

TYRANTS OF THE SOUL: PREJUDICES IN FRENCH REVOLUTIONARY  
EDUCATION, 1789-1799

by

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*Whenever I transcend the limits of my own life span  
and begin to reflect on this past, judging it, and this  
future, forming projects of the will, thinking ceases  
to be a politically marginal activity.*

*-Hannah Arendt*

*History is the subject of a structure whose site is not  
homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the  
presence of the now.*

*-Walter Benjamin*



Dessein par Marchal. 1790

Copie par Piquart

LA PHILOSOPHIE ET LE PATRIOTISME

VAINQUEURS DES PREJUGES.

Dédié à  
Présenté à



la Nation,  
l'Assemblée Nationale.

La Philosophie demandait depuis longtems qu'une famille  
entière ne fût pas deshonoree par la punition legale infligee  
à un de ses membres, pour un crime dont elle n'est point  
coupable. Les sages Législateurs de la Nation ont, par un  
Décret immortel, accueilli le vœu de la philosophie.

La raison voit le bien et l'indique, la sensibilité se lève  
le bien est malin. Mais pour arbitrer un instant, il  
faut être plus de la raison et de la sensibilité. L'homme sent  
est trop faible. Une grande réunion de volentes est nécessaire  
et rien ne la révoque.

L'histoire a consacré dans les fastes de la révolution  
l'admirable conduite des membres du District  
de St. Honoré. M<sup>r</sup> Baron de St. Girou de St. Es-  
tienne de leur conduite vertueuse et patriotique,  
par une motion qui honore son esprit et son cœur.

La famille Ag... alluit succomba en vue de la honte du  
proche. Les sages législateurs en un instant l'ont  
de tous les membres de l'Assemblée. Les sages  
pouvoient. Toute les volentes n'en font plus qu'une,  
et la Loi fut mise en action.

A Paris, chez Piquart, Graveur, rue des Cordons, au Collège de France.

## **Abstract**

Through analyzing textbooks, educational pamphlets, and the correspondence of the Committee of Public Instruction, I show that prejudices became the object of critique in the era of the Enlightenment and were a continuing topic of political concern during the French Revolution. During the French Revolution, prejudices represented any form of counter-revolutionary tendencies which were presumed to be a result of heteronomous reason and thus posed an epistemological threat to the revolutionary and Enlightenment projects. Correspondents to the Committee adopted revolutionary language to discuss their concerns and so legitimized the threat of prejudices. The textbook authors believed that moral education, supplemented by appeals to the students' sensibilities, would be the most effective way to purge prejudices from society. By focusing on the interaction of prominent and everyday revolutionaries within educational discourse, I showed that ordinary people were involved in a process of defining and attacking prejudices rather than simply consenting to a definition imposed from above. Prejudices functioned as a derogatory term used to dismiss others' ideas on a philosophical premise so as to avoid the necessity of engaging with them. As both their adoption and rejection allowed for a refusal to communicate, the discourse of prejudices therefore occupied an ambivalent space in revolutionary politics.

*Better to illuminate than merely to shine, to deliver to others  
contemplated truths than to merely contemplate.*

*-Thomas Aquinas*

*What is learning but a glorius form of play?*

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my thesis committee members: Michael C. Behrent, Ralph E. Lentz II, and Pavel Osinsky. Dr. Behrent has guided my work and challenged me intellectually since my first day of college. He encouraged me to attend conferences, publish work, and to apply for the grant I needed to do archival work in France. Throughout it all, he has always found the time to meet with me or to read my incredibly lengthy emails as I chased down various strands of thought. I greatly appreciate his unwavering support. Mr. Lentz has both patiently and enthusiastically travelled with me down intellectual rabbit-holes for the past two summers. He has kindly read every draft of this work and encouraged me through every moment of self-doubt. I have relied upon and deeply appreciate his interest and support. Dr. Osinsky gave me the theoretical background in which I grounded my project. He continually pushed me to develop my analysis further, and his comments significantly deepened my understanding of my project. I am incredibly thankful for the time and thought that he put into making me a better scholar. I would also like to thank Dr. Brad Nash, Dr. Darci Gardner, and Dr. Timothy J. Smith. Dr. Nash helped me think through issues of a project based primarily on published materials and to examine how letter writers might censor themselves. Without Dr. Gardner's guidance and instruction, I doubt that I would have been able to read my sources as fluently or to know how to best analyze them. Dr. Gardner also helped me to improve my writing, and while this work grew longer than anticipated, I hope that I have put many of her lessons into practice. Tim always seemed to have books that I needed that the library was missing, and I appreciate his willingness to let me occasionally borrow them or simply absorb new methodologies and ideas by working in the book reviews office. He challenged me to be constantly true to the sources, and I kept that in mind with every sentence that I wrote, even if it meant setting aside some of my favorite theorists. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of the other professors and people who have supported and guided me throughout this process. My mom and little sister have supported and believed in me through this entire journey. My cat reminded me to occasionally take breaks by falling asleep on my books and notes, and she brought laughter into solemn writing and editing sessions. Last, but certainly not least, I would especially like to thank Grayson Bodenheimer for always being there. He has listened to me talk about Rousseau and the Revolution for several years now and always helped me through roadblocks. His constant support has been invaluable. He has encouraged me not to forget about my other interests, reminded me of the value of moderation, and persistently asked "so what?" I hope that I have finally answered that question.

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## Introduction: Has the King Already Been Judged?

In his speech on December 3, 1792 denouncing the attempt to try the King, Maximilien Robespierre said:

Such is the natural dominion of habit that we regard the most arbitrary conventions, sometimes indeed the most defective institutions, as absolute measures of truth or falsehood, justice or injustice. It does not even occur to us that most are inevitably still connected with the prejudices [*préjugés*<sup>1</sup>] on which despotism fed us.<sup>2</sup>

Robespierre argued that the fact that Louis Capet was a king preemptively made him a traitor, even before his attempt to flee to Austria and raise an army against the Revolution. In this quote, Robespierre linked the possibility of a formal trial to an acceptance of the prejudices of despotism. By trying the King, the Convention would be admitting the possibility of his innocence. To Robespierre, this assumption represented a significant misunderstanding of the inherent tyrannical nature of the monarchy. Therefore, he rejected the value systems as tainted by the prejudices of despotism. His dismissal of prejudices was shared by other speakers at the trial. One speaker begged the Convention “not to pass down to posterity the deplorable memory of our prejudices.”<sup>3</sup> Louis Antoine de Saint-Just passionately argued that “the ruin of prejudices had shaken tyranny” and allowed for the French people to win their liberty.<sup>4</sup> Jeanbon Saint-André urged his fellow deputies not to surrender now: “braving the menaces of tyranny, we have combatted prejudices with relentless zeal, and we see, with a joy as life and pure, the sun of Liberty.”<sup>5</sup> These repeated

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the text, *préjugé* will be translated as prejudice. Within the context of the French Revolution, it captures the negative connotations associated with thoughts from the *Ancien Régime*. The second chapter will examine the philosophical definitions of this word, which other translators have used.

<sup>2</sup> Maximilien Robespierre. “On the Trial of the King,” *Virtue and Terror*. John Howe, Trans. London: Verso, 2007: 58-9.

<sup>3</sup> J. Madival and E. Laurent, et. al., Eds. *Archives parlementaires de 1789 à 1860: recueil complet des débats législatifs & politiques des Chambres françaises*. Paris: Librairie administrative de P. Dupont, 1862-, Tome 54, 22. <https://frda.stanford.edu/fr>

<sup>4</sup> *Archives parlementaires*, Tome 55, 703.

<sup>5</sup> *Archives parlementaires*, Tome 54, 57.

statements implied that prejudices could prevent the deputies from properly meting out justice while the rejection of prejudices proved that they and, by extension, the French people deserved liberty. If the legislators were not, in the words of Jean-Jacques Bréard, “dominated by prejudices and fanaticism” and thus enthralled with the King’s majesty, they could actually attend to the matter of his treason.<sup>6</sup> In all of these claims, prejudices were an obstacle to revolutionary justice because they interfered with rational judgment of a new age.

By perpetuating lingering influences of the *Ancien Régime*, prejudices imperiled the integrity of autonomous and hence revolutionary judgment. Instead of believing that the method of a trial could undo the influence of prejudices, Robespierre argued for a new kind of revolutionary judgment: “People do not judge in the same way as courts of law; they do not hand down sentences, they throw thunderbolts.”<sup>7</sup> Other deputies, however, criticized the abandonment of the slow, methodical aspects of judgment. Judging before the examination of evidence, they argued, still qualified as prejudice, even if revolutionary prejudice. As Dan Edelstein showed, many of the deputies turned to natural law as the basis of their judgment, and even Robespierre cited it as proof that judgment had already been attained.<sup>8</sup> The king was ultimately executed for treason on January 21, 1793 after a trial.

Nevertheless, the decision did not reflect a consensus over standards of judgment for ordinary life, and these confused standards were in many respects the effects of the dissolution of a unified sovereignty. The revolutionaries recognized that simply executing the king or declaring a republic would not completely destroy the monarchy. In legal matters, the

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<sup>6</sup> *Archives parlementaires*, Tome 55, 378.

<sup>7</sup> Robespierre, “On the Trial of the King,” *Virtue and Terror*, 59. One is reminded here of the image of Zeus and the possibility of influence by the Greek and Roman gods and not merely their governmental systems, but such a connection has not been proved.

<sup>8</sup> Dan Edelstein. *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Cult of Nature, and the French Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009: 146-157.



Constitution could be supplemented or even replaced by natural law.<sup>9</sup> In more mundane matters, however, there still appeared to be a lack of consensus by which people could judge. Claude Lefort posits that society constantly seeks unity, yet the realization of this unity would lead to the destruction of democracy.<sup>10</sup> In his book *Disenchantment of the World*, Marcel Gauchet argues that societies attempt to abandon heteronomy yet never fully attain their goal of autonomy.<sup>11</sup> Heteronomy is action influenced or directed by outside forces – in this instance, the monarchy, but also potentially imaginary forces, such as the divine. By seeking self-governance, the society is, in a sense, reifying itself by making the people, rather than a representation of the people, sovereign.

However, modern societies must balance the autonomy of the whole with the autonomy of the individual. In this quest for autonomy, individuals seek to escape “the collective totality,” but first the state must “create individual independence while continuing to presuppose the primacy of the social order.”<sup>12</sup> In the Trial of the King, Robespierre and other deputies argued that prejudices limited their ability to be autonomous. If they did not recognize and reject these prejudices, the deputies would have been unable to completely envision a social order without the King. Therefore, both the King and, even more importantly, the prejudices associated with monarchical rule had to be abandoned. By destroying the monarchy, the revolutionaries opened the possibility of self-governance and henceforth had to balance the autonomy of both France and the French people. This dialectic between individual autonomy and state authority was central to politics of the French

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<sup>9</sup> Edelstein, *Terror of Natural Right*.

<sup>10</sup> “Democracy inaugurates the experience of an ungraspable, uncontrollable society in which the people will be said to be sovereign, of course, but whose identity will constantly be open to question, whose identity will remain latent.” Claude Lefort. *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy and Totalitarianism*. John B. Thompson, Ed. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986: 304.

<sup>11</sup> Marcel Gauchet. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Oscar Burge, Trans. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

<sup>12</sup> Gauchet, *Disenchantment of the World*, 58, 65.

Revolution, as the revolutionaries sought a standard which would prevent the reliance upon prejudices.

Because political authority relies upon being able to delineate not only acceptable but also available modes of discourse, this quest was linguistic and discursive.<sup>13</sup> In the case of the French Revolution, statesmen formed the conception of the new order by distinguishing it linguistically from the *Ancien Regime*, a concept that they contributed to creating.<sup>14</sup> One of the ways that they were able to achieve this was by using the term *préjugé* to symbolize all of the negative aspects of the *Ancien Régime*. This decision drew upon the Enlightenment tradition of using prejudice to signify mental and cultural tendencies which were not in accordance with the ideal of autonomous reason. The ubiquitous use of the term prejudice during both the Enlightenment and the Revolution linked the philosophical and political projects together, thus validating the various revolutionary ideals regardless of revolutionary faithfulness to specific Enlightenment ideas.

### **Prejudices as Anti-Judgments**

While meanings for the term prejudice varied with the stage of the Revolution,<sup>15</sup> one constant remained: whatever else they might have been, prejudices were *not* judgments.

Specifically, prejudices had not undergone the rigorous mental process of judgment.

Therefore, as we attempt to understand the philosophical definition of prejudices, it is helpful to examine them in correlation to their antithesis, judgment. For these purposes, the thought

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<sup>13</sup> Keith Michael Baker. *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth-Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990: 4-5. Alessandro Duranti. *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997: 61-4.

<sup>14</sup> Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> This is particularly true of religion: it is one of the main signified meanings of the term *préjugé* during the Reign of Terror, but near the beginning and end, it was not as central. Similarly, the monarchy did not become important to the discussion of prejudices until after the King attempted to flee.

of Immanuel Kant proves particularly instructive. According to Jonathan Israel, Kant was the only Enlightenment philosopher who was able to somewhat successfully attempt to “bridg[e] the gulf between Radical democratic Enlightenment and moderate antidemocratic Enlightenment.”<sup>16</sup> In his 1790 *Critique of Judgment*, Kant mused on the problem that prejudice posed for the Enlightenment and how judgment, as a function of reason, could combat that danger. He stated that: “A propensity to a passive reason, and hence to a heteronomy of reason is called *prejudice*; and the greatest prejudice of all is superstition, which consists in thinking of nature as not subject to rules which the understanding through its own essential law lays down as the basis of nature.”<sup>17</sup> Hence, prejudice was linked to heteronomy, a rejection of the ability to govern oneself rationally. The connection between individual and governmental autonomy meant that prejudices were not just an individual issue of autonomy, but a political one as well.

As they are acceptances of others’ thoughts, prejudices are a refusal to think independently. This unthinking causes the individual to deviate from what their own reason would decide, thus causing the individual to disagree with themselves. Kant continued: “Liberation from superstition is called *enlightenment* [...] although liberation from prejudices generally may also be called enlightenment.”<sup>18</sup> Prejudices are inherently counter to the project of the Enlightenment, which is the development of autonomous reason. Through the amalgamation of individuals’ autonomy, the society as a whole would be able to move towards a stage of higher autonomy, as in Gauchet’s work.

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<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Israel. *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010: 12.

<sup>17</sup> Immanuel Kant. *Critique of Judgment: Including the First Introduction*. Werner S. Pluhar, Trans. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987 [1790]: 161.

<sup>18</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 161.

In this critique, Kant spells out the relationship between judgment and reason; judgment is “a mediating link between understanding and reason.”<sup>19</sup> Through analyzing the relationship between the particular and the universal, judgment uses the faculties of reason in order to achieve understanding. In order to avoid being prejudiced, judgments must be individually formed, yet with no influence from personal interests.<sup>20</sup> With the notion of universal standards, judgments require “the assent of *everyone* to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, judgments must be communicable.<sup>22</sup> One of the main examples of this is the *sensus communis*, or common sense, which is “a sense shared (by all of us), i.e., a power to judge that in reflection takes into account (*a priori*), in our thought, of everyone else’s way of presenting (something), in order *as it were* to compare our judgment with human reason in general.”<sup>23</sup> In this comparison, individuals can identify differences between their judgment and the judgments of others in order to locate any potential biases. However, when we refer to the common sense, “we compare our judgment not so much with the actual as with the merely possible judgments of others.”<sup>24</sup> The faculty of judgment requires the ability to imagine how others might judge. The goal is not consensus *in lieu* of independent judgment, “which would be precisely the sociological effect of a servile imitation,”<sup>25</sup> but rather the understanding that, were everyone to judge properly, consensus would be inevitable.

Although judgment was an individual act of reasoning, reflective judgments, which had to identify a universal, relied on collective norms as a criterion of judgment. This

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<sup>19</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Michel Chaouli. “A Surfeit in Thinking: Kant’s Aesthetic Ideas.” *The Yearbook of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 57: 62.

<sup>21</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 85.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Ricoeur. *The Just*. David Pellauer, Trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000: 96.

<sup>23</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 160.

<sup>25</sup> Ricoeur. *The Just*, 98.

understanding of judgment came more from the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, specifically his concept of the general will which required obedience and yet derived from the individuals. This insistence on consensus is representative of what Pierre Rosanvallon terms “revolutionary monism.” In this philosophical understanding, the revolutionaries turned to totalizing concepts which needed to make judgment both autonomous and yet form a collective agreement.<sup>26</sup> In a paradoxical way, the collected judgment of individuals within a society had to be coherent in order for a society to be capable of political autonomy. If the individual judgments were too disparate, then the government would be incapable of having a coherent policy. This dynamic represented the balance needed within a representative government, in which people were citizens and yet subject to the laws passed by their representatives. Gauchet argues that in trying to form this relationship, however, “power and society ultimately became indistinguishable, forming the horizon of modern politics.”<sup>27</sup> In the *Encyclopedie* articles on natural rights and tolerance, Diderot and Romilly argued that judgment was formed in dialogue with the general will.<sup>28</sup> Partially foreshadowing Kant’s reliance on common sense, Diderot and Romilly argued that individuals had to refer to a force like Rousseau’s general will in order to know the social norms that would serve as the universal in each judgment. Therefore, to ignore one’s judgment was to disobey the general will, and “the essence of crime is the intention to act directly against our judgment.”<sup>29</sup> The general will thus demanded obedience both socially and individually. Even public opinion, which was supposed to be a purely rational and voluntary consensus-making process, was

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<sup>26</sup> C.f. François Furet. *Revolutionary France, 1770-1880*. Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992.

<sup>27</sup> Gauchet, *Disenchantment of the World*, 174.

<sup>28</sup> Denis Diderot. “Natural Rights.” *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Translated by Stephen J. Gendzier. Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2009. Originally published as “Droit naturel,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, 5:115–116 (Paris, 1755).

<sup>29</sup> Romilly. “Tolerance” *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d’Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Translated by Stephen J. Gendzier. Ann Arbor: Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2009.

frequently referred to as an authority and was thus reified so that it began to obscure the reality of multiplicity of opinions. However, the rationality of public opinion was questioned during the Revolution, as Charles Walton argues that “Robespierre recognized that public opinion was still fallible, a fact he attributed to persistent prejudices.”<sup>30</sup> If individuals were still influenced by prejudices, then any judgment that referred to the society could be perverted into counter-revolutionary conclusions. For these reasons, neither public opinion, nor the general will, nor even the previously discussed natural law could provide sufficient protection from the peril which prejudices posed to the Revolution.

Recent scholarship on the French Revolution has attempted to move beyond the authoritative forces of the general will and public opinion. Instead, they show how these issues were negotiated and altered by the revolutionaries to fit specific needs. While Edelstein’s work highlights a new aspect of revolutionary discourse, he uses this discovery to argue that during the French Revolution, “political debates did not pitch defenders of rival value systems against each other (a ‘pluralist’ scenario) but opposed supporters of mutually exclusive interpretations of revolution.”<sup>31</sup> In this understanding, Edelstein shows why the revolutionaries had such a difficult time accepting the legitimacy of political disagreement. In his books *Becoming a Revolutionary* and *The Coming of the Terror*,<sup>32</sup> Timothy Tackett argues against searching for ideological causes for revolutionary decisions; he turns instead towards understanding the collective psychology through extensive use of diaries and letters. Marisa Linton argues that while revolutionary politics were heavily influenced through the

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Walton. *Policing Public Opinion in the French Revolution: The Culture of Calumny and the Problem of Free Speech*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009: 111.

<sup>31</sup> Dan Edelstein. “Do We Want a Revolution without Revolution? Reflections on Political Authority,” *French Historical Studies* 35:2 (2012): 288.

<sup>32</sup> Timothy Tackett. *Becoming a Revolutionary: The Deputies of the French National Assembly and the Emergence of a Revolutionary Culture (1789-1790)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. *The Coming of the Terror*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.



discourse of virtue, they were ultimately decided by personal friendships, which held such weight that destroying them during the Terror was an indisputable sign of devotion of the Republic.<sup>33</sup> Other scholars have turned their attention to aspects of the Revolution that have been taken for granted. David Andress focuses on the revolutionary civil wars and argues that they should be given a central place in revolutionary history.<sup>34</sup> Rebecca Spang deconstructs the financial policies of the Revolution to show that the failure of the *assignants*, the new revolutionary paper money, was representative of a lack of trust in the new government.<sup>35</sup> All of these scholars articulate rebuttals to the notion that the Terror was inevitable but rather that it was a result of individuals' collective choices.

### **Prejudices in French Revolutionary Education**

Rather than seeking to explain what led to the Terror, my work analyzes how individuals interacted with the language of revolutionary politics in order to influence educational policy. Through analyzing textbooks, educational pamphlets, and the correspondence of the Committee of Public Instruction, I show that prejudices were viewed as an obstacle to progress during the Enlightenment and were a continuing topic of concern during the French Revolution. The first chapter traces the development of this discourse of prejudices throughout the Enlightenment. By focusing on the discourse of prejudices, I show that the later revolutionaries drew upon philosophical traditions to argue for a specifically political goal. The connotations of this word were so well understood that they frequently

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<sup>33</sup> Marisa Linton. *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> David Andress. *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Rebecca L. Spang. *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

required little explanation, but this linguistic flexibility allowed dissidents to use it in order to get governmental attention. Chapter two draws on Tackett and Andress by examining letters sent to the Committee of Public Instruction in order to understand how France outside of Paris reacted to the educational plans. Some of these authors referenced the continual fighting and the sense that their well-being was being ignored by the Parisian revolutionaries. From Spang, I attempted to show how the process of building an education system was hampered by suspicions between legislators and members of the public that the other was unable to escape the influences of prejudices. This lack of trust, which contributed to the financial crisis, crippled the revolutionary plans for public instruction. In chapters three and four, I illustrate how this discourse was central in official discussions of education and that morality and emotions were proposed as the crucial techniques to evolve past prejudices.

During the French Revolution, prejudices represented any form of counter-revolutionary tendencies which were presumed to be a result of heteronomous reason and thus were seen as posing an epistemological threat to the revolutionary and Enlightenment projects. Hans-Georg Gadamer claims that “the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which deprives tradition of its powers.”<sup>36</sup> In accordance with Gadamer, chapter one shows that the rejection of tradition as a legitimate source of knowledge problematized prejudices. Instead of representing collective wisdom of the ages, they represented an unwillingness or inability to independently think in a Cartesian manner. Enlightenment philosophers therefore had the obligation to disabuse their readers of their prejudices by showing how the current religious and political traditions were neither rational nor the only option.

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<sup>36</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975: 239-240.

Due to their uncritical perpetuation of tradition, prejudices posed a threat to the revolutionary project of creating a new society. The term *préjugé* came to stand for all lingering remnants of the *Ancien Régime*, and it symbolized the fear of counter-revolutionary sympathies. Prejudices ignored the existence of the Revolution and the Republic and influenced individuals to act as if the *Ancien Régime* was still in existence, in direct defiance of Robespierre's statement that "Louis was king and the Republic is founded; the great question which occupies you is decided by these words alone."<sup>37</sup> The revolutionaries feared that the irrationality inherent within prejudices would lead individuals to unthinkingly reject the new republic in favor of the corrupt, but traditional monarchy. As such, they framed prejudices as a matter of public safety, and they spent a considerable amount of time discussing them in the legislature and in Committees. The revolution's sweeping legislation stemmed from a fear that the monarchy could continue to influence individuals' thoughts and actions through prejudices. Although the revolutionary government developed methods to punish the enactment of prejudices, they turned to education as a way to preserve the purity of the fledgling Republic. In many ways, education was the keystone to the perfectibility of society. Through education, individuals would become citizens and must be prepared to act as such. As Antonio Gramsci phrases it, the adoption of democratic forms of government "must mean that every 'citizen' can 'govern' and that society places him, even if only abstractly, in a general condition to achieve this."<sup>38</sup> In a republic, education's goal is to prepare all individuals for their rights and duties as citizens and, in doing so, had to begin by eradicating prejudices.

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<sup>37</sup> Robespierre, "On the Trial of the King," *Virtue and Terror*, 57.

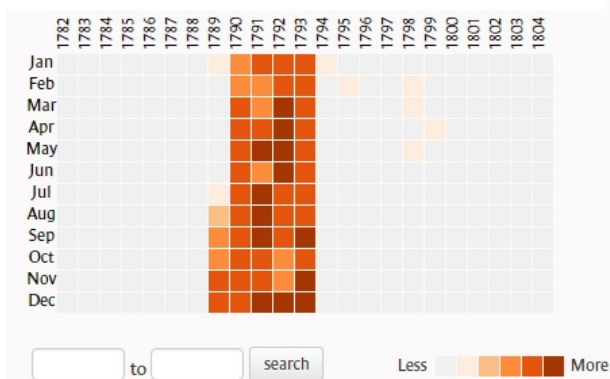
<sup>38</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, Eds and Trans. New York: International Publishers, 1971: 40. I am retaining the gendered language because the Revolution granted suffrage only to males.

Not all revolutionaries used the term *préjugé*, and as the revolutionaries were a

diverse intellectual group, it would be wrong to imply that they all shared an identical definition of prejudice.

Nevertheless, as chapters two through four show, prejudice was a dominant concern in revolutionary discourse throughout the Revolution that transcended partisan lines.<sup>39</sup>

Results from the French Revolution Parliamentary Archives search for *préjugé*.



Just as prejudice was anathema to the Enlightenment project, revolutionaries, by virtue of having rejected the *Ancien Regime*, also had to reject prejudices, even if only nominally. Although some of the textbook authors were prominent Girondins, Jacobins, such as Robespierre and Saint-Just, also referred to prejudices in these ways. Furthermore, as I show in chapter two, the discourse of prejudices was used by people without orthodox revolutionary beliefs. Like federalism or aristocracy, the word *préjugé* gained a connotation of automatically denouncing, of labelling that belief or action as inherently unrevolutionary. This connotation meant that while it was undoubtedly a legitimate threat to the revolutionary project, it could also be used in strategic ways, as a method of perfunctorily dismissing ideas. This dual meaning contributes to the diversity of people who were able to use the term in meaningful ways. In order to encapsulate the overarching uses of the term, I occasionally refer to “the revolutionaries” although this might occasionally imply more of a unified vision than actually existed.

<sup>39</sup> Chart from *Archives parlementaires*. 1313 results. For reference, *liberté* had 2980 results; *fédéralisme*, 330, and *aristocratie* 1162.

Calling every aspect of society into doubt was a tendency of some strands of revolutionary thought. Wherever these revolutionaries found prejudice, they sought to replace it with a more rational system. This attention to detail led to significant linguistic reform as well as the more known projects, such as the festivals or the adoption of the metric system.<sup>40</sup> While these rationalizing endeavors appear to have roots in the thought of the Enlightenment, they were not merely philosophical exercises. They were necessitated by the perception, justified by the nation-wide correspondence to the Committee, that prejudices posed a significant threat to public safety by contaminating the new republic. Both the textbook authors and correspondents perceived prejudices as predictors of counter-revolutionary revolt because they represented the *Ancien Régime*. Dispelling atavistic ideas was therefore just as important as fighting in the Vendée or against the Austrian invasion, although teachers were not paid as frequently or as well as soldiers. The authors of these letters saw the well-known delay of the educational plans and the financial distress of educational institutions as contributing to the continuation of prejudices, though they did not always rely on the term *préjugé* to signify their concerns.

In the midst of this relative chaos, individuals, often heavily involved in revolutionary politics, published textbooks to be used in primary schools and addressed the threat that prejudices posed to the public safety. The textbooks analyzed here offered potential solutions to the danger of prejudices because the authors and Committee members knew that the textbook would have to stand, at least temporarily, in the place of proper training, surveillance, or payment for teachers. They therefore advocated for moral education in which the virtue of the republic and revolution would be explained through historical examples or

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<sup>40</sup> Mona Ozouf. *Festivals and the French Revolution*. Alan Sheridan, Trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

by using art. Art was central to the proposed curriculum because of an established association between political and aesthetic judgments.<sup>41</sup> Building on this commensurability, the textbook authors hoped to encourage the development of civic judgment through exposure to beauty. The beautiful was supposed to inspire virtuous sentiments as an integral part of judgment. The textbook authors used art and passionate appeals to heighten the relevance of their civic lessons.

By prioritizing morality and sensibility, these authors sought to inculcate the process of judgment. Gadamer argues that Enlightenment philosophers agreed that “[i]t is only by having a basis, a methodological justification (and not the fact that it may actually be correct) that gives judgment its dignity.”<sup>42</sup> However, the revolutionaries were also concerned with the correctness of judgment’s outcome. Their vision and philosophical basis of politics demanded autonomy of thought, but their political circumstances, which were constantly under constant threat, led to a desire for a political judgment that could be simultaneously authoritative and autonomous. The adoption of rationality, through the rejection of prejudices, was seen as a possible solution to this dilemma; however, it contributed to a fear of dissent. The King, prejudices, and counter-revolutionaries threatened the purity of the revolutionary project; education, then, would become for the revolutionaries a purifying process and a defensive strategy.

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Wrigley. *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993: 102.

<sup>42</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 240.



## Chapter I: “Strangers to Reason”: Philosophical Attitudes towards Prejudice

*To think and to be fully alive are the same.*

*-Hannah Arendt*

In a 1770 essay, Paul Henri Dietrich d’Holbach claimed that “prejudices are the true causes of hardships.”<sup>43</sup> He lambasted the French people as “strangers to reason, dupes of ignorance” and the selfishness of the aristocracy, claiming that these “oppressors of the earth have profited from their [the people’s] religious prejudices.”<sup>44</sup> Like other philosophes, he decried superstition, ignorance, and error and called for a radical movement towards reason and knowledge. Through denouncing the economic, political, and religious systems, he used language strikingly similar to the revolutionary authors at the end of the century.<sup>45</sup> This resemblance is epitomized by the Revolution’s continuing view of prejudices as a significant social and political problem. Still, the influence of Enlightenment thought on the French revolutionaries remains uncertain.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, Roger Chartier maintains that “‘philosophical’ books, whatever their intent, produced a veritable ‘ideological erosion’ that may have made the revolutionary rupture inevitable.”<sup>47</sup> By examining the role of prejudices in maintaining the status quo, d’Holbach and his philosophical contemporaries contributed to this process of erosion.

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<sup>43</sup> Paul Henri Dietrich d’Holbach. *Essai sur les préjugés, ou De l’influence des opinions sur les mœurs et sur le bonheur des hommes, ouvrage contenant l’apologie de la philosophie*. Paris, 1770 : 17.

<sup>44</sup> d’Holbach, *Essai sur les préjugés*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> See chapters II-IV

<sup>46</sup> C.f. Roger Chartier. “Do Books Make Revolutions?” *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*. Lydia G. Cochrane, Trans. Durham: Duke University, 2004: 67-91. Robert Darnton. “What is the history of books?” *Daedalus*, 111(3), 1982: 65-83. Jonathan Israel. *Revolutionary Ideas: An Intellectual History of the French Revolution from The Rights of Man to Robespierre*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014. Theda Skocpol. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1979.

<sup>47</sup> Chartier. “Do Books Make Revolutions?” *Cultural Origins*, 81.

The Enlightenment project rejected authority and tradition as legitimate sources of knowledge. Through this rejection, they began a quest to make reason purely autonomous. Enlightenment philosophers dismissed heteronomous beliefs under the (now pejorative) term “prejudice.” For the philosophers, prejudices represented a stubborn, erroneous prioritization of tradition over reason and an embrace of suspect ways of knowing. In this mission, the philosophers defined truth in secular and increasingly non-transcendental ways so that it would be accessible through human endeavors. Religious prejudices were therefore doubly transgressive because they relied on outside knowledge to explain the unknowable. However, prejudices were not limited only to matters of religion but were rather everywhere throughout society. In their writings, Enlightenment philosophers aimed to break the hold of these relics of the past over the public.

### **Methodological Doubt**

Cartesian epistemology (theory of knowledge) was fundamental to Enlightenment thought. René Descartes was born in 1596 among the lower French nobility. He was educated by the Jesuits and developed an interest in math due to its freedom from doubt.<sup>48</sup> In his philosophical writings, he sought to create such certainty in other disciplines, arguing that “in our search for the direct road towards truth, we should busy ourselves with no object about which we cannot attain a certitude equal to that of the demonstrations of Arithmetic and Geometry.”<sup>49</sup> He criticized deduction for being “erroneously conducted,” while praising induction instead, defining it as “the undoubting conception of an unclouded and attentive

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<sup>48</sup> Robert Maynard Hutchins, Ed. *Great Books of the Western World: Descartes and Spinoza*, Vol. 31. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1952: ix.

<sup>49</sup> Rene Descartes. *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Trans. 3.

mind,” stating that it “springs from the light of reason alone.”<sup>50</sup> He intended to establish a method to acquiring knowledge which would “reduce involved and obscure propositions step by step to those that are simpler, and then starting with the intuitive apprehension of all those that are absolutely simple, attempt to ascend to the knowledge of all others by precisely similar steps.”<sup>51</sup> Once this method was used to prove a firm basis of knowledge, as in his famous quote “I think, therefore I am,” the rest of knowledge could be proven logically from there.

If used properly, Descartes’ method would result in being able to judge, “as nothing that we construed in this way really deceives us, if we judge it to be probable and never affirm it to be true.”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, under this conception, Truth is removed from the possibility of humankind and is replaced by facts, which can be more certain than Truth because they can be examined.<sup>53</sup> However, in order to achieve that level of certainty, individuals had to systematically discard all existing, heteronomous knowledge. Such knowledge became known in the Enlightenment as prejudices. Descartes did not use the term *préjugé*, but he was central to the formation of the understanding that all supposed knowledge should be discredited because its formation was not free of doubt.<sup>54</sup> Descartes was praised along with Francis Bacon for “having a lot of courage to combat prejudices.”<sup>55</sup> This continued embrace

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<sup>50</sup> Descartes, *Rules*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Descartes, *Rules*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Descartes, *Rules*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> This seems similar to Kant’s banishing certain topics as inaccessible to human endeavors.

<sup>54</sup> Descartes. *Mediations on First Philosophy*. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross, Trans. 75-7.

<sup>55</sup> Jean le Rond d’Alembert. « Discours préliminaire des éditeurs, » In *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2016 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (eds), <http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/>. Bacon’s writings on idols was particularly singled out, but this chapter is focusing on French philosophy, and so there is not room to properly discuss his thought. C.f. Francis Bacon. *Novum Organum: With Other Parts of the Great Instauration*. Peter Urbach and John Gibson, Trans. and Eds. Chicago: Open Court, 1994.

of radical, methodological doubt is central to the creation of modernity.<sup>56</sup> The centrality of doubt necessarily implied the rejection of prejudices, which, again, were any form of knowledge or belief that had not been critically examined. In the eighteenth century, various French philosophers attempted to define prejudices and to expand the conception of them from a philosophical problem to a political one.

### **Defining Prejudice**

In 1690, Antoine Furetière (1619-1688) finished assembling *Le dictionnaire universel*, which in some respects was an anticipation of the encyclopedic projects of the eighteenth century.<sup>57</sup> By providing systematic definitions and analyzes of virtually every aspect of society or topic of knowledge, these projects epitomized the Enlightenment. In his dictionary, Furetière defined prejudices as preoccupations with pre-conceived opinions; prejudices could be previously formed ideas, but they would always be considered opinions, rather than being categorized as previously formed judgments.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, Furetière did not dispute the notion that prejudices might have been valid for the individual at one point, although he still did not concede that this validity was obtained through the rigorous process of judgment. Rather, his emphasis was on the fact that prejudices and therefore prejudiced individuals could not belong in the present. Their existence represented historical, whether

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<sup>56</sup> “Doubt, a pervasive feature of modern critical reason, permeates into everyday life as well as philosophical consciousness, and forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world. Modernity institutionalizes the principle of radical doubt and insists that all knowledge take the form of hypotheses.” Anthony Giddens. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991: 3.

<sup>57</sup> C.f. Alain Rey. *Antoine Furetière: Un précurseur des Lumières*. Paris: Fayard, 2006. It was also groundbreaking for expanding the definition of *révolution* to include extraordinary social events. Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution*, 205.

<sup>58</sup> Antoine Furetière. “Préjugé,” *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts*.

societal or individual, understandings which were not necessarily relevant or accurate within the current situation. Furthermore, as individual opinions, they were not trustworthy.

In the eighteenth century, Denis Diderot (1713-1784) compiled his famous *Encyclopédie*. This work represented the attempt to gather all knowledge together so as to contribute to the enlightenment of as many people as possible. In the enlightening process, people would learn to abandon their prejudices in favor of accurate, reliable knowledge. More importantly, they would no longer need prejudices because they would have started to reason autonomously. This reasoning was provided for many other Enlightenment works. For instance, Montesquieu listed discouraging prejudices as one of the reasons that he felt compelled to write *The Spirit of Laws*, stating that: “It is not a matter of indifference that the people be enlightened. I would consider myself the happiest of mortals if I could make it so that men were able to cure themselves of their prejudice.”<sup>59</sup> However, the *Encyclopédie* is especially important to discuss because it played a significant role in changing popular understandings and beliefs. Many of the other, more pointedly political works of the Enlightenment were not as widely read as the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>60</sup> The success of the encyclopedic method also influenced later attempts to discredit prejudices.

In the “Preliminary Discourse of the Editors” of the *Encyclopédie*, Jean le Rond d’Alembert (1717-1783) stated that he and Diderot would know when their work was successful because it would be “when prejudices or Sophism will have been driven out [by truth].”<sup>61</sup> Like Descartes, d’Alembert was a mathematician, and he referred back to

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<sup>59</sup> Montesquieu. *The Spirit of Laws*. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone, Trans. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1898: xliii.

<sup>60</sup> C.f. Robert Darnton. *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800*. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1987.

<sup>61</sup> d’Alembert, “Discours préliminaire.”

mathematical theorems to explain how knowledge could become free of prejudices.<sup>62</sup>

d'Alembert praised Descartes' conception of radical doubt by saying that he "dared at least to show in good spirits rattling the yoke of scholasticism, of opinion, of authority, in a word, of prejudices."<sup>63</sup> By condensing Descartes' philosophy into a rejection of prejudices, d'Alembert illustrated how prejudice had come to stand for any form of heteronomous and hence questionable knowledge.

Louis de Jaucourt (1704-1779) wrote many of the entries for the *Encyclopédie*, including the ones on prejudices and judgment. Jaucourt defined prejudices as "false judgments of the soul."<sup>64</sup> Prejudices were therefore defined negatively: they are not genuine judgments. Like Furetière, Jaucourt saw prejudices at best as misguided opinions; unlike public opinion, however, individual opinions were not inherently rational. Through prejudices, opinions were able to masquerade as judgments, and this disguise contributed to their danger. Jaucourt also gave prejudices a moral aspect; not only did they represent an intellectual impediment, as in Furetière's definition, but they were also a moral fault. This duality stems in part from judgment's function as both an intellectual and a moral faculty, which will be examined more in-depth later.<sup>65</sup> In several other entries, prejudice is paired with ignorance, superstition, and fanaticism. Jaucourt recognized the discursive links to these other concepts. He called prejudice "the unfortunate fruit of ignorance" and went on to cite Bacon's categorization of them as a "contagion."<sup>66</sup> He distinguished between universal, particular, and public forms of prejudice. Universal prejudices are seen through the

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<sup>62</sup> "Considered without prejudice, they [math theorems] reduce themselves to a small enough number of primitive truths." d'Alembert, "Discours préliminaire."

<sup>63</sup> d'Alembert, "Discours préliminaire."

<sup>64</sup> Jaucourt. "Préjugé," In *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.*, eds. Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project (Spring 2016 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe (eds), <http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/>.

<sup>65</sup> C.f. Hannah Arendt. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ronald Beiner, Ed.

<sup>66</sup> Jaucourt. "Préjugé," In *Encyclopédie*.



popularity of superstition; they are fundamental errors that interrupt the proper process of prejudice. Particular prejudices, on the other hand, are mental habits, which the individual has simply neglected to examine. Public prejudices are ones of convention, “which are the apotheosis of error.”<sup>67</sup> According to Jaucourt, despotism and fanaticism require prejudices in order to gain the consent and support of the people. The disavowal of prejudices is necessary for the formation of liberty.

Voltaire began his entry in his *Philosophical Dictionary* on prejudices with the definitive statement that a “prejudice is an irrational opinion.”<sup>68</sup> Prejudices were thus immediately discredited within the context of Enlightenment emphasis on rationality. Furthermore, like Furetière, Voltaire labelled prejudices opinions, thus dismissing their process of formation as lacking rigor. Voltaire did so because of his belief that prejudices were not formed by those who possess them: “Thus, throughout the world, all sorts of opinions are instilled into children before they are able to use judgment.”<sup>69</sup> This statement raises interesting questions about the belief in the intellectual faculties of youth and reflects the perception that prejudices rely on ignorance.<sup>70</sup> Further in the entry, he suggested that the current Catholic educational system was encouraging prejudices by devoting an entire section to religious prejudices and stating “Out of prejudice you believed the fables with which your childhood was deluded.”<sup>71</sup> His *Philosophical Dictionary* was published in 1764, near the beginning of debates over educational reform.<sup>72</sup> By dismissing the ability of children

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<sup>67</sup> Jaucourt. “Préjugé,” In *Encyclopédie*.

<sup>68</sup> Voltaire. *Philosophical Dictionary*. Theodore Besterman, Ed. and Trans. London: Penguin Books, 1971: 343.

<sup>69</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 343.

<sup>70</sup> Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 190.

<sup>71</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 343.

<sup>72</sup> The Revolution both expedited this discussion and changed it in significant ways that will be discussed later.

to independently form conclusions, Voltaire indicted the current education system for propagating prejudices instead judgment.

However, Voltaire did not see this failing as the single cause of all societal problems. Unlike the other philosophers, Voltaire recognized the utility of prejudices, stating that some, such as moral standards, “are universal and necessary.”<sup>73</sup> These prejudices, Voltaire argued, “constitute virtue itself”; they could be identified because “they are those ratified by the judgment when one is able to reason.”<sup>74</sup> He specifically states that love and other sentiments were not prejudices, even if the individual cannot provide reasons for their existence and influence on their actions. This statement refers back to the eighteenth-century discussion about the importance of sentimentality in education. These exceptions were not explicitly accepted by other philosophers, but few labelled sentiments or basic morality as prejudices; this tension was carried out during the French Revolution’s attempt to adapt education to fight prejudices. Voltaire is unique in recognizing that emotions, morality, and prejudices all fell under the same philosophical category and yet the former two should not be rejected with the latter. Voltaire supported attacks on d’Holbach’s 1770 *Essay on Prejudices* for being too uncompromising.<sup>75</sup> Instead, Voltaire’s understanding of the inevitable continuation of prejudices anticipated Hannah Arendt’s analysis of them in the twentieth century. Rather than rejecting all prejudices on the basis that they were not judgments, Voltaire instead called for the rational examination of all prejudices. Through this process, the valid ones would become judgments, and then individuals would be able to independently tell the difference between vice and virtue.

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<sup>73</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 343.

<sup>74</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Dictionary*, 343.

<sup>75</sup> Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 84.

By allowing for confirmation by judgment, Voltaire emphasized the importance of the process of judgment formulated by Descartes and accepted during the Enlightenment. Furetière defined judgment as a “power of the soul” that has the capacity to “discern the good from the bad, the true from the false,”<sup>76</sup> hence emphasizing the moral element of judgment. Although judgment might be aimed at political or aesthetic questions, it always retained a moral element in eighteenth-century France. However, the Enlightenment definitions tended to emphasize the process of judgment over its connotations. In his *Encyclopédie* article on judgment, Jaucourt insisted that judgment was not merely knowledge that is acquired solely through the senses. Instead, “*judgment* is [...] an operation of the reasonable soul; it is an act of research.”<sup>77</sup> By focusing on the method, Jaucourt linked his definition back to Descartes’ meditations and to more accurate realms of knowledge, such as mathematics. The autonomous nature of judgment also distinguished it from inherently heteronomous prejudices. As a form of autonomous reason, judgment both exemplified and represented the goal of the Enlightenment; prejudices could only be an obstacle to that project. These definitions demonstrate how philosophers defined the two in opposition to one another but also in relation to Cartesian epistemology.

### **The Discourse of Prejudices**

Radical Enlightenment philosophers were not the only ones who denounced prejudices. Moderates also used the term to represent the heteronomy of reason and likewise

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<sup>76</sup> Antoine Furetière. “Jugement,” *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts*.

<sup>77</sup> Jaucourt. “Jugement (Metaphysique),” In *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, etc.* Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, Eds. University of Chicago: ARTFL Encyclopédie Project, (Spring 2016 Edition), Robert Morrissey and Glenn Roe, Eds. <http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/>. Emphasis original.

feared the potential damage, but they were conflicted over whether it or the radical attempt to uproot it proved the greater threat to society.<sup>78</sup> This tension is most evident in regard to religious prejudices, as was also the case during the French Revolution.

Throughout the Enlightenment, the rejection of tradition and thus of heteronomous reason was also “fortified by genuine resentment against social injustice.”<sup>79</sup> In fact, Baron d’Holbach claimed that prejudices were at the root of the people’s oppression, and many other philosophers agreed that prejudice was linked to privilege.<sup>80</sup> By the early 1770s, *préjugé* was being used to refer to the irrationality of the absolute monarchy.<sup>81</sup> However, as Peter McPhee states, “the *philosophes* were not revolutionaries. The extent of their critique was limited by what they saw as the ignorance and superstition of the masses.”<sup>82</sup> Prejudices prevented their critiques from being immediately effective.

Nevertheless, by linking abstract ideas to social ills, the philosophes were able to suggest that the entire society needed to be reformed and purged of prejudices. Discursive shifts of this kind were central to understanding Enlightenment thought, as “the *philosophes* effectively linked intellectual and social progress to linguistic advance.”<sup>83</sup> Although the philosophers were using an old term here, they were endowing it with new significations, such as superstition, ignorance, unjustified opinions, which were all notable obstacles to this progress. Therefore, prejudice came to automatically mean any idea or behavior which was

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<sup>78</sup> Aurelian Craiutu. *A Virtue for Courageous Minds: Moderation in French Political Thought, 1748-1830*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012: 145, 156, 192.

<sup>79</sup> Jonathan Israel. *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010: 35. C.f. Baron Paul-Henri Thiry d’Holbach. *Essai sur les préjugés ou De l’influence des opinions sur les mœurs et sur le bonheur des hommes, ouvrage contenant l’apologie de la philosophie*. 1770.

<sup>80</sup> Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 36, 52.

<sup>81</sup> Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 83.

<sup>82</sup> Peter McPhee. *Liberty or Death: The French Revolution*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016: 30.

<sup>83</sup> Sophia Rosenfeld. *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001: 5.

not aligned with the Enlightenment project. Through this change in meaning, it could be used intelligibly in a wide variety of contexts. This discourse over prejudices was continued in the educational reform movement of the 1760s and in the French Revolution, where it was adapted to represent a threat to revolutionary ideals.

Through the linkage of the Enlightenment and education, prejudice was primed to become not only a philosophical problem but also a political and social one. Through the discourse surrounding prejudices, the most obvious solution would have been public education. Once freed from prejudices, public education would be able to carry out the enlightenment of the common people. Philosophers claimed that individuals must take up the burden of self-education if they wanted to be able to reject the prejudices of the Catholic education system. While they agreed that people have a responsibility to purify themselves for the good of society, they began to suggest that it was unfair to expect them to do so while battling all social institutions. They therefore argued that already enlightened men had an obligation to make the road smoother for others by reforming the education system – and, later, by participating in the Revolution.<sup>84</sup> The revolutionaries were able to extend the discourse founded by the Enlightenment and to define prejudices in ways specific to the revolutionary context. These linguistic claims significantly shaped the political culture of the French Revolution, and the rest of this work will focus on the continuing discussion of prejudices within the context of revolutionary educational discourse.

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<sup>84</sup> Israel, *Revolution of the Mind*, 200-2.

## Chapter II: “Error, Ignorance, and Fanaticism”: Talking about Prejudices

*Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.*  
-H.G. Wells

In July 1793, a schoolteacher from Nancy wrote to the Committee of Public Instruction: “You are dear to all the subjects of the Republic, all of whom have the same confidence in your enlightenment, your justice, and your talents.”<sup>85</sup> His three pages of fulsome praise stood out among the heaps of complaints sent to the Committee in that month alone. People from across France directly criticized the Committee for not being proactive or quick enough and thereby condemning much of the population to a state of ignorance and error. These complaints were situated within a long history of educational reform and in relation to the series of plans that the revolutionary governments had promised. The correspondents argued that the lack of reform meant that prejudices would continue to reign.

When the Estates-General was summoned in 1789, villages and cities compiled *cahiers de doléances*, or notebook of grievances that they wanted their representative to address. Many of them mentioned education, but there was no nation-wide consensus on how to reform the education system. Many accepted Catholic control, but others requested government-run schools. The latter group worried about the lack of educational equality and standardization of textbooks, as well as the proliferation of superstition in the existing system.<sup>86</sup> Under the Legislative Assembly, the Committee of Public Instruction argued that education must “contribute to the perfectibility of the human spirit,” which required “the

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<sup>85</sup> AN F/17/1004/C: Letters received by the Committee of Public Instruction.

<sup>86</sup> Beatrice Fry Hyslop, Ed. *French Nationalism in 1789 According to the General Cahiers*. New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1968: 108-110.



maintenance of the principles of the French Constitution” over the remnants of superstition.<sup>87</sup> Thus, from the beginning of the Revolution, the issues of prejudices were connected to the need for educational reform.

Furthermore, an analysis of the correspondence to the Committee of Public Instruction under the National Convention from May-July 1793 shows that this concern was shared by many members of the society. In the letters examined, the writers did not use the term *préjugé* with as high a frequency as other, typically printed sources. Nevertheless, they regularly discussed the issues which *préjugé* signified, and this discourse became both a sign and site of radicalization. By examining how individuals outside of Paris and the Committee talked about prejudices, this chapter shows that prejudice was not merely a concern of philosophes, but a problem recognized by many individuals during the height of the Terror. While there was not a uniform definition of prejudices, most of the correspondents recognized the utility of the concept for representing counter-revolutionary ideas. This consensus over its broad meaning allowed for it to be used by individuals who disagreed with the Jacobin ideology.

Although the Committee set up a sub-committee to deal with correspondence,<sup>88</sup> by July 1793, the correspondents were citing previous letters and asking for confirmation that the letter had been received, even if the Committee was too busy to address the contents.<sup>89</sup> The writers rarely failed to mention the issue of religious involvement in education. They also framed the continual lack of funding as contributing to the sustained levels of prejudice

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<sup>87</sup> France. Assemblée nationale législative (1791-1792). *Comité d'instruction publique. Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de l'Assemblée législative* / publiés et annotés par M. J. Guillaume. 1889 : 3-4.

<sup>88</sup> At the second meeting of the Committee of Public Instruction under the Legislative Assembly (November 1, 1791), Romme, Roux, Audrein, and Guadin were assigned to examine the “cartons” of mail sent to the committee. Guillaume, *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de l'Assemblée législative*, 2.

<sup>89</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

within the rural population. The examined time period included the purge of Girondins, and so denunciations of individuals' lack of zeal for the Revolution carried an additional political weight. Overall, the authors gave the Committee the impression that without a regulated and surveilled education system, the public would instantly revert to relying on prejudices and thus would develop hotbeds of counter-revolutionary resistance. In this way, during the French Revolution, education was politicized and framed as the source of stability and security for the republic.<sup>90</sup>

### **The Pre-Revolutionary Education System**

Before the French Revolution, education was run by the Catholic Church, especially by the Jesuits until their expulsion in 1764. It was only nominally regulated by the monarchy, and then only to reinforce the Catholic mission of rooting out heresy.<sup>91</sup> The Reformation and Counter-Reformation increased attention on literacy, the rates of which doubled during the eighteenth century despite persistence of significant regional inequality in education.<sup>92</sup> The rates of literacy among women rose even more dramatically than those of men, which may be linked to the illegal yet de facto co-education of the genders in most rural schools.<sup>93</sup> Most standardization of curriculum was attained through the efforts of the Jesuits, who focused exclusively on Greek and Latin, even banning the use of French within schools until the latter

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<sup>90</sup> François Furet and Jacques Ozouf. *Reading and Writing: Literacy in France from Calvin to Jules Ferry*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982: 82-3.

<sup>91</sup> Robert J. Vignery. *The French Revolution and the Schools: Education Policies of the Mountain, 1792-1794*. Madison: The State History Society of Wisconsin, 1965: 7-10. Emile Durkheim. *The Evolution of Educational Thought: Lectures on the Formation and Development of Secondary Education in France*. Peter Collins, Trans. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977 [1938]: 234. Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 59-62.

<sup>92</sup> Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 58-9.

<sup>93</sup> Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 34-7, 73-4. Karen E. Carter. “‘Les garçons et les filles sont pêle-mêle dans l'école’: Gender and Primary Education in Early Modern France,” *French Historical Studies*, 31(3), 2008: 419.

half of the eighteenth century.<sup>94</sup> Despite have originally been attacked for allegedly promoting religious indoctrination and thus thwarting peace efforts at the end of the wars of religion, the Jesuits were later criticized for not linking their moral education to decisions within actual society.<sup>95</sup> The reformists argued that education needed to directly prepare students for the kind of judgments that they would have to make as members of society.

In the 1760s, a new educational reform movement began discussing many of the issues which would later plague the revolutionaries' plans for public instruction.<sup>96</sup> The reformers advocated relaxation of standards of self-discipline and called for a psychological understanding of childhood inspired by the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau in order to make education more effective.<sup>97</sup> This critique was based on the reformers' perception that the Jesuits were prejudiced against children.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, their other significant critiques, notably about the isolation of students from new French literature and ideas, would soon be encompassed under the term *préjugé*.<sup>99</sup> However, there was dissent over whether the Jesuit schools encouraged obedience to tradition or produced lovers of liberty. In a 1787 pamphlet discussing the best ways to induce patriotism under a monarchy, art critic and liberal noble Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour explicitly blamed the educational system for producing

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<sup>94</sup> Charles R. Bailey, *French Secondary Education, 1763-1790: The Secularization of Ex-Jesuit Collèges*. Independence Square: The American Philosophical Society, 1978 : 4. Robert M. Stamp. "Educational Thought and Educational Practice during the Years of the French Revolution." *History of Education Quarterly*. 6(3), 1966: 36. Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 69.

<sup>95</sup> Durkheim, *Evolution of Educational Thought*, 234. Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 80-1. Vignery, 10. Also C.f. Natasha Gill. *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment: From Nature to Second Nature*. Farnham: Routledge, 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Gill, *Educational Philosophy*, 161.

<sup>97</sup> Durkheim, *Evolution of Educational Thought*, 280. Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 73-7, 82-3. Also C.f. Philippe Ariès. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Robert Baldick, Trans. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962. Barnard views Rousseau as "the protagonist and prophet of the whole movement which bases education on child study and child psychology." H.C. Barnard. *Education and the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969: 20.

<sup>98</sup> Gill, *Educational Philosophy*, 163.

<sup>99</sup> Durkheim, *Evolution of Educational Thought*, 234. Bailey, 4.

republicans by focusing too much on the sources of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>100</sup> His protestations are supported by Lynn Hunt's argument that lawyers were able to be at the forefront of revolutionary politics because their traditional education had prepared them to lead: "The order of the speeches, the use of figures and paradigms, and the reliance on classical examples can be traced back to schoolboy rhetorical exercises."<sup>101</sup> Although both Mathon de la Cour and Hunt showed that the prerevolutionary educational system prepared France for republican politics, the revolutionaries nevertheless sought to radically transform French education.

### **Altering Discourse**

Under the National Convention, the legislators attempted to create a didactic politics through language. Because it was accessible to all members of the population, focusing on language sped up the educational process.<sup>102</sup> The old symbols and values were rejected in favor of purity. Therefore, the Committee of Public Instruction divided its attention between establishing educational institutions for the youth and creating "new symbols, images, and public festivals for all citizens"; these combined efforts "constituted a revolutionary 'pedagogy' that would gradually wean the French people from its ignorance and prejudices, and inculcate new civic values."<sup>103</sup> They created a plethora of neologisms, such as the word *instituteur*, which meant "the one who would found the new values."<sup>104</sup> These new words symbolized and embodied the radical newness and ahistoricism of the Revolution. By

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<sup>100</sup> Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour. *Discours sur les meilleurs moyens de faire naître et d'encourager le patriotisme dans une monarchie, qui a remporté le prix dans l'Académie de Châlons-sur-Marne*, 1787.

<sup>101</sup> Lynn Hunt. *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984: 33.

<sup>102</sup> Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 69.

<sup>103</sup> Isser Woloch. *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994: 177.

<sup>104</sup> Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 68.

creating new terms, the Committee members hoped to separate language from the *Ancien Régime* and therefore limit the influence of prejudices.

The Committee of Public Instruction was afraid that lack of formal education led to an inability to understand “the formal language of France’s laws and constitutions.”<sup>105</sup> Hunt argues that “the political practice of republicans was fundamentally didactic; republicans had to teach the people how to read the new symbolic text of revolution.”<sup>106</sup> In addition to the festivals and other projects of the Committee of Public Instruction, the Convention advocated membership in popular societies, as they “existed to educate every man to [their] political responsibilities by discussing the degrees of the national assembly and reading newspapers and periodicals.”<sup>107</sup> Public discourse was presumed to be a workable substitute for the flawed education system, and some of the educational pamphlets played up this notion by encouraging popular societies to function as instructive forces.

Under the Bouquier Law (1793) and the de facto state of deregulation during the earlier parts of the Revolution, teachers had no required educational qualifications, but “textbooks had to be approved by the Committee of Public Instruction.”<sup>108</sup> Although school forced the memorization of the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen and the Constitution, the textbooks often failed to include commentaries in plain language. Due to the lack of formal training, teachers may not have been able to explain the language to their students.<sup>109</sup> The Jacobin clubs were dissatisfied with this law and called for more regulation and higher teacher salaries. Nevertheless, the Jacobins assisted with establishing schools,

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<sup>105</sup> Sophia Rosenfeld. *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001: 151.

<sup>106</sup> Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 68.

<sup>107</sup> Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class*, 72.

<sup>108</sup> Michael L. Kennedy. *The Jacobin Clubs in the French Revolution, 1793-1795*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2000: 146.

<sup>109</sup> Rosenfeld, *Revolution in Language*, 151.

both through hiring teachers and finding schoolhouses. They also put pressure on local administration to enact regulations over discipline.<sup>110</sup> According to Michael Kennedy, the Jacobin Club of Pau “envisioned the schools as a vehicle to destroy religious prejudices.”<sup>111</sup> To supplement this project, the Jacobin clubs consistently sought to attract youth. In some cities, they formed Jacobin youth clubs, which required members to recite the Declaration from memory. However, the youth clubs usually merged back into the regular clubs so that the youth got proper training in political participation.<sup>112</sup> Through exposure to political discourse, the youth would get training in republican values and learn the dangers that prejudices posed to this political autonomy.

Adrian O’Connor argues that “the pedagogical ambitions of the Revolution were grounded in ideas about the power of information and the nature of communication, about the promise and peril of a society in which more people had access to more information (and to a wider array of opinions) than ever before.”<sup>113</sup> Public instruction needed to prepare the public to make sense of this information and to be able to judge it correctly and independently.<sup>114</sup> Lessons in reading and writing therefore were shaped to provide the skills to access and understand information about the new government and society. Although these skills were technical, they were imbued with moral and political lessons both before and during the Revolution.<sup>115</sup> For O’Connor, this enmeshed relationship is illustrative of how the

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<sup>110</sup> Kennedy, *Jacobin Clubs*, 146-7.

<sup>111</sup> Kennedy, *Jacobin Clubs*, 148.

<sup>112</sup> Patrice Higonnet. *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins during the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998: 96-7.

<sup>113</sup> Adrian O’Connor. “‘The Science of Liberty is Not So Simple’: Teaching Democratic Thinking in Revolutionary France.” *Partnerships: A Journal of Service-Learning & Civic Engagement*, 6(1), 2015: 139.

<sup>114</sup> O’Connor, “The Science of Liberty is Not so Simple,” 140.

<sup>115</sup> Adrian O’Connor. “‘Source de lumières & de vertus’: Rethinking *Education, Instruction*, and the Political Pedagogy of the French Revolution.” *Historical Reflections*, 40(3), 2014: 22.

revolutionary government combined *éducation* and *instruction* into public instruction.<sup>116</sup>

### **Tainted by Prejudices**

As the legislators worked to address the diverse needs of the nation, they sought to create a national, secular education system which would continually enlighten the youth so as to prevent internal dangers to the newly established order. Although education had long been a religious concern, they made it a secular and public endeavor because they did not want it to continue to be tainted by religious prejudices. Paired with the perceived attacks on the Catholic Church through the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the de-Christianization efforts, this decision rendered education a site of religious conflict. As the Committee members had to struggle with the possibility of allowing religious control of education to continue, they had to directly confront the question of whether religion was simply a complex of prejudices or if it had redeeming qualities. During the Terror, governmental policies leaned towards the former. One correspondent wrote that “the inhabitants of the countryside who are less instructed and less enlightened think that one wants to destroy their religion,” and he suggested that education should bind the people together, as the divide between the Church and State benefited only the Revolution’s enemies.<sup>117</sup>

In his monograph *Improvement of Humanity*, R.R. Palmer argues that the proposed educational plans amounted to little more than propaganda.<sup>118</sup> Any insistence of governmental control of education, however, does not necessarily equate to a propaganda machine, especially given the number of debates of what the education system should be like or teach. The public had opinions about the various plans for public instruction. For example,

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<sup>116</sup> O’Connor, “‘Source de lumières & de vertus,’ ” 36-38.

<sup>117</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>118</sup> Palmer, *Improvement*, 81-84.

public teachers opposed the Talleyrand plan (1790) because it called for the co-education of boys and girls.<sup>119</sup> Because of the lack of agreement, some politicians claimed that the public instruction plans had ambitious noble principles that clashed with public ignorance.<sup>120</sup> This perception is partially justified by the examined correspondence, which was typically written by educated members of society (judges, doctors, teachers, or government officials) who bemoaned the fickleness of the public to revolutionary ideals.<sup>121</sup>

The present university system had too many vices to allow it to continue to operate while waiting for reform. Before the Revolution, universities were incorporated bodies, ideally consisting of three faculties: theology, law, and medicine.<sup>122</sup> The University of Paris was the premier institution of higher learning. They taught exclusively in Latin and were generally considered to be “hampered by tradition, inimical to progress and research, and out of touch with current developments.”<sup>123</sup> Because of their ties to theology, the universities “were all swept away” during the Revolution,<sup>124</sup> but they were not the only educational institutions affected. Because elementary education was not standardized, it is more difficult to measure the impact of the Revolution. However, while the Catholic teaching orders were not prohibited from teaching, they were viewed suspiciously. This suspicion meant that most trained teachers were now hindered from carrying out their duties.<sup>125</sup> The rest of this chapter analyzes the Committee of Public Instruction’s correspondence located in the National Archives of France in order to show how the French population responded to the crises of education.

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<sup>119</sup> Phillipe Riviale. *L’enseignement public dans la Révolution française: commentaire philosophique*. Paris : L’Harmattan, 2015: 18.

<sup>120</sup> Riviale, 20-1.

<sup>121</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>122</sup> Palmer, *Improvement*, 30.

<sup>123</sup> Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*, 12.

<sup>124</sup> Palmer, *Improvement*, 32.

<sup>125</sup> Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*, 97-8.



## Prejudiced against Teachers

In May 1793, a minor government official in the department of Somme wrote to the Committee of Public Instruction that the Roman religion was fomenting insurrection. After introducing himself as “perhaps the only true republican in this administrative district,” he stated: “It is true that opinion is absolutely free, but it is not possible for true Catholics to separate their Savior either from the Church or from schools.”<sup>126</sup> He further argued that nothing could be more dangerous than “to let them teach their doctrines which run against the Constitution.”<sup>127</sup> He urged the Committee to begin training teachers and, in the meantime, to send a judge to teach the children because they could be trusted to teach against “the principles of the old aristocracy.”<sup>128</sup> He concluded his letter by stating that there can be no worse vice than counter-revolutionary leanings and that he trusted the Committee to act with all urgency.

His tone and word choice were common among correspondents, even ones who held opposing views of religion. A vicar from the department of Haute-Loire wrote in July 1793 to complain that the Church had done an excellent job in education and that it was unfair to blame them for “some prejudices” when they had “persuaded many to search for reason and public interest.”<sup>129</sup> The vicar’s letter and explicit use of the term *préjugé* shows that the discourse of prejudice could be wielded by Catholics and potentially other political dissidents. The revolutionary government did not have exclusive control over how this discourse was used. In both of these letters, however, the authors suggested that surveillance would prove them correct. The vicar argued that the universities, which functioned primarily

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<sup>126</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

as seminaries, could reopen and organize free elementary education under the guidelines and surveillance of the revolutionary republic. Adopting these measures, he argued, would decrease the likelihood of revolt because the people could learn to abandon their prejudices under the guidance of the religion which they trusted.

The letters were not solely concerned with religion. They spoke of the surrounding “fire of discord and counter-revolution” and blamed the Committee and the Convention for not acting quickly enough.<sup>130</sup> Virtually every letter complained of the continual delay of educational legislation. In November 1791, a doctor from Vendée criticized the Committee for continuing to allow the Academy of Painting to control the governmental commissions of artwork. He explicitly stated that this continuing practice perpetuated public prejudices.<sup>131</sup> In June 1793, the Committee was still receiving letters disparaging the Academy. One author claimed that it appeared that the Committee was interested in creating “neither a college nor an establishment of public instruction” but apparently preferred to rely on the Academy, even though its hierarchy and art shut out the “real revolutionary possibilities of public instruction.”<sup>132</sup> Although not all of the letters were this harsh, there seemed to be a national perception of the Committee having a prejudice against teachers. In this context, however, the authors used the term *préjudice*, not *préjugé*, thus making a legal accusation.

## Questions of Finance

Although the education system crumbled during the French Revolution, it was not the

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<sup>130</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>131</sup> Guillaume, *Comité d'instruction publique. Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de l'Assemblée législative*, 8-9.

<sup>132</sup> AN F/17/1004/C. The Committee did attempt to work with the new Commune of Arts during this time. C.f. Guillaume, *Comité d'instruction publique. Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de la Convention Nationale*, Tome 2.

result of an official dismantling but rather due to the lack of funding. This issue was particularly true of the universities, which were deserted because most college-aged men joined the military.<sup>133</sup> However, it also significantly affected the colleges, which “complained repeatedly to the Committee on Public Instruction of failures to receive their due income.”<sup>134</sup> Spang argues that “it was in the course of daily economic life that individuals formed some of their strongest political opinions.”<sup>135</sup> However, the economy was very unstable during the Revolution, which Spang argues resulted less so from the new paper money than “from a breakdown in what people could expect of one another.”<sup>136</sup> As economic policy changed so quickly, it was difficult to put faith in the *assignants* (paper money of the Revolution), but this lack of trust was rooted in feelings towards the Convention. When the teachers and administrators wrote to complain about their lack of pay, they were taking part in this breakdown of trust. However, in their correspondence to the Committee, these individuals had to be careful not to come across as counter-revolutionaries. The letters examined here skirted around the issue of the legitimacy of the *assignants* and pleaded instead for the Committee to simply pay them so that they could carry out their duties.

Although many professors and teachers focused solely on the absence of their pensions in their letters to the Committee, others took care to frame it as an issue of public safety rather than appearing self-interested. One author explained that he came from a poor village, which was trying desperately to maintain their two schools (one for each gender). They had even sent a citizen to Paris to buy new republican textbooks because they wanted to show their support of the Revolution. However, the teachers had not been paid, and they

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<sup>133</sup> Palmer, *Improvement*, 104-106.

<sup>134</sup> Palmer, *Improvement*, 117.

<sup>135</sup> Spang, *Stuff and Money*, 172.

<sup>136</sup> Spang, *Stuff and Money*, 174.

were therefore “daring to discontinue the use of these textbooks, which will halt the progress of humanity.”<sup>137</sup> The author begged the Committee to ensure the loyalty of teachers, either through promptly beginning to pay pensions or through a thorough surveillance system. Complaints of this nature led the Committee to insist upon teacher training.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, existing schoolteachers were required to possess a *certificat de civisme*, or civic certificate, and to take an additional oath of loyalty.<sup>139</sup> According to David Andress, *certificats de civisme* “were mandatory for all public officials, attesting to their patriotism” and were necessary for any form of travel.<sup>140</sup> Due to the inability of the government to fund education, there was a significant debate over whether the public education system should be exclusively public. Some argued that a free market would be able to produce schools at a lower cost to society,<sup>141</sup> or, at the very least, induce parents to contribute financially to the education system rather than relying solely on taxes to fund it.<sup>142</sup> However, others questioned whether this loss of control would give up ground in the battle against prejudices, as the ability or willingness of the family to advocate against prejudices was uncertain.

The issue of pay continued to haunt the legislators, especially given that the Committee was informed that the lack of consistent pay was contributing to a lack of trust in the revolutionary government and thus an unwillingness to abandon prejudices. If the educational system was being starved into nonexistence, then there would be little cultural resources in parts of France to hold back the tides of prejudices. A teacher from Cambrai wrote that “[b]efore and since the French Revolution, I have never ceased to combat error,

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<sup>137</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>138</sup> Riviale.

<sup>139</sup> Furet and Ozouf, *Reading and Writing*, 84.

<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, being denied a certificate automatically labelled one as a counter-revolutionary and the individual would be arrested and potentially guillotined. Andress, *The Terror*, 163; 211-2.

<sup>141</sup> Sieyes’s plan of national education would have allowed private schools. Vignery, 60-1. It was more common for plans to call for the co-existence of private and public schools than to advocate for only private schools.

<sup>142</sup> Vignery, 19.

ignorance, and fanaticism.”<sup>143</sup> He had been proud of his contribution, yet he had never been rewarded for it. He was frustrated with the prioritization of bureaucrats and politicians over teachers; the former apparently never missed a paycheck, while the latter grew poorer with every lesson they taught. Others complained that the government had confiscated church property, thus removing the ability of the Church to pay for education, yet gave the ministers salaries before the teachers. An author from Rouen complained that the lack of money meant that while they had managed to maintain fourteen elementary schools, they were only open to men, and none of the girls in the city were able to obtain an education. This gender disparity was reflected in the official public instruction plans, which, except for Condorcet’s, gave scant attention to the education of girls.<sup>144</sup>

Female education also suffered from lax hiring requirements. In hiring, significantly more emphasis was placed upon the teacher’s patriotism and morals, which were checked not only by the holding of *certificat de civisme*, but also through surveillance.<sup>145</sup> During the Revolution, becoming a teacher was an acceptable way for women to express their patriotism and was even comparable to men volunteering for the army.<sup>146</sup> The gender distinctions between acceptable expressions of patriotism were enforced, and, as the Revolution progressed, male teachers had to individually justify their decision to teach rather than to fight.<sup>147</sup> Unfortunately, women were not legally allowed to teach men, and so their enthusiasm could not substitute for the dearth of male teachers. Nevertheless, most education of the time was forced – due to lack of funding or space – to be co-ed, and so these female

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<sup>143</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>144</sup> Guillaume Ansart. “Condorcet, Social Mathematics, and Women’s Rights.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42(3): 347-362. Keith Michael Baker. *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

<sup>145</sup> Caroline Fayolle. “Des institutrices républicaines (1793-1799)” *Annales historiques de la Revolution française*, 368 : 89-90.

<sup>146</sup> Fayolle, “Des institutrices républicaines,” 94.

<sup>147</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

teachers may have occasionally taught co-ed classes.<sup>148</sup> In localities, their lack of training was supposed to be mitigated through the use of government textbooks,<sup>149</sup> which were designed to prevent the perpetuation of prejudices.<sup>150</sup> During the Terror, women had been banned from open political participation, but they were still given the duty of early education of future citizens in their potential roles as mothers. An elector of the Estates-General and president of the local Jacobin club in the department of Haut-Rhin argued that the neglect of women's education, therefore, was a forfeit of the first line of defense against prejudices. If given access to republican instruction, "mothers would steer their children to the holy temple of the fatherland" both through their domestic life and by ensuring that their children were prepared for formal education.<sup>151</sup> However, despite acknowledging the importance of republican mothers in preventing the perpetuation of prejudices, the Convention did not invest in their education.

In order to support their claims about being vital for the defense of the nation, school administrators professed their willingness to support the Republic through educating former soldiers or children of soldiers, but they insisted that the Convention needed to pay their tuition.<sup>152</sup> However, while specialized institutions, like the School of Mars or schools to teach signing to the deaf, managed to obtain funding, most of the existing schools did not, even when they were ordered to find room for former soldiers as a reward for "the destruction of enemies of the republic."<sup>153</sup> In May 1793, administrators from the College of Equality, which had previously been known as Louis-le-Grand, wrote the Committee to demand payment for

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<sup>148</sup> Fayolle, "Des institutrices républicaines," 100.

<sup>149</sup> Fayolle, "Des institutrices républicaines," 102.

<sup>150</sup> See chapters three and four.

<sup>151</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

the tuition of “children of citizens who have taken up arms for the defense of the motherland.”<sup>154</sup> In their petition, they suggested that schools who were not struggling must have had some kind of aristocratic backing, since all governmental support had been shut off. This suspicion was echoed in other letters, which claimed that the remnants of the aristocracy were able to corrupt entire cities because the people were not being given enough material support to resist their aid. Aristocracy was linked to prejudices, as they, like the clergy, had a vested interest in the continuation of the *Ancien Régime*. In these letters, administrators listed the various threats to the Revolution – open revolt, aristocratic influence, prejudices – and then argued that funding schools would be the quickest way to at least stem the latter two. This approach gave prejudices a material quality and cost.

### **Writing Jacobin**

In their complaints, the letter writers intended to link the financial distress of the education system – and the society as a whole – to the fear of prejudices and counter-revolution. By showing that the delay benefited the enemies of the Revolution, they sought to put pressure on the Committee to commit to a plan. Although they did not always use the terminology of the revolutionary elites, many of them were able to enter the discourse of revolutionary education. The issues which *préjugé* symbolized were much more widespread than the use of the term itself.<sup>155</sup> The authors of these letters thus legitimated the perception of heteronomy of reason as a significant political problem.<sup>156</sup> In doing so, they showed how

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Benjamin L. Whorf. *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf*. John B. Carroll, Ed. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1956: 137.

<sup>156</sup> “All transmission of institutional meanings obviously implies control and legitimation procedures.” Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966: 66.

educational discourse became a site for linguistic and political radicalization. Learning to use the governmental language, even when complaining about overdue paychecks, linked individuals around France to the revolutionary plans in Paris and illustrated a widespread commitment to the new political regime. Furthermore, they were able to connect the threat of prejudices with governmental decisions, such as the lack of consistent pay for teachers. Their complaints of prejudiced decisions gave these correspondents even more revolutionary standing than the Committee itself. As Stephen Kotkin has shown by analyzing Soviet individuals' discussion of governmental policies, using the language of the Revolution forced the government to at least nominally respond to complaints, lest it look as though it were abandoning its principles.<sup>157</sup>

Although the inability of the Convention to quell revolts meant that there was room for disagreements, these authors nevertheless incorporated the tone and much of the vocabulary of the Revolution. The use of revolutionary language represents an internalization of new concepts of society and identity, and, as Berger and Luckmann argue, “[t]his crystallization is concurrent with the internalization of language.”<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, in these letters, such discursive assimilation was more notable when the writer was disagreeing with the current decisions of the Convention or Committee. This appears to be in line with Kotkin’s observation that, under Stalinism, “It was not necessary to believe. It was necessary, however, to participate as if one believed.”<sup>159</sup> Although the Soviet government was already established by the time of Kotkin’s analysis (momentarily ignoring the other major differences between the two revolutions and governments), the letter writers during the

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<sup>157</sup> Stephen Kotkin. “Speaking Bolshevik,” In *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995: 198-237.

<sup>158</sup> Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 123.

<sup>159</sup> Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 220.



French Revolution seem to have assumed, even in the face of multiple forms of legislative assemblies, that the current régime would be long-lived enough to bother ingratiating themselves. Either they were committed to the revolutionary cause, or, at the very least, they thought it worthwhile to hedge their bets. By couching their criticism and complaints into a discussion of the dangers of prejudices, these correspondents recognized the revolutionary attempt to alter language and thus made their appeals more acceptable.

### Chapter III: Recognizing the Danger of “Our Prejudices”

*The educator has the duty of not being neutral.*

*-Paulo Freire*

Amid the trial of the King, Joseph Serre stated: “Do not therefore accuse men, but rather our character, our habits, our prejudices, and our education.”<sup>160</sup> In the textbooks and pamphlets examined here, the authors took the blame of the *Ancien Régime* off individuals and placed it squarely on prejudices. By explicating the various perils posed by prejudices, the authors proved that the Republic would have to be founded on a rigorous educational system, which would teach judgment and thereby eradicate prejudices. A critical element in the revolutionaries’ quest to found a republican culture was their attempt to create an ideal system of public education.<sup>161</sup> Through purifying the educational process, these authors certainly hoped to prevent internal threats to public safety, but in a way that simultaneously encouraged all citizens to become fully rational.

In order to discourage irrationality, they needed first to discourage the continuation of prejudices, which were specifically linked to the *Ancien Régime*. This obsession with the danger of prejudices was not only limited to members of the Committee of Public Instruction; it was also central to the public discourse around education during the French Revolution. In this context, prejudices embodied the societal past as lingering influences of unenlightened worldviews. They were false judgments made by an individual, often by uncritically accepting authority as a basis for knowledge. Therefore, the revolutionaries labelled many previously accepted societal standards as prejudices. For instance, support for a model of education in which few students have access to higher-level instruction was

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<sup>160</sup> *Archives parlementaires*, Tome 54, 37.

<sup>161</sup> Barrington Moore, Jr. *Moral Purity and Persecution in History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000: 62.

frequently denounced as evidence of a prejudice for hierarchy, as a model based on a belief in inherent inequality between individuals.

To effectively convince the youth to abandon ignorance and prejudices, the Committee of Public Instruction announced a contest for new elementary textbooks in Year II of the revolutionary calendar (January 1794).<sup>162</sup> This contest began barely a month after the enactment of the Bouquier Law, which abandoned the previous comprehensive plans for public instruction. Henceforth, anybody could become a teacher; they “simply had to receive a *certificat de civisme* and announce their intention to open a school.”<sup>163</sup> This law stripped the Committee of its control over the structure of the school system or over the training of teachers. Therefore, its members sought to exercise influence through textbooks. Their contest acknowledged the lack of official structure while still focusing on idealized vision of education as replacing prejudices with judgment. Not all of the textbooks examined here were written in response to this contest. However, textbooks and pamphlets consistently called for the eradication of prejudices even before this contest or before the Reign of Terror. Nevertheless, after this announcement, these calls became even more insistent.

### **Threats to Public Safety**

In both textbooks and pamphlets, prejudices were portrayed as lingering influences of the *Ancien Régime*.<sup>164</sup> In a pamphlet, Committee member François-Xavier Lanthenas (1754-1799), a Girondin who escaped the later purge of the Convention through the influence of

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<sup>162</sup> Grégoire. *Rapport sur l’Ouverture d’un Concours pour les Livres Élémentaires de la Première Éducation*. 3 Pluviôse, l’an Second de la République une & indivisible (1794). Imprime par ordre de la Convention Nationale : 10

<sup>163</sup> Isser Woloch. *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789-1820s*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994: 180.

<sup>164</sup> J. Courdin. *Observations philosophiques sur la réforme de l’éducation publique dédiées MM. les administrateurs du dépt de l’Hérault*. Montpellier : Imprimeurs du Département, 1792.

Marat and who has been deemed a “quintessential revolutionary idealist,”<sup>165</sup> stated that “[t]he education which existed under the *Ancien Régime* [...] was calculated [...] to entrench prejudices.”<sup>166</sup> The authors spoke of the *Ancien Régime* as a superstitious and unequal order and starkly contrasted it with the new republic, which was described as a transcendent entity, existing in the army’s courage, the will of the people, popular societies, military victories, and the hearts of the *sans-culottes*, the “breech-less” or common members of society. The republic was pure because its components had been “cleared of monarchical and religious prejudices.”<sup>167</sup> Yet this optimistic belief in purity hides the more pervasive fear that prejudices were still plaguing the republic; other texts suggest that the revolutionaries worried that, without systemic reform, the education system would reproduce prejudices rather than discourage them.

Writing in 1790, Desrasmer, a student at the University of Paris, addressed the Committee’s fear that the university system was unable to move past its tradition of the study of Catholic theology and was therefore contaminated with prejudices.<sup>168</sup> This universal religious influence, which was later used to indict the entire education system,<sup>169</sup> was due to the fact that the Catholic Church had been the primary provider of education.<sup>170</sup> Writing from within the university that housed France’s premier theology faculty,<sup>171</sup> Desrasmer claimed that the University had historically exposed students to the *philosophes* and had, in fact,

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<sup>165</sup> Walton, 218-9.

<sup>166</sup> François-Xavier Lanthenas. *Des Sociétés populaires considérées comme une branche essentielle de l'instruction publique*. Paris : impr. du Cercle Sociale, 1792 : 1-2.

<sup>167</sup> *Alphabet des Sans-culottes, ou Premiers éléments de l'éducation républicaine, contenant une analyse des devoirs des républicains envers l'Être suprême et ses semblables*. Paris : Impr. Callette, an II [1793-4]: 13

<sup>168</sup> Desrasmer. *L'Université à l'agonie, ou projet de réformer incessamment l'éducation ; de ne plus la confier aux ecclésiastiques et d'abolir les punitions corporelles*. Paris : (s.n.), 1790.

<sup>169</sup> Pierre-Claude-François Daunou. *Essai sur l'instruction publique*. Paris : Impr. nat., 1793 : 39.

<sup>170</sup> Charles R. Bailey, *French Secondary Education, 1763-1790: The Secularization of Ex-Jesuit Collèges*. Independence Square: The American Philosophical Society, 1978.

<sup>171</sup> It also had faculties of law and medicine, but the latter was primarily theoretical. Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*, 11-15.

nurtured republican ideas – a stance shared even by monarchists before the start of the Revolution.<sup>172</sup> However, others argued that “those students who were later *philosophes* or revolutionary leaders got most of their ideas from sources outside the schools.”<sup>173</sup> Thus the *Ancien Régime*’s educational system could not be credited with the production of “lovers of liberty.” By the time of the textbook contest, tolerance for Catholic influence was no longer publicly justified. In his *Manuel des Instituteurs*, Chantreau bemoaned the fact that college-educated men had a difficult time ignoring their prejudices. Like many other authors, he feared that this influence would seep into political decision-making.<sup>174</sup>

This fear of contamination fueled much of the discourse over public instruction, and prejudices were spoken of as threats to public safety. Like Voltaire before them, the authors realized that prejudices typically took root during childhood. Given the revolts in the Vendée and the refusal of many priests to swear the oath of allegiance,<sup>175</sup> the legislators feared that the home environment was too uncontrollable. In the current, impure society, prejudices abounded. Plans for public instruction therefore frequently called for mandatory attendance or even boarding schools for primary education. The textbook authors thus sought to protect the next generation from the corrupting prejudices so as to ensure the future purity of society.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Charles-Joseph Mathon de la Cour. *Discours sur les meilleurs moyens de faire naître et d’encourager le patriotisme dans une monarchie, qui a remporté le prix dans l’Académie de Châlons-sur-Marne*, 1787.

<sup>173</sup> Bailey, 4.

<sup>174</sup> Chantreau. *Manuel des Instituteurs : Essai didactique, dans lequel on indique l’espèce de Livres Élémentaires qui conviennent à nos nouvelles Ecoles, la manière de les faire, et les moyens d’en tirer le plus grand fruit...Suivi de quelques projets tendant à la parfaite organisation des Ecoles Nationales*. Paris: Chez Desenne, l’an III : 5-8

<sup>175</sup> David Andress. *The Terror: The Merciless War for Freedom in Revolutionary France*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2006.

<sup>176</sup> John Robert Vignery. *The French Revolution and the Schools; Educational Policies of the Mountain, 1792-1794*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin for the Dept. of History, University of Wisconsin, 1966: 40.

This debate, according to Robert Vignery, began a trend of “describing the republic as in imminent danger from the forces of reaction and advocating compulsory school attendance as an instrument of public safety.”<sup>177</sup> Even before the creation of the Committee of Public Safety, education was seen as a way to weed out and prevent internal enemies.<sup>178</sup> Teaching could, potentially, identify (and reform) such traitors before they became full-fledged citizens;<sup>179</sup> however, this was not a guarantee, as the Athenians’ refusal to listen to Socrates demonstrated. On the other hand, Plato argued in the *Republic* that the Athenians were unable to understand and value Socrates because they lacked a proper education system.<sup>180</sup> In this understanding, education again regains its central role in society.

In both the textbooks and pamphlets, prejudices were clearly seen as corrupting vices which must be eradicated, and the authors believed that this suppression could best be accomplished through a national form of education and instruction. A book of weekly moral lessons declared that “prejudices are the tyrants of the soul.”<sup>181</sup> Prejudices, under this understanding, encouraged one to act and think like a subject to a tyrant. Because the acceptance of prejudices meant that one was refusing to reject the knowledge system of monarchical tyrants, then one was voluntarily limiting one’s possible responses to situations and thus shirking one’s duty as a citizen. Referring back to Kant, the prejudiced individual lacked the ability to act or think autonomously. This willing retreat to heteronomy was seen as a betrayal of the values of the Revolution.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Vignery, 41.

<sup>178</sup> Vignery, 47-48.

<sup>179</sup> Philippe Riviale. *L’Enseignement Public dans la Révolution française : Commentaire Philosophique*. Paris : L’Harmattan, 2015 : 147.

<sup>180</sup> Plato. *The Republic*. Benjamin Jowett, trans. Norwalk: Easton Press, 1980.

<sup>181</sup> L.M. Henriquez. *Histoires et morales choisies pour chaque mois de l’année républicaine, ouvrage destiné à l’instruction de la jeunesse*. Paris : Demoraine, an III : 15.

<sup>182</sup> C.f. Marcel Gauchet. *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*. Oscar Burge, Trans. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

In the middle of the Revolution, textbook authors blamed the Catholic Church for the propagation of atavistic ideas. Early texts, however, often took a moderate stance in which they argued that the Church could help with the spread of morals and virtue if it chose to abandon most of its doctrine. Referring back to an argument that Voltaire had made, not all of the prejudices instilled by religion were considered wrong. The revolutionaries wanted to maintain morality, but in a purified manner. This morality, however, would be ratified by judgment and thus not considered prejudice. Nevertheless, the revolutionaries were unclear as to how the education system could maintain autonomy while promoting quasi-traditional morality.

### **The Root of Prejudices: Ignorance**

Once the perception of prejudices as threats to public safety had been established, the Committee and the textbook authors became increasingly concerned with the belief that most people were content with their prejudices and did not wish to discard them for revolutionary truth. Because prejudices were based on the acceptance of heteronomous authority, they made individuals more liable to manipulation and more resistant to education. According to Sophia Rosenfeld, revolutionary pamphlets sought “to articulate what everybody should already know from instinct and experience if they were not so blinded by prejudice (meaning what had passed for common sense just months earlier in many cases).”<sup>183</sup> The classification of certain ideas as prejudice changed as rapidly as revolutionary politics. Just as Descartes had cast all knowledge into doubt, the Revolution cast all societal practices and belief into doubt. These authors, however, argued that providing access to knowledge and emphasizing facts would free individuals to judge politics and adapt to the political situation at hand.

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<sup>183</sup> Sophia Rosenfeld. *Common Sense: A Political History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011: 188.

Even so, the people continued to resist education,<sup>184</sup> and the new textbooks were not always used outside of Paris.<sup>185</sup> Popular resistance to mandatory primary schools, especially boarding institutions, was occasionally dismissed as the influence of prejudices. While complaining about the persistence of prejudices, Lanthenas stated that “the enemies count on the ignorance of the people.”<sup>186</sup> Chantreau argued that public instruction had to ensure that the future generations would have neither the prejudices of the contemporary one nor the inclination to form new ones.<sup>187</sup> Prejudices, the authors contended, hindered the formation of political compromises. While this reluctance to compromise might protect the purity of the republic, it also contributed to delay in the political process. Although the Committee of Public Instruction’s devotion to minute details was frequently praised, authors bemoaned the fact that such attention led to a delay in actual reform.<sup>188</sup> The delay was criticized not only for the financial state that it put professors and teachers in,<sup>189</sup> but also because it meant that prejudices were continuing to propagate unchallenged. In one instance, the distinct lack of haste to implement any educational system at all was linked to the influence of prejudices within the Committee itself.<sup>190</sup>

Rather than viewing the new public instruction system as a creation of a new set of prejudices, the citizens’ plans frequently claimed to replace prejudices with knowledge. Léonard Bourdon de la Crosnière summed up many authors’ stances when he stated that “instruction is the friend and companion of liberty and the most formidable scourge of

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<sup>184</sup> Lanthenas, *Des Sociétés populaires*, 5.

<sup>185</sup> Isser Woloch. *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civil Order, 1789-1820s*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994: 195.

<sup>186</sup> Lanthenas, *Des Sociétés Populaires*, 5.

<sup>187</sup> Chantreau. *Manuel des Instituteurs*, 5-8.

<sup>188</sup> Mathurin-Louis-Etienne Sédillez. *Lettre au comité de l’Instruction publique*. Paris : impr. nationale, an 4 de la Liberté.

<sup>189</sup> Rapport par P.J. Audoin. Rapport fait par Pemartin.

<sup>190</sup> Desrasmer. *L’Université à l’agonie*.



despotism.”<sup>191</sup> By encouraging the acquisition of knowledge, public instruction would give students resources to discover truth.<sup>192</sup> Pierre-Vincent Chalvet, the author of a report from the department of Isère and a professor of history, explained that their library and art museum helped considerably with educating the public.<sup>193</sup> By highlighting opportunities for self-instruction, they found that people’s innate curiosity led them down the path of knowledge. Chalvet also praised their local newspapers for allowing citizens to follow the news from Paris but nevertheless beseeched the national government to enact sterner censorship laws.<sup>194</sup> Since newspapers functioned as a medium of instruction, ensuring their truthfulness was essential. In the absence of a common sense derived from truth and knowledge, the government, like all citizens, would revert to basing its decisions on prejudices.

Chalvet’s faith in individuals’ willingness to be educated is crucial, as education “depends very much on the mutual desire of the people who are competing to give and receive it.”<sup>195</sup> Without this reciprocal desire for education, the moral faculties of the students will be destroyed by the process of force. Chalvet argued that all men have equal aptitudes for morality, but that they must want to be educated to be able to develop their moral faculties properly. However, this claim also sheds insight into the agonistic qualities of French education. As the eighteenth century progressed, emulation, which had been a key figure in French education, ceased to focus solely on imitation and began instead to develop a competitive aspect. Through the proliferation of competitive examinations, which were

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<sup>191</sup> Léonard Bourdon de la Crosnière. *Mémoire sur l'instruction et sur l'éducation nationale avec un projet de décret et de règlement constitutionnel pour les jeunes gens réunis dans les écoles publiques, suivi d'un Essai sur la manière de concilier la surveillance nationale avec les droits d'un père sur ses enfants, dans l'éducation des héritiers présomptifs de la couronne*. Paris : impr. de Cailleau, an II : 11.

<sup>192</sup> Daunou, *Essai*, 3.

<sup>193</sup> Pierre-Vincent Chalvet. *Rapport sur l'Etat de l'Instruction Publique dans le Département de l'Isère*. Grenoble : Cadou, 1798 : 4.

<sup>194</sup> Chalvet, *Rapport sur l'Etat*, 12.

<sup>195</sup> Nanydre. *Le Petit maître d'école, ou le triomphe de la raison sur l'opinion publique*. Paris : chez la veuve Guillaume, an 1 de la Liberté : 6.

monetarily rewarded, education became increasingly perceived in terms of social utility. Nira Kaplan argues that these frequent competitions were seen “as exhibiting a new type of public virtue in which the emphasis on heroism and self-sacrifice was replaced by an ideal of social utility.”<sup>196</sup> During the Revolution, competitions were offered as solutions to the destruction of *Ancien Régime* institutions, even though competitions had thrived under the *Ancien Régime*, particularly among the Academies. The competing plans and even the competition for new textbooks illustrated a belief that the public was capable of discerning the best solution. This discernment relied heavily on the development of judgment.

As it emphasizes the development of judgment, education, according to national librarian Jean Chevret, “internally enlightens us on justice and injustice, on the nature of vice and virtue, which we use to distinguish between truth and error.”<sup>197</sup> Nevertheless, since education had to be desired in order to be effective, educators during the Revolution had to prepare for the possibility of introducing it in a limited form so as to gain societal acceptance. If this were to be the case, then it needed to be able to inspire “the spirit of analysis, the faculty of reasoning well, the genius of discovery, the talent of expressing oneself eloquently, with justice and energy in the popular assemblies, the perception and function of useful knowledge, the talent of instructing oneself and listening to others in the sphere of these ideas.”<sup>198</sup> Practical knowledge was a virtue because it implied a moral decision about the goal for such knowledge. In thinking about the uses for practical knowledge, “[t]he distinction between what should and should not be done includes the distinction between the

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<sup>196</sup> Nira Kaplan. “Virtuous Competition among Citizens: Emulation in Politics and Pedagogy during the French Revolution.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36(2), 2003: 242.

<sup>197</sup> Jean Chevret. *De l'éducation dans la république, et de ses moyens de prospérité et de gloire : ou suite du principe universel d'éducation*. Paris : Impr. N. H. Nyon, 1792 : 1.

<sup>198</sup> *Le Manuel des jeunes républicains, ou Eléments d'instruction à l'usage des jeunes élèves des écoles primaires*, 7è édition. Paris : Devaux, an II : 27.

proper and improper and thus presumes a moral attitude, which it continues to develop.”<sup>199</sup>

Therefore, the emphasis on utility did not negate any moral claims that the revolutionaries made.

### **A Civic Sin**

Through expounding on the various potential meanings of the term *préjugé*, the textbook authors highlighted the perceived sources of danger to the Revolution. The consistent use of this term in these published materials suggests that it became a consciously ideological tool in the revolutionary attempt to rework the French language.<sup>200</sup> Furthermore, the connotations of the term are consistent with its meaning in French Enlightenment discourse. Paired with the occasional reference to the philosophes, the usage of this term suggests that the revolutionaries were intentionally building upon educated people’s understanding of the term.

By highlighting ignorance as the primary source of prejudices, the authors under examination framed them as a fixable problem. Exposure to knowledge – through libraries, reliable newspapers, and schools – would enlighten the people and strengthen the Republic. This goal was essential to ensure the purity and longevity of the Republic. As Marisa Linton has shown throughout her work on the French Revolution, purity and virtue were interwoven concepts in revolutionary politics.<sup>201</sup> Once prejudices were understood as a civic sin, inasmuch as they embodied the source of corruption, their eradication became a necessary prerequisite for the possibility of virtuous citizens and politics.

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<sup>199</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975: 22.

<sup>200</sup> C.f. Sophia Rosenfeld. *A Revolution in Language*.

<sup>201</sup> C.f. Marisa Linton. *The Politics of Virtue in Enlightenment France*. Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001. And *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

## Chapter IV: Converting Schools from Prejudice to Judgment

*In order for critical pedagogy, dialogue, and thought to have real effects, they must advocate the message that all citizens, old and young, are equally entitled, if not equally empowered, to shape the society in which they live.*

*-Henry Giroux*

An educational reformer both before and during the Revolution as well as one of the Paris electors of 1789, Léonard Bourdon de la Crosnière (1754-1807), summed up the general intent of textbook authors by stating that public instruction “must convert schools from prejudices, from ignorance, and from servitude into schools in which free, virtuous, and enlightened men are formed.”<sup>202</sup> The textbook authors, as well as other members of the public who published pamphlets analyzing the state of education, sought to enforce this conversion, most notably through changes in the curriculum and emphasis on moral development. They not only participated in a nation-wide process of defining prejudice as a philosophical, moral, and political problem, but they also proposed various reforms to excoriate them.

Through art, memorization of civic texts, or emotional appeals, the authors sought to make students interested in questions of morality. These debates over mythology or rhetoric shed insight into the political culture endorsed by the authors. The control and concern over early reading exercises or the incorporation of art gave some authors the freedom to move away from catechisms and to a more engaged learning style. Not only would this moral education encourage obedience to laws, as seen through the use of civic catechisms, but it would also instill correct judgment. By illustrating the authors’ commitment to cultivating

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<sup>202</sup> Bourdon de la Crosnière, *Mémoire sur l’éducation*, 2.

judgment, these curriculum changes are central to understanding their struggles against prejudices.

The Committee members wanted to find long-term solutions to the threat of atavistic ideas, and they realized that it was more important to impart the process of judgment rather than merely the end goal. Due to the imminent danger, some of the authors, who were often prominent revolutionaries, did revert to rote memorization. Nevertheless, whether in introductions or footnotes, they explained how they wanted their texts to impact the readers. This explication suggests a desire to retain further control over the use of the textbooks. As we have already seen, revolutionary legislators worried that people would not understand the importance of revolutionary projects. By providing the reasoning behind their proposed changes, the authors hoped to make the texts more accessible to the public and thus more meaningful.

### **Curriculum Changes**

The authors all agreed that the structure of public instruction needed to be optimized to encourage reason and judgment. Through suggestions for the order and nature of subjects, the authors sought to differentiate their ideas not only from the practices of the *Ancien Régime*, but also from other revolutionary authors and legislators. In *Le Manuel des Jeunes Républicains*, the author argued against teaching mythology, as it will give children “the taint of its prejudices.”<sup>203</sup> He argued that while some plans called for mythology to be taught early, as a way of exposing children to religious plurality,<sup>204</sup> it would not give children a

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<sup>203</sup> *Le Manuel des Jeunes Républicains*, 67.

<sup>204</sup> The comment about religious plurality was a moderate position shared by few authors. They argued that discarding all religion or even simplifying religion down to moral precepts – the most common revolutionary positions – would be rejected by the public and thus harm the republic. Instead, they advocated for teaching the

consistent conception of republican values and virtues. Furthermore, the author posited that the unnecessary emphasis on mythology would pervert children's tastes and thus their moral judgments.<sup>205</sup> Building on philosophy's understanding of the commensuration of political, moral, and aesthetic judgments, he argued that exposure to art needed to be strictly controlled in order to prevent development of additional prejudices.

Conversely, other authors, like Chalvet, advocated for art to be used proactively to encourage proper virtue. Pierre-Claude-François Daunou (1761-1840) was central to these discussions. He was a former member of the Oratorian teaching order and a Girondist who was imprisoned during the purging of the National Convention and who was later central to the founding of the Directory. His 1795 plan was the only revolutionary plan to be implemented.<sup>206</sup> In his textbook, he posited that art could not be separated from education.<sup>207</sup> For Daunou, art's "supreme utility consists in its forcing individuals to attentively observe the forms of nature; art makes one find justice, harmony, and beauty."<sup>208</sup> Likewise, the *Alphabet républicain's* syllabic essays began with one on the beauty of nature. J.B. Chemin-Dupontès, the author and official printer for the department of Paris, addressed natural phenomenon and concluded by arguing that if one paid attention, then one could not fail to notice the order and beauty of the world, which proved the existence of a supreme being.<sup>209</sup> Most other discussions of art, however, tended to limit themselves to advocating for the

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history of the different doctrines of religion, most likely referring to the various denominations of Christianity, rather than a modern understanding of several different religions.

<sup>205</sup> *Le Manuel des Jeunes Républicains*, 64-70.

<sup>206</sup> Palmer, *Improvement of Humanity*, 82. See Appendix 2 for a brief overview of his proposed plans.

<sup>207</sup> Andrew Jainchill. *Reimagining Politics after the Terror: The Republican Origins of French Liberalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008.

<sup>208</sup> Daunou, *Essai*, 16.

<sup>209</sup> J.B. Chemin-Dupontès. *Alphabet républicain... suivi de conversations à la portée des enfans, propres à leur inspirer l'amour de la Liberté, de l'Egalité et de toutes les vertus républicaines, et à les mettre en état de bien entendre la Déclaration des Droits et la Constitution*. Paris : l'auteur, an II : 8.

revolutionary festivals as modes of public instruction.<sup>210</sup> These discussions over the utility of art illustrate the search for a trustworthy method to combat remnants of the past or immoral beliefs. By assuming an inherent moral value in art, the authors posited that it could be used as a replacement to religion to instill pure virtues into students. This instruction would ensure virtuous, unprejudiced citizens.

The dangers of art were also elucidated. Traditionally, rhetoric had been taught before logic, but Chantreau argued that this sequence was one of the primary causes of prejudices because people are easily seduced by the well-spoken. Throughout Western education, “[r]hetoric was always in conflict with philosophy and, against the idle speculation of the sophists, claimed to teach true wisdom.”<sup>211</sup> Building on Plato’s ideas, however, Chantreau argued that “the art of rhetoric is doubly dangerous and perfidious.”<sup>212</sup> In a political system which relied on oratory to convince deputies how to vote, the art of rhetoric could potentially be used to argue for the perpetuation of prejudices. Unless its instruction was tied to logic, rhetoric could be an irrational force, appealing to the ignorance of the listeners. The question of when and how it ought to be taught reflected a concern with the purity of political culture. In a pamphlet addressed to parents, Abbé Pierre-Nicolas-Joseph Hazard (1750-1797), director of a military school in Nanterre, argued that music could be a danger despite reinforcing natural sentiments. If listened to without an understanding of the rules which govern it, music could overexcite a sensitive soul and cease to be a moral influence.<sup>213</sup> By linking criticisms of subjects to fears about political stability, authors were able to justify

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<sup>210</sup> Hérault. *Constitution du peuple français* ; Lanthenas, *Des Sociétés Populaires* ; Chantreau. *Manuel des Instituteurs ; Mémoire sur l'éducation de la jeunesse*

<sup>211</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer. *Truth and Method*. New York: Seabury Press, 1975: 20.

<sup>212</sup> Chantreau. *Manuel des Instituteurs*, 79.

<sup>213</sup> Pierre-Nicolas-Joseph Hazard. *Avis aux bons parens ou plan d'éducation patriotique. Présenté à l'Assemblée nationale*. 1789: 29-30.

their concerns in a way that could not be easily dismissed. These authors worried that art was not so intrinsically tied to good that it could not be used for counter-revolutionary purposes. Art, such as inflammatory rhetoric or music, might be used by prejudiced individuals to incite the French people against the Revolution, their reason, and their best interests.

This emphasis on art's power, both positive and negative, was not the only curriculum change suggested by these authors. They advocated for using instruction in reading to double for other instructions. In the eighteenth century, students were commonly taught to read through short compositions on general topics in which each word was broken into syllables.<sup>214</sup> Daunou argued that reading exercises could be used to give lessons in natural and civil history, morality, and even to provide a general conception of the new political organization.<sup>215</sup> These compositions would instruct the students and thus immediately dispel ignorance and prejudice while also providing them with the skills to examine their remaining prejudices. One of the last essays in the *Alphabet républicain* concerned itself with the nature of government. It stated that a society "where the people are sovereign, & where all the citizens are equal, that is to say, all have the same rights, is called REPUBLIC. It is the best of all the governments."<sup>216</sup> History was often central to these textbooks, as it provided the space for students to contemplate why the revolutionaries had chosen a republic. Some of the catechisms had students memorize particular dates of the Revolution, such as the storming of the Bastille or the execution of the King.<sup>217</sup> Through

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<sup>214</sup> This system also helped students with pronunciation. Schoolbooks also carried on the debate over standardizing French. Some argued for the continuation of Latin education so that the elements of French would be better understood. Others argued that French orthography needed to be simplified so that all students could learn to read and write more easily. C.f. Dena Goodman. *Becoming a Women in the Age of Letters*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.

<sup>215</sup> Daunou, *Essai*, 22

<sup>216</sup> Chemin-Dupontès, *Alphabet républicain*, 17.

<sup>217</sup> *Alphabet des sans-culottes*.



familiarity with these concrete, historical examples, people would learn to make better judgments.

In *Le Premier Livre ou Alphabet du républicain*, the author used the Prayer to the Supreme Being and the Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen as the first reading exercises. In a footnote, the author remarked: “We cease to mark the division of words into syllables so as to deliver the young student unto the forces which he should have acquired in reading what precedes, to the point of knowing it by heart.”<sup>218</sup> The author chose the Declaration as the first exercise because the students would have to continually practice it until they learned to read. At that point, it would have been impressed upon their mind. The choice of rights as the most fundamental lesson is meaningful, as “[t]o have human rights, people had to be perceived as separate individuals who were capable of exercising independent moral judgment.”<sup>219</sup> The Declaration both cemented the benefits of the new political order and emphasized the importance for the students to develop autonomous judgment. Another footnote at the end of the Declaration states that “instructors should not neglect to make their young students learn by heart the Declaration of Rights of Man.”<sup>220</sup> The moral or political nature of these early readings was crucial because it was accepted that not all students would be able to continue their education. Therefore, their limited education needed to be relevant to their political and social duties. Specifically, it needed to instill in students the desire to free themselves from their prejudices and to train them in how to do so. These early political readings were not so much political indoctrination as examples of proper judgment. Since it had already been established that the source of prejudices was

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<sup>218</sup> *Le Premier livre ou alphabet du républicain à l'usage des écoles primaires*. Paris : chez la cit. Roudier, an II :18.

<sup>219</sup> Lynn Hunt. *Inventing Human Rights: A History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007: 27.

<sup>220</sup> *Le Premier livre*, 25

ignorance, young students needed to be given as much information about the nature and goal of government as possible in order to make political judgments as future citizens.

### **Exposure to Political Processes**

Some textbooks took the mission of preparing students for their political duties more seriously than others. Rather than limiting themselves to only discussing the nature of government, some textbooks provided models of *procès-verbaux*, or minutes of governmental meetings. An author from Hérault explained that students needed models so that political processes could be uniform across the nation. This conformity would allow citizens to communicate more clearly with one another.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, he argued that people needed to engage in the law-making process even after the Constitution was ratified.<sup>222</sup> Even authors who did not provide such models praised those schools, such as Louis-le-Grand, who integrated instruction about the nature of government and guidance in how to participate in it.<sup>223</sup> By being exposed early to the structure of political documents, the students would have a better ability to grasp governmental affairs.

Instead of merely advocating for the study of governmental publications as preparation for political duties, some pamphlets argued that students needed to be exposed to political discourse. They therefore encouraged students to attend popular societies in order to complete their education. Assemblies, whether governmental or popular, allowed citizens to

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<sup>221</sup> C.f. Jürgen Habermas. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

<sup>222</sup> *Constitution du peuple français, à l'usage des enfans, précédée du rapport du comité de salut public fait à la Convention le 10 juin par le citoyen Hérault, suivie du décret et de l'instruction pour la convocation des assemblées primaires etc., et à laquelle on a joint le nouveau calendrier, décrétée le 24 juin et acceptée le 10 août l'an deuxième de l'Egalité*. Paris : Le Prieur, 1793 : 102-3.

<sup>223</sup> Sédillez. *Lettre au comité*, 5. R.R. Palmer. *The School of the French Revolution: A Documentary History of the College of Louis-Le-Grand and Its Director, Jean-François Champagne, 1762-1814*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975.

engage directly with political debates and to intellectually grapple with the issues of how to serve and protect the nation. By engaging with political discussions from an early age, students would gain the skills necessary to prevent the republic from degenerating into an aristocracy.<sup>224</sup> These requirements included rhetoric, to be persuasive members of society, and analytic skills to dissect opponents' arguments. Through attending popular societies, students would realize the responsibility of civic judgment.

Popular societies also combatted ignorance. As previously discussed, the revolutionaries believed that giving people access to knowledge would dissuade them from their preconceptions by providing an alternative basis for judgment. However, standards for judgment could become outdated in a matter of days as previous allies were revealed to be counter-revolutionaries.<sup>225</sup> This chaos meant that citizens could never assume that their beliefs were accurate. Instead, responsible citizens continually had to guarantee that their knowledge was correct. Popular societies provided the forum for discourse that could clear away lies and confusion; in them, public opinion would crystallize free of the corrupting influence of prejudices.<sup>226</sup> By linking education to civic obligations, these textbooks provided reasons for students to be interested in their lessons.<sup>227</sup>

### **Developing the Soul**

While many revolutionaries had abandoned Catholicism, they nevertheless continued to use the language of morals and virtues – and even of souls – when discussing politics and

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<sup>224</sup> Lanthenas, *Des Sociétés Populaires*, 6-7.

<sup>225</sup> C.f. Marisa Linton. *Choosing Terror: Virtue, Friendship, and Authenticity in the French Revolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>226</sup> Lanthenas, *Des Sociétés Populaires*, 12.

<sup>227</sup> Alexandre-François Marie Beauharnais, Vicomte. *Rapport fait à la Société des Amis de la Constitution de Paris, le 11 mars 1791, au nom des commissaires nommés pour l'examen du mémoire de Léonard Bourdon, sur l'instruction et sur l'éducation nationale*. Paris : Impr. nat., 1791 : 4-5.

education. In a report to the Parisian Jacobins, Alexandre-François Marie, Vicomte de Beauharnais (1760-1794), the revolutionary general who was later executed for poorly defending France, claimed that public instruction should be “a natural system of education which provokes the development of the faculties of the soul.”<sup>228</sup> The Jacobins still maintained a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, and that faith, as well as the wish to avoid antagonizing the Catholic population, may have been a factor in their choice to use religious language. Another crucial factor was judgment’s categorization as a moral faculty<sup>229</sup>; its prominent role in the discourse around education may also have contributed to the prevalence of religious undertones. In using moral terms in reference to a secular project, the authors examined here revealed their quest to find new transcendent ground for a non-religious set of morals and ethics. They believed that it was important to develop the soul in order for individuals to realize why their prejudices ought to be abandoned. Through this moral development, education held the key to perfecting humanity.<sup>230</sup>

One way that the authors sought to excite the soul was through sentiments,<sup>231</sup> often towards the country. Many textbooks listed “love of country” or “love of liberty, of equality” as essential republican virtues.<sup>232</sup> The *Alphabet des Sans-culottes*, which



<sup>228</sup> Beauharnais, *Rapport fait à la Société des Amis*, 6.

<sup>229</sup> C.f. Hannah Arendt. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ronald Beiner, Ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

<sup>230</sup> Chantreau, *Manuel des Instituteurs*, 111.

<sup>231</sup> Hunt. *Inventing Human Rights*, 110-111.

<sup>232</sup> The picture is from *Alphabet Républicain*, at the end of the illustrated alphabet but immediately before the reading exercises.

was structured as a civic catechism, prompted its readers: “Q. What are the sentiments which are innate with the soul of a republican? A. The love of liberty, of equality, and the hatred of tyrants.”<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, such sentimental pleas were sometimes followed by statements about how good intentions are not enough, such as the claim that patriotism “is not always enlightened, is not always wise; it can become dangerous in men, in whose homes it creates very lively and vicious passions.”<sup>234</sup> Similarly, “hatred of tyrants” was frequently encouraged. This language recalls another author’s radical claim that “prejudices are tyrants of the soul,” and it suggests that hatred of tyrants would compel one to reject all influences of prejudices. Although love of country and hatred of tyrants were not seen as solving all potential issues, they were seen as virtues and even as “the religion of honest people.”<sup>235</sup> Therefore, according to the authors, lessons designed to teach children love of the nation were not any more manipulative than ones that teach them to be honest. Instead, both were part of a necessary attempt to “regenerate morals by good public instruction.”<sup>236</sup> Under this belief, to criticize the inspiration of patriotism was to denounce all encouragement of morality.

It is not incidental that sentiments were linked to morals in education. The Revolution was a heavily passionate event, and Robespierre and other politicians relied on sentimental appeals.<sup>237</sup> Although the Enlightenment praised reason, Hunt shows that eighteenth-century educational reformers had also decided that “[t]he passions were good and could be mobilized by education for the improvement of humanity.”<sup>238</sup> Through its connection to

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<sup>233</sup> *Alphabet des sans-culottes*, 5.

<sup>234</sup> Sédillez. *Lettre au comité*, 7.

<sup>235</sup> Sédillez. *Lettre au comité*, 8.

<sup>236</sup> *Instituts Républicains*, 5.

<sup>237</sup> David Andress. “Living the Revolutionary Melodrama: Robespierre’s Sensibility and the Construction of Political Commitment in the French Revolution.” *Representations*, 114(1), 2011: 103-128.

<sup>238</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 111.

morality, passions became part of judgment, even unconscious judgments. Rather than opposing reason and passion, the revolutionaries used the two to bolster morality, which Hunt argues “was the education of this sentiment to bring out its social component.”<sup>239</sup> Encouraging sentimentality<sup>240</sup> involved the cultivation of judgment. According to Aristotle, “judging well” meant “something like having the right feelings for the right reasons.”<sup>241</sup> According to Robert C. Solomon, passions are rational insofar as they are “calculative judgments that can be discussed, debated, developed, and further argued, just like the reasons and arguments that are advanced concerning more abstract and purely impersonal topics.”<sup>242</sup> Without interest or sentiments, people have little incentive to care about the suffering of others or the noble goals of politics, such as equality and liberty. The revolutionaries used basic emotions such as love and hatred to make education more meaningful,<sup>243</sup> but they also used emotional language because it was common during their time period and powerful during the Revolution.

As the Revolution progressed, the plans for public instruction turned more towards moral education; instead of dictating every aspect of the curriculum, they “focused on directing the child toward civic virtue through manipulation of the sentiments rather than pushing him on to study.”<sup>244</sup> Moral education would teach children to recognize when their heart was properly guiding them and then to obey it.<sup>245</sup> This vision of public instruction

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<sup>239</sup> Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights*, 111.

<sup>240</sup> Sophia Rosenfeld. “Thinking about Feeling, 1789-1799.” *French Historical Studies*, 32(4), 2009: 697-706.

<sup>241</sup> Susan Bickford. “Emotion Talk and Political Judgment.” *The Journal of Politics*, 73(4), 2011: 1027.

<sup>242</sup> Robert C. Solomon. *A Passion for Justice: Emotions and the Origins of the Social Contract*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995: 212.

<sup>243</sup> C.f. Jean Bloch. *Rousseauism and Education in Eighteenth-Century France*. Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1995.

<sup>244</sup> Nira Kaplan. “Virtuous Competition among Citizens: Emulation in Politics and Pedagogy during the French Revolution.” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 36(2), 2003: 244.

<sup>245</sup> *Mémoire sur l'éducation de la jeunesse par une méthode d'enseignement tout-à-fait nouvelle*. Paris: Morin, 1789:v.

explains why it was acceptable for the majority of students not to pursue higher education; its main purpose was fulfilled once they had accepted their moral and civic obligations.

However, authors disagreed on how to implement moral education, which was central to the French conception of the obligations of public instruction.<sup>246</sup> This shift towards emotional language was a recognition of the failure of reason in convincing individuals to be virtuous. It was common for this moral, emotional education to be suggested as a replacement for religious instruction.<sup>247</sup> In his *Lettre au comité*, Mathurin Louis Étienne Sédillez stated that moral education was simply supposed to erase differences between morality and laws.<sup>248</sup> In this understanding, moral education could “inspire feelings of justice and beneficence, social morals, and republican virtues in the students.”<sup>249</sup> Therefore, as students progressed through the public instruction system, they approached both adulthood and citizenship.<sup>250</sup>

In his recent book, Adrian Velicu argues that the existence of civic catechisms is “evidence of a favourable outlook on the political instruction that excluded questioning and critical judgment.”<sup>251</sup> Certainly there were catechisms, the very format of which encourages, even demands, rote memorization and obedient answers. Nevertheless, the catechisms were not the only form of revolutionary textbooks. Other textbook authors explicitly rejected the catechism method because they sought to encourage independent judgment. Condorcet “disliked the idea of republican catechisms and civic indoctrination [...] He expected that

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<sup>246</sup> C.f. Emile Durkheim. *Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education*. Everett K. Wilson and Herman Schnurer, Trans. Everett K. Wilson, Ed. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961.

<sup>247</sup> *Mémoire sur l'éducation de la jeunesse*, 23-4 ; Sédillez. *Lettre au comité*.

<sup>248</sup> Sédillez. *Lettre au comité*, 3.

<sup>249</sup> Daunou, *Essai*, 17.

<sup>250</sup> Philippe Ariès. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. Robert Baldick, Trans. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962: 154.

<sup>251</sup> Adrian Velicu. *Civic Catechisms and Reason in the French Revolution*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010

with the right knowledge the desired virtues would naturally emerge.”<sup>252</sup> The ones who did endorse catechisms appeared to do so somewhat reluctantly, after admitting that in a time of crisis, it appeared essential to be able to educate as many students at once as possible;<sup>253</sup> they tended to see public education as essential for a strong republic and catechism as a necessary evil in this particular situation. Mass education, the apologists argued, did not give instructors enough time to be able to use other alternatives. This understanding operated under the mentality that cultivating morality “is the development of something that is given, so that the practice and cultivation of it is a mere means to an end.”<sup>254</sup> Everyone has an aptitude for morality, but they must strive to develop that possibility. Because the process has little effect on the use of morality, the process recedes in importance in relation to the end goal.

According to Mirabeau, “no ideological principle, even one conceived in liberty, could be allowed to threaten the political and social gains of the Revolution.”<sup>255</sup> Public education was essential for a strong republic. However, the mere presence of catechisms does not prove, contrary to Velicu’s argument, that revolutionary instruction was primarily dedicated to silencing political dissent.

### **Teaching Good Judgment**

By making rejection of prejudices central to their education system, the revolutionaries also made the development of judgment a key goal. In the Enlightenment, judgment was defined as a process, which ideally would be the application of rules to situations. However, in the chaos of the Revolution, many of those standards had been

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<sup>252</sup> R.R. Palmer. *The Improvement of Humanity: Education and the French Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985: 125.

<sup>253</sup> Hérault. *Constitution du peuple français*, 13-16.

<sup>254</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 12.

<sup>255</sup> Vignery, 21.



dismissed as prejudices. Therefore, there was a divide between calls for reflective and determinative judgments. In both cases however, judgment was understood to be, according to Gadamer, “something that cannot be learned because no demonstration from concepts is able to guide the application of rules.”<sup>256</sup> Therefore, the revolutionaries had to encourage proper judgment in different ways, and they did so by focusing on *sensus communis*, or common sense. Instead of being an intellectual faculty, like judgment, common sense was “a sum of judgments and judgmental criteria that determine its contents.”<sup>257</sup> These accumulated judgments and standards assist in the individual judging process.<sup>258</sup> Although the revolutionary system of education could not directly teach its students how to judge, it could purify the common sense by convincing the population to reject corrupt prejudices. Though enlightening these societal standards for future judgments, the revolutionaries hoped to guide individuals towards proper judgment. It may seem as though this entire process could be summed up by stating that the revolutionaries intended to replace one set of prejudices with another. Such an oversimplification would be incredibly misleading. The revolutionaries maintained their suspicion of all prejudices and their ability to bypass the judging process. However, given their situation – one overwhelmed by threats and besieged by fear – they adapted their education project to bring them to a situation in which they could focus purely on developing the faculties of judgment.

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<sup>256</sup> Gadamer. *Truth and Method*, 30.

<sup>257</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 30-1.

<sup>258</sup> David L. Marshall. “The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Judgment.” *Political Theory*, 38(3), 2010: 384.

## **Conclusion: Can Prejudices Be Revolutionary?**

*Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently.*  
-Rosa Luxemburg

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Edmund Burke attacked the revolutionary project to remove all prejudices from society and stated that the revolutionaries were rashly constructing “a scheme of society on new principles” and disregarding “the judgment of the human race.”<sup>259</sup> What the revolutionaries saw as prejudices, Burke saw as “common judgment,” and he warned that abandoning it would lead to social chaos, as he saw this common judgment to be the result of previous generations’ wise decisions and necessary to social stability. Burke took on the almost preposterous position of defending prejudices in the face of modernity, and his counterrevolutionary critique would go on to define conservatism.<sup>260</sup> Burke’s attack linked the goal of the Enlightenment – rejection of tradition in favor of autonomous reason – to the plans of the Revolution. In the writings examined here, revolutionaries did not view themselves as disregarding human judgment, but rather as creating the conditions for the possibility of proper judgment. However, their attempt to cultivate judgment relied on labelling deeply-held beliefs of the populace as relics of the past.

### **The Failure of Revolutionary Education**

An elector of the Estates-General from the Haut-Rhin complained to the Committee of Public Instruction in June 1793 that the nation “has had for a long time martial law, and we have not yet had a law of public instruction.”<sup>261</sup> Despite the repeated importance of public

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<sup>259</sup> Edmund Burke. *The Works of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke*, Vol. 1. London: Holdsworth and Ball, 1834: 443.

<sup>260</sup> Corey Robin. *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011: 41-60.

<sup>261</sup> AN F/17/1004/C.

instruction as crucial to public safety, the Committee and Convention failed to implement a comprehensive plan. This failure has been lamented by historians ever since and taken at face value, used to imply that the entire discourse around public instruction, with perhaps the notable exception of the revolutionary festivals, was meaningless. While individuals during the Revolution shared this frustration at the lack of tangible results, they nevertheless participated in shaping the goals of these proposed projects. The public contributed to the Committee's understanding that the new public instruction system needed to ensure that prejudices were not carried on through time. The educational discourse of the French Revolution revealed the role of education in supporting a political regime.

By focusing on the interaction of prominent and everyday revolutionaries within educational discourse, I have shown that ordinary people were involved in a process of defining and attacking prejudices rather than simply consenting to a definition imposed from above. The adoption of revolutionary terms, even when the authors did not agree fully with the government's decisions, may be seen as evidence of a working hegemony – as consenting and legitimating the new regime and agreeing to work within it – but, as the widespread revolts indicate, that decision was far from universal. Furthermore, the discourse of prejudices transcended obvious partisan lines and persisted after 9 Thermidor and therefore should be examined as a central tenet of revolutionary thought.

The revolutionary authors wanted to destroy prejudices, but they did not intend to replace them with other ideas so much as with a *method* – judgment – which would maintain the newly achieved purity of society. Isaiah Berlin argues that political philosophers in the Enlightenment believed that studying society would result in recognition of natural law, which could, as universals, be applied to particular situations. In this way, the validity of

political judgment could be guaranteed.<sup>262</sup> “However, this approach turned out to explain so small a part of the actual behavior of human beings at times when it seemed most in need of explanation – during and after the Jacobin Terror.”<sup>263</sup> In Berlin’s understanding, bad political judgment is being over-scientific; it is relying too heavily on theories and not enough on the particulars of the situation. This belief that the particulars are often minimized in determinative judgment is supported by Randall Curren’s argument that the modern world “is characterized by demanding contexts of judgment in which the coordination of proliferating forms of expertise is ever more difficult.”<sup>264</sup> Because of this excess of information, individuals may be incapable of gathering enough knowledge to make proper judgments. In this state of uncertainty, the ability to judge properly on limited evidence becomes essential. The French Revolution has often been labelled as the birth of the modernity, and, at least in regard to the amount of information suddenly available to the average citizen, this characterization seems accurate.

In their writings, these revolutionary authors criticized prejudices because they realized that over-reliance on any kind of outside ideas, even philosophy, could make people unable to react quickly to revolutionary change. By instead advocating for the method of judgment, the authors were recognizing the need for political flexibility over ideological orthodoxy. The targeting of prejudices allowed the authors to support diverse political stances while retaining a revolutionary image. Although the language of prejudices could be used to attack opponents, it also illustrated their revolutionary commitment and thus gave them the freedom to question the Committee’s decisions.

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<sup>262</sup> Isaiah Berlin. *The Sense of Reality: Studies in Ideas and Their History*. Henry Hardy, Ed. London: Chatto & Windus, 1996: 40-1.

<sup>263</sup> Berlin, *Sense of Reality*, 42.

<sup>264</sup> Randall Curren. “Judgment and the Aims of Education.” *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 31(1): 38.

Republics do not rely on the obedience of subjects but rather on the active participation of citizens, who hold their representatives accountable. This obligation relies on an ability to dissent. Jacques Rancière argues that “Disagreement occurs whenever contention over what speaking means constitutes the very rationality of the speech situation.”<sup>265</sup> If people are disagreeing over a question of rationality, then the entire legitimacy of communication and even knowledge is being disputed; people are disagreeing over what qualifies as valid knowledge, and without that shared base assumption, meaningful communication cannot occur. Caroline Weber argues that verbal dissent during the Reign of Terror was perceived as potentially more of a threat than foreign armies.<sup>266</sup> Her project focuses on “the very forms of difference – political, ontological, and linguistic – that Robespierre and his acolytes strove to annihilate.”<sup>267</sup> However, her statement is both over-general and over-dramatic. As a specific form of dissent, prejudices did pose an epistemological, but not ontological, threat to the French Revolution. However frequent whispers of the dangers of prejudices might have been, the revolutionaries typically advocated for education and not execution as response. Furthermore, as I have shown, the language of prejudices – like most other revolutionary discourses – was not limited to Jacobins or Robespierrists. As Gramsci accurately notes, parties rely on the active support of the masses and not solely on the leaders. Through discussing prejudices, individuals were able to help shape the actions of the Committee and potentially the Convention. In this communicative action, they were not following a strict definition of prejudices but rather

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<sup>265</sup> Jacques Rancière. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999: xi.

<sup>266</sup> Caroline Weber. *Terror and Its Discontents: Suspect Words in Revolutionary France*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003: 43. This argument is weakened by the fact that the legislator consistently disregarded questions of public education or censorship in favor of focusing on war efforts.

<sup>267</sup> Weber, *Terror and Its Discontents*, 118.

creating possibilities for further discourse. Prejudices thus held an ambivalent space; they represented both the danger and the linguistic possibility of dissent. This mixed meaning represented first the ways that the revolutionaries themselves used the term to discredit other ideas and second how this usage bolstered their revolutionary status and thus gave them greater freedom.

### **Prejudices, Judgment, and Disagreement**

Throughout the French Revolution and many of the subsequent social revolutions, prejudices, in one guise or another, were routinely criticized by the revolutionaries as relics of the past. During the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks dismissed them as “birthmarks of the old society.”<sup>268</sup> It is inherent in revolutionaries to reject the mentalities of the systems which they are overthrowing. Nevertheless, the uncompromising rejection of these historic thought systems may not be particularly prudent.<sup>269</sup> To return to Berlin’s question of the flexibility of the revolutionary thought system, I will now examine Hannah Arendt’s theory of judgment and its relation to prejudices and political dissent to highlight further and to show the continuing relevance of the ambivalent nature of prejudices.

Unlike the eighteenth-century French *philosophes* or Kant, Arendt does not unconditionally reject prejudices. In her incomplete manuscript *Introduction into Politics*, she recognizes their utility in everyday judgments and discourages societal attempts to eradicate them.<sup>270</sup> She deviates from philosophical tradition by arguing that “[m]an cannot live without prejudices, and not only because no human being’s intelligence or insight would

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<sup>268</sup> Vladimir Lenin. *State and Revolution*. Todd Chretien, Ed. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014: 130.

<sup>269</sup> Moore, *Moral Purity*, 62.

<sup>270</sup> Hannah Arendt. “Introduction into Politics,” *The Promise of Politics*. Jerome Kohn, Ed. New York: Schocken Books, 2005: 93-200.

suffice to form an original judgment about everything on which he is asked to pass judgment in the course of his life, but also because such a total lack of prejudice would require a superhuman alertness.”<sup>271</sup> She defends this position by explaining that prejudices function as categories by which humans judge. This understanding was shared by the revolutionaries, who qualified it by arguing that they were incorrect categories; nevertheless, it was their utility which made prejudices so dangerous. In both Arendt and the revolutionary tradition analyzed in the introduction, judging is a social activity that helps people to make sense of the plurality of the world.<sup>272</sup> Through functioning as the basis of future judgments, prejudices support intersubjective communication by allowing individuals to anticipate the judgments of others.<sup>273</sup>

Furthermore, according to Arendt, every prejudice “always conceals some previously formed judgment which originally had its own appropriate and legitimate experimental basis, and which evolved into a prejudice only because it was dragged through time without its ever being reexamined or revisited.”<sup>274</sup> By acknowledging prejudices as previous judgments and not mere opinions, Arendt deviates from the Enlightenment tradition. However, she agrees that prejudices are mental representations of the past and thus displaced into the present.

Despite Arendt’s acceptance of societal prejudices, however, she explicitly bans them from the political realm. She believes that in politics, prejudices tended to disguise themselves as judgments, which posed significant danger, as we cannot function at all

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<sup>271</sup> Arendt. “Introduction *into* Politics,” 99.

<sup>272</sup> “The domain of action and human capacity to connect thinking and judgment is exercised not only on the public sphere, but also in relation to what Arendt calls the ‘common world,’ a shared set of institutions and artefacts that constitute the context of human activity and represents the current knowledge of the world.” Lis Lange. “Understanding and Action: Thinking with Arendt about Democratic Education.” *Perspectives in Education*, 30(4): 3.

<sup>273</sup> David L. Marshall. “The Origin and Character of Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Judgment.” *Political Theory*, 38(3): 367-393.

<sup>274</sup> Arendt, “Introduction,” *Promise*, 101.

without judgment, in which political thought is essentially based.<sup>275</sup> Modernity has created a distinction between the social and political that allows Arendt to make that claim.<sup>276</sup>

However, for the French Revolution, society was politicized, in large part because of the governmental attempts to eradicate prejudices.

Arendt thinks that political judgment needs to be reflective; it always has to be formed *without* reference to universal standards. Like the revolutionary authors, Arendt understands that prejudices are traditional societal standards.<sup>277</sup> Because of their ubiquity, prejudices can never fully be abolished from society, but they have to be from politics. If allowed to influence politics, prejudices will degrade political judgment to solely determinative judgments, which merely apply pre-existing universal standards to particular situations. This would prevent individuals from properly examining not only the situation at hand but also the standards that they are using. This tension between different forms of judgment and the subsequent role of prejudices was also visible in Voltaire's thought as well as in the revolutionary discussion over public instruction.

In her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Arendt explicitly links political and aesthetic judgments because both are reflective. Building on Kant's common sense, she argues that judgment is formed in an inner dialogue with society. In judging, an individual "always reflects upon others and their taste" and "takes their possible judgments into account"<sup>278</sup> Therefore, "when one judges, one judges as a member of a community."<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Arendt, "Introduction," 100-1.

<sup>276</sup> Benjamin Constant. *De la liberté des Anciens comparée à celle des Modernes*.

<sup>277</sup> David Marshall argued that Arendt rejected determinative judgments because they simply required applying the proper standard to a specific situation. She "argue[d] that any determinative judgment requires a prior reflective judgment. One has to examine both the situation and the standard in order to determine if they explain one another. These examinations qualify as reflective judgments, but the application of the universal to the particular follows chronologically and is actually unnecessary." Marshall, "Origin and Character," 380.

<sup>278</sup> Hannah Arendt. *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*. Ronald Beiner, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982: 67.



Individuals' judgments are not so much a process of consensus building as a reflection of what the general rule ought to be for the whole society.<sup>280</sup> Arendt believes that "[t]he power of judgment rests on a potential agreement with others."<sup>281</sup> Despite relying on the potential for agreement, Arendt's judgment hardly represents acceptance of a general will mentality. Rather, *Taste* represents an individual conception of a societal common sense,<sup>282</sup> as people make judgments based on the assumption that others will agree.<sup>283</sup>

One of the key features of judgment for Arendt is its reliance on humans' capacity for enlarged mentalities. She argues that "judgment may be one of the fundamental abilities of man as a political being insofar as it enables him to orient himself in the public realm, in the common world."<sup>284</sup> In this enlarged mentality, individuals would imagine political dissent.<sup>285</sup>

Therefore, according to David Marshall, Arendt argues that

judgment assumed that there would be no pre-established consensus in response to particular phenomena and that politics is essentially concerned with negotiating differences of opinion without presuming either that such differences are merely subjective (and therefore baseless, arbitrary, and intractable) or that differences of opinion may be resolved through a rational process of verifying and falsifying claims.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 72.

<sup>280</sup> "I judge as a member of this community and not as a member of a supersensible world [...] The basic other-directedness of judgment and taste seems to stand in the greatest possible opposition to the very nature, the absolutely idiosyncratic nature of the sense [of taste] itself." Arendt, *Lectures*, 67-68.

However, the idea that judgments should be made with the goal of creating consensus can also be seen in Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*, see 8-11.

<sup>281</sup> Hannah Arendt. "The Crisis in Culture: Its Social and Its Political Significance." *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*. Jerome Kohn, Ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2006: 217

<sup>282</sup> Arendt, *Lectures*, 70-72.

<sup>283</sup> "one can never compel anyone to agree with one's judgments" Arendt, *Lectures*, 72.

<sup>284</sup> Arendt. "The Crisis in Culture," 218.

<sup>285</sup> The "*sensus communis* as a capacity to engage with the possible as well as the actual judgments of others." Marshall, "Origin and Character," 368. "judgments must address themselves to phenomena that are complex to the point of being controversial – that is, capable of being characterized in different ways." Marshall, "Origin and Character," 374.

<sup>286</sup> Marshall, "Origin and Character," 369. Here, Marshall is primarily concerned with differentiating Arendt's position from that of Habermas.

Without a pre-existing solution, judgment requires that each individual seek to understand others' positions in detail; this interaction with the common sense enhances judgment.<sup>287</sup>

This process of discernment prepares the individual for debate rather than encouraging conformity.

However, George Kateb argues that Arendt seeks to aestheticize political judgment, which he claims results in a value-less politics, one not connected to truth or morality.<sup>288</sup> He posits that Arendt's "[a]estheticized politics is pure politics, politics for the sake of politics."<sup>289</sup> Such purposeless politics allows opinion, rather than truth, to be the currency of democracy.<sup>290</sup> Kateb insists that seeing a connection between the reflective qualities of aesthetic and political judgments qualifies as an aestheticization of politics, which is not the case.<sup>291</sup> He misunderstands Arendt's reasons for rejecting pre-determined standards as a basis for political judgment. When trying to identify the motivation for Eichmann's actions, Arendt writes that

Eichmann acted fully within the framework of the kind of judgment required of him: he acted in accordance with the rule, examined the order issued to him for its 'manifest legality,' namely regularity; he did not have to fall back upon his 'conscience,' since he was not one of those who were unfamiliar with the laws of his country.<sup>292</sup>

Arendt sees judgment based on standards decided by others (a form of heteronomous reason) as relinquishing moral responsibility. A sign of true judgment is the *ability* to disagree with

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<sup>287</sup> "Anticipating the judgments of others is not motivated by a desire to conform to them, but rather by a desire to measure the distances between one's own judgments and a range of others, and then to distinguish one's own judgments from them in a way that is defensible even in the face of such difference." Marshall, "Origin and Character," 381.

<sup>288</sup> George Kateb. "The Judgment of Arendt." *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 53(208:2), 1999: 133-154.

<sup>289</sup> Kateb, "The Judgment of Arendt," 134-5. This statement is clearly invoking the mantra of modern art – *l'art pour l'art*, or art for art's sake, rather than for embodying beauty and the associated values.

<sup>290</sup> To understand Arendt's position on this question, see: Hannah Arendt. "Lying in Politics," In *Crises of the Republic*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1972: 1-48.

<sup>291</sup> Ricoeur. *The Just* 104-6

<sup>292</sup> Hannah Arendt. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: Viking Press, 1964: 293

majority when the majority is wrong. Thus, her vision of judgment is deeply committed to preserving the ability to dissent.

### **Room for Dissent?**

This analysis of Arendt sheds light into the importance of the revolutionaries' battle against prejudices and reveals it to be a matter of exerting control over the accepted forms of knowledge. By excluding prejudices, the revolutionary authors excluded real people from their new politics. Their idealized goal is understandable. Prejudices prevent this judgment making process and do not encourage debate. The French revolutionaries believed, as many commentators do today, that ignorance is the source of prejudices. More accurately, though, prejudices encourage people to ignore new information, new beliefs, new ideas by prioritizing traditional ones. As common societal beliefs, prejudices allow individuals to avoid reexamining traditional beliefs and practices, even when those exclude members of society. Prejudices create an illusion of a unified society and people; this vision is intimately linked to why societies cannot achieve true self-governance but instead frequently fall prey to populist movements. Arendt therefore correctly identified prejudices as a threat to politics, but I argue that the language of prejudices itself creates the opportunity for individuals to circumvent political discussion.

The ubiquitous use of the term prejudice labels the Other's knowledge as irrational and invalid and thus precludes the possibility for discussion between opposing sides. Prejudices functioned as a derogatory term used to dismiss others' ideas on a philosophical premise so as to avoid the necessity of having to engage in them. Since prejudices are always already a danger to society, labelling various beliefs as prejudices served as a way to

discredit undesired dissent. Words today that carry the connotation of prejudice (racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.) also silence discussion. By not allowing for free political dialogue, individuals limit their perceived realm of possibilities for political decisions. Rancière argues that “[t]o lose sight of the double specificity of political ‘dialogue’ is to lock oneself into false alternatives requiring a choice between the enlightenment of rational communication and the murkiness of inherent violence or irreducible violence.”<sup>293</sup> Furthermore, these pejorative terms marginalize individuals who hold these beliefs and cut them off from the allegedly real people of the nation. This vision of a unified people may give further support for the revolutionaries or enlightened members of society, but it hides significantly different visions for society. For a democracy or republic to be committed to the values of good judgment, it must accept the possibilities for dissent embodied in prejudices.

Debate, not conformity, is the ideal.

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<sup>293</sup> Rancière, *Disagreement*, 43.

## **Appendix 1: French Revolution Timeline**

- July 5, 1788 – Announcement of the convening of the Estates-General; suspension of censorship
- December 27, 1788 – Council doubled number of delegates from Third Estate
- January – April 1788 – Election of deputies
- May 5, 1789 – Estates-General convened
- June 17, 1789 – Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly
- June 20, 1789 – Tennis Court Oath
- July 14, 1789 – Storming of the Bastille
- August 4-11, 1789 – Abolition of feudalism
- August 26, 1789 – Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen
- October 5-6, 1789 – Women and National Guard forced King and National Assembly to move to Paris
- November 2, 1789 – Nationalization of Church property
- July 12, 1790 – Civil Constitution of the Clergy
- July 14, 1790 – Festival of the Federation
- June 2, 1791 – Louis XVI flees Paris
- October 1, 1791 – First Session of the Legislative Assembly
- October 30, 1791 – First meeting of the Committee of Public Instruction
- April 20, 1792 – France declared war on Austria; Condorcet plan presented
- August 10, 1792 – Mobs swarmed Tuileries; monarchy suspended; call for the election of the National Convention
- September 2-5, 1792 – September Massacres
- September 19, 1792 – Last meeting of the First Committee of Public Instruction
- September 20, 1792 – National Convention opened
- September 22, 1792 – Republic declared
- October 15, 1792 – First meeting of the Second Committee of Public Instruction
- December 18, 1792 – Lanthenas report
- December 20, 1792 – Romme report
- January 21, 1793 – King executed
- March 11, 1793 – Revolts in Vendée began

May 31-June 2, 1793 – Purge of the Girondins  
June 26, 1793 – Sieyès-Daunou-Lakanal report  
September 5, 1793 – Terror declared  
September 17, 1793 – Law of Suspects passed  
October 5, 1793 – Revolutionary calendar adopted, begins retroactively on the first day of the  
Republic  
October 20, 1793 – Romme’s report  
December 19, 1793 – Bouquier Law passed  
April 6, 1794 – Execution of Indulgents  
June 8, 1794 – Festival of the Supreme Being  
July 27, 1794 – Robespierre arrest (9 thermidor II)  
April 1, 1795 – Sans-culottes invade National Convention  
March 20, 1795 – Last meeting of the Committee of Public Safety  
October 5, 1795 – First Directory  
October 25, 1795 – Daunou Law passed  
September 4, 1797 – Second Directory  
October 17, 1797 – Napoleon’s treaty with Austria  
November 9, 1799 – Sieyès and Napoleon overthrow Directory  
December 13, 1799 – Napoleon made First Consul

## Appendix II: The Committee of Public Instruction<sup>294</sup>

In 1791, the first Committee of Public Instruction was established under the Legislative Assembly. The French Constitution required a national system of public instruction, but the assemblies had not adopted the plans already proposed. When the National Convention replaced the Legislative Assembly in 1792, it also created a Committee of Public Instruction. In July 1793, Robespierre created a Commission of Public Instruction as a sub-committee to the Committee of Public Safety because he felt that the original committee was not invested enough in the goals of the Revolution. He hoped that the smaller body would be more efficient in passing and enforcing educational legislation. Throughout its history, the Committees and Commission's primary mission was to establish a national system of education.

These committees and commission were made up of deputies, and they met at least twice a week but frequently every day. The minutes for these meetings listed the responsibilities of each member for the next week and contained reports on duties. The Committee regularly presented its progress to the legislator. The two committees were broken down into sub-committees, responsible for research of education systems, correspondence duties by region or type. They debated every possible aspect of education, such as how many schools there should be per number of students, beginning age of students, the pay of teachers, and surveillance methods. They passed several decrees. They confiscated books of the aristocracy for the new National Library and tried to stop the public from

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<sup>294</sup> Unless otherwise noted, information for this appendix comes from Guillaume, *Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de l'Assemblée législative* and *Comité d'instruction publique. Procès-verbaux du Comité d'Instruction publique de la Convention Nationale*, Tomes 1-5.

vandalizing cathedrals and other cultural relics. Most of their work was relatively ignored by the Legislative Assembly and National Convention.<sup>295</sup>

The members' political affiliations varied significantly; for instance, several members had voted to acquit the King. Some members were imprisoned during the Terror or after Thermidor but were ultimately released. Quite a number of the members had been affiliated with teaching orders before the Revolution and thus had direct teaching experience; all of these members took the oath of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. All three of these bodies produced, analyzed, and recommended plans for public instruction systems, but they also engaged in other forms of didactic politics. Playing cards were redesigned with workers and representations of liberty and equality in place of the monarchy. The Committees are responsible for the creation of the metric system, the new republican calendar, and the renaming of streets and locations in France. They organized public festivals, commissioned artworks, and oversaw changes to the French language.<sup>296</sup> One of their projects was the establishment of libraries and museums throughout France.

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<sup>295</sup> Palmer, *Improvement of Humanity*, 123.

<sup>296</sup> C.f. Mona Ozouf. *Festivals and the French Revolution*. Alan Sheridan, Trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.



### **Legislative Assembly's Committee of Public Instruction Members:**

Lacepède	Dupin
Condorcet	Audrein
Cerutti (left Feb 1792, replaced by Theule)	Jean De Bry (left March 1792, replaced by Baudin)
Arbogast	
Vienot-Vaublanc	Quatemère
Gentil	Gibergues
Pastoret	Gausserand
Romme	Bonnier
Vayron	Gaudin
Rous-Rasillac	Quatresols-Marolles
Riboud	Guilloud
Carnot ainé	Urbain Chappe
Prieur	

### **National Convention's Committee of Public Instruction Members:**

Barthélémy Albuys	Claude-Joseph Ferry
Charles-Jean Alquier (from Vendée)	Joseph Fouché
Louis-François-Antoine Arbogast <sup>297</sup>	Henri Grégoire
Edme-Louis-Barthélemi Bailly	Jean-François-Auguste Izoard
Jean-Henry Bancal des Issauds	Jean Julien
Jean-François Barailon	Joseph Lakanal
Claude Basire	Jean-Denis Lanjuinais
Jean Bassal	François Lathenas
Pierre-Charles-Louis Baudin	Joseph-Marie-Philippe Martinel
Léonard Bourdon de la Crosnière	Louis-Sébastien Mercier
Laurent-Martial-Stanislas Boutroue	Michel-Edme Petit
Léonard Buzot	Claude-Antoine Prieur-Duvernois
Pierre-Jacques-Michel Chasles	Charles-Gilbert Romme
Charles-Antoine Chasset	Pierre Roux de Fazillac
Marie-Joseph de Chénier	Antoine-François Sergent
Jacques-Bernardin Colaud de la Salcette	Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès
Marquis de Condorcet	Antoine-Claire Thibaudeau
Jacques-Michel Coupé	
Pierre-Claude-François Daunou	
Jacques-Louis David	
Charles-François Dupuis	
Pierre-Toussaint Durand de Maillane	
Jean Dusaulx	
Charles Duval	

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<sup>297</sup> He is primarily responsible for the emphasis that the Committee placed on textbooks. Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*, 108.

## Commission of Public Instruction Members

Phillipe Rühl

Joseph Lakanal

Henri Grégoire

Jacques-Michel Coupé

Louis-Antoine de Saint-Just (served one week, replaced by Robespierre)

Jeanbon Saint-André (served one week, replaced by Bourdon de la Crosnière)

## Educational Plans<sup>298</sup>

1791

Mirabeau's Project: primary education fee-based, allowed independent schools, National Lycee at head

Taylletrand's report: free, allowed independent schools, controlled by legislature

1792

Condorcet's project: free, addressed female education, hierarchical and controlled by hierarchal administration

Lanthenas' project: focused on primary schools, called teachers *instituteurs* and forbade priests from teaching, communes responsible for funding

Romme's project: free, hierarchal, promoted academic freedom, never debated

1793

Sieyès-Daunou-Lakanal report: primary co-education, standard salaries for teachers, Central Commission of Public Instruction would oversee local inspection bureaus, allowed independent schools under the surveillance of the Commission, only private higher education, emphasized festivals

Lepelletier's scheme: boarding schools starting from age 5 for both genders, state controlled

Romme's report: advocated for the suppression of all existing educational institutions, primary state, co-educational schools

Bouquier's law: free, independent education, state textbooks, teachers monitored through *certificats de civisme*, considered higher education aristocratic

1795

Daunou Law: fee-based, state-subsided, allowed independent schools, National Institute, central schools in every department, special schools for deaf and blind

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<sup>298</sup> Barnard, *Education and the French Revolution*, 247-251.