

One of the points stressed by Stephen Ambrose in his statements about the Enlightenment in *Undaunted Courage* is that persons of the Enlightenment were typically concerned with "practical, useful knowledge," as distinct from "exploration for its own sake or merely to satisfy curiosity about what was out there" (71; cf. 34, 127, 203, and espec. 81). But, surely, another characteristic of the Enlightenment was its tacit assumption that all human concerns, including, not least, religion, were open to critical interpretation and validation in terms of common human experience and reason.

Recognizing this, one may say that the positivism or panempiricism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while, in some ways, the offspring of the Enlightenment, also involved a fateful and unfortunate narrowing of its true concern—certainly with respect to the scope of critical reflection and perhaps also with respect to the relation between knowledge and life. Insofar, then, as "modernism" is taken to refer^e to such narrowing, a position such as mine can frankly acknowledge its commitment to recovering and carrying forward the original Enlightenment project without forfeiting its right to be thought and spoken of as a genuinely "postmodernist" position.

25 June 1998

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Of course, wisdom at either level, categorial or transcendental, includes knowledge, or science, since "human beings perforce ask *intellectual* questions because they want only valid answers to their *existential* questions." Still, wisdom is one thing, science, another; and what the Enlightenment was most fundamentally about was wisdom, which one can acquire only by daring to use her or his own understanding "without direction from another."

10 February 2005

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