

## The Enlightenment

### ➤ Enlightenment Ideas

→ stems from a love of the Scientific Revolution – they used reason to discover the natural world

◆ Enlightenment thinkers used reason to understand their own lives

- Search for natural laws of social world
- ◆ grew from popularizers (those who rewrote the Scientific Revolution in layman's terms)
  - esp. Bernard de Fontenelle (1657-1757), secretary of the French Royal Academy of Science – rewrote science as conversations between two normal people
    - Fontenelle was not fond of religion, so he wrote that out of the scientific revolution (still persists today)

→ skepticism

- ◆ Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) – was a Protestant, and remained so
  - criticized traditional religious attitudes of superstition, intolerance, and dogmatism
  - argued for complete religious toleration
  - applied rationalist principles to the Bible, re-imagining its heroes as villains (David)

→ “noble savage”

- ◆ came from explorers, especially James Cook's *Travels*
- ◆ idea that indigenous peoples are closer to nature, and therefore superior
- ◆ thrives in idea of Indigenous Americans as original environmentalists

→ influence of Newton & Locke

- ◆ wanted to follow Newton's rules that constructed a “universal law” for planetary motion, and created universal laws of politics, economics, justice, religion, & the arts
- ◆ Locke posited a “tabula rasa,” or “blank mind”
  - we are born with no knowledge, and acquire everything from experience, not heredity

→ Philosophes

- ◆ all Enlightenment thinkers were known as philosophes, French for philosophers
  - important that it is a French word, because Paris was the center of the enlightenment

### ➤ Some Political Philosophes

→ Charles de Secondat, the baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755)

- ◆ *Persian Letters*, written as a conversation between two Persians traveling through France
  - attack traditional religion
  - advocates religious toleration
  - denounces slavery
  - use of reason to free humans from their prejudices
  - all of these are the “program” of the Enlightenment (to use Spielvogel's word)
- ◆ *The Spirit of the Laws* – attempt to apply scientific method to social and political life
  - uncover natural, universal laws that govern social life
  - three basic kinds of governments
    - republics (for small states)
    - monarchy (for middle-sized states)

- despotism (for large empires)
- Most significantly, advocated the importance of checks and balances, as in England
- Voltaire (1694-1778)
  - ♦ began his career as a playwright, but became hugely famous (& infamous) when he published his *Philosophic Letters on the English* in 1733
    - he praised [& exaggerated] English freedom of religion, forcing him out of French public life
  - ♦ *Treatise on Toleration* 1763 – England & Holland have had no problems by allowing religious toleration
  - ♦ believed in deism – the idea that God had created the universe, but has no present involvement in it
    - most Enlightenment thinkers were deists (so was Thomas Jefferson)
- Denis Diderot (1713-1784)
  - ♦ famous for his attacks on Christianity, which he viewed as fanatical and unreasonable
  - ♦ wrote the *Encyclopedia, or Classified Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Trades*
    - twenty-eight-volume work designed to bring most of society into Enlightenment thinking
- Some Social Science Philosophes
  - David Hume (1711-1776)
    - ♦ wrote the *Treatise on Human Nature*, arguing for a systematized “science of man”
  - Physiocrats, led by François Quesney (1694-1774) – economic rules
    - ♦ Physiocrats' Economic Laws
      - land is the only source of wealth (argued against Mercantilist idea of gold/silver as only source of wealth)
      - laissez-faire economics is best
  - Adam Smith (1723-1790), wrote *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*
    - ♦ gave three principles of economics (which also attacked Mercantilism)
      - No protective tariffs – buy instead of produce if it's cheaper
      - wealth of a nation comes from labor
      - state should not interfere with economic matters (laissez-faire again)
        - government should only provide an army, police, & public works
- Philosophes – the Next Generation (let's criticize the other Philosophes)
  - Jean-Jacques Rousseau (d. 1778)
    - ♦ had the leisure of writing, courtesy of his mistress
    - ♦ *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality of Mankind*
      - in primitive state, mankind was happy & free – private property destroyed happiness, led to laws & governors
    - ♦ *The Social Contract* – 1762
      - the social contract is an agreement by an entire society to be governed by its general will (the wishes of everyone together)
        - the general will would automatically be what is best for each individual
        - requires direct democracy, since the laws must be equal to the general will
    - ♦ *Émile* – 1762, on education, suggested that education should foster children's natural instincts, and lead to a balance between heart and mind
  - Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) – *Vindication of the Rights of Women*

- ♦ **women should not have to obey men** (it's like obeying monarchs, which Enlightenment thinkers opposed)
- ♦ **women should have equal rights with men**, since they have the capacity to reason
- **salons**
  - occurred in the drawing rooms of wealthy & aristocracy (middle class was largely unaffected by Enlightenment)
  - hostesses would gather together philosophes and guests to have conversations (like modern “entertaining”) – **gave women political/social power to influence decision-makers**
    - ♦ it was also common for women to influence men more directly. Rousseau was funded by an older female lover; Voltaire lived on his mistress's estate.
  - **ended during French Revolution due to complaints of undue female influence.**
- Rococo – architectural style emphasizing grace (curves) and gentle action (pursuit of pleasure/happiness/love)
- Classical Period (Music) 1750-1820
  - Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) – eschewed patronage for public concerts
  - Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)
    - ♦ prodigy
    - ♦ couldn't get along with patrons
    - ♦ Wrote for patrons and public (*The Magic Flute*)
- Books of the Enlightenment
  - growth of the novel (came from romance novel tradition)
  - Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*
    - ♦ reflected Enlightenment ideals at the time – blame Christianity for fall of Rome; saw Middle Ages as especially gruesome due to Christian control (not accurate)
    - ♦ **HISTORY ALWAYS REFLECTS IDEALS OF WHEN IT IS WRITTEN**
- High Culture
  - available to the middle class (lending libraries, newspapers)
  - **move from patronages to public** (example: the novel, which began to be published by publishing houses)
- Popular Culture
  - vs. high culture
  - **festivals** – mostly in Southern Europe (Catholic), incl. Carnival
  - **Taverns** were primary meeting places; **local churches** were also important
  - **Chapbooks** – possible because of spread of literacy
- Other cultural changes
  - education moved from emphasis on Classics to **emphasis on practicality** (i.e. German Realschule – 1747, which gave modern languages, geography, etc.)
  - criminal justice
    - ♦ Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794) – *On Crimes and Punishment*, argued that punishment should equal deterrent and no capital punishment.
    - ♦ **decline of torture & executions**
  - medicine
    - ♦ **move from barber-surgeons to trained surgeons**
  - Churches
    - ♦ **nationalization** of Catholic churches (like Protestant churches) – **end of Society of Jesus/Jesuits**

- ◆ pogroms – massacre & looting of Jewish communities
  - most Enlightenment thinkers were as critical of Judaism as they were of Christianity
  - some said Jews should have rights because they were human
- ◆ John Wesley (1703-1791)
  - advocated personal religious experiences
  - preached to common people
  - people organized together into Methodist communities