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A Cultural History of the Modern Age: Baroque, Rococo and Enlightenment

Egon Friedell

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This is the second volume of Friedell's monumental *A Cultural History of the Modern Age*. A key figure in the flowering of Viennese culture between the two world wars, this three volume work is considered his masterpiece. The centuries covered in this second volume mark the victory of the scientifi c mind: in nature-research, language-research, politics, economics, war, even morality, poetry, and religion. All systems of thought produced in this century, either begin with the scientifi c outlook as their foundation or regard it as their highest and fi nal goal.

Friedell claims three main streams pervade the eighteenth century: Enlightenment, Revolution, and Classicism. In ordinary use, by "Enlightenment" we mean an extreme rationalistic tendency of which preliminary stages were noted in the seventeenth century. Th e term "Classicism", is well understood.

Under the term "Revolution" Friedell includes all movements directed against what has been dominant and traditional. Th e aims of such movements were remodeling the state and society, banning all esthetic canons, and dethronement of reason by sentiment, all in the name of the "Return to Nature." Th e Enlightenment tendency might be seen as laying the ground for an age of revolution. Th is second volume continues Friedell's dramatic history of the driving forces of the twentieth century.

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