

1. Descartes from Discourse on Method

“So blind is the curiosity with which mortals are obsessed that they often direct their energies along unexplored paths, with no reasoned ground for hope, but merely making trial whenever what they seek may by happy chance be thereby found”.

**Rule 1**

“Never to accept anything for true which I did not clearly know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice, and to comprise nothing more in my judgment than what was presented to my mind so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all grounds of doubt.”

**Rule 2**

“To divide each of the difficulties under examination into as many parts as possible, and as might be necessary for its adequate solution.”

**Rule 3**

“To conduct my thoughts in such order that, by commencing with objects the simplest and easiest to know, I might ascend by little and little, and, as it were, step by step, to the knowledge of the more complex; assigning in thought a certain order even to those objects which in their own nature do not stand in a relation of antecedence and sequence.”

**Rule 4**

“To make enumerations so complete, and reviews so general that I might be assured that nothing was omitted.”

2. From *The Declaration of Independence*: We hold these **truths to be self-evident**, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

3. Benjamin Franklin, Letter to Mary Stevenson, 1759

“There are few, though convinced, that know how to give up, even an Error, they have been once engaged in maintaining; there is therefore the more Merit in dropping a Contest where one thinks one’s self right; tis at least respectful to those we converse with. **And indeed all our Knowledge is so imperfect, and we are from a thousand Causes so perpetually subject to Mistake and Error, that Positiveness can scarce ever become even the most knowing;** and modesty in advancing any Opinion, however plain and true we may suppose it, is always decent, and generally more likely to procure assent.”

4. **Denis Diderot on the Salon of 1765**

## Boucher

I don't know what to say about this man. Degradation of taste, color, composition, character, expression, and drawing have kept pace with moral depravity... Those subtle, refined analogies that summon objects onto the canvas and bind them together by means of imperceptible threads, my God, he hasn't the vaguest notion of them. He's the most mortal enemy of silence known to me... [and] it's at precisely the moment Boucher has ceased to be an artist that he's appointed first painter to the king.

## Chardin

Here you are again, great magician, with your silent arrangements! How eloquently they speak to the artist! How much they have to tell about the imitation of nature, the science of color and harmony! How freely the air circulates around your objects! The light of the sun is no better at preserving the individual qualities of the things it illuminates... If it's true, as the philosophers claim, that nothing is real save our sensations, that the emptiness of space and the solidity of bodies have virtually nothing to do with our experience, let these philosophers explain to me what difference there is, four feet away from your paintings, between the Creator and yourself...

### 5. Henry Fielding, "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men."

"I have now, I think, enumerated the principal methods by which deceit works its ends on easy, credulous, and open dispositions; and have endeavored to point out the symptoms by which they may be discovered; but while men are blinded by vanity and self-love, and while artful hypocrisy knows how to adapt itself to their blind sides, and to humor their passions, it will be difficult for honest and undesigning men to escape the snares of cunning and imposition; I shall therefore recommend one more certain rule, and which, I believe, if duly attended to, would, in a great measure, extirpate all fallacy out of the world...

This method is, carefully to observe the actions of men with others, and especially with those to whom they are allied in blood, marriage, friendship, profession, neighborhood, or any other connection; nor can you want an opportunity of doing this; for none but the weakest of men would rashly and madly place a confidence, which may very materially affect him, in any one, on a slight or no acquaintance.

Trace then the man proposed to your trust into his private family and nearest intimacies. See whether he hath acted the part of a good son, brother, husband, father, friend, master, servant, etc. If he hath discharged these duties well, your confidence will have a good foundation; but if he hath behaved himself in these offices with tyranny, with cruelty, with infidelity, with inconstancy, you may be assured he will take the first opportunity his interest points out to him of exercising the same ill talents at your expense.

I have often thought mankind would be little liable to deceit (at least much less than they are) if they would believe their own eyes, and judge of men by what they actually see them perform towards those with whom they are most closely connected; whereas, how common is it to persuade ourselves, that the undutiful, ungrateful son, the unkind or barbarous brother, or the man who is void of all tenderness, honor, or even humanity, to his wife or children, shall nevertheless become a sincere and faithful friend!"