

ENLIGHTENMENT



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THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

- The **Enlightenment**, also known as the **Age of Reason**, was an intellectual and cultural movement in the eighteenth century that emphasized **reason** over superstition and **science** over blind faith.
- Using the power of the press, Enlightenment thinkers like **John Locke**, **Isaac Newton**, and **Voltaire** questioned accepted knowledge and spread new ideas about openness, investigation, and religious tolerance throughout Europe and the Americas.
- Many consider the Enlightenment a major turning point in Western civilization, an age of light replacing an age of darkness.

Introduction to The Enlightenment

Enlightenment-

- A change in outlook among many educated Europeans that began during the 1600s.
- This was a time when reason was a key part of progress.
- They used observation and logic to understand the world instead of errors and superstitions of the past.

In France these thinkers were known as 'philosophes', French for Philosophers.



The Roots

- Enlightenment form of thinking grew out of the Scientific Revolution, using science, observation, and reason.
- Some consider the publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia Mathematica* in 1687 as the first major enlightenment work.
- Philosophers started to question Christian belief, also preferring rational understanding to faith. They said humans were perfectly able to discover truth for themselves instead of just believing the Bible. Although, most still believed in God. Eventually philosophers started to question the basis of everything- religion, morality, and government were some.

Enlightenment Thought

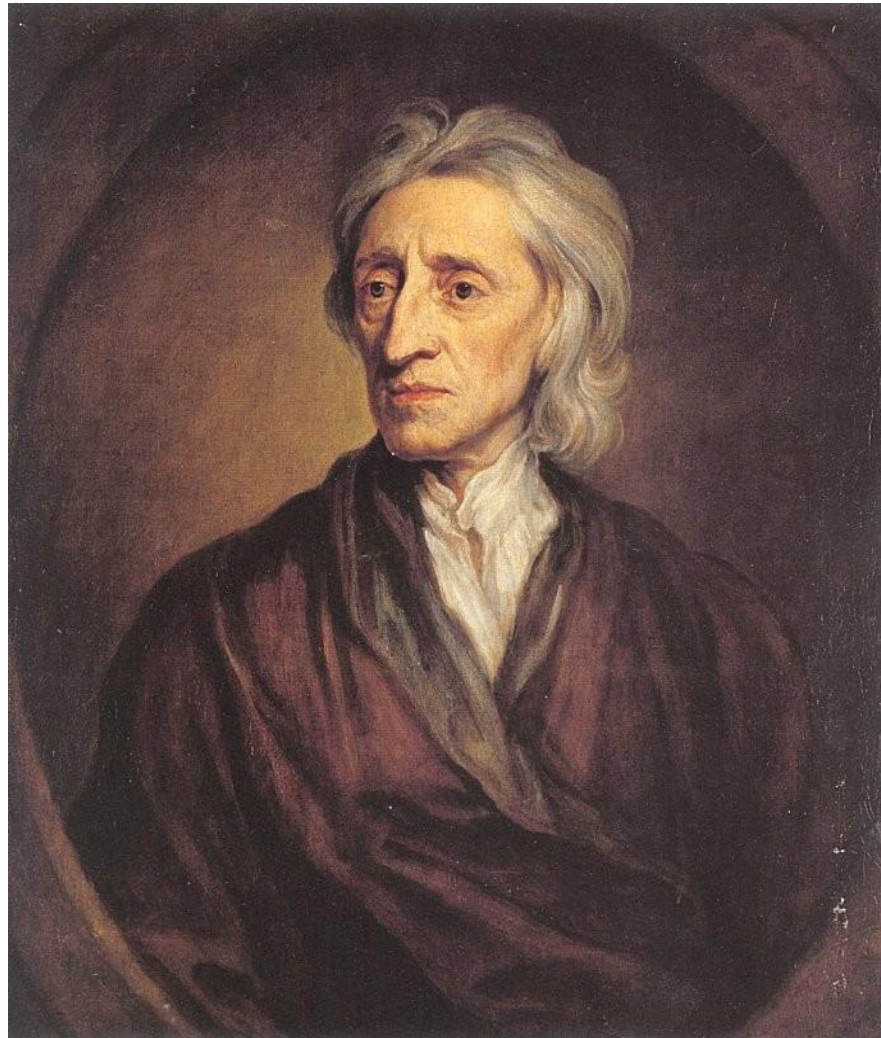
Several ideas dominated Enlightenment thought, including **rationalism, empiricism, progressivism, and cosmopolitanism.**

- **Rationalism** is the idea that humans are capable of using their faculty of reason to gain knowledge. This was a sharp turn away from the prevailing idea that people needed to rely on scripture or church authorities for knowledge.
- **Empiricism** promotes the idea that knowledge comes from experience and observation of the world.
- **Progressivism** is the belief that through their powers of reason and observation, humans can make unlimited, linear progress over time; this belief was especially important as a response to the carnage and upheaval of the English Civil Wars in the 17th century.
- Finally, **Cosmopolitanism** reflected Enlightenment thinkers' view of themselves as actively engaged citizens of the world as opposed to provincial and close-minded individuals. In all, Enlightenment thinkers endeavored to be ruled by reason, not prejudice.

Enlightenment Thinkers

- Earlier philosophers whose work influenced the Enlightenment- included Bacon and Descartes.
- Contributors to the movement include France's Denis Diderot (who edited *Encyclopedia*), Voltaire (*Candide*), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (*The Social Contract, Emile, or On Education*), Germany's Immanuel Kant (who is also associated with Transcendentalism), Scotland's Adam Smith (*The Wealth of Nations*, which laid the foundations of classical free market economy theory), England's David Hume, Italy's Cesare Beccaria, and Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson (*United States Declaration of Independence* (1776), which says "All men are created equal", and his support of democracy in theory and practice) or Thomas Paine (*Common Sense*) in the North American colonies.

John Locke



Important empiricist, a seminal thinker in the realm of the relationship between the state and the individual, the contractual basis of the state and the rule of law. Argued for personal liberty emphasizing the rights of property.

Locke's theory of mind is often cited as the origin of modern conceptions of identity and the self. Locke was the first to define the self through a continuity of consciousness. He postulated that, at birth, the mind was a blank slate or *tabula rasa*.

Notable work: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690)

Thomas Hobbes



Philosopher who wrote *Leviathan*, a key text in political philosophy. While Hobbes justifies absolute monarchy, this work is the first to posit that the temporal power of a monarch comes about, not because God has ordained that he be monarch, but because his subjects have freely yielded their own power and freedom to him – in other words, Hobbes replaces the ‘divine right of kings’ with an early formulation of the social contract.

Voltaire

Highly influential writer, historian and philosopher. He promoted Newtonianism and denounced organized religion as pernicious.

One of his most famous books is-
Candide,



Immanuel Kant



Philosopher and physicist. Established critical philosophy on a systematic basis, proposed a material theory for the origin of the solar system, wrote on ethics and morals. He tried to reconcile rationalism and religious belief, individual freedom and political authority. Prescribed a politics of Enlightenment in *What is Enlightenment?* (1784). Influenced by Hume and Rousseau. Important figure in German Idealism, and important to the work of Fichte and Hegel.

In one of his major works, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), he drew a parallel to the Copernican revolution in his proposition that worldly objects can be intuited *a priori* ('beforehand'), and that intuition is therefore independent from objective reality.

Thank You.

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