

SUMMARIES

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DIDRO AND FRANKLIN: CITIZENS OF THE REPUBLIC OF REASON

Denis Diderot and Benjamin Franklin are two eminent figures of this republic. And despite the fact that none of their contemporaries or historians, literary scholars of the different times is likely to think of them in terms of their differences or similarities, we find some reason to search for some analogies. Both images are saved in the form of portrait (Diderot, 1769; Franklin, 1778) by Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1733-1806), their contemporary who was a very famous French painter. He managed to catch the apparent likeness in their appearances and then find their inner affinity. Unofficial posture, natural gesture and turn of the head are stressed in both pictures. And this shows not only obvious author's (rococo) aspiration for the intimacy in drawing the appearance details. Fragonard saw the core of people and did not make it up, so he succeeded in restructuring the image of a living spiritual person – not an icon, but a personality in the complicated and natural essence. Although such a portrait reflected the tendency of the art in 18th century according to which main attention was paid to character's psychological analysis, rejection of festiveness and depiction of the real and comparable to a man, it showed the recognizable image of a sage, philosopher immersed in the depths of his thoughts. The source of these thoughts is likely to be a book depicted in the Diderot's portrait and left behind the scene of Franklin's one. The probable meetings of Franklin and Diderot were reproduced by Lion Feuchtwanger's artistic imagination. There is no doubt that the main topic of their conversations was Diderot's work on the Encyclopedia that made Franklin admired, but, nevertheless, it triggered his thoughts about the sources of the concept – the English principles mastered and converted by the French – and then about the important conclusion of the Great Republic of the Scientists where he felt he belonged to. The term «the Republic of the Scientists» was used by Diderot in his article Art published in the Encyclopedia, and there he considers the great scientific discoveries.