

**THE STORY**  
**OF**  
**DOCTOR**  
**AKAKIA**  
**AND**  
**THE NATIVE**  
**OF ST. MALO**  
**BY**  
**VOLTAIRE (1753)**

**Translated by**  
**D. H. Delphenich**

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The native of St. Malo had been plagued for some time with a chronic condition that is called *philotimo* in Greek and *philocracy* (†) by some. It went to his brain most violently, and when he suffered such fits, he would write diatribes against the physicians and proofs of the existence of God. Sometimes, he imagined, always with due economy, that there was certainly an economy regarding the small number of readers that were capable of reading them, at the pain of reading the same thing twice, in the book entitled *Ses Oeuvres* and the one that he called *Ses Lettres*. At

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(†) D.H.D: Although the Greek word *philotimo* is said to be untranslatable, it corresponds roughly to “a love (or covetousness) of honor.” Similarly, the word *philocracy* means a belief in the power of love.

least one third of either volume is copied word-for-word in the other. That great man, so far removed from charlatanism, would not have presented letters to the public that were not written in person, and above all, he would certainly not have fallen prey to certain small oversights that would be pardonable only in a young man.

I believe (to the extent that it is possible) that it was not at all the interest in my profession that led me to speak here. However, one might excuse me if I find it a bit infelicitous that the writer treated physicians like his booksellers. He claims that he will starve us to death. He does not think that one should pay the doctor when it is one's misfortune that the affliction does not get better. As he said (\*), one certainly does not pay a painter that has created a bad painting. O! Young man, that you should be so harsh and unjust! Should the Duke of Orléans, a Regent of France, not pay handsomely for the daubings with which Coypel adorned the Gallery of the Royal Palace? Should a client deprive his advocate of a just salary because he lost his case? A physician promises to care for his patients, not to cure them. He made the effort, so we must pay him. What! Would you be jealous of even the doctors?

I pray of you, what would a man say who had, for example, a pension of twelve hundred ducats, who had discoursed on mathematics and metaphysics and dissected two toads, and had been painted with a furry hat, if the treasurer used that sort of language with him?

“Dear sir, I have deducted one hundred ducats for having written that there are some stars that were made like millstones, one hundred more ducats for having written that a comet will *fly* past our Moon and go on to *attack the Sun* itself. One hundred more ducats were deducted for having imagined that some comets that are *all made of gold and diamond* will fall upon the Earth. You were taxed with three hundred ducats for having asserted that children are formed by attraction in the mother's womb (\*\*), that the left eye attracts the right leg (†), etc. One cannot deduct less than four hundred ducats for having imagined that one could know the nature of the soul by means of opium and dissecting the heads of giants, ...”

It is clear that the poor philosopher would lose all of his pension. In light of that, would he be comfortable with the fact that we other doctors laughed at him and assured him that compensation will be made to only those writers who write useful things, and not to the ones who are not known to the world, but only envious of being recognized?

That inconsiderate young man reproached my medical colleagues for not being bold enough. He said (††) that it is due to chance and savage nations that its only specifics are known, and that the physicians have not found a single one. One learns from him that it is only experience that has taught men about the remedies that plants provide. *Hippocrates*, *Boerhaave*, *Chirac*, and *Senac* had certainly never guessed, while looking upon a cinchona tree that it would cure a fever, nor while looking upon rhubarb that it would be a purgative, nor while looking upon poppies that they would make one drowsy. What he calls *chance* can only lead to the discovery of some properties

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(\*) Page 124.

(\*\*) In *Oeuvres* and *Lettres*.

(†) See *Venus Physique*.

(††) Page 205.

of plants, and physicians can do nothing but recommend those remedies according to the occasion. Much has been invented with the aid of chemistry. It does not boast that it can cure everything, but it does boast that it will do everything that it can in order to relieve the suffering of men. Does the young comedian, who treats humankind so badly, render more of a service to them than the one that one infers, against all appearances, from the doors to the tomb of Marshal Saxe after his victory at Fontenoy?

Our young thinker claims that it is necessary for physicians to be only empirical (\*) and advises them to refrain from theory. What would one say of a man who would desire that one should no longer appeal to architects in order to build houses, but only to the masons that carve the stones at random?

He also offers the sage advice that one should overlook anatomy (†). Now we are talking about surgeons. We are amazed by only the fact that the author seemed to have so little knowledge of such things since he was beholden to the surgeons of Montpellier in some small way in regard to some conditions that demanded a great knowledge of the interior of the head and some other parts that drew upon the resources of anatomy.

That same author, who apparently has little knowledge of history, said, while speaking of making something useful of the torture of criminals by experimenting on their bodies, (§) that this proposal has never been implemented. He is ignorant of what the entire world was doing during the time of Louis XI, that a test of the height of a man condemned to death was performed for the first time in France, that the late queen of England attempted to inoculate four criminals with smallpox, and some other similar examples.

However, even if our author is ignorant, one is nonetheless obliged to confess that he makes up for that with a singular imagination. Speaking as a physicist, he suggests that we should appeal to centrifugal force in order to heal apoplexy (\*), and that one can spin the patient. In truth, the idea is not his own, but he gives it a whole new look.

He advises us (\*\*) that we should cover a patient with grape resin or pierce his skin with needles. If he were to ever practice medicine and propose such remedies then there is a great likelihood that the patients who would follow the advice that he gave them would not pay their doctor.

Nonetheless, what is truly strange is that this cruel enemy of academia, who desires that he should deduct from our salary so ruthlessly, proposes (§§), in order to mollify us, that we should bankrupt the patients. He ordains (since he is despotic) that every doctor should treat only one infirmity, in such a way that if a man has gout, fever, deviation, pain in the eyes, and an earache then he would have to pay five doctors, instead of one. However, it might also be that his intent is that we should give each of them only one-fifth of the ordinary remuneration. I see his malice quite well in that. One will soon advise the pious that they should have a director for each vice, one for an obsession with small things, one for jealousy that is hidden beneath a stern and imperious

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(\*) Page 119.

(†) Page 120.

(§) Page 198.

(\*) Page 206.

(\*\*) Page 206.

(§§) Page 208.

façade, one for raging about mostly nothing, and one for other miseries. However, let us not get too far afield, but return to our colleagues.

*The best doctor*, he said, *is the one that reasons the least*. He seems to be as faithful to that axiom in philosophy as Father *Canaïe* was in theology. Meanwhile, despite his hatred for reasoning, one sees that he has made some deep meditations about ways of prolonging life. First of all, he agrees with all sensible people, and for this we must congratulate him, that our forefathers lived for eight to nine hundred years.

Then, having found by himself, and independently of *Leibnitz*, that *maturity is not the age when one is strongest, i.e., manhood, but death*, he proposes to move back that point of maturity (\*) *as one preserves eggs by preventing them from hatching*. That is a beautiful secret, and we advise him that he is well-assured of the honor of making that discovery in some chicken coop or by the criminal sentence of some academy.

One sees from the account that we just gave that if those imaginary *Lettres* were from a president then they could only be from a president of *Bedlam* (\*\*), and that, as we said, they are uncontestably those of a young man who wishes to bear the name of a sage that is respected, as one would be, in all of Europe, and who has consented to be declared a *Great Man*. At the carnival in Italy, we have sometimes seen Harlequin disguised as an archbishop, but we very quickly unmask Harlequin by the manner in which he gives the benediction. Sooner or later, one recognizes that this recalls a fable of Fontaine:

*A small piece of an ear that escaped by misfortune,  
Discovered deceit and error.*

Here, one sees that his ears are *complete*.

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(\*) Page 76.

(\*\*) The *Petites-Maisons* of London.

**EDICT**  
**OF**  
**THE ROMAN INQUISITION**

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We, Father Pancras, etc., Inquisitor for the faith, have read the *Diatribes* of Monsignor Akakia, ordinary physician to the Pope, without knowing what one must call a *Diatribes*, and have found nothing in it that would be contrary to the faith nor papal decrees. The same is true of the *Oeuvres* and *Lettres* of the unknown young man who is disguised with the name of a president.

However, after invoking the Holy Spirit, we have found some strong claims in the *Oeuvres*, i.e., the *in-quarto*, of that reckless outsider that are dissonant, heretical, and smack of heresy. We condemn them collectively, separately, and respectively.

We especially and particularly anathematize the *Essai de Cosmologie*, in which the outsider, blinded by the principles of the Children of *Belial*, and accustomed to finding everything bad, insinuated, contrary to the word of Scripture (\*), that it is a defect of providence that spiders capture flies, and in that *Cosmologie*, the author then voiced the opinion that there is no other proof of the existence of God than the fact that  $Z$  is equal to  $BC$ , divided by  $A$ , plus  $B$  (†). Now, since those characters were drawn from a *Grimoire*, and are obviously diabolical, we declare them to be detrimental to the authority of the Holy See.

Moreover, since, as is customary, we do not hear a word regarding the matters that one calls physics, mathematics, dynamics, metaphysics, etc., we have enjoined the reverend professors of philosophy of the College of Knowledge to examine the *Oeuvres* and *Lettres* of the young outsider and to give us a faithful account of that examination. So help them God.

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(\*) *Oeuv.*, page 9.

(†) *Oeuv.*, page 45.

# JUDGEMENT

## OF THE PROFESSORS OF THE COLLEGE OF KNOWLEDGE

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1. We declare that the laws regarding the collisions of perfectly-rigid bodies are puerile and imaginary (\*) since there are no bodies that are known to be perfectly rigid, but indeed some rigid minds which we have tried in vain to influence.

2. The assertion that the *product of the interval by the velocity is always a minimum* (\*\*) seems false to use, because that product is sometimes a *maximum*, as **Leibnitz** thought, and as he proved. It seems that the young author has taken only one-half of **Leibnitz**'s idea, and because of that we feel entirely justified in saying that he never had any inkling of **Leibnitz**, at least not entirely.

3. In addition, we cleave to the censure that Monsignor **Akakia**, physician to the Pope and others, has applied to the *Oeuvres* of the young pseudonym, and above all, to the *Vénus Physique* (†). We advise the young author that when he proceeds with his wife (if he has one) to the task of procreation, he should no longer think that the infant is formed in the uterus by means of attraction, and we appeal to him that if he commits the sin of the flesh then he should not envy the fate of snails in love nor those of toads and to imitate less the style of **Fontanelle** when the maturity of age has formed his own.

We proceed to an examination of the *Lettres*, which we have judged to contain, by a vicious double use, almost all of what was in the *Oeuvres*, and we urge you to not debit the same merchandise twice under different names because that would not be as honest of you as a merchant should be.

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(\*) *Oeuv.*, page 4.

(\*\*) *Oeuv.*, page 44.

(†) *Oeuv.*, page 248.

# EXAMINATION OF THE LETTRES

## OF A YOUNG AUTHOR DISGUISED BY THE NAME OF A PRESIDENT

1. It is first necessary that the young author should understand that *foresight* (\*) is not exactly what men call *foretelling*. That word, “foretelling,” is uniquely applied to the knowledge by which God sees the future. It is good that he should know the power of words before he writes them down. He needs to know that the soul does not *perceive* itself: It sees objects and not itself. That is its essence. The young author can easily correct his errors.

2. *It is false that we lose more than we gain when it comes to memory (\*\*).* The candidate must understand that *memory* is the faculty that retains ideas, and that without that faculty, one would not only produce a bad book, but one would even know almost nothing and be certain of nothing, so one would be an absolute imbecile. The young man needs to consult the professors on that subject.

3. We are obliged to declare the idea to be ridiculous (†) *that the soul is like a body that returns to its state after having been agitated, and that the soul will then return to that state of contentment or distress that is its natural state.* The candidate has misspoken himself. Apparently, he wished to say that everything returns to its original character, that a man, for example, after having been compelled to play the philosopher, will return to ordinary banality, etc. However, truths that trivial need not be repeated. It is a flaw of youth that one believes that common things can take on a character of novelty by giving them obscure expressions.

4. The candidate fails when he says that *size* is only a perception (††) of our soul. If he is not well-studied then he will see that is not like sound and color, which exist only in our sensation, as all schoolboys know.

5. In regard to the nation of Germany, which he vilifies (§) and treats like imbeciles for all practical purposes, that seems ungrateful and unjust to us. It is not entirely wrong, but one needs to be polite. It might be that the candidate believes that he has invented something in the manner of **Leibnitz**, but we say to that young man that it was not he who invented gunpowder.

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(\*) Page 3, *Lettres du natif de St. Malo*.

(\*\*) Page 5.

(†) Page 8.

(††) Page 15.

(§) Page 50, 52.

6. We fear that the author will inspire in his comrades some small temptation to seek the Philosopher's Stone (\*), because, as he said, *when one considers one aspect of it, one cannot prove its impossibility*. It is true that he asserted that it would be mad to employ that property in order to seek it: However, as when one speaks of the greater common good, he says that one cannot prove the Christian religion, and that meanwhile many people have followed it. There is all the more reason to understand why some persons were ruined by the search for that great achievement, since according to him, it is possible to find it.

7. We shall pass over several things that tax the patience of the reader and the intelligence of Mr. Inquisitor. However, we believe that it would be quite surprising to hear that the young student (†) absolutely desires to dissect the brains of giants that are twelve feet tall and hairy men that bear tails in order to give a basis for the nature of human intelligence, that he will modify the soul with opium and dreams, that he knows how to make *large* eels spring from other eels using late flour, and fish, from grains of wheat (\*\*). We shall take this occasion to entertain Monsieur Inquisitor.

8. However, Monsieur Inquisitor will no longer be laughing when he sees that the entire world can become prophetic, because the author finds no more difficulty in seeing the future than he does in seeing the past. He asserts (††) that the reasons in favor of judicial astrology are as strong as the reasons against it. He then assures us (§) that our perceptions of the past, present, and future differ (§§) only in the degrees of activity of the soul. He hoped that a little more heat and *exaltation* in the imagination might serve to show the future, just as the memory shows the past. We unanimously judge his brain to be quite *exalted*, and that he will soon become prophetic. We do not further know if he will be a prophet of peace and whether he will be a great or minor prophet, but we believe that he will not be a prophet of doom, since in his treatment of happiness itself, he spoke only of affliction: He said (\*\*\*) that, above all, all madmen are unhappy. To all of them, we extend our sincere condolences. However, if his soul has been exalted to where he can see the future, did his soul not see it to be a bit ridiculous?

9. It seems to us that he is somewhat envious of those who go to the southern lands (†††). Although upon reading his book, one is tempted to believe that he has been there, nonetheless, he seems ignorant of the fact that it has been known for some time now that the land of Frédéric-Henri is situated beyond the fortieth degree of meridional latitude, but we caution him that is, instead of going to the southern lands, he claims (§§§) to navigate straight ahead directly below the arctic pole then no one will board that ship with him. He must be further assured that if, as he

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(\*) Page 85.  
 (†) Page 222, 223.  
 (\*\*) Page 143.  
 (††) Page 147.  
 (§) Page 151.  
 (§§) Page 154.  
 (\*\*\*) Page 9.  
 (†††) Page 172.  
 (§§§) Page 174.



claims (\*), one succeeds in digging a hole that goes down to the center of the Earth (where he would apparently like to hide in shame for having developed such things) then one cannot go anywhere in his hole besides the pole.

10. In conclusion, we pray that Doctor **Akakia** might prescribe himself some refreshing herbal teas. We urge him to study at some university and to be modest there.

If we ever send some physicists to Finland in order to verify, if they can, by some measurements what Newton discovered by way of his sublime theory of gravitation and centrifugal force then the purpose of that voyage should not be to continually seek to elevate it above its companions nor to attempt to portray it by merely flattening the Earth, as one would paint an atlas that bears the sky as if one had changed the face of the universe because one was rejoicing in a town where there was a Swedish garrison, but they will not refer to the polar circle on any occasion.

If some study companion would like to amicably propose a route to him that is different from his and convinces him that it is supported by the authority of **Leibnitz** and several other philosophers, and in particular shows him a letter by **Leibnitz** that formally contradicts our candidate and that the aforementioned candidate has not imagined without reflection, then that candidate will announce to all that we have forged a letter from **Leibnitz** in order to rob him of the glory that comes from being an originator.

He should not take the error that he made regarding a point of dynamics that is absolutely useless in practice to be an admirable discovery.

If that comrade, after having communicated his work several times, in which he struggles with it with the utmost polite discretion and praise, prints it with his consent then he should be careful not to pass along that work to his adversary, which would be an academic crime of *lése-majesté*.

That comrade has asserted to him several times that he regards the letter of **Leibnitz**, as well as several others, to be from a man who has been dead for some years, that the candidate cannot take advantage of it maliciously, that it does not appeal to roughly the same artifices that some have appealed to against **Mairan**, **Cassini**, and other true philosophers, that it never requires a frivolous dispute, that one must rise from the dead in order to refer to the pointless minutia of a letter by **Leibnitz**, and that he reserves that miracle for the time when he will prophesy, that he will not compromise anyone in a quarrel over nothing that vanity might exaggerate to something important, and that at no point will he make God intervene in the war of the rats and frogs. He asserts that he has not written letter upon letter to a great princess in order to force his adversary to be silent and to tie his hands in order to assassinate him at leisure.

He asserts that in a miserable dispute on dynamics, he did not summon a professor to appear in a month by an academic feat, that he did not condemn him out of sheer contumacy for having acquired his glory as a forger of letters and a counterfeiter. Above all, it is obvious that the letters by **Leibnitz** are by **Leibnitz** and that he proves that the letters that bore the name of a president were no more received by his correspondents than they were read by the public.

He asserts that he never sought to deny anyone the liberty of a just defense, that he thought that a man who is wrong and wishes to dishonor that which has reason dishonors himself.

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(\*) Page 186.

He said that he believes that all men of letters are equal and that he deserves that equality.

He said that he never demanded that nothing should be printed without his approval.

We conclude by urging him to be docile and to make some serious studies, not some vain cabals, because what a scholar gains in intrigue, he loses in genius, just as in mechanics, what one gains in time, one loses in force. One sees that too often in young people who start off with great expectations and do good work, but finally conclude by writing only nonsense, because they would like to be skillful courtesans instead of being skillful writers. That is because they have substituted vanity for study, and dissipation weakens the spirit, just as contemplation strengthens it. One has lauded them, and they have ceased to be laudable. One has compensated them, and they have ceased to deserve their compensation. They wished to appear, and they have ceased to be, because when, for an author, the *sum* of his errors is equal to the *sum* of his ridicules, *nothingness deserves to exist*.

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That benign remedy had an effect that was contrary to the one that all of the faculties hope for, as happens very often. The bile of the Native of St. Malo had exalted him even more than his soul. He mercilessly burned the ordinance of the doctors, and the evil worsened. He persisted in his ambition of performing his experiments, and to that effect, he convened the memorable session of which we shall now give a faithful account.

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# MEMORABLE SESSION

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On the first calendar day of October 1751, there was an extraordinary gathering of sages under the direction of their very wise President. Each of them having taken their place, the president gave a eulogy for a member of the company who had recently *died* (\*), i.e., *deceased*, because he had not taken the precaution of clogging his pores and preserving them like a raw egg in accordance with new method. The president proved that the man's doctor had killed him because that doctor had also neglected to treat the patient in accordance with the laws of centrifugal force, and he concluded that the doctor was to be reprimanded, and certainly not paid. He concluded by going on to say a few words about himself, as was his modest custom. He then proceeded, with great fanfare, to the verification of the experiments by which he proposed to astonish all of the scholars of Europe.

(\*\*) To begin with, two doctors each produced a patient who was coated with grape resin, and two surgeons pierced his thighs and arms with long needles. The patient, who had barely been able to move up till then, forthwith began to run and scream with all of his might, and the Secretary made note of that in his records.

(†) The apothecary approached with a large pot of *opium* and placed it on a volume of the president's composition, in order to double its power, and then took a dose of it with a vigorous young man. To the great astonishment of the entire world, he then fell asleep, and in his slumber, he had a pleasant dream that frightened the ladies, who ran off with all due solemnity. The nature of the soul was then understood perfectly, as Mr. President had quite rightly divined.

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(\*) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, page 76.

(\*\*) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, page 206.

(†) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, page 223.

All of the drills of the city were then brought forth in order to quickly bore a hole that would reach to the center of the Earth, according to the precise instructions of Mr. President (\*). His vision reached that far, but, as the operation took very long, they had to take it up on another occasion. Mr. Perpetual Secretary then arranged a meeting between the workers and the masons on the Tower of Babel.

Soon afterwards, the President decreed that a ship should be booked in order to dissect some giants and men with long tails in the lands to the south. He declared (†) that he himself would make the voyage and that he would once again breathe his native air. The entire assembly applauded that assertion.

He then proceeded, by his decree and according to his principles, to couple an Indian rooster with a mule in the academy's courtyard. While the poet of the assembly composed their epithalamion, the president, who was being gallant, served the ladies a paté (\*\*) of eels, one inside of the other, that were born suddenly from a mixture of late flour. There were large platters of fish that formed in a field of germinated wheat grains, which the ladies took a singular pleasure in consuming. The president, having drunk a glass of *rogum*, demonstrated to the assembly that it was just as easy for the mind to see the future as the past, and then he licked his lips with his tongue, rolled his head for a long time, exalted his imagination, and prophesied. We shall not present that prophecy here, which can be found in the Almanac of the Academy in its entirety.

The session concluded with a very elegant discourse that was uttered by the Perpetual Secretary: *There is only one Erasmus* (he said) *who is worthy of our praise*. He then raised the president's monad up to the *nous*, or at least to the mists. He boldly placed him beside **Cyrano de Bergerac**: A throne of bladders was constructed for him, and he left for the moon the following day, where Astolfo would recover (he said) what the president had lost.

*End of the session*

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(\*) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, page 174.

(†) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, page 172.

(\*\*) See the *Lettres* of Mr. President, pages 130 and 143.

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The Native of St. Malo did not actually depart for the moon, as he believed; he was content to bark at it. The good Doctor **Akakia**, seeing that the evil had worsened, imagined, with some of his colleagues, that he could soften the edge on his humors by reconciling the President with the Swedish doctor, who had too much of them, by showing him the degree of his restraint. The doctor, who believed that antipathy was a sin that one could defeat, then proposed the following peace treaty.

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**PEACE TREATY**  
**CONCLUDED BETWEEN**  
**THE PRESIDENT**  
**AND**  
**THE PROFESSOR**

1 *JANUARY* 1753

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All of Europe was up in arms about the dangerous quarrel over a formula in algebra, etc., and the two parties that were mainly interested in that war, who wished to prevent an outpouring of ink that would be unsupportable to all readers in the long run, have finally agreed to a philosophical peace in the manner that follows.

The President was transported to his place of presidency and said to his peers:

1. Now that we have had enough time to recognize our misunderstanding, we pray that Mr. Professor will forget everything in the past. We are quite upset that we made so much noise about so little and declared that a serious professor who has not once supposed that there are monads and a preestablished harmony to be a forger.

2. We have signed the patent letters, sealed them with our Great Seal, by which we present to the Republic some Letters of Liberty, and we declare that it is nonetheless permissible to prove that we have sinned without being known as dishonest men.

3. We ask God's forgiveness for having suggested that the only proof of his existence is that  $A$  plus  $B$ , divided by  $Z$ , etc., and we pray that the Inquisitors might even not wish to judge us with all due rigor in regard to that matter, which we no longer cleave to.

4. We henceforth permit all patients to pay their doctors and all doctors to treat several conditions, to the extent that if a patient who is attacked with colic sends for a doctor of the Stone then it will be possible to cure him by cutting him up, instead of giving him an enema. Things will then remain just as they are.

5. We declare that when we have proposed to establish a Latin city, we have, in truth, indeed foreseen that it would be necessary for the cooks, the laundresses, and the streetsweepers to first be fluent in Latin, and that it would then have to be possible that those persons would want to learn that grammar, instead of cooking and laundering shirts, which might create some dangerous cabals. However, we have also considered that the students and the regents could switch shirts, like the ancient Romans, and similarly for the cooks, and that we will examine that further at leisure once we have learned basic Latin.

6. Since we have never addressed copulation or the fetus, we promise to study anatomy beforehand, to no longer advocate ignorance to the doctors, to no longer envy the fate of snails, and to no longer utter these sweet words to them: *Innocent snail, receive and return a thousand times the blows of these darts that nature has armed you with; the ones that it has reserved for us are care and attention*, inasmuch as that phrase is confusing since the *care* that one takes is not actually a *dart*, and those expressions are purely academic.

7. We shall no longer envy toads, and we shall no longer speak of the style of the sheepfold, seeing that **Fontanelle**, who we are believed to have imitated, did not actually sing of toads in his eclogues.

8. We leave to God the responsibility of creating men as He sees fit, without us ever getting involved. Each of them will be free to not believe that the right toe does not attract the left toe in the uterus, nor that the hand is held to the end of the arm by attraction.

9. If we should go to the lands to the South then we promise the Academy that we will bring them four giants that are twelve feet high and four men with long tails. We shall dissect all living things without claiming that we know more about the nature of the soul than we know at present, but that it is always good for the progress of the sciences to have great men to dissect.

10. If we go straight to the arctic pole by sea then no one should be forced to make that voyage, except for Mr. de \*\*\*\*, who we have already followed to countries that are unknown to him.

11. In regard to the hole that we would like to dig to the Earth's core, we shall formally desist from that enterprise, because although the truth is that it is basically a well, nonetheless, that well would be much too difficult to construct. The workers on the Tower of Babel are dead. No sovereign can be burdened with our hole, because its opening would have to be a bit too large, and one would have to excavate at least all of Germany. That would introduce a considerable prejudice into the balance of Europe. Thus, we shall leave the face of the Earth as it is, and we shall restrain ourselves whenever we would like to dig or go beneath the surface of things.

12. We sincerely recognize that it is a little more difficult to predict the future than it is to know how to read Livy or Thucydides. We shall rule our soul and no longer exalt it. We swear that we do not have the gift of prophecy, although we do have much disposition towards it, if perspicacity can serve to predict, and when we say that it is the same thing to know the future and the past, we take that to mean that we know nothing of either.

13. We always find it good that one should live for eight to nine hundred years by blocking the pores and the channels of respiration, but we shall not perform that experiment on anyone for fear that the patient should, at one stroke, reach the age of maturity, which is death.

14. We shall no longer commit ourselves to writing sadly of happiness, and allowing everyone, moreover, the freedom to kill oneself or be a Christian, etc., that they have already been granted.

15. We shall no longer belittle the Germans, and we swear that Copernicus, Kepler, Leibnitz, Wolf, Haller, Maseau, and Gottsched are such things, and that we have studied under Bernoulli, and that we shall study some more.

Having finished that wise and beautiful discourse, the Perpetual Secretary read aloud the declaration of the professor, which stated, in substance:

That he confessed to not having as much imagination as the president, insofar as he was born Swiss. However, for that reason alone, he had a good heart and loved truth, so he protested that he had never wished to trouble Europe over an error of the president, that for the good of the country he would accept the post of professor in the Latin city that the president would like to found, and that he would speak Latin for the entire journey, even if Mr. President would have some difficulty understanding him.

That he would bring the Academy just as many monads as Mr. President had brought giants, and that he would dissect the brain of one or the other in order to know perfectly that which is the soul. However, he expects little success in that experiment.

That everything else would be declared to be void, that all of the combatants in the two parties, without exception, would swear to their good faith, that each of them had been too far from the two sides, and that he would begin where the public had concluded, i.e., by laughing.

It was agreed by the present treaty that all of the men of letters would nonetheless live as brothers from that day forward when all women who claim to beauty would be without jealousy. A *Te Deum* was sung, which was put to music by a Frenchman and performed some Italians. A High Mass was celebrated that was officiated by a Jesuit, with a Calvinist for a deacon and a Jansenist for a sub-deacon, and peace reigned over all Christendom.

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Who would have believed that a peace project so reasonable would not be accepted by Mr. President? However, at the point of signing and fulfilling all of its articles, his melancholy and philocracy doubled with some violent symptoms. He raged against his good Doctor **Akakia**, who was then himself ill in the city of Leipzig in Germany, and he wrote a fulminant letter in which he threatened to kill him.

There has never been found such a malicious patient since the late Monsieur de Pourceaugnac, who wished to see his doctor with a sword in his hand. Doctor **Akakia**, who was completely terrified, appealed to the University of *Leipzig* and present the attached request to them:

“Doctor **Akakia**, a refugee at the University of Leipzig, where he sought asylum from the attacks of a Lapp that is native to St. Malo, who absolutely wishes to assassinate the doctor in the arms of the aforesaid university, urgently begs that the doctors and scholars should arm him against that barbarian with their writing desks and penknives. He is particularly addressing his colleagues, the medical doctors. He hopes that he will purge the aforementioned savage wherever he appears, that he will evacuate all of his peccant humors, and that he will preserve in that way what remains of reason in that cruel Lapp and of life in their colleague, the good **Akakia**, who is recommended to their care. He prays that the apothecaries should not forget him on that occasion.”

By virtue of that request, the university issued a decree by which the native of St. Malo would be arrested at the gates of the city if he were to go there in order to execute his plan of parricide against **Akakia**, who served as his father.

Here is the precise decree of the university, just it is found in the *Acta Eruditorum*.

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# EXTRACT

## FROM THE LEIPZIG JOURNAL

### ENTITLED

## DER HOFMEISTER

A *quidam* has written a letter (\*) to a habitant of Leipzig in which he threatened to assassinate the aforementioned habitant, and since assassins are obviously contrary to the privileges of the fair, one prays that each and every one should make note of said *quidam* when he presents himself to the gates of Leipzig. He is a philosopher who walks in reason, composed of a distracted and precipitate air, his eye round and small, and similarly his wig, his nose flattened, his physiognomy poor, having a full face and a spirit that is itself full, and always carries a scalpel in his pocket for dissecting tall men. Those who report him will get a thousand ducats as compensation, which will be allocated from the funds of the Latin City that the said *quidam* builds or from the first comet of gold and diamond that must fall incessantly upon the Earth according to the predictions of the aforesaid *quidam*, who is a philosopher and an assassin.

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Nonetheless, Doctor **Akakia** did not delay in responding to his patient, and he further tried to return the spirits of the latter to an amiable state with his letter.

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(\*) See above, page 17.

**LETTER**  
**FROM**  
**DOCTOR AKAKIA**  
**TO THE**  
**NATIVE OF ST. MALO**

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MONSIEUR LE PRÉSIDENT,

I have received the letter that you have honored me with. You have told me that you are well, that your strength has returned, and you threatened to assassinate me if I were to publish the letter of **La Beaumelle**. What ingratitude towards your poor Doctor **Akakia**! You are not content to decree that one should not pay his doctor; you would like to kill him! That procedure is not befitting of either a President of the Academy or a good Christian, such as you are. I compliment you on your good health, but I do not have the strength that you have. I have been bedridden for fifteen years, and I would beg you to defer the little physics experiment that you would like to perform. Perhaps you would like to dissect me. However, you should reflect upon the fact that I am not a giant from the lands to the south, and that my brain is so small that the discovery of its fibers would give you no new conception of the soul. Furthermore, if you kill me, have the goodness to remember that Mr. **de la Beaumelle** has promised me that *he would follow me into Hell itself*: He would not fail to seek me there, even though work on the hole to the center of the Earth that he would have to dig, by your decree, and which would have to lead straight to Hell, has not yet commenced. There are some other ways of doing that, and one would find that I would be just as mistreated in the other world as you have persecuted me in this one.

Would you extend your animosity that far? Once more, have the goodness to give heed to one small fact. As long as you would like to exalt your soul in order to see the future clearly, you will see that if you were to assassinate me in Leipzig, where you are not more loved than you are elsewhere, and where your letter was deposited, you would incur some risk of being hanged. That would advance the moment of your maturity too much and would hardly be appropriate for a President of the Academy. I would thus advise you to first declare that the letter of **la Beaumelle** was a forgery and was detrimental to your glory at one of your assemblies: After that, it would perhaps no longer be permissible for you to kill me for having perturbed your self-esteem.

As for the rest, I am still quite weak. You find me in bed, and I can only throw my syringe and my chamber pot at your head. However, when I have a little more strength, I will load my pistols

*cum pulvere pyrio*, and upon multiplying the mass by the square of the velocity until the action and you are reduced to zero, I will put a ball of lead in your brain: It seems to need it.

It must be sad for you that the Germans, whom you have so vilified, having invented gunpowder, as you have complained, also invented the printing press.

Farewell, my dear President,

**AKAKIA**

P. S.

Since there are fifty to sixty people here who have taken the liberty of mocking you prodigiously, they demand to know the day upon which you plan to assassinate me.

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One might have hoped that the latter cordial note might have served to soothe the irate temper of the native of St. Malo, that he might desist from his cruel experiments, that he would no longer persecute the Swiss, nor **Akakia**, that he would leave the Germans alone, and that there might even come a day when he was perfectly cured enough to laugh at the symptoms of his illness.

However, Doctor **Akakia**, a prudent man, wished to further humor the sensibilities of the native of St. Malo, and he humbly addressed the eternal Secretary of the Academy of the aforesaid native of St. Malo by writing to him thus:

*Dear eternal Secretary,*

I am sending you the death warrant that the president has pronounced against me, with my appeal to the public and the testimony of protection that I give to all physicians and all apothecaries of Leipzig. You see that Mr. President is not confined to the experiments that he proposed in the lands to the south, and that he would absolutely like to separate my soul from my body in the north. This is the first time that a president has wished to kill one of his advisors. Is that the *principle of least action*? Such a terrible man, this president! With the left hand, he declares forgeries, with the right, he assassinates, and he proves the existence of God by saying  $A$  plus  $B$  divided by  $Z$ . Frankly, one has never seen anything like it. Dear sir, I shall make a small reflection: It is that when the president has killed, dissected, and interred me, he should give my eulogy to the Academy, as is their laudable custom. If it is he who is in charge then he would not be embarrassed in the slightest. He should do as he did do passionately with the Marshall of Schmettau, with whom he had some trouble in his life. If it is you, dear sir, who makes my funerary oration then you would do just as well to prevent another one. You are a priest, and I am profane. You are a Calvinist, and I am a papist. You are an author, and I am too. You are doing well, and I am a doctor. Therefore, dear sir, in order to avoid the funerary oration and to put the whole world at ease, let me die by the cruel hand of the president, and strike me off from the list of your chosen ones. Moreover, you sense quite well that, having been condemned to death by his warrant, I wish to be previously demeaned,

Remove me then, dear sir, from your list: Place me with the Forger King, who has the misfortune of possessing reason. I patiently await death with that culprit:

*Pariterque cadentes ignovere Deis* (†).

I am, metaphysically,

Dear Sir,

You very humble and obedient servant,

AKAKIA

**THE END**

*of*

*The story of Doctor Akakia and the Native of St. Malo*

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(†) D.H.D.: “and equally incurring the wrath of the Gods.”

**HERE IS, *nonetheless, a small***

## **ADDENDUM**

**Which is as important as it is necessary,**

***insofar as it sheds light upon the bona fides of AKAKIA, or that of  
Mr. de VOLTAIRE,***

*and thus reduces to nought all of his vulgar jokes and false pleasantries, which are based uniquely upon a shameful and criminal falsification. Indeed, is that anything else beyond his ridiculous and impertinent **trembling!** A poor and vapid copy of the enjoyable **PAR LA MORT!** by Scarron that was added, as unfaithfully as senselessly, to the letter of Monsieur **de Maupertuis**, and which we publicly present to him as the more authentic and humbling disclaimer below?*

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**COPY**

**OF THE**

**LETTER FROM MR. DE MAUPERTUIS**

**TO VOLTAIRE**

*Berlin, 3 April 1753*

The newspapers say that you remain ill in Leipzig. One particular news item assures us that you are visiting there only in order to print some new libel. As for myself, I wish to inform you of certain news about my own condition and plans.

I have never done anything against you, whether in writing or in speech. I even believe that it would be undignified of me to say a single word in regard to all of the impertinences that you have propagated up to now, and I have preferred to circulate some stories of **de la Baumelle**, whose disavowal I have in writing, and a hundred other falsehoods that you have broadcast in order to justify your conduct towards me, rather than to support a war that is so indecent. Justice, which I have made the **king** of your initial writings, my illness, and what little significance that I give to my work might justify my indolence up to now.

However, it is true that your plan is to attack me even more and to attack me as you have already done, in character, and I say to you that instead of responding in writing, my blood is good enough to find you wherever you are and to exact from you the most complete vengeance.

Give thanks to the respect and obedience that have stayed my arms up to now, and which have saved you from the most unfortunate adventure that would ever befall you.

*As one sees that there is no point in this extravagant rodomontade, you should **tremble!***

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*Berlin, 3 April 1753*

One finds oneself obliged to publish that letter (which must remain secret, as is the usual course of things), because **Mr. de Voltaire**, having circulated some truncated and altered pieces that **Mr. de Voltaire** had written, had deposited that *letter* into the hands of the Magistrates of Leipzig. One should be surprised that in that affair, that poet has dared to address the Magistrates, whose presence must always be redoubtable to the purveyors of libel.

Seen and approved,

**FRIEDRICH**

**THE END**

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