

History and Nature in the Enlightenment: Praise of the Mastery of Nature in Eighteenth-Century Historical Literature

Nathaniel Wolloch



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The mastery of nature was viewed by eighteenth-century historians as an important measure of the progress of civilization. Modern scholarship has hitherto taken insufficient notice of this important idea. This book discusses the topic in connection with the mainstream religious, political, and philosophical elements of Enlightenment culture. It considers works by Edward Gibbon, Voltaire, Herder, Vico, Raynal, Hume, Adam Smith, William Robertson, and a wide range of lesser- and better-known figures. It also discusses many classical, medieval, and early modern sources which influenced Enlightenment historiography, as well as eighteenth-century attitudes toward nature in general.

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