DARE TO KNOW
Chess in the Age of Reason

An age when the game of kings first became …
A GAME OF THE PEOPLE

We think of chess as the game of kings. And it is. But there was a time when chess was also the game of those who were throwing off their kings. A time when chess was the game of dangerous radicals and revolutionaries, writers and intellectuals; men and women who used coffeehouses, newspapers and salons as we use the internet, to spread once-forbidden ideas and knowledge, ideas that would ultimately shatter the old order, and usher in the modern world.

The problem with chess as a game of kings, of course, is that it has always nourished independent thinking. And *this* has always been dangerous to the established order. In any era, there are those who are not content to bow down to authority, especially when that authority is abusive, wrong-headed, or simply fails to best serve the people. As it happened in 1789, today's monolithic institutions might easily become tomorrow's obsolete *Ancien Régime*.

In all the vast upheavals of the 18th century, chess was in the thick of things, played in taverns and inns as well as royal courts, played by misfits and disaffected intellectuals as well as kings and aristocrats. In 1784, some five years before the Storming of the Bastille, *sapere aude* was the old Latin motto applied to that century by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, in an essay analyzing and defending the Enlightenment. *Sapere aude* translates as "dare to know," "dare to be wise" or more loosely as, "dare to think for yourself."

SAPERE AUDE thus became the unofficial battle cry of the Enlightenment. It is also good basic advice for any chess player. Trust in your own analysis of the position, and do not be too intimidated by your opponent's smug looks, nor too reliant on conventional wisdom (the "book" line).

The current exhibition at the World Chess Hall of Fame and Museum examines this fascinating and little-understood era of chess history in depth for the first time anywhere, covering roughly the years from 1700 through 1830. At the beginning of the era, with few exceptions, chess was a game played primarily by kings and their courtiers, as well as the clergy. The few servants or tradesmen who had the leisure time to enjoy the game tended to be attached to the aristocracy somehow. Even the great Philidor started out as a child in a company of royal musicians, and is said to have picked up the game from them, as a way to pass the time while waiting to be summoned for performances. Chess books were very few and far between. By the end of the era, people of all classes played in great numbers, chess books began to be published in greater and greater numbers (soon to become a deluge), and that vast age of much more complex and better-known chess history, the 19th century, had dawned.

What caused such a drastic transformation in our beloved game? It turns out to have been a natural outgrowth of the Enlightenment, a phenomenon that likewise transformed so much of the world. Our exhibition includes material from the various regional Enlightenments of Europe and America, but will focus primarily on that most central, the first Enlightenment – the *French* Enlightenment.

Most historians define the Enlightenment as beginning in the early 18th century and ending sometime much later in the century, usually with the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789.

Our date range takes in a bit more than that, to include something of both the pre- and post-Enlightenment periods.

REINVENTING THE WORLD – THE *ENCYCLOPÉDIE*

It is impossible to discuss the Enlightenment without also discussing the famous *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert, and vice-versa. Indeed, it is difficult to say which one would never have occurred at all, without the other. Just what was this *Encyclopédie*? Most scholars agree, if we could choose just *one* artifact or document to best represent the entire Age of Englightenment, our only possible choice would be Diderot's *Encyclopédie*. It is the most famous, the most infamous, the most controversial, the most revolutionary, the most subversive, and the most dangerous encyclopedia ever published. It is a document that helped to inspire and lay the groundwork for the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and many other revolutions around the world. It is a document that helped modern nations to separate Church from State. It is a document that literally toppled monarchies, and helped break the chains of religious intolerance. And in the bargain, it was an accurate snapshot of the technology, art, literature, culture, and modes of thinking of 18th century France. Scholars still rely on it today for authoritative answers to many historical questions relating to the period.

The lofty and audacious goal of the *Encyclopédie* was nothing less than to gather together all human knowledge, and yet at the same time, to fundamentally change the way people think. It had its own daring story of being written and published, at times against seemingly impossible odds, and once in print, it succeeded in revolutionizing the world.

But before all this, the *Encyclopédie* had set out to be, first and foremost, an encyclopedia, in the ordinary, everyday sense of that term. To modern people, it may seem hard to believe that the writing of an encyclopedia could be so fraught with controversy. But this one was written by a unique group known as the *encyclopédistes*, most of whom also counted themselves among the French *philosophes*, the leading progressive intellectuals of the era. Such authors could not help but infuse their articles with high-minded concepts of tolerance, reason and open-mindedness, and egalitarian political ideas which up until then had held no place in political thought. As a result, the *encyclopédistes* worked under constant threat of censorship, arrest, and even worse. The *Encyclopédie* was the work of its chief editor, the *philosophe* Denis Diderot, assisted by Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, and over 150 other authors, many toiling in obscurity. By far the most prolific author was the Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, who wrote over 17,000 articles, or roughly a quarter of the entire *Encyclopédie*. (Diderot himself wrote well over 5,000 articles, the second highest total.)

There were of course many other important literary and philosophical contributions to Enlightenment thought (Rousseau's *Social Contract* and Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* spring to mind; unsurprisingly both these men are also to be counted among the *encyclopédistes*), yet in many ways it is not going too far to argue that the Enlightenment *was* the *Encyclopédie*, and the *Encyclopédie was* the Enlightenment.

Historians will always debate the extent to which the Enlightenment and/or the *Encyclopédie* actually *caused* the French Revolution and the many other societal upheavals soon to follow. And it is often claimed, rightly or wrongly, that the *encyclopédistes* and *philosophes* sought societal *evolution*, not revolution.

[Margin quote: "Men will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest." – Denis Diderot (1713-1784), echoing a popular jest of the day.]

But it is probably fair to say that the *Encyclopédie* – chock-full as it was of common sense, progressive ideas, reason and rationality in science, and dangerously radical new notions about

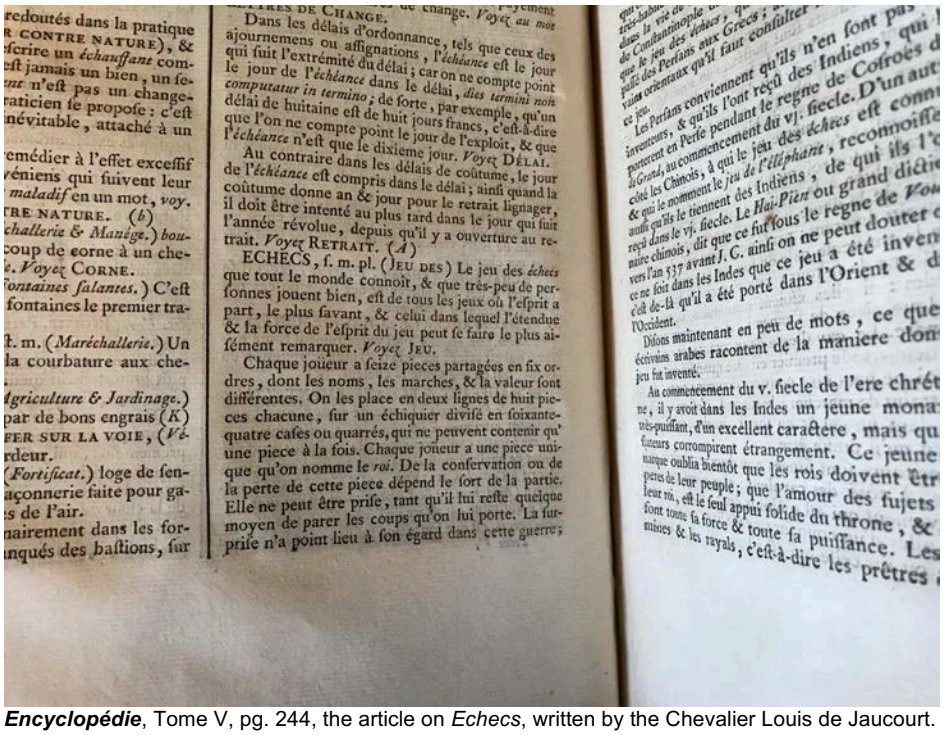
basic human rights – that this document fatally undermined the authority of Crown and Church. So much so that the effect was literally to unmoor society, to cut it adrift. And what society then drifted *toward* was the long series of cataclysms we now refer to as the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, and the Napoleonic Wars. Millions died, but the modern world as we know it was forged in the process.

Before the Revolution, while the *Encyclopédie* was being written, French society was governed exclusively by the clergy and the aristocracy, what were known as the First and Second *Estates*. The lowly Third Estate, composed of the farmers and peasants, tradesmen and servants (some 98 percent of the population!), had little power or say in their own government. By the time the Revolution was over, this world had been mutilated beyond all recognition. The aristocrats had long since been beheaded on the guillotine, and the Third Estate had grown vastly in power and influence, a political juggernaut much more in proportion with their population numbers. A long series of revolutions would continue to consume France for much of the 19th century as well. Though history might repeat itself, change was irreversible: By 1830, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, and the now-powerful Third Estate was soon to burgeon into a much more modern phenomenon we refer to as the rise of the middle class.

It is mind-boggling to realize how much of the credit for these sweeping changes can be traced back to the monumental *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and d'Alembert. No other encyclopedia or reference work of any kind, before or since, has ever changed the world to such an extent as this one. Even just the introduction, the famed *Preliminary Discourse* written by d'Alembert, which audaciously attempts to systematize all knowledge, serves as much more than a general introduction to this reference work. It is considered required reading for anyone seeking to understand the principles of the Enlightenment itself.

AN ENDURING MYSTERY: *KNIGHT or BISHOP?*

Chess is included in the *Encyclopédie* of course, in two main places: First, in the 5th text volume (1755), under the E's (for *Échecs*, the French word for chess), on page 244, can be found the actual article about the game, written and signed by the ever-prolific Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt.



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LETTRES DE CHANGE.

Dans les délais d'ordonnance, tels que ceux des ajournemens ou aſſignations, l'*échéance* eſt le jour qui ſuit l'extrémité du délai ; car on ne compte point le jour de l'*échéance* dans le délai, *dies termini non computatur in termino* ; de ſorte, par exemple, qu'un délai de huitaine eſt de huit jours francs, c'eſt-à-dire que l'on ne compte point le jour de l'exploit, & que l'*échéance* n'eſt que le dixieme jour. *Voyez* DÉLAI.

Au contraire dans les délais de coûtume, le jour de l'*échéance* eſt compris dans le délai ; ainſi quand la coûtume donne an & jour pour le retrait lignager, il doit être intenté au plus tard dans le jour qui ſuit l'année révolue, depuis qu'il y a ouverture au retrait. *Voyez* RETRAIT. (*A*)

ECHECS, ſ. m. pl. (JEU DES) Le jeu des *échecs* que tout le monde connoît, & que très-peu de perſonnes jouent bien, eſt de tous les jeux où l'eſprit a part, le plus ſavant, & celui dans lequel l'étendue & la force de l'eſprit du jeu peut ſe faire le plus aiſément remarquer. *Voyez* JEU.

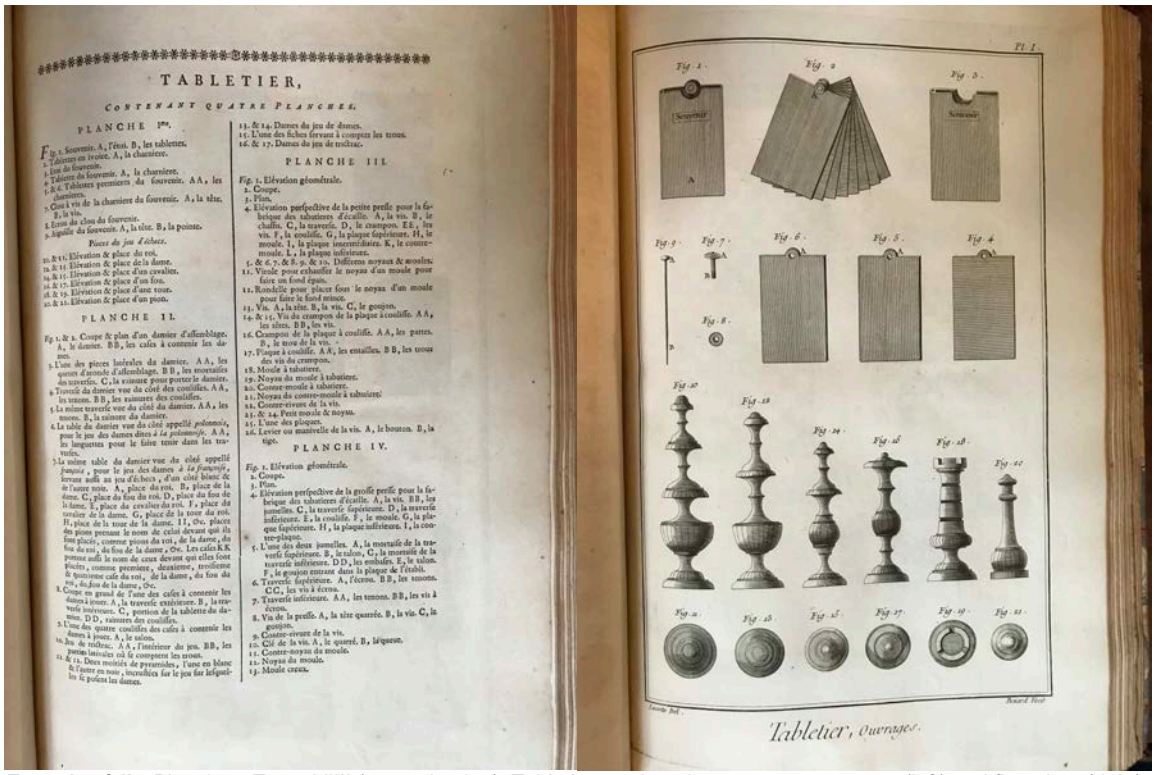
Chaque joüeur a ſeize pieces partagées en ſix ordres, dont les noms, les marches, & la valeur ſont différentes. On les place en deux lignes de huit pieces chacune, ſur un échiquier diviſé en ſoixante-quatre caſes ou quarrés, qui ne peuvent contenir qu'une piece à la fois. Chaque joüeur a une piece unique qu'on nomme le *roi*. De la conſervation ou de la perte de cette piece dépend le ſort de la partie. Elle ne peut être priſe, tant qu'il lui reſte quelque moyen de parer les coups qu'on lui porte. La ſurpriſe n'a point lieu à ſon égard dans cette guerre ;

dans la vûe de
de Conſtantinople
que le jeu des *échecs*,
paſſa des Perſans aux Grecs ;
vains orientaux qu'il faut conſulter
ce jeu.
Les Perſans conviennent qu'ils n'en ſont pas
inventeurs, & qu'ils l'ont reçû des Indiens, qui
porterent en Perſe pendant le regne de Cofroès
le Grand, au commencement du VI. ſiecle. D'un autre
côté les Chinois, à qui le jeu des *échecs* eſt connu
& qui le nomment le *jeu de l'éléphant*, reconnoiſſent
auſſi qu'ils le tiennent des Indiens, de qui ils l'ont
reçû dans le VI. ſiecle. Le *Hai-Pien* ou grand dictionnaire chinois, dit que ce fut ſous le regne de *Vou*
vers l'an 537 avant J. C. ainſi on ne peut douter
ce ne ſoit dans les Indes que ce jeu a été inven
c'eſt de-là qu'il a été porté dans l'Orient & d
l'Occident.
Diſons maintenant en peu de mots, ce que
écrivains arabes racontent de la maniere dont
jeu fut inventé.
Au commencement du V. ſiecle de l'ere chrét
ne, il y avoit dans les Indes un jeune mona
très-puiſſant, d'un excellent caractere, mais qu
flateurs corrompirent étrangement. Ce jeune
narque oublia bientôt que les rois doivent être
peres de leur peuple ; que l'amour des ſujets
leur roi, eſt le ſeul appui ſolide du throne, &
ſont toute ſa force & toute ſa puiſſance. Les
miſes & les rayals, c'eſt-à-dire les prêtres

Encyclopédie, Tome V, pg. 244, the article on *Echecs*, written by the Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt.

And second, in the 9th plate volume (1771) lies an illustration of a chess set that has fascinated and confused chess historians and collectors for some 250 years. A common enough wooden playing set of the day, it was pictured here, not because it was considered important to show what a chess set looked like, but merely because a chess set was one of the typical products of a *Tabletier*, or toymaker. And it was the toymaker's craft work that was really on display. The full title of the *Encyclopédie* was, after all, *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Encyclopaedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts). The toymaker's work was featured in this plate volume simply because it was an important *industry*.

A few other games are featured in the toymaker's section also, notably Polish draughts (played on a 10 x 10 board) and *tric-trac* (backgammon). And yet, in spite of this seemingly incidental reason for inclusion, the particular chess set depicted here, because of its association with the famous *Encyclopédie* (it is the *only* set depicted therein), has come to be the chess set that most strongly symbolizes the Age of Reason in the minds of historians, scholars and collectors. It exists in only a handful of known, complete sets. It is always referred to as an *Encyclopédie* set, or sometimes as a *Diderot* set, though it also gave rise to later (closely related) styles such as the *Directoire* and *Régence*.



TABLETIER,

CONTENANT QUATRE PLANCHES.

PLANCHE Ire.

Fig. 1. Souvenir. A, l'écu. B, les tablettes.
2. Tablettes en ivoire. A, la charnière.
3. Etui du souvenir.
4. Tablettes du souvenir. A, la charnière.
5. & 6. Tablettes premieres du souvenir. AA, les charnieres.
7. Clou à vis de la charniere du souvenir. A, la tête. B, la vis.
8. Ecrou du clou du souvenir.
9. Aiguille du souvenir. A, la tête. B, la pointe.

Pieces du jeu d'échecs.

10. & 11. Elévation & place du roi.
12. & 13. Elévation & place de la dame.
14. & 15. Elévation & place d'un cavalier.
16. & 17. Elévation & place d'un fou.
18. & 19. Elévation & place d'une tour.
20. & 21. Elévation & place d'un pion.

PLANCHE II.

Fig. 1. & 2. Coupe & plan d'un damier d'assemblage. A, le damier. BB, les cases à contenir les dames.
3. L'une des pieces latérales du damier. AA, les queues d'aronde d'assemblage. BB, les mortaises des traverses. C, la rainure pour porter le damier.
4. Traverse du damier vue du côté des coulisses. AA, les tenons. BB, les rainures des coulisses.
5. La même traverse vue du côté du damier. AA, les tenons. B, la rainure du damier.
6. La table du damier vue du côté appellé *polonnois*, pour le jeu des dames dites *à la polonnoise*. AA, les languettes pour le faire tenir dans les traverses.
7. La même table du damier vue du côté appellé *françois*, pour le jeu des dames *à la françoise*, servant aussi au jeu d'échecs, d'un côté blanc & de l'autre noir. A, place du roi. B, place de la dame. C, place du fou du roi. D, place du fou de la dame. E, place du cavalier du roi. F, place du cavalier de la dame. G, place de la tour du roi. H, place de la tour de la dame. II, &c. places des pions prenant le nom de celui devant qui ils sont placés, comme pions du roi, de la dame, du fou du roi, du fou de la dame, &c. Les cases KK portent aussi le nom de ceux devant qui elles sont placées, comme premiere, deuxieme, troisieme & quatrieme case du roi, de la dame, du fou du roi, du fou de la dame, &c.
8. Coupe en grand de l'une des cases à contenir les dames à jouer. A, la traverse extérieure. B, la traverse intérieure. C, portion de la tablette du damier. DD, rainures des coulisses.
9. L'une des quatre coulisses des cases à contenir les dames à jouer. A, le talon.
10. Jeu de trictrac. AA, l'intérieur du jeu. BB, les petites lunettes où se comptent les trous.
11. & 12. Deux moitiés de grenouilles, l'une en blanc & l'autre en noir, incrustées sur le jeu sur lesquelles se jouent les dames.
13. & 14. Dames du jeu de dames.
15. L'une des fiches servant à compter les trous.
16. & 17. Dames du jeu de trictrac.

PLANCHE III.

Fig. 1. Elévation géométrale.
2. Coupe.
3. Plan.
4. Elévation perspective de la petite presse pour la fabrique des tablettes d'écaille. A, la vis. B, le chassis. C, la traverse. D, le crampon. EE, les vis. F, la coulisse. G, la plaque supérieure. H, le moule. I, la plaque intermédiaire. K, le contre-moule. L, la plaque inférieure.
5. & 6. 7. & 8. 9. & 10. Différens noyaux & moules.
11. Virole pour exhausser le noyau d'un moule pour faire un fond épais.
12. Rondelle pour placer sous le noyau d'un moule pour faire le fond mince.
13. Vis. A, la tête. B, la vis. C, le goujon.
14. & 15. Vis du crampon de la plaque à coulisse. AA, les têtes. BB, les vis.
16. Crampon de la plaque à coulisse. AA, les pattes. B, le trou de la vis.
17. Plaque à coulisse. AA, les entailles. BB, les trous des vis du crampon.
18. Moule à tabatiere.
19. Noyau du moule à tabatiere.
20. Contre-moule à tabatiere.
21. Noyau du contre-moule à tabatiere.
22. Contre-virure de la vis.
23. & 24. Petit moule & noyau.
25. L'une des piquets.
26. Levier ou manivelle de la vis. A, le bouton. B, la tige.

PLANCHE IV.

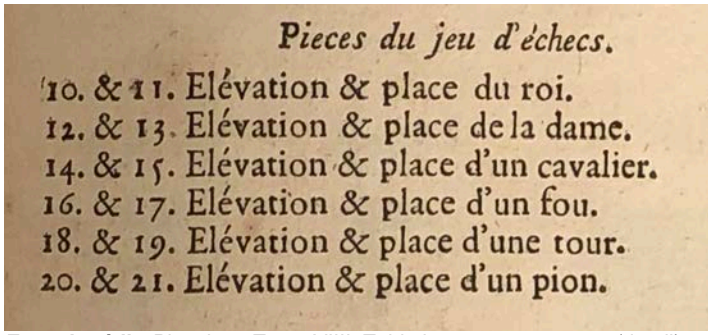
Fig. 1. Elévation géométrale.
2. Coupe.
3. Plan.
4. Elévation perspective de la grosse presse pour la fabrique des tabatieres d'écaille. A, la vis. BB, les jumelles. C, la traverse supérieure. D, la traverse inférieure. E, la coulisse. F, le moule. G, la plaque supérieure. H, la plaque inférieure. I, la contre-plaque.
5. L'une des deux jumelles. A, la mortaise de la traverse supérieure. B, le talon. C, la mortaise de la traverse inférieure. DD, les embases. E, le talon. F, le goujon entrant dans la plaque de l'établi.
6. Traverse supérieure. A, l'écrou. BB, les tenons. CC, les vis à écrou.
7. Traverse inférieure. AA, les tenons. BB, les vis à écrou.
8. Vis de la presse. A, la tête quarrée. B, la vis. C, le goujon.
9. Contre-virure de la vis.
10. Clé de la vis. A, le quarré. B, la queue.
11. Contre-noyau du moule.
12. Noyau du moule.
13. Moule creux.

Pl. I.

Tabletier, ouvrages.

Encyclopédie, Planches, Tome VIIII (no pagination), Tabletier, explanation or comments page (left) and first plate (right). The plates were drawn by Jacques-Raymond Lucotte and engraved by Robert Bénard.

The six different chess pieces are depicted in a sophisticated manner, giving both elevation (side view) and plan (top view), in the manner of an architectural drawing. One of the pieces, fourth from the left, is depicted as having a top cut into a crude triangle. We might expect this piece to be the knight, and after some convoluted deliberations it will indeed turn out to be so! Many writers have pointed out that this crude triangular cut was probably cheaper than employing a skilled carver to make horses' heads, the rest of the set being turned quite inexpensively on the lathe, and this was probably a factor.



Pieces du jeu d'échecs.

10. & 11. Elévation & place du roi.
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14. & 15. Elévation & place d'un cavalier.
16. & 17. Elévation & place d'un fou.
18. & 19. Elévation & place d'une tour.
20. & 21. Elévation & place d'un pion.

Encyclopédie, Planches, Tome VIIII, Tabletier, comments page (detail).

Yet right away, we notice a slight problem. On the comments page which precedes this plate, we find that the third piece from the left is referred to as the *cavalier*, or knight, while the fourth piece from the left is dubbed the *fou*, or bishop. Largely on the strength of this, and a misguided instinct to treat the *Encyclopédie* as some sort of infallible gospel, collectors and chess historians ever since have been twisting themselves into knots trying to prove that the triangular-cut piece was indeed intended as the bishop, and the taller round-topped piece as the knight. Countless times we have seen collectors arrange sets from this era with pieces that are clearly knights on the

bishops squares, with taller bishops on the knights squares, confident that they have got it right. Confusion reigns supreme.

Some have even claimed that the triangular-cut piece represents a prelate's hat, and therefore marks this piece out as the religious bishop. They can only be referring to a Roman Catholic biretta or perhaps the Anglican Canterbury cap, related hats that more often have four corners than three. This argument is easily disposed of, as we shall see.

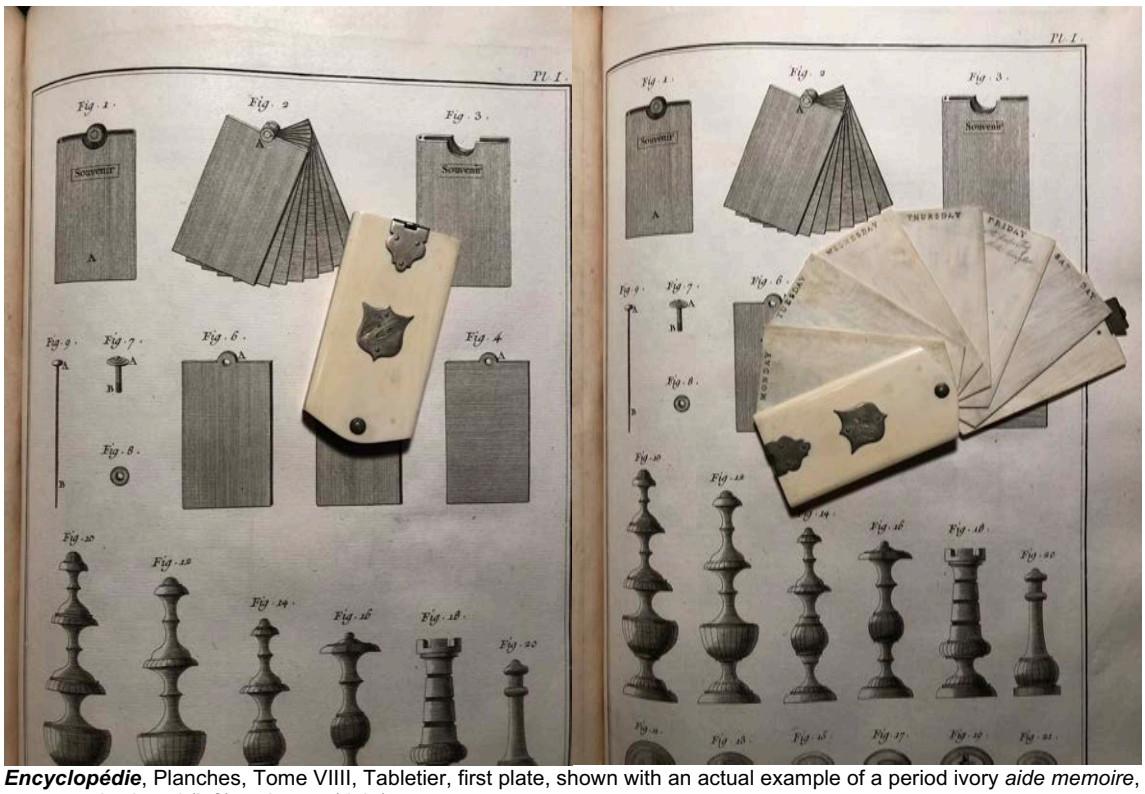
Much of the confusion is due to the fact that the *Encyclopédie* is very difficult for researchers to access. The first edition is an expensive, nearly unobtainable item for book collectors, and copies in institutional libraries often require special permission to access. Even online access has been spotty and unreliable until quite recently. We have been truly fortunate in having access to a genuine first edition, which repays careful study, and which we believe clears this matter up once and for all. It can be done in two simple propositions:

PROPOSITION ONE: The *Encyclopédie* is full of errors, and this is one of them.

PROPOSITION TWO: The confusion caused by such errors can be persistent, and a lasting legacy of evidence on both sides of the debate is created.

On Proposition One, it is quite clear that the claim on the comments page, as to which piece is which, is a mere typographical error – a misprint. Amazing though it was, the *Encyclopédie* was full of such errors. First editions of most books, published under the best of circumstances, commonly have errors that somehow find their way into print. It was even more so with the *Encyclopédie*, which was published under the constant threat of censorship, arrest and even death hanging over its editors' heads. Never was the successful outcome of such an important project so uncertain for so long. It is something of a miracle that we have the *Encyclopédie* at all. So you can bet a work as monumental as this one was full of errors – thousands upon thousands of errors. (To acknowledge this does not in any way diminish the importance of the *Encyclopédie*, or dilute its revolutionary, world-shaking impact.)

Errata sheets were often included in subsequent volumes, seeking to correct mistakes in previous volumes, but even these could not possibly catch all the errors. (There were no *errata* sheets ever issued for any of the plate volumes of the first edition, as far as I can tell, and the particular mistake under consideration was never corrected in any of the later printings or editions of the *Encyclopédie* that I have been able to access, but this question could use further research.)



Encyclopédie, Planches, Tome VIIII, Tabletier, first plate, shown with an actual example of a period ivory *aide memoire*, or *souvenir*, closed (left) and open (right).

There are even further mistakes to be found on this *same plate*! One that can be quickly isolated is at the top-center of the illustration (Fig. 2), where the letter "A" shown on the fanned-out ivory tablet leaves should actually be a "B" according to the comments page.

Incidentally, this part of the illustration demonstrates why the French word for toymaker is *Tabletier*, because the same craftsmen also made these ivory tablets, commonly carried by both men and women as a kind of appointment book, basically the smart phone of the 18th century. They went by a couple of different names; *aide memoire* (an aid for the memory) is what they are usually called today, but the word given on the comments page is *souvenir* (not in the modern sense of something picked up in one's travels, but simply the French word for *remembrance*). The ultra-thin ivory leaves could be written on in eraseable pencil, allowing people to make notes and keep track of social, commercial, or professional engagements. There are usually six leaves, one for each day of the week. You were not supposed to have any appointments on Sundays, but this did not stop many people from writing on the inside back cover when needed. Today we would not think of a "toymaker" as making an adult item such as this, but in 18th century France, they obviously did.

But returning to the chess pieces, if the fourth piece from the left had really been intended as a bishop, it unquestionably would have been pictured third from the left in the illustration, not fourth. The pieces in the illustration are arranged as such things have always been, as one hypothetical wing of the army, from the king's file to the queen's rook file, adding the pawn at the end of the row. The queen stands between the king and her bishop, just as she would on the board. And even more telling, if we refer back to the actual article on chess in the text volumes (Tome V, 1755), we quickly find, at the top of page 246, that, in rough translation, "the *third* piece in chess is the bishop, and … the knights, who are the *fourth* piece in chess …" If we relate these paragraphs to our famous illustration, counting from left to right, it proves that the triangular-cut piece is in fact a knight. Case closed.

On Proposition Two, in an age before mass media, or much in the way of standardization generally, once a mistake like this had been published, the confusion generated was immediate and intractable. (There was probably much confusion on a point like this even before the publication of the *Encyclopédie*.) Even today, having digested our arguments under Proposition One, there are those collectors and historians who will remain stubbornly unconvinced. And they are certainly welcome to do so, for they would merely be following in the best tradition of other confused parties from centuries ago, given that there is plenty of period evidence on both sides of the case, generated centuries ago by the original error. (Or possibly even existing before that!) We will examine but a smattering of this evidence.

To take a similar case, today we insist upon the chess board as needing to be set up with a white square on each player's near right corner. It is apparently a very old rule; Philidor tells us, in his famous *Chess Analysed*, 1st English ed., London, 1750, at pg. vi, that this was due to the "fact" that this white square on the right was considered a good omen by the chess players of ancient *Greece*, no less! (And this is in a part of the Preface where he is complaining bitterly about the lack of standardization – even mutilation – of the rules and equipment in many countries. No great fan of chess *variants*, was Philidor.)

In the antiques trade, we often meet with certain chess boards where this rule was not followed, the original carpenter or craftsman obviously being unaware of it. This "mistake" (again, it is really just a lack of standardization) is expecially common with folding boxboards where the 64 squares are folded in half, or with some chess tables. Such boards and tables can often only be set up properly according to modern standards with some awkwardness; for example the boxboard being set up lengthwise between the players, instead of crosswise, which would allow for an easier reach across the table. There is at least one example of such a boxboard in the exhibit:

Folding Boxboard in Ebony and Ivory, German, circa 18th or early 19th century. Note that this is made "incorrectly" by modern standards, and must be set up lengthwise between the players to achieve a white square in the near right corner.

There are even very old boards where, to play on them at all, the players must simply accept that they will have to have a dark square on the near right corner. Sometimes it is denied that these are chess boards at all, but rather boards for some other game. (And indeed some of them may turn out to be, for example, Italian draughts boards – the Italian variant of draughts actually does call for a dark square on the player's right-hand corner.)

As for the argument that the triangular piece represents a prelate's hat and is therefore a bishop, this is also quite easy to refute. *IF* (and it's a rather big if) this crudely cut triangle top really does

represent a hat of some sort, it cannot possibly be the obscure and little known 4-cornered biretta or Canterbury cap (the latter never seen in France). Rather, it must be the most universally-worn hat of the entire 18th century, across the whole of Europe – the tricorn.

The tricorn was actually not so named until the 19th century. The term used in the 18th century was "cocked hat," due to the three sides being turned up to form better rain gutters for outdoor use – I kid you not. But we will call it a tricorn here, as this is the term most people are familiar with today. The tricorn was the most popular and ubiquitous hat of the 18th century, worn by all classes of society, from peasants right up to the nobility. It was especially popular for military men, and even some women were known to sport a tricorn occasionally, when they went hunting, to attend a masqued ball, or were otherwise in the mood to make a somewhat mannish fashion statement.

Frederick II, *a.k.a.* Frederick the Great (1712-1786), painted by Wilhelm Camphausen. (Wikipedia.) King of Prussia, military genius, musician, composer, art patron, so-called "enlightened despot," subscriber to the *Encyclopédie*, and an avid chess player, Frederick was a major proponent of the Enlightenment, but did not think that implementing its principles meant getting rid of all kings, necessarily. The enlightened "philosopher kings" in the Socratic sense, that is, men like himself, could safely be left in power. (Catherine the Great of Russia felt the same way. Ominously, so would Napoleon.) Frederick was and is nearly always depicted with his walking stick, and either wearing or doffing his ever-present tricorn hat, which, as a military *Chevalier*, he wore more often than any crown of state.

The tricorn was most especially associated with the *cavalier*, or mounted horseman, and by the 18th century, this was exactly what the medieval knight had evolved into. *Knight, cavalier, Chevalier* – these were all related terms, having an unshakeable association with horses and horsemen, in a military context. *Cheval* is the French word for horse, and *Chevalier* is a title or rank which specifically refers to an order of knighthood. Note that we are not hearing much that is ecclesiastical in any of these terms. We are obviously talking about *knights*, not bishops.

For the chess knight to be represented as a horse's head was commonplace before, during and after the Enlightenment – on *most* sets. But in the mid-18th century, and certainly by the time of the 9th plate volume in 1771, it was also common for simpler, less-expensive playing sets to feature this abstract, triangle-headed knight (perhaps for reasons of economy, as we have

already mentioned). And then, apparently, the fashion swung back towards horse's heads. Another piece of evidence whereby we can *know* the tricorn piece was a knight and not a bishop, is given by this transitional set, one of the earliest known examples which is indisputably an *Encyclopédie* set, and yet where the tricorn piece has been replaced by a rudimentary horse's head, anticipating the later *Régence* style:

Transitional *Encyclopédie* set in wood, French, circa 1750-1790. It is very important to note that, although this set is absolutely an *Encyclopédie* set in every other way, the abstract "tricorn" knights have been replaced by a horse's head, proving yet again that the tricorn piece was always a knight, and not a bishop. The round-headed bishops have been retained, completely unmodified. Note also, however, that the knights here are a bit taller than the bishops, a common feature of these early transitional sets.

And yet, having said all this, it is finally time to give some of the evidence for the other side of this debate. And there is actually quite a bit. Many early French sets can be found where the tricorn piece explicitly and unequivocally became a bishop, while the knights once again sprouted horse's heads. And it must be admitted, whether this was due to confusion created by the *Encyclopédie* plate, or simply because some players liked it this way, we will probably never know. There is a fine ivory example in the Brykman collection:

French *Régence* set in ivory, circa late 18th to early 19th century. Note that the diminutive bishops in this set have triangular-cut tops. Brykman collection.

And there is more, a whole genre, in fact. Bone (and sometimes ivory) figural sets made in the German town of Geislingen during the 18th and 19th centuries (once thought to be from Dieppe) were usually carved with both a horse-head piece, undoubtedly the knight, and a tricorn-wearing military officer or cavalier standing as the bishop. These "cavalier bishops" often feature actual leather tricorns, sometimes fur-lined, sometimes even removable. They may be military officers and not religious figures due to some form of anti-clericalism (the same reason the French bishop is a *fou*, or fool), or for some other reason. Again, the question of whether the original designers of these Geislingen sets were confused by the *Encyclopédie* plate, or simply following a local tradition, is a mystery.

Figural Geislingen set in bone, German, circa 1750-1790. Like the majority of Geislingen sets, this one features both horse-head knights and "cavalier bishops" sporting leather tricorn hats.

Therefore, if you are bound and determined to argue that the tricorn piece was a originally intended as a bishop and not a knight, then perhaps you would be well-advised to consider collecting Geislingen sets. They will most assuredly take your side in the debate.

The question becomes even more complicated than this, since even men in religious orders quite often wore the ubiquitous tricorn, but we will let the subject rest at this point.

Voltaire plays chess with Father Adam, 1770-1775, painted by Jean Huber, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Note that Father Adam wears a tricorn.

The alert chess historian or collector will discover many other examples over the years, of a lack of standardization in chess artifacts from this era, or of so-called "mistakes" (according to modern definitions) in items which were crafted by artisans who were simply making things to their own standards, for their own purposes, according to their best understanding of the rules. Though a chess set will almost always be recognizable as a chess set, we will find we often cannot hold the artisans of centuries ago accountable to our exacting specifications.

Even with regard to the styles of sets, we may confidently call something a Geislingen set or a Dieppe set; yet scholarship in these matters is constantly evolving, and it must be admitted that hybrids and hard-to-classify sets are often met with. And historically, it is impossible to know when a carver from one part of the world might have moved to another part of the world, whether

due to war, or a life at sea, and made sets in the old, familiar style – or just as likely, a carver who stays put might have suddenly carved a few sets in a style seen through trade with distant lands – sets that future generations of collectors will then proceed to mis-attribute. Therefore, most attributions (especially of anonymous, unsigned sets – the majority) must always remain tentative, and the exact boundaries of these collecting categories must always remain elusive, ambiguous, and hard-to-define. As soon as you think you have established a general rule, someone will disagree, and someone else will be happy to step forward and show you a counterexample, or three. I am not foolish enough to pretend that this will be the last word in the debate, by any means.

PLAYERS of the WORLD, *AWAKE!*
The RISE of the COFFEE HOUSE

"You have all Manner of News there: You have a good Fire, which you may sit by as long as you please: You have a Dish of Coffee; you meet your Friends for the Transaction of Business, and all for a Penny, if you don't care to spend more."

Maximilien Misson (c. 1650-1722), on the proliferation of London coffeehouses in the late 17th century.

Just as chess was the chosen game of the *philosophes* and most others who championed the use of reason and common sense in human affairs, coffee was their chosen drink. Because of the way coffee tended to sharpen the wits, rather than dull them like alcohol, coffee was the obvious choice for all manner of thinkers, writers, *philosophes*, *encyclopédistes*, scientists, academics, and everyone else intent on living what we would now call a life of the mind.

Today it is almost impossible to find a decent chess coffeehouse anywhere in the world; they have mostly gone the way of the dodo bird, or shall we say the *Ancien Régime*. Like the dodo, once there were thousands of them. Every major city in Europe and the Americas had countless options to choose from; there were some three hundred coffeehouses in Paris alone, most of them allowing or encouraging chess and other sober games such as draughts. (London probably had just as many.) While most chess players today have heard of the Café de la Régence, and perhaps Café Procope, these were only the most famous. It is easy to forget they were surrounded by others.

In his new book, *Reading Jean-Jacques Rousseau through the Prism of Chess*, Univ. of Michigan Press, 2019, Professor Florian Vauléon takes us through the litany of options available near the Café de la Régence alone. It is worth quoting at length:

"There was the Café de Foy, founded in 1749, on the upper floor of which was located the academy of the chess players, known as the Salon des Échecs. Only chess was allowed in this private society that admitted a new member following a unanimous vote by all other existing members. There was the Salon des Arts, upstairs from the Café du Caveau, which hosted the authors, intellectuals, and artists. In this salon, there was a room for discussions and debates, another room for music, and a library. All games were prohibited except chess and checkers, which could be played only in a specific room. The Café Bidaut was mainly frequented by chess players, and the Café Valois was a well-known rendezvous for first class chess-players. There was, among the most famous coffeehouses, the Café de Chartres, the Café méchanique, the Beaujolais, the Café polonais, the Café des Variétés, the Café Lemblin, Les Mille colonnes, the Café Corazza, the Café Février, the Café italien, and, in the basement, the Caveau des aveugles, all of them located in the galleries of the Palais Royal." (As was the Café de la Régence itself.)

If you thought the explosion of Starbucks locations in the 1990's was a new phenomenon, think again. History teaches that it has all happened before.

[Margin Quote: "No matter the weather, rain or shine, it's my habit every evening at about five o'clock to take a walk around the Palais Royal. I'm the one you see dreaming on the bench in Argenson's Alley, always alone. I talk to myself about politics, love, taste, or philosophy. I let my spirit roam at will, allowing it to follow the first idea, wise or foolish, which presents itself, just as we see our dissolute young men on Foy's Walk following in the footsteps of a prostitute with a smiling face, an inviting air, and a turned-up nose, then leaving her for another, going after all of them and sticking to none. For me, my thoughts are my prostitutes.

"If the weather is too cold or too rainy, I take refuge in the Café de la Régence. I like to watch the games of chess. The best chess players in the world are in Paris, and the best players in Paris are in the Café de la Régence. Here, in Rey's establishment, they battle it out: Legall the Profound, Philidor the Subtle, Mayot the Solid. One sees the most surprising moves and hears the stupidest remarks. For one can be an intelligent man and a great chess player, like Legall, but one can also be a great chess player and a fool, like Foubert and Mayot."

From *Rameau's Nephew*, a philosophical novel by Denis Diderot (1713-1784), translated by Ian C. Johnston of Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, 2002.]

The Café de la Régence was not merely the mecca for chess during the French Enlightenment. It was also a mecca for *philosophes*, *encyclopédistes*, and intellectuals generally. To name just two examples, this was where Diderot first met the philosopher Rousseau, in 1742. A century later, in 1844, a young Karl Marx would meet Friedrich Engels at the Café de la Régence for the first time.

Chess players today often tend to think of the Café de la Régence and places like it merely as places where chess was played, but this is a woefully inadequate view of history. If ever there was a place where world-shaking ideas flowed along with the flow of the black brew, mingling with the gentle click of the pieces, where the world literally became "woke" to use a modern expression, it was that venerable and much-mourned institution, the chess coffeehouse.

A Scene from the Café de la Régence, circa 1837 print after an 1792 painting by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761-1845). A calm and placid Philidor is shown as the player at left. His frustrated-looking opponent has not been identified, but the gentleman standing at far right, in the bicorn hat, is said to be Philidor's great teacher, François Antoine de Legall de Kermeur, or simply, Legall (1702-92), at that time the second-best player in France, who would die later that same year.

MYSTERIES OF THE AGES – *CHESS AMONG THE SECRET SOCIETIES*

As can be seen on the ritual apron pictured below, the floor of virtually every Masonic Temple has always been the chequered board, or chessboard pattern, of alternating black and white squares. The standard explanation for this symbolism is usually that it is taken as an allegory of the eternal opposition of life and death, or good and evil. (The philosophical term for this is *dualism*.) Coincidentally – or perhaps not – this is also the most common historical interpretation given as to why the chess board itself has alternating light and dark squares.

Master Mason's silk ritual apron, French, First Empire period, circa 1804 to 1815.

Chess was by far the most intellectually admired and respected game of the 18th century, and as such was widely played by Freemasons and members of most other secret societies (and there was considerable overlap; a member of one society often joined several others). Freemasonry at that time was torn by internal divisions, primarily between the *philosophes* who championed logic, rationality and common sense on the one hand; and the occultists, who championed ritual magic and mysticism on the other, with a thousand overlapping shades of gray in between. The game of chess, with its deep and multi-layered mysteries accessible only through prolonged study and meditation, fit right in with the Masonic ethos.

As it still does today, the word "Enlightenment" meant different things to different people. In some places and times, the meetings and practices of Freemasons were allowed or even encouraged under the law. At others, they were outlawed, and their members often persecuted by the government, or most especially by the Catholic Church, to whom the freethinking ways of the Freemasons represented an existential threat.

Ritual aprons like the one pictured were garments worn by master masons as an echo of their stoneworking forebears. This one seems caught somewhere between rationality and magic, as shown by its many timeworn symbols of the craft, including personifications of the Sun and Moon, the twin pillars of Jachin and Boaz from Solomon's Temple, the Sprig of Acacia, the Love Knot (or Infinity Knot), the Square, Compass, and other stoneworking tools, and a tiny Skull & Bones banner displayed at the center of the mystic Tholos (i.e., round) Temple. At the top, a deeply occult Ouroboros (snake biting its own tail, symbolizing eternity and many other things) surrounds a flaming star with the Masonic "G" (for God or Geometry) at its center. The depiction of the

Temple as an outdoor space is quite unusual, and dates from a time when the symbols on these ritual aprons were not as standardized as they are today. But it is the alternating squares of the chequered board, or chess board, which undergirds and is the foundation of them all.

A meeting of Freemasons in Vienna, circa 1790.

THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE – *VON KEMPELEN'S TURK*

Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
I wish, I wish he'd go away …

"*Antigonish*" by
William Hughes Mearns (1875-1965)

"A man who wasn't there" is an apt description of the greatest enigma of the 18th century, the famous chess-playing automaton known as the Turk. The invention of Wolfgang von Kempelen (1734-1804), the Turk made its debut at the court of Empress Maria Theresa in 1770. Nothing more than a strange cabinet or desk, at which was seated a robotic Oriental mannequin, this so-called "automaton" baffled aristocrats and courtiers, and later, common folk, around Europe and America with its uncanny ability to defeat the best chess players of the age. The Turk was a true original. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. It made for quite a spectacle, with its pantographic arm uncannily moving the pieces, and its artificial voice box that could pronounce one word, "*Échecs! Échecs!*" over and over, the Turk astonished audiences – including many of Europe's greatest minds – into believing that a machine really could play chess, and play it well.

The Turk, as depicted in Ueber den Schachspieler des Herrn von Kempelen und dessen Nachbildung (About the Chess-Player of Mr von Kempelen and an Imitation of It), by Joseph Friedrich zu Racknitz, Breitkopf, Leipzig and Dresden, 1789. The Turk spawned a veritable cottage industry of writers and thinkers who corresponded with one another and published books speculating about von Kempelen's invention, or even claiming to expose its secrets. Racknitz was one of the first, and most obsessed, and it is fair to say he was right about some things, wrong about others. The modern computer age was, in an important sense, born out of such speculations.

Since about the mid-19th century, it has been common knowledge that this was in fact a hoax, a mere magic trick, and that there was a human chess player hiding inside the whole time. Today therefore, we tend to think of the Turk as having a man hidden inside, with a little smoke and mirrors conjuring thrown in, to hoodwink the gullible 18th century audiences.

But this does not begin to do justice to the effect, which, when done properly, can still amaze and stupefy even modern, sophisticated audiences. Just picture all the doors thrown open, the cabinet spun around in full view of the audience, candlelight shining through from the back to reveal mostly empty space, save for a small amount of gearing and machinery, no room to hide a cat, much less a human being. In other words, if there *was* a man hiding inside, it seemed to the audience as if he literally "*wasn't there*" – couldn't possibly be there. Then, the doors being shut, and other preparations made, the so-called "machine" would proceed to defeat all comers over the board.

Our modern view also fails to do justice to the extreme difficulties of finding a human player of sufficient skill to defeat the vast majority of challengers, training him for the rigors of playing inside a cramped, hot, stuffy, candlelit coffin, swearing him to secrecy, and sneaking him in and out of countless stage doors and past other theater personnel, not to mention in and out of the cabinet itself, for performance after performance. For this reason, historians of magic consider the Turk to have been the first great "cabinet illusion," the term for making people and things appear and disappear from such cabinets or closets.

Today, the details of the internal workings of the Turk have been mostly reconstructed, reverse-engineered, or guessed-at by experts, who have been toiling away at the problem ever since that very first mind-boggling performance in 1770. John Gaughan, the famed magic effects creator, has indisputably come the closest, re-creating at great expense a full-sized working replica of the Turk that occasionally still gives performances. Arguably no other person now living understands the Turk better than he.

Yet it is still safe to say that the biggest secrets of the mechanism – in terms of how the human player was so effectively hidden, how he perceived what was happening on the board above him, and how he directed his moves in response – were fully known only to the Turk's original operators, and remain poorly understood by virtually everyone else to this day.

In the late 18th and early 19th century, automata were certainly nothing new. Mechanical clocks had been around for some time, and their complicated gearing had been applied to many other tasks, both entertaining and productive. But the idea that a mechanism could interact and respond to a human opponent, and even prevail in a contest as subtle and complex as a chess game, something requiring human intelligence, was at that time entirely new, not to mention shocking, and even deeply disturbing to many.

Many were sceptical and guessed at the secret, some coming close to the truth. Many were willing to believe that a machine really could play chess. A few thought the machine was possessed by evil spirits, and refused to go near it. But vast numbers of people, upon witnessing a performance of the Turk, began to dream about the infinite possibilities of machine automation. Among them were inventors who would go on to pioneer things like the first mechanical textile looms, and even the first modern computers.

The Turk is therefore much more than just an important episode in the history of chess, and much more than one of the greatest magic tricks ever performed. Fraudulent though it was, the Turk made a real contribution to the history of computers and technology in general, and to artificial intelligence in particular. Indeed, it is not going to far to say that the Turk helped to accelerate the Industrial Revolution itself.

The original Turk was completely destroyed in a museum fire in 1854. These three artifacts, held by the Library Company of Philadelphia, are the only surviving relics. In addition to playing full games of chess for audiences, the automaton could also perform feats such as endgame studies and the Knight's Tour, on command. The three items are:

- A traveling or "marine" chess board (because pegged chess boards and sets were often used at sea), probably the internal board used by the machine's human operator. (This board has holes in each square, which almost certainly accomodated a small pegged chess set. If the LCP just happens to have such a set anywhere in its collections, it probably belongs to this board.)
- A template or mask for allowing the human operator to perform the Knight's Tour, starting from any square on the board. Extremely worn.
- A leatherbound booklet of endgame problems, all of which the automaton would win, since it was stipulated to have the first move. This booklet bears the name of J. Maelzel (Johann Nepomuk Mälzel) who owned/toured with the automaton after von Kempelen's death, from 1805 through his own death in 1838.

How can we best understand these artifacts? How did they escape the fire that destroyed the Turk in 1854? These three items were stored separately from the automaton, and thus escaped the fire, probably because they are the human operator's pocket aids, the equipment carried in and out of the machine by the human player, so they would not be lying around in view while the cabinet's doors were being opened and closed for the audience. They were kept pocketed to leave the operator hands-free, to help lift himself in and around the hidden compartment, avoiding the view of the audience before settling down to play a game. Once he did however, these items would be taken out of his pockets, and become indispensible aids to staying oriented to what was happening on the main chess board above his head, thus enabling him to successfully play the games and perform the other feats. Such paraphernalia obviously could not be stored with the Turk itself, in case some nosy person decided to examine the automaton after hours.

In the parlance of modern computer technology, these three items constitute nothing less than the "human-machine interface" that allowed the human operator to give the illusion that a

machine could play chess better than any human being. Today of course, modern computers actually can.

Left, the Traveling Chessboard and Endgame Booklet; and **Right**, the Knight's Tour mask or template. The extreme wear bears witness to many, many public exhibitions and demonstrations. (Library Company of Philadelphia)

THE INFAMOUS *LAW of SUSPECTS*

We must smother the internal and external enemies of the Republic or perish with it; now in this situation, the first maxim of your policy ought to be to lead the people by reason and the people's enemies by terror.

Maximilien de Robespierre (1758-1794)

The first government of revolutionary France, called the National Convention, issued a series of decrees aimed at cementing the gains of the Revolution against any remaining royalists. These culminated in the decree of September 17, 1793 known as the Law of Suspects, which outlawed any form of aiding, abetting, or even sympathizing with, royals and the aristocracy. It explicitly stated that anyone even *suspected* of having such sympathies was to be placed under arrest. (Arrest in those days could quickly lead one to the guillotine.) This resulted in royal symbols and imagery of all kinds being frantically destroyed and replaced throughout France, and in other areas of Europe that were coming under French control.

In the world of games, this mainly affected chess sets and decks of playing cards. Some figural chess sets, and most card decks had to be redesigned, with the kings and queens having their crowns lopped off on the woodblocks used for printing them, or completely redrawn and replaced with Phrygian caps (the cap of liberty, or *bonnet rouge*).

For example, in the set below, Wallonia was annexed to France in 1795 as part of the War of the First Coalition (the first attempt of the great powers of Europe to stop Napoleon). The humble carver of this set would surely have been forced to replace the royals to keep it in his inventory at all, lest a French soldier or local busybody should wander into his shop and see the original kings and queens.

Walloon Set in Boxwood with Ivory Finials, Wallonia (Low Germany, or, today's Flemish Belgium & The Netherlands), circa 1790-1800. This set almost certainly had figural kings and queens at one time, to better match the rest of the set, but they were discarded and abstract replacement pieces deftly added, to protect the maker against the revolutionary paranoia then sweeping the nation.

Paris Pattern Piquet Deck, 32 cards (complete), circa 1790's. Like some figural chess sets, even playing cards had to be hastily redesigned to help their makers avoid the guillotine. This deck simply had the printer's woodblocks crudely recut to remove *most* of the royal crowns and scepters. (The stencils used to apply color were not adjusted in this case, so we can still just make out the crowns.) We can only hope that this was enough to protect the hapless card maker against accusations of royalist sympathy.

THE SELF-MADE MONSTER – *NAPOLEON*

"For him there is no one but himself: all other creatures are mere ciphers. The force of his will consists in the imperturbable calculations of his egotism: he is an able chess-player, and the human race is the opponent to whom he proposes to give checkmate." Madame de Staël on Napoleon.

Madame de Staël, 1891 print after the circa 1817 posthumous portrait by François Gérard.

Anne Louise Germaine de Staël-Holstein, usually called Madame de Staël (1766-1817) was a Swiss historian and woman of letters who was born in the middle of the Enlightenment, and grew up to see it evolve into the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. Her mother was a famed salonnière, and she herself became one of the most popular and influential salonnières of Paris in the late 18th century. She, earlier than most, saw through Napoleon's superficial charms and understood his true nature as a remorseless tyrant, who in his quest for personal power would eventually bring about the near-total destruction of Europe. For his part, Napoleon perceived in de Staël a dangerous adversary, and exiled her from France more than once.

The life of Napoleon himself is too well-known to need much recounting here; the extraordinary man of relatively humble birth, who rose through a fortunate combination of his own indefatigable industry, competence, and military ingenuity to become a self-crowned Emperor. However, it must be noted that the world might never have heard of this man had it not been for the Revolution and the Reign of Terror which preceded him. The ancient institutions and traditions of France had been completely eviscerated in favor of new and untried ideals. France was ripe for the plucking, in a sense, almost eager for the emergence of a strongman who would give it a sense of real purpose once again. (This has often been compared to the way another strongman would restore Germany's sense of purpose in the 1930's, with tragic implications for the entire world.)

As First Consul (1799-1804) Napoleon paid lip service to the ideals of the French Revolution. After boldly placing the Imperial crown upon his own head in 1804, he could finally reveal his true nature to the world. Just as Madame de Staël had forseen, the optimistic principles of *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, barely fifteen years old, were completely and ironically subverted to the rule of a tyrant more absolute than any hereditary monarchy the nation had shrugged off. France had bartered away its lofty goal of becoming a free republic for a fever-dream of military greatness, and a prolonged exercise in the aggrandizement of a single individual. The resulting cult of personality eventually faded away, but never quite completely vanished, and in some ways lingers on to this day.

Adolf Hitler has been depicted on very few chess sets. Yet, though his life story is so similar in many ways, there was a sudden fashion for depicting Napoleon on the chess board which began

during his reign, only intensified after his final defeat and exile, and has continued through to the present. Why the difference? Surely it is the ghastly legacy of the Holocaust, along with the fact that Hitler was never known to be active as a chess player to anything like the degree Napoleon had been. For whatever reason, for better or worse, the romanticized figure of Napoleon has found its place as the king (never any other piece) in countless chess sets. There are several examples in this exhibit.

A Sailor-made scrimshaw chess set in walrus and elephant ivory, with the kings depicted as the Waterloo adversaries of Wellington (white) versus Napoleon (green), circa 1815-1830.

Cast Iron set by the Royal Prussian Iron Foundry, circa 1820. The kings are Napoleon (light) versus Frederick (dark). The two men never met on the battlefield, being of different generations. However, in 1807, after the battle of Jena, Napoleon did make a reverent pilgrimage to Frederick's tomb at Potsdam, telling his officers, "Gentlemen, if this man was still alive, I would not be here."

CONCLUSION

The game of chess had a deep and complex relationship with the French *philosophes* and *encyclopédistes* who prepared France for a revolution and thus changed the world. It was their chosen game; the game of those who prided themselves on the use of reason in human affairs, the game that was associated less and less with bloody battles, and more and more with elegance and refinement in human thought, and with the growing aspirations for actual improvements in the human condition. While we may not have a wealth of recorded game scores from this era, it may be argued that chess in the 18th century played a much more pivotal role in world affairs than it does today. Chess was the province and the passion, not only of the great masters of the time whom most chess players have heard of, such as Philidor and his great teacher Legall, but also that of the great thinkers and world-shakers whom *everyone* has heard of, such as Rousseau, Voltaire, Franklin, and Napoleon. That this is no longer true today is perhaps only one reason why so many feel that our current crop of world leaders leave so much to be desired.

Dare to Know marks the first time anywhere that a true first edition of the *Encyclopédie* (published over nearly three decades, from 1751-1780) has ever been displayed alongside one of these vanishingly rare and elusive chess sets. And you will find many other important firsts and little-known stories from the Enlightenment and the Revolutionary era as well, some of which we have only briefly sketched out in this document: The ivory chess set of King Louis XVI, who went to the guillotine in 1793. The chess set of Madame Tussaud, of wax museum fame, who in her former life in France chronicled the worst excesses of the Revolution, by making death masks for the victims of the Terror. The last-known remnants of the infamous Turk, the chess-playing automaton (really a hoax!) created by Wolfgang von Kempelen for the Empress Maria Theresa in 1770. Memories of the most famous and important of all the countless chess coffee houses of the day, the *Café de la Régence*. Period sets, boards, books and artifacts from all over Europe. And much more.

Dare to Know seeks to resurrect a lost world, the milieu of chess in the 18th and early 19th century. So much of the chess history that we know focuses on the later 19th and 20th centuries. Come and explore, and learn a bit about what happened before all that. And as you do, remember to *Dare to Know* – dare to think for yourself!

By Tom Gallegos