible before, if only because the polemics to which the Enlightenment is always associated—because it represents a critical reflection on the present, as difference or as break—lead women and men who are inspired by it to insist on one aspect rather than another. Thus, for example, in the countries of the Arab world, the Enlightenment can be invoked to denounce the claims of religious representatives to control the social order in order to impose a theocracy. In France, where religion and politics are separated, reference to the Enlightenment is often used to denounce new forms of obscurantism that fuel intolerance, based on prejudice and racist hatred, and compromise the health of democracy.

The Enlightenment project and the Counter-Enlightenment

In thinking about Enlightenment today, it is important to reflect on the meaning that, in the current context, universalism can have: the idea of the unity of the human race, individual emancipation, and the organization of society on the principles of freedom and equal-

machinery, they cut off the hand; but if we try to run away, they cut off a leg: I have found myself in both situations. It is the price we pay for the sugar you eat in Europe." *Candide, or Optimism*, trans. Theo Cuffe (London: Penguin Books, 2005). See also, Antoine Lilti, *L'Héritage des Lumières. Les Ambivalences de la modernité* (Paris: EHESS-Gallimard-Seuil, 2019), 27–28. The author shows that Rousseau's ideas about education and the role of women in Émile are conservative. Lastly, in *L'Amérique de John Locke. L'expansion colonial de la philosophie européenne* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2014), Matthieu Renault shows that the trans-Atlantic slave trade "remains the blind spot of a self-defined philosophy of freedom" (135 [our translation]) and reveals a theory of colonial power inherent in Locke.

ity. The relationship between the development of technology and the progress of freedom being less straightforward than the 18th century might have thought, "the analysis of ourselves as historically determined, to a certain extent, by the *Aufklärung* […] involves a series of investigations […] on what is not or is no longer indispensable for the constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects."[11]

However, if knowing who we are is inseparable from the way in which we situate ourselves in relation to the Enlightenment, this is also because the Enlightenment designates a social and political project and the latter, nowadays, is threatened on all sides, by reactionaries as well as by some progressives who consider any universalism imperialist. Thus, any undertaking seeking to perpetuate it experiences the onslaught of those who consider it unsuited to the challenges of our time or who wish to abandon its project of emancipation.

This inquisition is not limited to genealogical surveys aiming, as Michel Foucault sought, to track the reversion of knowledge into power and to denounce the hegemonic power of reason blind to differences. This does not mean that the trial of the Enlightenment, that is, the criticism that has been leveled at it from the beginning of the 18th century to the present day, on both the left and the right, has no relevance. Examination of our own time is inseparable from awareness of the failures of the Enlightenment and its blind spots. These failures and the destructive potential attached to modern rationalism must be examined with the greatest care if the Enlightenment's promises of individual and collective emancipation and of peace are to be fulfilled. However, the rendezvous we have with ourselves and the challenges we face demand at once more audacity and more gravity than postmodern philosophers ever imagined.

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[11] Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 110.

Indeed, in the 1970's and until the early 1990's, it was unimaginable that people born in France could be seduced by the fanatical discourses of Islamic terrorists, or that nationalism could reemerge in many European countries. At the same time, although issues related to planetary limits, to ecological and demographic challenges, and to the suffering that our consumption imposes on animals were the subject of reports[12] and gave rise to new disciplinary fields like environmental ethics and animal ethics, these subjects were rarely viewed as interrelated and remained rather marginal.

In other words, after the Second World War and until the end of the 20th century, it was understood that the main objective was to combat discrimination against other human beings and to denounce abuse of power, loss of freedom, the threat of totalitarianism, and economic inequality. Criticism of the Enlightenment still served the ideals of Enlightenment, namely individual freedom and equality. Conflicts between supporters of liberal democracy and communists were fierce, but they focused on the particular articulation of freedom and equality, the individual and the community. Communism, which aimed to impose equality through revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, may have generated totalitarianism, but it was not based on racism. Its belief in the progress of history and its ideal of equality place it in the wake of the Enlightenment, since it intended to overcome the bourgeois revolution, centered on formal freedoms, by a proletarian revolution supposed to give everyone access to decent material conditions guaranteeing real freedoms. By contrast, Nazism and the far-right parties which are today winning elections in European countries display racist hatred and xenophobia as well as their

[12] The first report of the Club of Rome, "The Limits to Growth" or "the Meadows Report," was published in 1972 and "the Brundtland report" (*Our Common Future*) was drafted in 1987 by the U.N. World Commission on Environment and Development.

contempt for cosmopolitanism and human rights, completely opposing the ideals of the Enlightenment.

Meanwhile, the founders of animal ethics and deep ecology denounced the humanism of the Enlightenment, that is, its conception of freedom as an uprooting from nature and its anthropocentrism, which leads to assigning only instrumental value to ecosystems and other living beings and thus justifying their unlimited exploitation. Nevertheless, their critique did not entail a wholesale questioning of democratic institutions nor their replacement by what is sometimes called ecofascism. Arne Næss, along with his major influence Aldo Leopold, even thought that the shift in ethics which had led to human rights and the recognition of the equal dignity of all human beings should be extended to affirm the intrinsic value of ecosystems and other forms of life. As for the deconstruction of speciesist prejudices, it follows from the overcoming of anthropocentrism.[13]

Today, however, confidence in the individual as a reasonable being has eroded, and the ideal of emancipation, which implies the ability of everyone to free themselves from the tyranny of custom, is losing all credibility. Democracy, based on freedom and equality as well as the ability of citizens to deliberate, is also under attack or seen as an illusion. At the same time, the particularism which, in a multicultural context, served to promote the recognition of minority rights and the value of each culture, is commuted to nationalism: cultures are not considered as different, but as incommensurable and unequal, so that no dialogue between them and no mixture is considered possible or

[13] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac; and Sketches Here and There* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 202–3. This frequently cited passage and any reading of Arne Næss's work preclude any legitimate identification of ecologists with ecofascists. Similarly, the argument that failing to take into consideration the interests of animals is an injustice does not mean that one dismisses the differences between humans and animals or between various animals.

desirable. Finally, the idea that the way to take into account other living beings and protect nature is through responsible policies that can accompany the evolution of modes of production and consumption while respecting pluralism and democratic procedure is rejected both by those who advocate for an enforced energy and food transition and by the defenders of the productivist model.

Thus, we must go beyond the criticism or deconstruction of the Enlightenment's oversights. It is not enough today to respond to the detractors of the Enlightenment; it is necessary to promote a new Enlightenment. It must have a positive content and present a project of emancipation based on an anthropology and an ontology that take into account the challenges of the 21st century, which are at once political, ecological, and related to our way of cohabiting with others, human and non-human.

Counter to the capitalist imaginary, which offers no other perspective to individuals than production and consumption and which bases social life on competition and manipulation, the new Enlightenment project must offer a new narrative. In order to clarify the content of the latter, we also have to remember that the Enlightenment is also defined by what it fights against. To be sure, our time is characterized by a virulent fight against the Enlightenment, as demonstrated by the nationalist parties, the widespread hatred of reason, the rejection of universalism, and the temptation to organize society by emphasizing what separates human beings, instead of insisting upon what we have in common. The loss of meaning and State resignation in the face of the economization of the world, which leads to the commodification of life and destroys the planet, also fuel certain Counter-Enlightenment themes, such as relativism and contempt for democratic institutions. This does not mean that skepticism about the Enlightenment

is fascist in essence, but it is undeniable that it facilitates the rise of fascism by weakening the possibilities of resistance to it.[14]

In other words, when we take a critical look at our present and consider that the Enlightenment designates a project aimed at directing the course of history, the bipolarity of Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment cannot be ignored. It is certainly necessary to appreciate the diversity of the Counter-Enlightenment to avoid confusing the partisans of a return to birth rights with those who, like Isaiah Berlin, fear the conversion of hegemonic reason to totalitarianism.[15] However, these important nuances must not make us forget that

[14] On this point, it is useful to remember that fascism is always linked to terror and the use of violence, which differentiates it from the populisms of the extreme right that exist today. Even though they express an aggressive and often racist nationalism and make frequent reference to former dictators like Mussolini, they are not identical to the fascist regimes of the 1930's. This does not, however, prevent certain populist governments under certain conditions from descending into fascism.

[15] Isaiah Berlin, "The Counter-Enlightenment," in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968–1973), 100–112. Though Isaiah Berlin is opposed to the foundationalist project of the Enlightenment and accuses its rationalism and universalism of being tyrannical, he still subscribes to its struggle against prejudice and intolerance. His criticism of the Enlightenment has nothing to do with contemporary calls for a return to hierarchical order, nor with the Counter-Enlightenment which, as early as the 18th century, but especially in the 19th and 20th centuries, rejected the idea of a unity of the human race and anticipated the rise of Nazism. See also Darrin McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: the French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Note that, even though the term Counter-Enlightenment is often associated with the name of Isaiah Berlin, he did not invent it. Nietzsche and, before him, the authors of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* at the end of the 1780's, were already discussing *Gegenerklärung* ("Counter-Declaration [of human rights]") or *GegenAufklärung* (Counter-Enlightenment). The English term 'Counter-Enlightenment' first appeared in 1958 in *Irrational Man* by William Barrett. See Robert Wokler, "Isaiah Berlin's Enlightenment and Counter-Enlightenment," in *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, eds. Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society Press, 2003).

those who hold reason in contempt do not express themselves only in academic circles; they defend in the public arena a political and social project involving the subjugation of individuals, whether by advocating a theologico-political order that opposes individual and social emancipation, or by imitating the former fascist regimes that combined several themes dear to the Counter-Enlightenment, such as the rejection of universalism, cultural relativism, nationalism, and a certain fascination with technology.

Not only must the new Enlightenment be able to respond to criticisms of the Enlightenment of the past, but in addition it must change the foundations on which its rationalism and universalism are based so that it is no longer suspected of facilitating brutality, destroying the planet, and being blind to difference. Its primary task is to oppose the project defended by those who are fighting it today and which can be identified as the Counter-Enlightenment, understood not as a period of history but rather as an "intellectual structure."[16]

It is therefore essential to distinguish between critics of the Enlightenment and proponents of the Counter-Enlightenment. Feminist and postcolonial criticisms of the Enlightenment, while attacking rationalism, universalism, and contractualism, serve a project of emancipation and equality that fits within the spirit of the Enlightenment. To fulfill the promises of equality and justice dear to the Enlightenment, it was necessary to denounce some of its presuppositions, such as the belief in a supposedly gender-neutral State and subject, and to combat the racist prejudices that explain, for example, that in the 1776 Declaration of Independence, Jefferson failed to include the abolition of slavery. Thus, the criticism of the Enlightenment led by multiculturalism and feminism is radical in that it advocates particularism in opposition to universalism, but it was made in the name of the principles of freedom

[16] Zeev Sternhell, *The Anti-Enlightenment Tradition*, trans. David Maisel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 441.

and equality in dignity of each person and, in that sense, on behalf of the Enlightenment.

By contrast, when the Counter-Enlightenment strikes at the universalism of the Enlightenment, it attacks not only its philosophical foundations, but also its spirit and principles, as well as the democratic institutions that are linked to it. Criticism of the Enlightenment is, in this case, in the service of a project hostile to the idea of emancipation and to the construction of a political order based on freedom and equality. For the Counter-Enlightenment of yesterday and today, rejection of the idea of a unity of the human race, contempt for the philosophy of human rights, hatred of cosmopolitanism and reason, anti-intellectualism, relativism, and ethnic determinism are weapons of war. They are used to defend closed societies and establish social and political order on nationalism and its fantasy of an *a priori* unity of the people, thought of as an organic body, culturally and ethnically homogeneous, and perceiving openness to the Other and reception of the foreigner as violations of its integrity.

After the eclipse of Enlightenment

While the Enlightenment extends beyond the 18th century, there is nevertheless a rupture between our situation and that of our illustrious predecessors. We must take this into account in order to determine what a new emancipatory project might look like. Indeed, while the Enlightenment era was associated with a certain enthusiasm and a spirit of conquest due to the certainty that progress was unstoppable,[17] there was, in the 20th century, an eclipse of Enlightenment.

[17] This enthusiasm did not preclude doubt, nor awareness of the contradictions between the ideal of equality of all human beings and colonialism, as Antoine Lilti shows in *L'Héritage des Lumières*. Nonetheless, these doubts did not controvert the Enlightenment project nor faith in reason.

Since the First World War, but especially after the Holocaust, the hope of human progress through science and technology and the idea of basing a universal morality on reason have collapsed. Thus, criticism of the universalism and rationalism of the Enlightenment has become, in academic circles, an obligatory rite of passage. Postmodernism has banned any foundationalist enterprise,[18] and a kind of metaphysical silence has been imposed on philosophy. This eclipse does not mean that all the ideals of the Enlightenment were abandoned, as we have already said and as we are reminded by the movements that marked the 1960s and 1970s: the demand for more autonomy, the refusal of authority, the denunciation of the Vietnam War, etc. However, there are few philosophers who at the end of the 20th century expressly and unambiguously invoke the Enlightenment,[19] whereas, at the same time, the currents of thought associated with feminism, postcolonial studies, and structuralism have made the trial of the Enlightenment one of their themes,[20] and today, on the political scene, in Europe and elsewhere, it is the Counter-Enlightenment that is most often heard.

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[18] Daniel Gordon, ed. *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[19] John Rawls's resumption of contractualism and exploration of the political conditions of Kantian autonomy follow in the wake of the Enlightenment, only he proposes a procedural conception of justice. Jürgen Habermas, who takes seriously the radical criticisms of *Aufklärung* developed by the Frankfurt School and presents, along with the theory of communicative action, a procedural conception of reason, also abandons the underlying metaphysics of Enlightenment rationalism. He is nonetheless faithful to it, as we see in his effort to rethink public space and generate universalizable norms and in his work on Europe. Lastly, Philip Pettit in *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) develops a theory of freedom (as non-domination) and a republicanism that ties back to the Enlightenment, without, however, suggesting a new philosophy of the Enlightenment.

[20] Concerning feminist criticism, see notably Jane Flax, "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory," *Signs* 12, no. 4 (1987), and Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

The Enlightenment of the 21st century must listen to the criticisms that postmodernism has directed at it, and in particular that which denounces the conversion of rationalism into its opposite, and of the ideal of emancipation into tyranny. It must accept that its hegemonic humanism, blind to difference, colonial and patriarchal, has been defeated.[21] Condemnation of individualism and materialism, which produced anomie and a loss of meaning, is also relevant, though we must be careful not to attribute responsibility to human rights for this situation too quickly. Meanwhile, the anxiety aroused by scientific excesses, which prevent technology from being used wisely, raises the question of the meaning that scientific and technological progress can have today.

That said, what definitively separate us from the men and women of the 18th century are the death camps and the awareness of an irreducible human destructiveness. With Auschwitz came a "reversal of the process of civilization."[22] A threshold was crossed, for this reversal goes far beyond the war of all against all and devastates the guarantees offered by *Aufklärung*. We must replace Enlightenment anthropology with another epistemological paradigm, one which Freud formulated in 1920 when, following Sabina Spielrein, he spoke of the death drive as an archaic power of destruction within the psyche.[23] We must

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[21] For a presentation of the body of criticism directed at the Enlightenment, see Dennis Rasmussen, "Contemporary Political Theory as an Anti-Enlightenment Project," in *Rethinking the Enlightenment: Between History, Philosophy, and Politics,* eds. Geoff Boucher and Henry Martyn (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2017).

[22] *"inversion du processus de civilization,"* Gérard Rabinovitch, *Somnambules et Terminators. Sur une crise civilisationnelle* (Paris: Le Bord de l'eau, 2016), 26. The author is translating Jürgen Habermas, *Eine Art Schadensabwicklung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987), 163.

[23] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle,* trans. Gregory C. Richter (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2011), 93. The death drive is the tendency of every organism and of psychic life to seek to establish a state prior to internal stimulation and characterized by the absence of life. This destructiveness can be directed towards the outside or towards the self.

therefore imagine a new Enlightenment knowing that the emblems of progress (science, technology, medicine) can be used in the service of extermination, and that humanity recognizes no limits to evil when it is faced with beings who do not enter the sphere of its moral consideration and whom law does not protect.

In addition, the possibility of world annihilation created by the atomic bomb completely changes the relationship between technology and freedom. In general, the technological innovations made possible by scientific advances, such as human genome sequencing and genetic engineering, underline the need for a clear distinction between scientific knowledge that reveals the laws or facts of nature, technical knowledge concerning its applications, and the choice of purposes for the use of technology, that is, wisdom.

Yet, despite this eclipse of Enlightenment, an age corresponding to a new Enlightenment may emerge. The condition is that it should structure its overall vision around the notions of autonomy, democracy, rationalism, and progress, that it should reconfigure them, and rethink the heritage of Europe. It is also important to specify the method for proposing a political project based on an anthropology and an ontology that are not based on metaphysics or a religious conception of the world, but on universalizable structures of existence that give meaning to the idea of the unity of the human race and the human condition.[24]

Awareness of the ecological, technological, and political challenges we face may be disquieting, but it is also a source of hope and generates an energy in civil society reminiscent of the 18th century. The Enlight-

[24] This work is based on the phenomenology of corporeality and the eco-phenomenology elaborated in my previous books as well as on the political and ethical theory that derives from them. See *Nourishment. A Philosophy of the Political Body*, trans. Justin E. Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), and *Éthique de la considération* (Paris: Seuil, 2018).

enment of the 21st century must retransmit this hope, which relies on an ecological project comprising a departure from the destructive and violent development model and the decolonization of our imagination marked by the domination of nature and of others and by the suppression of our senses.[25] One of the early signs of this new age that can repair the link between progress and civilization is the fact that more and more people no longer think of themselves as an empire within an empire, but acknowledge their dependence on nature and on other living beings and the common fate uniting them with others, human and non-human.

One of the theses of this book is that the new Enlightenment is ecological and that it requires an awareness of our vulnerability and an openness to possibilities leading to a wiser inhabitation of the Earth and a more just cohabitation with other living beings. In this regard, the "Universal Declaration of Humankind Rights,"[26] which complements the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" by no

[25] In this book, the term "domination" is not used in the sense of Judith Butler or Philip Pettit, for example, who define it as the subjugation of individuals produced by power dynamics and social norms assigning individuals to various subordinate roles. For me, domination includes relationships of power, but it is not reduced to such. It arises not only from social ontology, therefore, but indicates a connection to the world, to others, and to oneself which is rooted in the concealment of our common vulnerability. As a global perspective, it results in a propensity to think in terms of friends and enemies and in the need to step on others in order to exist, and it also explains the tendency, manifested in science and technology, to manipulate life, to reify it in order to control it and use it, instead of cooperating with it while respecting its own norms and environment. Lastly, it engenders social violence, the destruction of nature, and a repression of one's emotional life in favor of aggressiveness. The opposite of domination is consideration, which is itself a global perspective, but which exhibits a certain quality of presence to oneself and to others, thus inclining the subject to make a place for them and to take care of them.

[26] *Universal Declaration of Humankind Rights*, written in 2015 under the direction of Corinne Lepage. This point will be further detailed in Chapter 2. www.ddhu.org

longer basing rights on an individual moral agent but on a relational subject able to recognize that which links it to other generations, past, present, and future, is already a step forward. It specifies that my freedom is not only limited, as stated in Article 4 of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen," by the freedoms of my fellow citizens, but also by the right of future generations, other cultures, and other species to exist, as well as by respect for the natural and cultural heritage that I inherit and that belongs to humanity.

Furthermore, the idea that animals are entitled to our moral consideration and can be holders of specific rights, that their interests must be taken into account in public policy, is steadily gaining traction around the world. Even if conditions for animals are far from improving in practice, the recognition of the subjectivity of animals as vulnerable and individuated beings whose existence entails obligations for us is a historical fact that concerns the heart of our humanity. This awareness as well as the concern that more and more people, especially younger people, have for ecology is part of a broader movement, a civilizational evolution that we call "the ecological age" ("*l'âge du vivant*").[27] This age assumes a subject that accepts its vulnerability and finitude, respects planetary limits, and assigns limits to its own rights by considering those of others, human and non-human.

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[27] The ecological age appears in *Éthique de la considération*, 17–2, 181–182, 261–266, and in *Manifeste animaliste: Politiser la cause animale* (Paris: Alma, 2017), 35–41. [Translator's note: We have chosen to translate the significant term *l'âge du vivant* as the ecological age with the author's approval. The term 'le vivant,' which literally means 'the living' refers to both the principle of life, of living, but also to the collection of living beings, or the living being as such. It seemed best captured by the term 'ecological,' since the age concerns not merely life (and it is not itself living, as would be indicated by "the living age") but an age which takes into account the interrelationship of all living beings and the interrelation at the heart of living itself, which is captured in the science of ecology as well as in the definition of ecology Pelluchon will provide later on: "the wise inhabitation of the Earth" (see page [36]).]

Enlightenment in the ecological age

The ecological age connects the ecological transition, social justice, and animal rights to a movement of individual and social emancipation which is based on a reflection that takes our corporeality and our finitude seriously. This reflection also determines our ability to make sensible use of technology, to live together in a democracy, and to restore the political meaning of Europe. It is up to the new Enlightenment to show that the health of democracy, the ecological transition, respect for animals, the fight against discrimination and against everything that compromises openness to others, cooperation, and solidarity between countries, are not injunctions or slogans, but manifestations of rationalism in the ecological age. This rationalism, which is based on a philosophy of corporeality, manifests a reconciliation of civilization and nature, and of rationality and sensibility, which contrasts with the instrumental or instrumentalized rationalism by which Adorno and Horkheimer thought they explained the reversal of Enlightenment into barbarism.

Thus, we begin in chapter 1 by criticizing this misguided rationalism which is the instrument of the domination of others and of nature within and outside oneself. Rooted in a conception of the subject which gradually established self-preservation and usefulness as criteria of truth, this rationalism turns into its opposite. But this destructive dialectic is not an inevitability. It is when reason ceases to be an authority for distinguishing the true from the false, the good from the evil, and becomes a simple instrument to maximize efficiency, that the principles on which Enlightenment and democracy are based are emptied of their substance and that majority rule and science can be employed in the service of any purpose.[28]

[28] Max Horkheimer, *Eclipse of Reason* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 19.

By contrast, a conception of the subject emphasizing its depth and describing its connections to the common world composed of all generations and heritages, natural and cultural, can generate a healthy role for reason. It becomes once again the faculty that allows us to grasp what is universal or, at least, universalizable. Thus, consideration, which presupposes both a movement toward subjectivization and a widening of the subject who becomes aware of its own belonging to the common world, overcomes relativism and regenerates rationalism by extending the work of individual and social emancipation proper to the Enlightenment.[29] Consideration also offers us the means to articulate the civilizational project of the Enlightenment as respect for nature and other living beings, and thus opposes the misguided rationalism which is based on a triple domination—that of nature, society, and psychological life.

An examination in Chapter 2 of the link between the rejection of alterity and of the body and the culture of death, which reached its peak with Nazism and is expressed today as much by the destruction of the planet as by the rise of nationalism and racism, allows us to identify the vice of our civilization, which the old Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment have in common. This examination also shows the fruitfulness of a phenomenological approach for renewing the way in which we understand reality and other living beings and constitutes, along with evolutionism, the content or the "beautiful notions" fundamental to the new Enlightenment. It is in this chapter that the central idea of the work appears, namely the notion of Schema, which designates the organizing principle of a society as well as the set of social, economic, and political representations and choices that form its matrix. Denouncing the assumptions of modernity must allow ecological age Enlightenment to identify the Schema that currently governs society, and to replace it with another.

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[29] Pelluchon, *Éthique de la considération*.

Chapter 3, entitled "Regaining Autonomy," deals with the conditions of individual emancipation. It illuminates the link between individuation and socialization in a civilization that offers self- and Earth-cultivation and care for others, human and non-human, as an alternative to destructive, and self-destructive, policies. This chapter also explores interventions that can encourage individuals to become actors in the ecological and social justice transition, and to organize themselves so that public policy is based on their initiatives.

In Chapter 4, the issue of the conflict between the Enlightenment and the Counter-Enlightenment is given a political form. The Enlightenment is inseparable from the ideal of a State based on the freedom and equality of citizens. Over time, this ideal has formed a democratic society that entails respect for pluralism, thereby opposing the old tyrannies, totalitarianism, and forms of democracy now considered illiberal.[30] But the future of democracy demands more than respect for procedure. Individuals must be aware of the fact that they institute meaning, and are therefore able to change the imaginary values that explain adherence to current lifestyles, representations, and affects associated with the capitalist system and the dominant Schema of our society. It is equally necessary to reflect on the conditions for social innovation and to examine the role played by minorities in the emergence of a new imaginary. We also show in what way the new Enlightenment, itself inseparable from the project of an ecological and democratic society, goes hand in hand with a decentralization of democracy that requires making room for experimentation by citizens and opposing a vertical system of governance.

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[30] One might object that several Enlightenment philosophers such as Rousseau and Kant expressed reservations about democracy; they preferred, in effect, a republic, and Voltaire went so far as to propose enlightened despotism. Nevertheless, when Rousseau says in *The Social Contract*, for example, that democracy would only work for a society of gods, he meant democratic government, and not the sovereignty of the people and its legislative function, which he defends with force.

Chapter 5 begins with an essay on the phenomenology of technology which describes the latter as a condition of our existence and shows that it belongs to the common world. But considering technology as an *existentiale* does not exclude an analysis of the reasons that make it the main source of our alienation today and that which threatens our world with extinction. This is why it is important to bring to light the characteristics of technology in our society, where the principle of calculability is elevated as a standard. In this context, technology becomes autonomous and turns against the human, whereas in the 18th and 19th centuries it was subordinated to the project of individual and collective emancipation. Nevertheless, even if globalization and our technological power change the structure of responsibility, since our actions have consequences that go far beyond the present time and affect beings whose faces we do not see, it is not impossible to develop a culture that allows a reasoned use of technology and directs it towards civilizational purposes.

Insofar as the Enlightenment establishes a direct link between freedom, democracy, and the institution of peace, it is essential in the last chapter to consider Europe and its future. To appreciate the meaning and importance of the European edifice, it is not enough to point out the difficulties it has faced since the 1990's, particularly with globalization and the complete rejection by some Europeans of the idea of Europe itself, nor to invoke the refugee crisis that exposes its failure to fulfill the promise of hospitality linked to its principles and its history. By considering Europe from a philosophical point of view, that is, as a spiritual figure linked to a heritage whose content can inspire other peoples, it is possible to think of a universality that is not hegemonic and to show in what sense Europe may constitute the first step towards a politics and a cosmopolitics of consideration.