Biographical Notes on Persons Cited or Mentioned by Joseph de Maistre

Abbadie, Jacques (1654–1727) French Protestant theologian. Left France in 1680, served as pastor to refugee Huguenot communities in Prussia, England, and Ireland. His apologetic work, *Traité de la vérité de la religion chrétienne* (1684), which Maistre owned, was enormously popular with Catholic as well as Protestant readers.

Aldrovandi, Ulisse (1522–1607) Italian physician and botanist. Professor of natural history of Bologna and inspector of pharmacies.

Alembert, Jean Le Rond d' (1717–1783). French mathematician and philosophe who wrote the "Preliminary Discourse" to Diderot's great *Encyclopédie*.

Alpani, Prosper (1553–1617) Italian physician and botanist, who travelled to Egypt in search of medicinal plants; published a work on botany and natural history.

Anaxagoras (499–422 B.C.) Greek philosopher, author of *On Nature*, of which only fragments survive. Worked out an "atomistic" physics.

Anaximenes (588–524 B.C.) Greek philosopher, said to have been a friend or pupil of Anaximander, another Greek philosopher.

Andres, Abbé Giovanni (1740–1817) Italian Jesuit, author of a literary history of Italy.

Aquinas, St Thomas (1225–1274) Catholic philosopher-theologian who sought to incorporate Aristotelian philosophy within the framework of the Christian faith.

Archimedes (c. 287–121 B.C.) Syracusan mathematician, astronomer and inventor.

Aristophanes (445–c. 380 B.C.) Greek comic playwright.

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato. Aristotelianism (Aristotle's philosophy as combined with Platonic and Christian ideas in the Middle Ages) had become the dominant philosophy in Europe prior to the Scientific Revolution.
Arnauld, Antoine (1612–1694) French theologian and controversialist who wrote in defence of Jansenism, and against the Jesuits, Protestants, Malebranche, and William II (defending the rights of James II).

Augustine of Hippo, Saint (354–430) Greatest of the Latin Church Fathers, whose writings had an enormous influence on Western thought.

Bacon, Francis (1561–1626) English philosopher, legalist, and political figure.

Bacon, Roger (1214–1294) English Franciscan and natural philosopher. Emphasized mathematics and experiment as essential to science.

Bartholin (Bartholini or Bartholinus), Kaspar (1585–1629), Thomas (1619–1680), and Kaspar (1650–1680). Father, son, and grandson, the Bartholins were well-travelled and well-published Danish physicians and professors of medicine.

Batteux, Charles (1713–1780) Cited by Maistre as Le Batteux. French man of letters who published a number of works on literature and belles-lettres.

Beattie, James (1735–1803) Scottish philosopher whose *Essay on Truth* set forth his “common sense” reply to David Hume’s sceptical philosophy.

Bellarmine, Robert (1542–1621) Jesuit theologian, cardinal, doctor of the Church, and saint.


Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) Medieval theologian and mystic.

Bernoulli (or Bernouilli). Name of a Swiss family of mathematicians and scientists. Jakob (Jacques) (1654–1705); Johann (Jean) (1667–1748); and Daniel (1700–1782). Jakob and Johann made important contributions to calculus and probability theory; Daniel has been called the founder of mathematical physics.

Black, Joseph (1728–1799) Distinguished Scottish chemist.


Boerhaave, Hermann (1668–1738) Dutch physician and physicist.

Boileau (or Boileau-Despréaux), Nicolas (1636–1711) French poet; less important as a poet than as a founder of French literary criticism who laid down canons of good writing.


Bonnet, Charles (1720–1793) Swiss naturalist and philosopher. Maistre knew his *Palingénésie philosophique* (1769–70)
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Borelli, Giovanni Alfonso (1608–1679) Italian astronomer and physicist. Compared the action of the heart to a wine press.


Boyle, Robert (1627–1691) English natural philosopher and chemist. Endowed a lectureship for the defence of Christianity.

Brahe, Tycho (1546–1601) Danish astronomer whose meticulous celestial observations provided Kepler with data for his famous laws of planetary movement.


Cabinis, Pierre-Jean Georges (1757–1808) Physician and materialist philosopher, one of the French *Idéologues*.


Caesar, Julius (c. 101–44 B.C.) Roman politician and general, who seized control of the Roman Republic in 44 B.C., but was then murdered by his colleagues Brutus and Cassius.

Carli-Rubbi, Giovanni-Rinaldo (1720–1795) Italian naturalist, economist, and man of letters.

Cavalieri (or Cavalleri), Bonventure (1598–1647) Italian geometer who invented a method of “indivisibles” important in the history of geometry.


Chateaubriand, François-René, Vicomte de (1768–1848) French man of letters and politician. Best known to Maistre as the author of *Le Génie du christianisme* (1802), a romantic defence of Christianity.

Chaulieu, Abbé Guillaume Amfrye (1639–1720) A French poet and “libertine,” known as the “Ancréon du Temple,” who frequented the epicurean society of the Temple.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius (106–43 B.C.) Roman orator, statesman, and man of letters.

Clarke, Samuel (1675–1729) English philosopher, theologian, and spokesman for Newton; involved in a famous correspondence with Leibniz on metaphysical questions. Maistre owned a French translation of one of Clarke's theological works as well as his edition of Homer.
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Clavius, Christopher (1538–1612) Bavarian Jesuit astronomer, who advised Pope Gregory XIII with respect to the calendar established by a papal bull in 1582, and whose commentary on Sacrobosco’s Sphere became a widely used astronomy textbook.

Condillac, Etienne de (1715–1780) French philosophe who wrote on epistemology and language. Maistre’s papers contain a long analysis of Condillac’s Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines (1746).

Condorcet, Antoine-Nicolas de (1743–1794) French mathematician and philosophe, best known for his History of the Progress of the Human Mind, written while he was in hiding from the Terror.

Copernicus, Nicholas (1473–1543) Polish astronomer whose On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies laid the foundations for modern astronomy and the Scientific Revolution by arguing a heliocentric cosmology against the old geocentric Ptolemaic theory.

Cudworth, Ralph (1617–1688) Cambridge Platonist. Maistre was much taken by Cudworth’s Systema intellectuale (1678 in English, 1733 in Latin translation).

Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) Italian poet whose most famous work was The Divine Comedy.

Democritus (460–370 B.C.) Greek philosopher who developed an “atomic” philosophy.

Descartes, René (1596–1650) French philosopher, mathematician, and scientist whose ideas on philosophy, scientific method, and cosmology were enormously influential in France through most of the eighteenth century.

Destouches (Philippe Néricault) (1680–1754) French dramatist with religious convictions who sought to make comedy moral.

Diderot, Denis (1713–1784) French philosophe who is perhaps best known as the editor of the famous Encyclopédie.

Diophantus (3rd century A.D.) Alexandrian mathematician and naturalist, credited with either inventing algebra or borrowing it from India.

Duffand, Marie de Vichy-Chambrond, Marquise du (1697–1780) French writer who for many years hosted a famous salon frequented by many philosophers.

Dughet, Gaspard (1615–1675) French painter, sometimes called Gaspard-Poussin, after his brother-in-law, Nicolas Poussin. Born in Rome to a French father and Italian mother, he spent much of his working life in that city.


Empedocles (490–430 B.C.) Greek philosopher.
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Epictetus (60–138) Greek philosopher, one of the best known Stoic philosophers.

Epicurus (341–270 B.C.) Greek philosopher who founded a school of philosophy (Epicureanism) stressing atomic theory, empiricism, and hedonism.

Erastosthenes (3rd century B.C.) Greek scientist of the school of Alexandria.

Ernesti, Johann August (1707–1781) German classical scholar.

Estienne, Henri (1528–1598) Learned French scholar who edited a large number of Greek and Latin authors.

Euclid (fl. 300 B.C.) Greek mathematician. His *Elements* (of geometry) became the basis of future geometry.

Euler, Leonhard (1707–1783) German philosopher and mathematician.

Euripides (480?–405 B.C.) Greek tragic playwright.

Feller, François-Xavier (1735–1802) Belgian Jesuit who authored a number of works of apologetics, which Maistre knew and used extensively.

Fénelon, François de Salignac de la Mothe (1651–1715) French archbishop, theologian, and sometime tutor to the heir to the French throne. Maistre owned many of his works.

Fermat, Pierre de (1595–1665) French mathematician. Correspondent of Pascal who entered into some lively disputes with Descartes.

Fourcroy, Antoine-François de (1755–1809) French chemist and politician.

Galen, Claudius (130–200) Greek physician and philosopher whose writings on medicine remained standard until the sixteenth century.

Galileo (Galileo Galilei) (1564–1642) Italian astronomer, physicist, and philosopher. His adamant advocacy of the new cosmology of Copernicus led to his condemnation by the Roman Inquisition.

Gassendi, Pierre (1592–1655) French mathematician and philosopher who sought to revive the atomic theory of Epicurus.

Gilbert, William (1540–1603) English naturalist, especially known for his work on magnetism.

Gregory, James (1636–1675) Scottish geometer and physicist who made important contributions to optics.

Grou, Jean-Nicolas (1731–1803) French Jesuit, classical scholar, and spiritual writer.

Guericke, Otto von (1602–1686) German physicist and astronomer who undertook famous experiments with the air pump and the vacuum.
Guido of Arezzo (990–1050) Italian musical theorist who developed the system of modern musical notation.

Haccadosh, see Judah Ha-Nasi

Haller, Albrecht von (1708–1777) Swiss anatomist, botanist, and physiologist. Established physiology as an independent science.

Halley, Edmund (1656–1742) English astronomer, especially famous for predicting the return of the comet of 1682. This prediction was verified in 1758; Halley’s Comet was the first that was proved to revolve around the sun.


Heraclitus (fl. c. 500 B.C.) Greek philosopher, whose best known statement was “all things change.”

Hesiod (8th century B.C.) Greek poet whose *Theogony* is an account of the origin of the world and the gods.

Hipparchus (190–125 B.C.) Greek astronomer, credited with laying the foundations of Greek astronomy; discovered the procession of the equinoxes.

Hippocrates (460?–7377 B.C.) Greek physician, known as the father of medicine. According to tradition, the author of the Hippocratic Oath still administered to new physicians.

Hobbes, Thomas (1588–1679) English philosopher, best known for the *Leviathan*, a strong defence of secular monarchy.

Holbach, Paul Henri Thiery, Baron d’ (1723–1789) French philosophe, well known as an atheist, materialist, and Encyclopedist.

Homer. Ionian poet to whom the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are traditionally attributed.

Hooke, Robert (1635–1703) English mathematician, naturalist, physician, and architect.

Horace (65–8 B.C.) Roman lyric poet and satirist.


Hume, David (1711–1776) Scottish philosopher and historian. His philosophical scepticism has been of great importance in the history of modern philosophy.

Iamblichus (c. 270–330) Syrian Neoplatonist.

Judah Ha-Nasi (second half of the second century-beginning of the third century). Patriarch of Judah and codifier of the Mishnah (the Oral Law), and known for his wisdom, sanctity, and humility.
Juvenal (60–140) Roman satirist whose works abound in witty observations and terse proverbs.

Kant, Immanuel (1724–1804) German philosopher whose attempt to define the nature of rational understanding remains a landmark in Western thought.

Kepler, Johannes (1571–1630) German astronomer who helped establish the Copernican system by his formulation of the laws of planetary motion.

Kircher, Athanasius (1601–1680) Learned German Jesuit, Egyptologist and scientist.

Klingenstierna, Samuel (1689–1785) Swedish mathematician and philosopher.

La Fontaine, Jean de (1621–1695) French poet and author of fables.

La Harpe, Jean-François de (1739–1803) French dramatist, journalist and literary critic. Best known for his _Lycée, ou course de littérature ancienne et moderne._

La Rochefoucauld, François, Duc de (1613–80) French moralist whose _Maximes_ were a pitiless and beautifully crafted analysis of the motives of human conduct.

Lalande, Joseph-Jérôme (1732–1807) Distinguished French mathematician who wrote a highly acclaimed history of mathematics.

Lasalle, Antoine de (1754–1829) French philosophe and moralist; translated Bacon’s works into French.

Le Batteux (See Charles Batteux)

Le Sage, George-Louis (1724–1803) Swiss naturalist and Encyclopedist.

Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm (1646–1716) German philosopher and polymath whose philosophy of pre-established harmony drew Voltaire’s ridicule. Invented the calculus in 1676, independently of Newton.

Leland, John (1691–1766) English theologian who wrote in opposition to the deists.

Linnaeus, Carolus (Carl von Linnée) (1707–1778) Swedish botanist whose system of plant classification forms the basis of modern botanical nomenclature.

Lipsius, Justus (1547–1606) Belgian humanist and neo-Stoic philosopher. Maistre owned editions of his works and of his editions of Seneca and Tacitus.

Livy (59 B.C.–17 A.D.) Roman historian who composed a history of Rome from the founding of the city.

Locke, John (1632–1704) English philosopher, whose most famous works are _An Essay Concerning Human Understanding_, an inquiry into the nature of knowledge, and _Two Treatises on Government_, written in defence of the Glorious Revolution.

Luc, Jean-André de (1727–1817) Swiss geologist and physicist; populariser and interpreter of Bacon.
Lucretius (98?–55 B.C.) Roman poet and philosopher. In his On the Nature of Things outlines an atomic and materialist natural philosophy.

Mably, Gabriel Bonnot (1709–1785) French moralist, historian, and political writer; half brother to Condillac.

Maimonides (1135–1204) Jewish philosopher, who was born in Spain and died in Egypt. He sought to show the compatibility between philosophic and religious faith; he exercised an immense influence over both Jewish and Scholastic thought in the Middle Ages.

Malebranche, Nicolas (1638–1715) French theologian, scientist, and philosopher. A disciple of both St Augustine and Descartes, his work helped domesticate Descartes' philosophy within Catholicism.

Malfilatre, Jacques-Charles-Louis de (1732–1767). A promising French poet who died young and unrecognized. Many of his poems were published after his death.

Mallet, David (1705–1765) English poet, playwright, and miscellaneous author; wrote a short life of Bacon.

Mani (215–276) Founder of a Gnostic dualistic religion that attempted to synthesize the teachings of Buddha, Zoroaster and Jesus.


Mersenne, Marin (1588–1648) French theologian, philosopher, and mathematician; a friend of Descartes who carried on a correspondence with scientists all over Europe.


Mohammed (570–632) Founder of Mohammedanism (Islam), a religion characterized by exclusive monotheism. The Koran, the sacred books of Islam, is a written version of his religious visions.

Molière (pen name of Jean Baptise Poquelin) (1622–1673) French comic dramatist.

Montesquieu, Charles Louis de Secondat, Baron de (1689–1755) French philosopher and man of letters. Famous especially for his Lettres persanes (1721) and De l’Esprit de lois (1748).

Montucla, Jean-Etienne (1725–1799) Learned French mathematician who wrote a highly acclaimed history of mathematics.


Mosheim, Johann Lorenz (1694–1755) German theologian and church historian. Provided notes to the Latin version of Cudworth’s True Intellectual System of the Universe.
Newton, Isaac (1642–1727) English mathematician and natural philosopher. A great genius, he is credited with three scientific discoveries of fundamental importance: the invention of calculus, the determination of the composition of light, and formulation of the law of universal gravitation.

Newton, Thomas (1704–1782) English divine who published an edition of Milton’s *Paradise Lost* with a life and elaborate notes.

Nicolas of Cusa (1400–1464) German cardinal, philosopher and administrator. Also wrote on scientific topics.

Nicole, Pierre (1625–1695) French moralist and theologian. A moderate Jansenist, he collaborated with Antoine Arnauld in the *Logique de Port-Royal*.

Ovid (43 B.C.–17 A.D.) Roman poet. Maistre admired his *Metamorphoses*.


Papin, Denis (1647–c. 1712). French physicist, credited with the invention of the pressure cooker. A Protestant, he worked in exile in England and Germany.

Pappus (c. 3rd–4th century A.D.) Greek geometer.

Paracelsus (1490–1541) Swiss physician. Self-educated and interested in the Cabala and Gnosticism, he aroused the hostility of the orthodox medical profession.

Parmenides (c. 515–c. 450 B.C.) Greek philosopher. Prophet of changelessness, he founded the Eleatic philosophy.

Pascal, Blaise (1623–1662) French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and man of letters. Pascal’s most famous literary works were the *Lettres provinciales* (1656), a defence of Jansenism and satirical attack on the Jesuits, and his *Pensees*, a fragmentary work of Christian apologetics published after his death.

Patrizi (or Patrizzio), Francesco (1529–1597) Italian philosopher and man of letters.


Persius (34–62) Roman satric poet, author of six satires expounding Stoicism.

Pétau, Denis (1583–1652) Learned and prolific French Jesuit theologian.

Peurbach, Georg (also Purbach) (1423–1461) Austrian astronomer, teacher of Regiomontanus, and author of *Theoricae novae planetarium*, an explanation of planetary motion based on Ptolemaic geocentric assumptions.

Pindar (522–438 B.C.) Greek poet, author of odes celebrating victors at the Olympic and other games.
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Plato (c. 417–c. 348 B.C.) Greek philosopher, pupil of Socrates and Aristotle’s teacher.

Plautus (2547–184 B.C.) Roman comic playwright.

Pliny the Elder (23–79) Latin author, known for his Natural History.


Plutarch (c. 46–c. 120) Greek biographer, best known from his Moralia and his Parallel Lives.

Polignac, Cardinal Melchior de (1661–1742) Diplomat and author of Anti-Lucretius; sive De Deo et Natura (1747), a work that Maistre owned and cited.

Posselt, Ernst Ludwig (1763–1804) German jurist and historian.

Poussin, Gaspard (see Gaspard Dughet)

Proclus (410–485) Greek Neoplatonic philosopher; last important pagan Greek philosopher.

Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) Hellenic philosopher and scientist. His geocentric cosmology was widely accepted until Copernicus.

Pythagoras (570–500 B.C.) Greek philosopher and mathematician.

Racine, Jean (1639–1699) Great French dramatist.

Raphael (1485–1520) Italian painter and architect.

Regiomontanus (Johann Müller) (1436–1476) German astronomer.

Reid, Thomas (1710–1796) English philosopher, chief exponent of the philosophy of “common sense.”

Reimarus, Hermann (1694–1768) German philosopher.


Riccioli, Giambattista (1598–1671) Italian astronomer.

Roberval, Gilles Persone de (1602–1675) French geometer, involved in disputes with Descartes and others.


Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (1712–1778) Philosopher, born in Geneva, who lived most of his life in France. One of the most influential figures of the French Enlightenment, even though he turned against some of its characteristic ideas.
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Ruisdale (or Ruysdael), Jacob van (1628–1682) Dutch landscape painter. Referred to by Maistre as Ruysdale.

Sacrobosco, John (John Holywood) (c.1200–1256) English astronomer who worked and died in Paris. His work, Sphere, was used as a textbook in astronomy into the seventeenth century.

Saint-Vincent, Grégoire de (1584–1667) Jesuit astronomer.

Sanctorius (1561–1636) Italian physician. The first "iatrophysicist" (school of medicine that thought of the body as a machine). Invented many useful instruments, including the clinical thermometer.

Schubert, Friedrich Theodor (1758–1825) Born in Germany, Schubert became an adjunct of the St Petersburg Academy of Science in 1786. He was an Academician in astronomy with the same institution from 1803 until his death.

Sénebier, Jean (1742–1809) Swiss naturalist, journalist, translator, and bibliographer.

Seneca (4 B.C.–65 A.D.) Roman philosopher and playwright. Also wrote the first and only Roman text book on physics, Investigations in Natural Philosophy.


Sextus Empiricus (c. 190 A.D.) Greek physician and Skeptical philosopher.

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, third earl of (1621–1683) English statesman and first philosopher to use the term "moral sense." Maistre owned a copy of Diderot's translation of Shaftesbury's Essay on Merit and Virtue.

Shakespeare, William (1564–1616) English poet and dramatist, the most widely known author in English literature. Maistre owned an edition of his plays.

Shaw, Peter (1694–1763) English physician and author; edited the works of Bacon and Robert Boyle.

Sherlock, Thomas (1678–1761) Bishop of London and controversialist.

Spallanzani, Lazzaro (1729–1799) Italian naturalist.

Spina, Alessandro della (?–1313) Cited by Maistre as Alexis de Spina. Learned Dominican who, with his colleague Salvino Armati, is credited with the invention of eye glasses.

Spinoza, Barauch (Benedict) (1632–1677) Jewish philosopher. Regarded today as a pantheist, he was feared in his own time as an atheist.

Statius (c. 45–96) Latin poet.

Strabo (c. 58 B.C.– 24 A.D.) Greek geographer.
Telesio, Bernardino (1509–1588) Italian philosopher. His principal work, *De Rerum Natura lustra Propria Principia* was published between 1565 and 1586.

Teller, Guillaume-Abraham (1734–1805) German philosopher, theologian, and biblical scholar.

Terence (185?–159 B.C.) Roman comic playwright.

Theocritus (early 3rd century B.C.) Greek poet, usually regarded as the inventor of the pastoral.


Titian (1477–1576) Italian painter, greatest painter of the Venetian school.

Torricelli, Evangelista (1608–1647) Italian mathematician and physicist. Invented the barometer.

Towers, Joseph (1737–1799) English pamphleteer and dissenting minister.

Valperga di Caluso, Tommaso (1737–1789) Piedmontese mathematician and man of letters. Used pen name of Didymus Taurinensis for his works on Oriental languages.

Vergil (70–19 B.C.) Roman poet, author of the *Bucolics*, the *Georgics*, and the *Aeneid*, the supreme epic of the Roman world.

Vico, Giam battista (1668–1744) Italian philosopher and jurist. Best known for his *La Scienza Nuova (The New Science)* in which he propounded an evolutionary view of civilization.

Viète, François (1504–1603) French mathematician, one the founders of "mathematical analysis."

Volney, Constantin, comte de (1757–1820) French Idéologue.

Voltaire, François-Marie Arouet, known as (1694–1778) French poet, historian, and philosophe.

Vossius, Gerhard Johannes (1577–1649) German classical scholar.


Zoroaster (c. 1000 B.C.) Founder of the ancient Iranian national religion, characterized by a dualistic theology.