

## Shadowed Enlightened Thinkers

*The People Who Did The Real Thinking But Didn't Get Any Credit*

There are many unknown enlightened thinkers, but all of them made contributions to the greater good, helping advance the world to what it is today. A few of them are Jędrzej Śniadecki, Georges-Louis Leclerc-Comte de Buffon, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, Gaetano Filangieri, Jędrzej Śniadecki, Jean Meslier, and Johann Elert Bode.

### **Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon**

*Author, Mathematician, Geologist, Naturalist*

“He was not an evolutionary biologist, yet he was the father of evolutionism. He was the first person to discuss a large number of evolutionary problems, problems that before Buffon had not been raised by anybody ... he brought them to the attention of the scientific world. Except for Aristotle and Darwin, no other student of organisms [whole animals and plants] has had as far-reaching an influence. He brought the idea of evolution into the realm of science. He developed a concept of the ‘unity of type’, a precursor of comparative anatomy. More than anyone else, he was responsible for the acceptance of a long-time scale for the history of the earth. He was one of the first to imply that you get inheritance from your parents, in a description based on similarities between elephants and mammoths. And yet, he hindered evolution by his frequent endorsement of the immutability of species. He provided a criterion of species, fertility among members of a species, that was thought impregnable.”-Ernst Mayr

Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788) studied astronomy, mathematics, and natural history at Janssen's College in Dijon. He wrote 44 volumes about natural history

(called *Natural History*), a manual of all known plants, natural history, biology, geology, and anthropology. He became a royal society member on a trip to England. Like Kelper, Buffon had a problem. Unlike Kelper, Buffon solved his problem. Buffon's needle problem found the probability that a needle of a certain length will fall on a line (on a paper) placed at certain intervals. He translated many books from French to English. In 1739 he was made the Keeper of the Royal Botanical Garden and Natural History Museum. His son, Georges Louis Marie du Mont de Courset was also a naturalist, botanist, and agronomist who published six volumes of *Natural history*. He wrote many books about the universe and human history(*Epochs of Nature* and *Theory of the Earth*). He believed the universe had seven stages in its past. He thought the solar system was created by a collision between the Sun and a comet. First the collision, then the cooling, then a planetary ocean, the water stops, planetary volcanoes, the land dries then plants, animals, and humans. His writings were popular with most people, but many scientists were sceptical. He avoided censorship by saying that his writings were not made to be against the Scriptural Truths.

"If Buffon had assumed that his organic molecules had been formed by each separate unit throughout the body, his view and mine would have been very closely similar."-Charles Darwin

### **Julien Offray de la Mettrie**

*Blasphemous Writer, Physician, Physiology, Philosophy*

Julien Offray de la Mettrie (1709 to 1751), studied medicine at the University of Paris. When he finished he went to Reims to get a degree. He studied under Hermann Boerhaave, who might have affected his blasphemous writing. First he wrote a book about the soul, which was kinda offensive. His book was condemned, but he wrote another book with even more kinda

nasty stuff about religious people and doctors. This book was so hated he had to flee to Holland in 1747 to avoid his growing fan club, all of which were wielding pitchforks and torches. He wrote another book, *L'homme Machine* (The Human Machine) with the nastiest stuff yet, all about atheism and materialism and other nastier touchier subjects, which greatly increased his deadly fan club. He fled to Frederick the Great of Prussia who made him a member of the royal academy of sciences and a reader to the king. He wrote and translated many other books, but the worst of them was *Discours sur le bonheur* (a Speech on Happiness), which greatly increased the pitchfork mob. It was said he died from an act of gluttony.

### **Gaetano Filangieri**

*Jurist, Philosopher*

“[As long as] the evils which afflict humanity are not yet removed; errors, and prejudices which perpetuate errors, have their advocates and partizans; and truth is known but to a few privileged individuals, and is still kept at an awful distance from the thrones of kings, it is the duty of the scholar and the sage to endeavour to eradicate the former, and to proclaim, support and illustrate the latter. If the lights they scatter are not useful in their own times, and their own country, they may enjoy the certainty of having served other countries and succeeding generations. Citizens of the world, they are contemporaries of every age, the universe is their fatherland, the earth is their school, and posterity will be their disciples.”-Gaetano Filangeri.

Gaetano Filangieri was born into a noble Norman family in the year 1753. He was taught military tactics as was the tradition of his family but also studied law. At the age of twenty two (1774) he published his thoughts and reflections on politics. His writings were so good that in 1777 he was chosen as Majordomo of the week, Gentleman of the Chamber and officer of the

Royal Corps of Naval Volunteers in Bourbon under King Ferdinand IV. Working in the law system he realised how corrupt it was, and the large gap between the rich and the poor. He wrote *'The science of Legislation'* on the political system, advising the monarchs what to do about it. Apparently it was a good book. He became sickly and moved to the country, but he returned to work in the Supreme Court of Finance. He became even more sick and moved with his wife to his sister's castle in Solvent. He died a few months later at 35 years of age in the year 1788.

### **Jędrzej Śniadecki**

*Writer, Physician, Chemist, Scholar*

Jędrzej Śniadecki was a Polish writer, physician, chemist, and professor who lived from 1796 to 1838. After his parents died, he was raised by his older brother, Jan Śniadecki, who later became a distinguished astronomer and mathematician. He studied medicine at Krakow Academy. He continued studying medicine at the University of Pavia, where he also began to study chemistry. He graduated at 25 in the year 1793, after which, in 1794, he went to the University of Edinburgh, which was known for their chemistry courses. He worked most of his life at Vilnius University, giving lectures and writing many books about chemistry. He also wrote simple books about day to day chemistry because he believed that the common people needed to know. He also wrote a paper called *On a New Metal in Crude Platinum*, which described ruthenium. He opened and headed a Department of Chemistry until he retired. Six years later he returned as the Clinic of Therapy head and stayed working there until he died.

### **Jean Meslier**

*Blasphemous Writer, Catholic priest (or so you thought)*

Jean Meslier, 1664 to 1729, wrote only one book, which was published after his death.

*The Testament* was atheist, declaring all religions a ploy by the government to keep the peasants in control. He hated all religions, especially Christianity, even though he pretended to be a Catholic Priest. He said he felt 'sorry' for all those poor people who believed such 'nonsense'. He felt bad for the common folk and wanted to help them (only good thing he did), which is what Christianity is about, by telling them to ditch religion. For obvious reasons, he was abhorred by many people.

### **Johann Elert Bode**

*Astronomist, Mathematician*

Johann Elert Bode (1749-1826) was born in Germany with smart parents who taught him early on. When he was little he contracted smallpox, going blind in the right eye, and staying sickly for much of his life, but that did not stop him. He married Johanna Christiane Lange (great niece of Berlin astronomer Christine Kirch). After she died, he married her older sister. After she died, he married Charlotte Wilhelmine Lehmann. Then she died and he did not remarry. He studied astronomy and higher mathematics, publishing his first work as a teenager. He graduated from Berlin Academy in 1772. He co-wrote the Titius-Bode formula with Johann Daniel Titius, a Prussian Astronomer. The T-B formula states adding 0, 3, 6, 12, 24, etc. Then divide by ten and found will be the distance of the planets in AU. This worked, except that the asteroid belt counted as a planet, until Neptune was found, banishing the theory. He made the Berlin academy yearbook into a famous astronomical journal, heading it until he died. He also published a huge star chart called *Uranographia* (after the planet he named in 1781) recording all known stars, quasars, nebulae, and supernovae, 17,000 space items in all. It was printed on copper plates which made it a little bit pricey. Bode became a royal astronomer in 1784 and used his position

to enlighten the common folk. Two years later he became the director of the Berlin observatory. He wrote many chart and manual about the sky for all people, a few of the more well known being *Instructions For Knowing the Starry Sky Set Up For Every Single Month of the Year* and *The Berlin Astronomical Almanac* Co-written with Johann Lambert, which printed from 1772-1960. He found a few comets (one of which became Bode's comet) and two galaxy nebulae: M81 (Bode's galaxy) and M82 in 1774 and a globular cluster in 1775: M53. He named Uranus, which he proved had been found in 1690 but mistaken as a star. He shall be remembered because, most importantly, there is a crater on the moon named after him (there is a crater named after every astronomer. Charon's craters on google maps are something worth seeing).

# OUTLINE

## I. Introduction

- A. Thesis: There are many unknown enlightened thinkers, but all of them made contributions to the greater good
- B. Explanation

## II. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. impact

## III. Julien Offray de la Mettrie

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. impact

## IV. Gaetano Filangieri

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. Impact

## V. Jędrzej Śniadecki

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. Impact

## VI. Jean Meslier

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. Impact

## VII. Johann Elert Bode

- A. Life
- B. Life's work
- C. Impact

## VIII. Conclusion

- A. Summary

### **Works Cited**

- 1# Manger, Lois N. "Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon." Science and it's times, vol. 4; 1700-1799, Gale 2000, *Gale ebooks*.
- 2# "La mettrie, julian Offray de." complete dictionary of scientific biography. Encyclopedia.com. 18 of February, 2020.
- 3# Ferrell, Keith. "Johann Elert Bode." Science and it's times, Gale 2000, *Gale ebooks*.
- 4# Vatanian, Aram. "Jean Meslier." Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Macmillan, 2006. *Gale ebooks*.