

Chapter 17 – The Eighteenth Century: An Age of Enlightenment

The Enlightenment

1784: Immanuel Kant called it “man’s leaving his self-caused immaturity”

his motto for the Age: “Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own intelligence!”

in general, it was the application of the scientific method to understanding all of life

it believed in the hope for bettering society: *REASON, NATURAL LAW, HOPE, PROGRESS*

The Paths to Enlightenment

The Popularization of Science

Science needed someone to “translate” the difficult theories of the “geniuses”

Bernard de Fontanelle (1657-1757), secretary of the French Academy

A skeptic, particularly about religion

Plurality of Worlds, an intimate “conversation” between a noble lady and her lover

Over two evenings, he explains Copernicus to her

A New Skepticism

Despite the great scientists’ wish to exalt God, the more educated among the 18th C. doubted religion

Pierre Bayle (1647-1706)

A Protestant who attacked superstition, religious intolerance, and dogmatism (stubbornness)

Forcing religion on people produced hypocrisy

Individual conscience should determine one’s actions

New rationalism should be applied to even the Bible

Impact of Travel Literature

Travelers through the 1600s – traders, missionaries, medical practitioners, and explorers – began to publish

Particularly Captain James Cook’s *Travels*, about the South Pacific

Some people saw these new exotics as “noble savages,” happier than civilized Europeans

Different cultures (especially China) seemed “equal to/better than” Europe

Resulting uncertainty about European culture brought about *cultural relativism*

Reinforced religious skepticism

The Legacy of Locke and Newton

Were held in the highest esteem by the 18th C. *philosophes*

Newton’s “universal” application stimulated the *philosophes* to find its equivalent in human behavior

By applying his rules of reasoning to politics, economics, justice, religion, and the arts

Locke’s theory of knowledge in his 1690 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

tabula rasa (“blank slate”) argued against Descartes’ idea of innate ideas

all knowledge is based on our environment, not heredity; from reason, not faith

changing environment can improve human understanding, achievement

The Philosophes and Their Ideas

Philosophes (primarily French and rarely actual philosophers) came from a variety of backgrounds

literary people, professors, journalists, statesmen, economists, political scientists and *social reformers*

from nobility and middle class – and even a few from more common origins

an international movement, but with Paris as its spiritual capital

its intention was to create better societies

its desire for freedom of expression fought censorship

often published under pseudonyms or in more tolerant countries such as Holland

substituted for inflammatory words (e.g., “Persian” for “French”)

each generation of *philosophes* became more radical

Montesquieu (1689-1755) and Political Thought

1721: *Persian Letters* used Persians traveling through Europe to criticize the French

especially the Catholic Church and French monarchy

1748: *The Spirit of the Laws (L’Esprit des Lois)* tried to apply rational thought to governments

used (his misunderstanding of) English system as a template

checks and balances based on *separation of powers* created the greatest freedom and security

1750: the English translation was read by American *philosophes*

Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson

Voltaire and the Enlightenment

François-Marie Arouet was known as Voltaire (1694-1778)

A playwright in his early twenties, known for his wit

After angering a noble, he fled to England

1733: his *Philosophic Letters on the English* praised the English

for their freedom of the press, religious toleration, and political freedom

reception in France as its author forced him to retire in semi-seclusion

lived with Madame du Châtelet, an early *philosophe* who translated Newton's *Principia* into French
continually criticized religious intolerance

1763: *Treatise on Toleration* argued that England and Holland hadn't suffered from religious diversity
famous for "Crush the infamous thing" (*écrasez l'infâme*), meaning religious intolerance

championed *deism*

God created the universe, but did not interfere afterward

Jesus was historical, good, but not divine

Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and the Encyclopedia

A freelance writer who began by criticizing Christianity

: *Encyclopedia, or Classified Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*

intended to "change the general way of thinking"

used *philosophes* (many were his friends) to write articles supporting enlightenment ideas

at first considered subversive, but later – as prices dropped – became more widely read, accepted

The New "Science of Man"

"science of man" would be equivalent to modern concept of social sciences

proposed "natural laws" that governed human actions

David Hume (1711-1776), a *philosophe* from Scotland

Treatise on Human Nature argued that observation and reflection could result in "rules" of human nature

Physiocrats and Adam Smith developed a philosophy of economics

Physiocrats argued that land was the only real source of wealth

Rejected mercantilism – and gold and silver

"laws" of supply and demand argued that individuals should be free to pursue their own self-interest
so *laissez-faire* demanded that government not interfere

best presented in Adam Smith's (Scot, 1723-1790) 1776 work, *Wealth of Nations*

attacked tariffs, promoted free trade

if it was cheaper to purchase from another country than produce it, then buy it

attacked gold and silver as wealth

proposed that *labor* was the source of wealth

said that government had only three responsibilities

protect from invasion (army), protect from each other (police), build public works

these ideas became known as *economic liberalism*

The Later Enlightenment

Baron d'Holbach (1723-1794) preached atheism and materialism

1770: *System of Nature* argued that all things (including humans) were machines in motion

God was unnecessary for leading a moral life; reason was enough

Marie-Jean de Condorcet (1743-1794)

1794: *The Progress of the Human Mind* argued that man had been through nine historical stages

The tenth stage (a perfect one) was based on science and reason

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the Social Contract

Born in Geneva, made his way to Paris, but never liked the social life of the cities

Discourse on the Origins of the Inequalities of Mankind

Argued that man was happiest in a state of nature; civilization brought not freedom but "chains"

Government might be necessary, but it was a necessary evil

1762: *The Social Contract* argued that the contract was among citizens

self-interest should be subordinated to the “general will”

but the general will should be whatever was best for each individual

people are “forced” to follow laws that one imposes on oneself

1762: *Émile* (a novel) proposed that education should foster, not restrict, children’s natural instincts

his experiences suggested that life required both reason and sentiment (feeling)

made him the intellectual father of Romanticism

Rousseau did not follow his own advice with his own family

Sent his children to a foundling home, did not grant his wife any sense of independence

The “Woman’s Question” in the Enlightenment

Philosophes generally agreed with centuries of thought that biological differences separated the sexes

Women writers of the time (understandably) disagreed

Mary Astell (1666-1731) argued for better women’s education

1697: *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* called for better education

Some Reflections on Marriage called for equality within marriage

“If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?”

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797)

1792: *Vindication of the Rights of Women* pointed out the hypocrisy of many male *philosophes*

if arbitrary subjugation of men to the monarch was wrong, what about women’s to men?

The Social Environment of the *Philosophes*

Although *philosophes*’ backgrounds were varied, their message appealed most to aristocrats and upper middle class

Publication spread the ideas to the elite of Europe

Salons did the same within the cities, especially Paris

Invited guests traded witty comments and new ideas

Writers, artists, aristocrats, government officials, wealthy *bourgeoisie*

The hostesses of these salons found themselves able to sway the opinions of the important

Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin hosted the Encyclopedists

The marquise du Deffand hosted (among others) Montesquieu, Hume, and Voltaire

Coffee-houses, cafés, reading clubs, and public lending libraries also contributed to the exchange of ideas

Learned societies – as in Edinburgh (Scotland) and the American colonies – discussed Enlightenment ideas

1717: the Freemasons were formed in London, and spread France, Italy, Prussia, and the American colonies

Culture and Society in the Enlightenment

Innovations in Art, Music, and Literature

1730s: *Rococo* influenced decoration and architecture

Baroque: majesty, power, and movement (drama)

Rococo: grace and gentle action; geometrical patterns and wandering, “natural” lines (e.g., seashells),

designs in gold, intricate contours; lightness, charm; happiness and love

Antoine Watteau: aristocratic life – refined, sensual, civilized, elegant

Imitations of Versailles all across the continent

Late 1700s France: *Neoclassicism*

Recent discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum

Jacques-Louis David: scenes from Roman history, portraying honor and patriotism, pleased the French

The Development of Music

Rise of the opera and oratorio (vocal), sonata, concerto, and symphony (orchestral)

Italians, followed by Germans, Austrians, and English

Patronage of royalty, clergy (remember, there were lots of them in Germany, Italy)

Johann Sebastian Bach (German) believed music served God

Famous works: Mass in B minor, Saint Matthew’s Passion

George Frederick Handel (German moved to England) more secular, composer to the king

Famous works: Royal Fireworks Music, *Messiah*

Late 1700s: orchestral music blossoms

Piano invented

Franz Josef Haydn (symphonies, oratorios, Masses)

Began composing for public concerts, not patrons

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (concertos, symphonies, operas)

Child prodigy, died at 35

Famous works: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute* (operas)

The Development of the Novel

English credited with making the novel the primary mode of fiction

Samuel Richardson: *Pamela* (servant girl resists her master's attempts at seduction; he marries her)

sentimental and emotional; virtue is rewarded

Henry Fielding: *Tom Jones* (bastard celebrates life, fools the rich)

Unsentimental; presented scenes of English life; attacked hypocrisy

The Writing of History

philosophe-historians examined history beyond politics: economic, social, intellectual and cultural aspects

bias of *philosophes*: emphasized science and reason, deemphasized religion (Christianity)

sympathetic to ancient Greece and Rome; unsympathetic to the Middle Ages

High Culture of the Eighteenth Century

Beginning of the distinction between high culture (elite) vs. popular culture (of the masses, often oral)

High culture: the world of theologians, scientists, philosophers, intellectuals, poets, and dramatists

Latin was the international language

Boom in publishing, expansion of the reading public (women, middle-class)

Magazines for general public (Great Britain was its center)

Publishing houses began to replace patrons

Not just in libraries, colleges and universities; also in clubs, tea-tables, and coffee houses

Newspapers were cheap and plentiful (at least in England)

Educational and Universities

Privately-funded secondary schools – for the elite – perpetuated class hierarchy

Grammar and public schools (England), gymnasium (Germany), and *collège* (France and Spain)

D'Holbach said schools should teach:

“Princes to reign,

ruling classes to distinguish themselves...and use their riches well, and

the poor to live by honest industry”

not until late 1700s did the new ideas in science and mathematics enter the curriculum

some reformers (especially in Germany) opened new schools for practical education

prepared boys for careers in business, girls for religion and domestic skills

Crime and Punishment

most European states had courts to deal with crime, but judicial torture was still used to extract evidence,

confession (e.g., rack, thumbscrews)

punishments could be arbitrary, cruel (e.g., public execution) or excessive (e.g., death for property crimes)

death for nobles was swift; for lower classes, it could be gruesome (e.g., drawn and quartered)

philosophes looked for a new approach to justice

1764: Cesare Beccaria (Italian) published *On Crimes and Punishments*

punishment as deterrent, not as brutality

opposed capital punishment; preferred imprisonment

set example of barbarism

by late 1700s capital and corporal punishment declined

The World of Medicine

A hierarchy existed

Physicians: college-educated, high status, consulted with patients in return for payment (rich)

Surgeons: bled patients and performed (often crude) surgery; licensed, gained status over time

Apothecaries (pharmacists), midwives, faith healers: served the common people

Hospitals were as much carriers of disease and illness as curers

Popular Culture

Written and unwritten literature; social activities and pursuits of the common people

Especially as practiced in groups

Church festivals in Catholic Europe (especially Christmas and Easter)

Carnival

Celebrated just before Lent, was the *opposite* of Lent

Heavy consumption of food and drink, intense sexual activity, songs with *double entendres*

Verbal aggression, especially at social superiors

Taverns and Alcohol

Local gathering place

Talk, play games, conduct small business, and drink

Source of cheap drink (e.g., gin in England, vodka in Russia) resulted in frequent alcoholism

As opposed to the rich, who drank port wine and brandy

Literacy and Primary Education

Chapbooks (on cheap paper) sold by itinerant peddlers to the lower classes

Inspirational (lives of the saints) or secular (crude satires and adventure stories)

A result of increased literacy

Almost all the elite classes were literate; lower-middle-class artisans were fairly literate, too

Catholics *and* Protestants had “invested” in literacy

But the upper class worried about increased literacy among the lower classes

They allowed for only preparation to serve the rich

Religion and the Churches

Despite the inroads of the skeptics and atheists, Europe was still overwhelmingly Christian

The Institutional Church

Churches were mostly conservative and supported state policies

Main functions: recorded births, marriages, deaths, provided charity for the poor, provided primary education (for some), cared for orphans

Church-State Relations

Protestants: allowed for state controls

Lutheranism in Scandinavia, northern Germany; Anglicanism in England; Calvinism in Scotland, United Provinces, some Swiss cantons and German states

Catholics: still powerful in Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Habsburg Empire, Poland Southern Germany

Higher clergy were active in upper class; lower clergy lived much like the peasants

1700s: states tried to seek greater control over Catholic church

tried to reduce influence of the Jesuits or expel them

expelled from Portugal (1759), France (1764), and Spain (1767); dissolved in 1773

papal power had declined; it played only a minor role in diplomacy and international affairs

Toleration and Religious Minorities

philosophes battled for religious toleration; devout rulers preferred single state religions

persecution of heretics continued until 1781

Joseph II (Austria) protected the rights of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Greek Orthodox

Toleration and the Jews

Jews were the most despised – particularly in Eastern Europe (Ashkenazi Jews)

Restricted in their movements, forbidden to own land or hold many jobs, paid burdensome taxes

Victims of periodic outbursts of popular anger

In *pogroms*, Jewish communities were looted and massacred

Jews in the western regions (Sephardic Jews) received moderate acceptance

Especially in Amsterdam, Venice, London, and Frankfurt; within some courts

but often suffered popular resentment

some Enlightenment thinkers argued for toleration of Jews – and Muslims

but sometimes even that masked personal animosity

some accepted Jews only if they converted to Christianity

Popular Religion in the Eighteenth Century

Catholic (Lack of) Piety

Attendance most reliable on Easter (90-95%)

Even some priests accused the faithful of being “more superstitious than devout”

Reliance on the intervention of Mary and the saints

Protestant Revival: Pietism

Churches had settled down in the years since the Reformation

Rationalism and deism were more influential

Some believers looked to more personal involvement in religion

Pietism (starting in Germany) looked for mystical connection rather than rational explanations

England: Anglicanism was “boring”; its dissenters (Puritans, Quakers, and Baptists) weren't much better

Wesley and Methodism

John Wesley (Anglican minister) had mystical experience: God bestowed his grace, assured salvation

Took his message of salvation out to the people

In open fields, to lower classes

Strong, emotional conversions resulted

Wesley meant it to stay within Anglicanism, but it created its own denomination