

Dialogue on the Foundations of the Modern

1) "The century after 1600 has been designated by many names: the age of power, the age of expansion, the age of revolution. The list goes on; and taken separately, each of these designations points out some important trend or "truth" about the seventeenth century as reflected in one of its various facets. Taken together, however, these names suggest a greater theme, one which transcends each particular view and brings them all into coherent relationship. This theme, which we may call the urge towards absolutism, concerns the accelerated drive by strong-willed and powerful men to achieve integral power and full control over society in its political, economic, and general cultural aspects." Gentrain Syllabus

2) **Moliere's writings about *Tartuffe*** -- Petitions to the King and Preface

[adapted from Library of Liberal Arts, ed. R. W. Hartle, 1965]

First Petition

PRESENTED TO THE KING

Concerning the Comedy *Tartuffe*

SIRE:

Whereas the duty of comedy is to correct men by amusing them, I felt that, being in that profession, I could do no better than to attack, by ludicrous portrayals, the vices of my age; and since hypocrisy is certainly one of the commonest, most disagreeable, and most dangerous, the thought occurred to me, Sire, that I should render no small service to all the upstanding people of your kingdom, if I wrote a comedy which would discredit hypocrites and properly expose all the studied grimaces of those excessively pious folk, all the covert rascalities of those counterfeits of piety who try to trap men with spurious zeal and sophistical charity.

I made this comedy, Sire, with, I believe, all the possible care and

circumspection demanded by the delicate nature of the subject; and, the better to preserve the esteem and respect we owe to the truly pious, I differentiated as well as I could between them and the character I had to deal with. I have left no ambiguity, I have removed whatever could confuse good with evil, and in this portrait I have used only clear colors and essential traits that make immediately manifest a true, out-and-out hypocrite.

Nevertheless, all my precautions have come to naught. They took advantage, Sire, of the susceptibility of your heart in matters of religion, and they were able to overcome you in the only way by which you are vulnerable, I mean by your respect for sacred things. The *tartuffes* have had the underhanded skill to find grace in the eyes of your Majesty; in short, the originals have had the copy suppressed, no matter how innocent nor how true the likeness.

Although the suppression of this work was a severe blow, nevertheless my misfortune was softened by your Majesty's explanation of this matter; and I believed, Sire, that you relieved me of all grounds for complaint by your kindness in saying that your Majesty found nothing to criticize in the play that you forbade me to present in public.

But despite this splendid declaration from the greatest as well as the most enlightened king in the world, despite the added approval of his Eminence the Papal Legate [1] and the great majority of our prelates, who all, after my private readings of the work, have been in agreement with the sentiments of your Majesty; despite all that, I say, we see a book composed by the curate of --[2] which brazenly contradicts all that august testimony. Your Majesty speaks for nothing, and his Eminence the Legate and the prelates give judgment for nothing; my comedy -- though not seen -- is diabolical, and diabolical, my brain; I am a devil dressed in flesh and clothed like a man, a freethinker, impious, worthy of an exemplary execution. Public burning would not suffice to expiate my offense, that would be letting me off too lightly; this worthy gentleman is careful not to stop there in his charitable zeal: he wants me to get no mercy from God; he insists that I be damned-- the matter is settled.

This book, Sire, was presented to your Majesty; and, surely, you can imagine

how disagreeable it is for me to be exposed every day to those gentlemen's insults, how much wrong such calumnies will do me in the world if they must be tolerated, and, finally, how much it is in my interest to be purged of its deceit and to make known to the public that my comedy is nothing like what is claimed. I shall not say, Sire, what I should like to request for my reputation and to justify to all the innocence of my work. Enlightened kings like yourself have no need to have our wishes pointed out; they see, like God, what we need, and know better than we what they should grant to us. It is sufficient to place my interests in the hands of your Majesty and to await respectfully whatever it may please your Majesty to ordain.

<https://pages.uoregon.edu/nateich/worldlit/moliere.html>

3) Galileo's Recantation of Heliocentric Theory

I, Galileo, son of the late Vincenzo Galilei, Florentine, aged seventy years, arraigned personally before this tribunal, and kneeling before you, Most Eminent and Reverend Lord Cardinals, Inquisitors-General against heretical depravity throughout the entire Christian commonwealth, having before my eyes and touching with my hands, the Holy Gospels, swear that I have always believed, do believe, and by God's help will in the future believe, all that is held, preached, and taught by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. But whereas -- after an injunction had been judicially intimated to me by this Holy Office, to the effect that I must altogether abandon the false opinion that the sun is the center of the world and immovable, and that the earth is not the center of the world, and moves, and that I must not hold, defend, or teach in any way whatsoever, verbally or in writing, the said false doctrine, and after it had been notified to me that the said doctrine was contrary to Holy Scripture -- I wrote and printed a book in which I discuss this new doctrine already condemned, and adduce arguments of great cogency in its favor, without presenting any solution of these, and for this reason I have been pronounced by the Holy Office to be vehemently suspected of heresy, that is to say, of having held and believed that the Sun is the center of the world and immovable, and that the earth is not the center and moves:

Therefore, desiring to remove from the minds of your Eminences, and of all faithful Christians, this vehement

suspicion, justly conceived against me, with sincere heart and unfeigned faith I abjure, curse, and detest the aforesaid errors and heresies, and generally every other error, heresy, and sect whatsoever contrary to the said Holy Church, and I swear that in the future I will never again say or assert, verbally or in writing, anything that might furnish occasion for a similar suspicion regarding me; but that should I know any heretic, or person suspected of heresy, I will denounce him to this Holy Office, or to the Inquisitor or Ordinary of the place where I may be. Further, I swear and promise to fulfill and observe in their integrity all penances that have been, or that shall be, imposed upon me by this Holy Office. And, in the event of my contravening, (which God forbid) any of these my promises and oaths, I submit myself to all the pains and penalties imposed and promulgated in the sacred canons and other constitutions, general and particular, against such delinquents. So help me God, and these His Holy Gospels, which I touch with my hands.

I, the said Galileo Galilei, have abjured, sworn, promised, and bound myself as above; and in witness of the truth thereof I have with my own hand subscribed the present document of my abjuration, and recited it word for word at Rome, in the Convent of Minerva, this twenty-second day of June, 1633.

I, Galileo Galilei, have abjured as above with my own hand.

<https://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/galileo/recantation.html>

4) CANONS AND DECREES OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT: ON THE INVOCATION, VENERATION, AND RELICS, OF SAINTS, AND ON SACRED IMAGES.

...Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honor and veneration are to be given them; not that any divinity, or virtue, is believed to be in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that anything is to be asked of them; or, that trust is to be reposed in images...but because the honor which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which those images represent...

...Moreover, in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished; finally, all lasciviousness be avoided; in such wise that figures shall not be painted or adorned with a beauty exciting to lust; nor the celebration of the saints, and the visitation of relics be by any perverted into reveling and drunkenness; as if festivals are celebrated to the honor of the saints by luxury and wantonness.

...In fine, let so great care and diligence be used herein by bishops, as that there be nothing seen that is disorderly, or that is unbecomingly or confusedly arranged, nothing that is profane, nothing indecorous, seeing that holiness becometh the house of God.

Selections from Giovanni Bellori's biography of Caravaggio (c.1670)

[After arriving in Rome Caravaggio] began to paint according to his own genius. He not only ignored the most excellent marbles of the ancients and the famous paintings of Raphael, but he despised them, and nature alone became the object of his brush. Thus when the most famous statues of Phidias and Glycon were pointed out to him as models for his painting, he gave no other reply than to extend his hand toward a crowd of men, indicating that nature had provided him sufficiently with teachers.

This facile manner attracted many, and only the old painters who were accustomed to the old ways were shocked at the new concern for nature, and they did not cease to decry Caravaggio and his manner. They spread it about

that he did not know how to come out of the cellar and that, poor in invention and design, lacking in decorum and art, he painted all his figures in one light and on one plane without gradations.

There is no question that Caravaggio advanced the art of painting because he came upon the scene at a time when realism was not much in fashion and when figures were made according to convention and manner and satisfied more the taste for gracefulness than for truth.

Moreover, he followed his model so slavishly that he did not take credit for even one brush stroke, but said that it was the work of nature. He repudiated every other precept and considered it the highest achievement in art not to be bound to the rules of art.

With all this, many of the best elements of art were not in him; he possessed neither invention, nor decorum, nor design, nor any knowledge of the science of painting. The moment the model was taken away from his eyes his hand and his imagination remained empty.

His first manner, with its sweet and pure color, was his best; in it he made the greatest achievements and proved himself to be the most excellent colorist but later, driven by his peculiar temperament, he gave himself up to the dark manner, and to the expression of his turbulent and contentious nature.