



**DENIS
DIDEROT**
(1713-1784)

Diderot

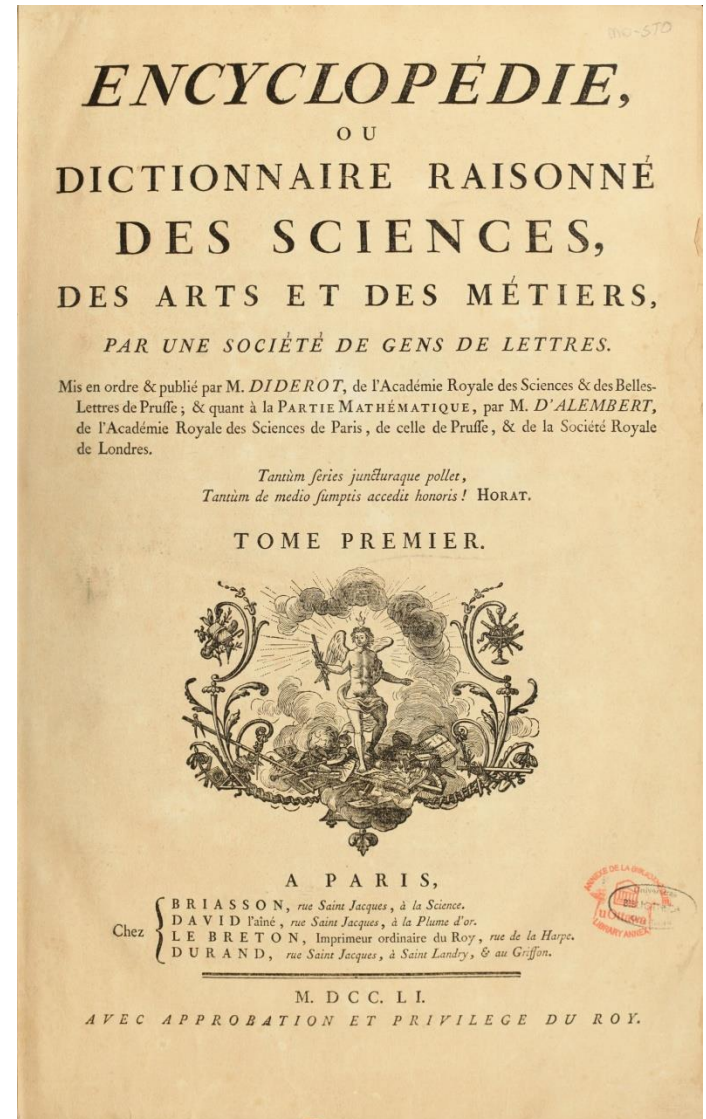
- French philosopher, art critic, writer.
- Master of Arts degree in Philosophy.
- Disowned by father who wanted him to study medicine or law while his interest lay in literature.
- Married Antoinette Champion in 1743, but has affairs with other women.
- Translated English books in 1740s which began to gain him notoriety.

Famous works

- Co-founder, chief editor and contributor to the *Encyclopédie* along with Jean le Rond d'Alembert.
- Translated Shaftesbury's 'Inquiry on Merit and Virtue' into French.
- Published 'Pensees philosophique' (1746), a work that criticized both atheism and Christianity, but was still burned by the Parisian parliament.

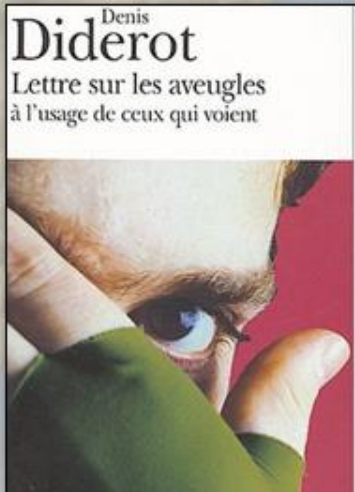
Encyclopédie

- First encyclopedia to include contributions from many named contributors.
- First general encyclopedia to lavish attention on the mechanical arts.
- Encyclopédie's aim was "to change the way people think".
- He wanted to incorporate all of the world's knowledge into the Encyclopédie and hoped that the text could disseminate all this information to the public and future generations.



‘Do we ourselves not cease to feel compassion when distance or the smallness of the object produces the same effect on us as lack of sight does on the blind?’

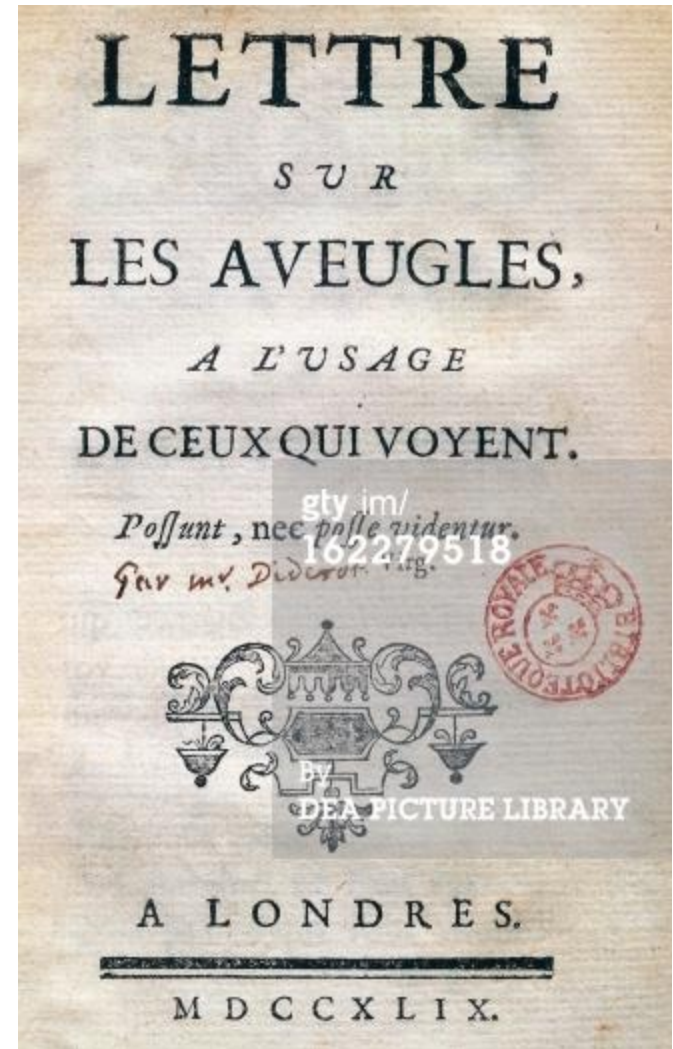
‘... I feel quite sure that were it not for the fear of punishment, many people would have fewer qualms at killing a man who was far enough away to appear no larger than a swallow than in butchering a steer with their own hands.’



Denis Diderot, *Lettre sur les aveugles* (1749)

‘Letter on the Blind’

- Published in 1749
- It is a discussion of the interrelation between man's reason and the knowledge acquired through perception (the five senses).
- The title also evoked some ironic doubt about who exactly were "the blind" under discussion.



Contributions to literature

- His work, *Jacques the Fatalist and his Master*, is influenced by Tristram Shandy.
- It challenges conventions regarding novels, their structure and content, and also examines philosophical ideas about free will.
- Wrote the imaginary conversation *Rameau's Nephew*, upon which many articles and sermons about consumer desire have been based.

DIDEROT

LE

NEVEU DE RAMEAU

SATYRE

*publiée pour la première fois sur le manuscrit original
autographe*

Avec une introduction et des notes

PAR

GEORGES MONVAL

*Accompagnée d'une Notice sur les premières éditions
de l'ouvrage et de la Vie de Jean-François Rameau*

PAR

ER. THOINAN



PARIS

LIBRAIRIE PLON

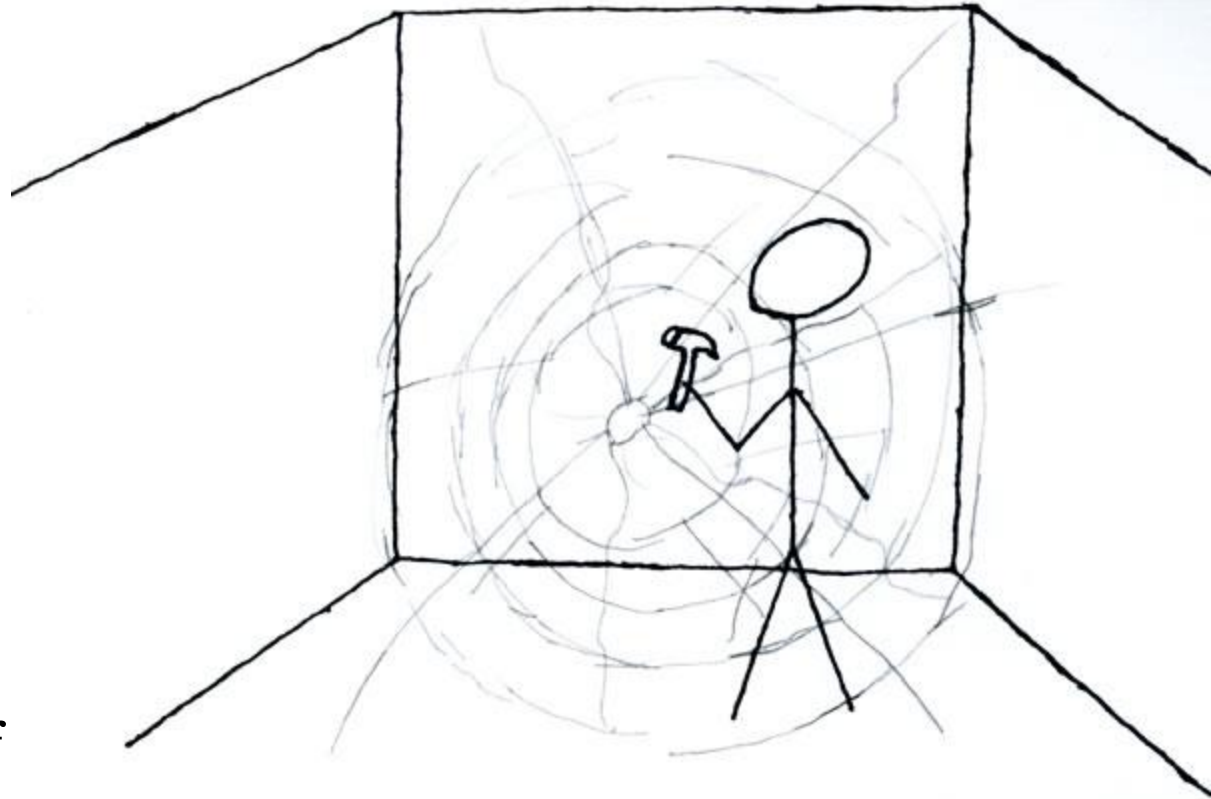
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Rue Garancière, 10

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MDCCCXCI

The fourth wall

Introduced the concept of the fourth wall, the imaginary "wall" at the front of the stage in a traditional three-walled box set in a proscenium theatre, through which the audience sees the action in the world of the play.



An unsuccessful career

- He could not obtain the bare official recognition of merit which was implied by being chosen a member of the Académie française.
- However Empress Catherine II of Russia commissioned an agent in Paris to buy the library when he planned to sell it.
- She then requested that the philosopher retain the books in Paris until she required them, and act as her librarian with a yearly salary.



Statue of Diderot at his birthplace in Langres

Death

- Diderot died of pulmonary thrombosis in Paris on 31 July 1784, and was buried in the city's Église Saint-Roch.
- His heirs sent his vast library to Catherine II, who had it deposited at the National Library of Russia.



Monument to Diderot in Paris