

THE ENLIGHTENMENT

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A GENERAL IDEA

The Enlightenment was an intellectual era that began in the mid 1600s and ended in the late 1700s, that focused on rationalism, individualism, and analysis. It was predominantly secular, without much emphasis on religion. In a way, it expanded upon the Renaissance.

THE BIG THREE

RATIONALISM

The most important idea of the Enlightenment was how methods of science could be used to study and understand all aspects of life. This can be narrowed down to the term reason, which is rationalism.

SOCIAL SCIENCE

The Enlightenment brought the idea that the scientific method was capable of discovering the laws of society and nature, giving birth to social science.

PROGRESS

Progress is the idea that human beings could create better societies and people.

THE PEOPLE IT EFFECTED

It had an impact on the aristocracy and middle class, however it did not appeal to the lower classes.

THE BIRTH OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

Its hard to say when and how it was born, but it emerged directly from the scientific revolution.

The people who took the credit for bringing the Enlightenment to the forefront were the Philosophes.

PHILOSOPHES

Philosophes emerged from France, where the Enlightenment reached its highest point.

France was the best because:

1. French was the international political language.
2. French absolutism was strong enough, but not overpowering.
3. The questions they asked were truly philosophical, ex. “What is life?”

SALONS

Salons in France were a place that women managed for people of the Enlightenment to gather. Here they could also gather philosophes to exchange ideas and observations. They helped to unify the intellectual, economic, and social elites.

ENLIGHTENMENT MINDS

BERNARD DE FONTENELLE

- ◉ Wrote books on science for a nonscientific audience, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*
- ◉ Skeptical of absolute truth and didn't agree with organized religion, showed in his writing



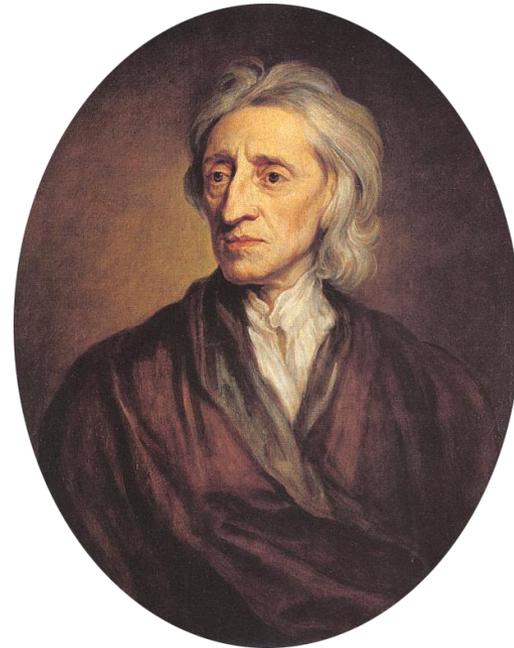
PIERRE BAYLE

- ◉ French Huguenot who moved to the Netherlands
- ◉ Critical of religion, shown in *Historical and Critical Dictionary*
- ◉ Concluded that nothing could be known for certain, birth of skepticism in the Enlightenment



JOHN LOCKE

- ◉ English intellectual
- ◉ *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, set forth a new idea on how human beings learn and form ideas from experience,
 - Mind at birth is a tabula rasa, or blank slate
 - *Human development determined by education and institutions*



JEAN DE ROND D'ALEMBERT

- ◉ French philosophe
- ◉ Believed that there was an enlightened public above the rest
- ◉ Contributed to the seventeen volume *Encyclopedia: The Rational Dictionary of the Sciences, the Arts, and the Crafts*



MONTESQUIEU

- ◉ French philosophe
- ◉ Compared governments in *The Spirit of Laws*
 - Argued that despotism could be avoided with a separation of powers
- ◉ Wrote *The Persian Letters*

Criticized society through letters written by “Persians”, since open criticism was illegal



VOLTAIRE

- ⦿ French philosophe
- ⦿ Praised England and its scientific progress
- ⦿ Historian, wrote *Age of Louis XIV*
- ⦿ Had a correspondence with Frederic the Great
- ⦿ Believed that human beings could rarely govern themselves, could hope for a “good monarch”
- ⦿ Indirectly challenged the church in many writings
- ⦿ Deist



DEISM

Deism was a religion that believed in God, however did not believe in established churches. The most popular belief is that God originally created the universe, but stepped aside and then let it run.

BARON PAUL D'HOLBACH

- ◉ German but French educated
- ◉ Later Enlightenment, breaks its unity
- ◉ Argued that human beings were machines completely determined by outside forces
- ◉ No God, free will, or immortality of the soul
- ◉ Repelled many other Enlightenment figures, like Voltaire



JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

- ◉ Swiss, studied in France
- ◉ Late Enlightenment
- ◉ Committed to individualism but not rationalism, believing it to destroy the individual, liked warm feelings instead of cold intellect
- ◉ *The Social Contract*, political theory, believed in the general will and popular sovereignty, both common interests of the people



ENLIGHTENED ABSOLUTISM

WHAT WAS IT?

- ◉ Absolute monarchs tied the ideas of the Enlightenment into their rule

FREDERICK THE GREAT OF PRUSSIA

- ◉ Embraced culture and literature
- ◉ Tolerant of religious and philosophical views
- ◉ Improved schools
- ◉ Allowed scientists to publish findings
- ◉ Had help of Voltaire
- ◉ Simplified laws, abolished torture, impartial judges
- ◉ Promoted agriculture and industry after war



CATHERINE THE GREAT OF RUSSIA

- ◉ Continued Peter's work to bring western culture to Russia
- ◉ Domestic reform, made better laws, restricted torture, allowed limited religious toleration
- ◉ Improved education and strengthened local government



FRANCE

- ◉ Louis XIV was absolute, however everything changed when he died
- ◉ Enlightenment liberal ideas want to limit kings power
- ◉ Old parlements restored under Louis XV, judges go from middle class to hereditary nobles
- ◉ Louis XV leads unpopular income tax after war, was soon dropped
- ◉ Parlement challenged royal authority
- ◉ Louis appoints Rene de Maupeou as chancellor, who abolished the parlements
- ◉ Made a new parlement out of royals
- ◉ Philosophes supported old parlements
- ◉ Louis XVI soon ascends to throne, reinstates old parlements with good intentions, but monarchy remains weak, leading to financial and political crisis

IMPORTANCE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

- ◉ New emphasis on reason, rationalism
- ◉ Creation of the scientific and critical methods
- ◉ Skepticism
- ◉ Social Science
- ◉ Creates Enlightened Absolutism
- ◉ Brings western ideas and progress to the east
- ◉ Makes France an intellectual state, but weakens it substantially in times to come
- ◉ Grew market for books
- ◉ Promotes middle class, who buys the books
- ◉ Reaches the American colonies for their own Enlightenment
- ◉ Indirectly leaves France open for revolution