Claude Adrien Helvetius Encyclopedia Article

Claude Adrien Helvetius

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1715-1771

French philosopher whose controversial book, *De l'esprit*, suggested that the source of all intellectual activity is the quest for sensation and that all human actions arise from self-interest. This book was burned in Paris, denounced by leading French intellectuals, and condemned by the English Parliament. Because of this, it was widely translated and read, forming part of the intellectual framework of the philosophical school of utilitarianism.