

The 18th Century proudly referred to itself as the "Age of Enlightenment" and rightfully so, for Europe had dwelled in the dim glow of the Middle Ages when suddenly the lights began to come on in men's minds and humankind moved forward.

The Age of Enlightenment

The European Dream Of Progress And Enlightenment

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To understand the natural world and humankind's place in it solely on the basis of reason and without turning to religious belief was the goal of the wide-ranging intellectual movement called the Enlightenment. The movement claimed the allegiance of a majority of thinkers during the 17th and 18th centuries, a period that Thomas Paine called the Age of Reason. At its heart it became a conflict between religion and the inquiring mind that wanted to know and understand through reason based on evidence and proof.

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Reflections Of The Age In Cultural Expression

The eighteenth century, when Newtonian science exerted its greatest impact, was exceptionally noteworthy for European cultural expression. This was most evident in philosophy, which sought to find in human affairs natural laws similar to those science had discovered in the physical universe. This approach, with its optimistic utopianism, found some expression in literature, but it was much more obscured in the visual arts and barely noticeable in music. Because they were largely affected by tradition, individual feeling, and patronage, the arts were less responsive to scientific influence. They were, nevertheless, quite rich and varied, reflecting the increasing wealth, widening perspectives, and rising technical proficiency of European life.

Developments In The Arts

The quantity and diversity of artistic works during the period do not fit easily into categories for interpretation, but some loose generalizations may be drawn. At the opening of the century, baroque forms were still popular, as they would be at the end. They were partially supplanted, however, by a general lightening in the rococo motifs of the early 1700s. This was followed, after the middle of the century, by the formalism and balance of neoclassicism, with its resurrection of Greek and Roman models. Although the end of the century saw a slight romantic turn, the era's characteristic accent on reason found its best expression in neoclassicism.

In painting, rococo emphasized the airy grace and refined pleasures of the salon and the boudoir, of delicate jewelry and porcelains, of wooded scenes, artful dances, and women, particularly women in the nude. Rococo painters also specialized in portraiture, showing aristocratic subjects in their finery, idealized and beautified on canvas. The rococo painting of Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) blended fantasy with acute observations of nature, conveying the ease and luxury of French court life. Watteau's successors in France included Francois Boucher (1703-1770) and Jean Fragonard (1732-1806). Italian painters, such as Giovanni Tiepolo (1696-1730), also displayed rococo influences. English painting lacked the characteristic rococo frivolity, but the style affected works by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) and Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), whose portraits tended to flatter their aristocratic subjects.

Eighteenth-century neoclassicism in painting is difficult to separate from some works in the era of Louis XIV. Both Charles Le Brun (1619-1690) and Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) had earlier projected order and balance, often in grandiose scenes from antiquity or mythology. Jean Chardin (1699-1779) carried some of this over into the 1700s. The neoclassic approach, however, often expressed powerful dissatisfaction and criticism of the existing order, sometimes in stark realism and sometimes in colossal allegory. The most typical representative of this approach was Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), whose most famous work, Death of Socrates illustrates his respect for Greco-Roman tradition. His sketch of Marie Antoinette enroute to the guillotine clearly represents his revolutionary sympathies. The best examples of pure realism and social criticism are the London street scenes by the English painter William Hogarth (1697-1764) and the Spanish court portraits of

Francisco Goya (1746-1828).

The number of women painters increased during the eighteenth century, but they were so limited by traditions and so dependent upon public favor that they could hardly maintain consistent styles. Very few were admitted to academies, where their work might be shown; in France, they were not permitted to work with nude models. The result was their practical restriction to still-life and portraiture. Among rococo painters, the two best-known were Rachel Ruysch (1664-1750), a court painter of flowers in Dusseldorf, and Rosalba Carriera (1675-1757), a follower of Watteau, who was admitted to the French Academy in 1720. Two very famous French portrait painters and members of the Academy, were Vigee Le Brun (1755-1842) and Adelaide Labille-Guiard (1749-1803). If possible, they were overshadowed by Angelica Kaufmann (1741-1807), a Swiss-born artist who painted in England and Italy. All three were celebrated in their time. Each produced grand scenes in the neoclassical style, but their market limited them to flattering portraits, at which they excelled.

Neoclassicism also found expression in architecture and sculpture. Architecture was marked by a return to the intrinsic dignity of what a contemporary called "the noble simplicity and tranquil loftiness of the ancients." The Madeleine of Paris is a faithful copy of a still-standing Roman temple, and the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin was modeled after the monumental entrance to the Acropolis in Athens. In England, where the classical style had resisted baroque influences, the great country houses of the nobility now exhibited a purity of design, which often included a portico with Corinthian columns. Mount Vernon is an outstanding example of neoclassicism in colonial America. The trend in sculpture often revived classical themes from Greek and Roman mythology; statues of Venus became increasingly popular. Claude Michel (1738-1814) and Jean Houdon (1741-1828) were two French neoclassical sculptors who also achieved notable success with contemporary portraits. Houdon's Portrait of Voltaire is a well-known example.

At the opening of the eighteenth century, music demonstrated typical baroque characteristics. These were evident in instrumental music, especially that of the organ and the strings. The most typical baroque medium was opera, with its opulence and highly emotional content. The era culminated in the sumptuous religious music of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), a prolific German organ master and choir director. Bach's equally great contemporary, the German-born naturalized Englishman, George Frideric Handel (1685-1759), is known for his grand and dramatic operas, oratorios, and cantatas; he is best known today for his religious oratorio, Messiah (1742).

Composers of the late eighteenth century turned from the heavy and complex baroque styles to classical music of greater clarity, simpler structures, and more formal models. Plain, often folklike melodies also became common. With the appearance of symphonies, sonatas, concertos, and chamber music, less interest was shown in mere accompaniment for religious services or operatic performances. The general emphasis on technical perfection, melody, and orchestration is summed up in the work of the Austrian composers Franz Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791). Haydn wrote over 100 symphonies, along with numerous other works. Mozart wrote more than 600 works, including 41 symphonies, 22 operas, and 23 string quartets, climaxing his career with his three most famous operas: The Marriage of Figaro (1786) Don Giovanni (1787), and The Magic Flute (1791).

Musical expression at the turn of the century was touched by the genius of the immortal German composer Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827). The passion of his sonatas and symphonies expressed a revolutionary romanticism, which challenged the sedate classicism of his time.

Reflections Of The Age In Literature

More than in art, neoclassicism in literature came closer to voicing the eighteenth century's fascination with reason and scientific law. Indeed, the verbal media of poetry, drama, prose, and exposition were commonly used to convey the new philosophic principles.

A typical poetic voice of the Age of Reason in England was Alexander Pope (1688-1744). In his most famous work, An Essay on Man (1733), Pope expressed the optimism and respect for reason that marked the era. He described a Newtonian universe in the following often quoted lines:

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul ...
All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou cannot see.
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,

[Footnote 5: Quoted in G. K. Anderson and W. E. Buckler, eds., *The Literature of England*, 2 vols. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1958), vol. 1, p. 1568.]

Two other poetic voices deserve mention here. One belonged to the English Countess of Winchelsea (1661-1720), who extolled reason and feminine equality in her verse. The other was that of a Massachusetts slave girl, Phyllis Wheatley (1753-1784), whose rhyming couplets, in the style of Pope, pleaded the cause of freedom for the American colonies and for her race.

Reflecting the common disdain for irrational customs and outworn institutions were such masterpieces of satire as *Candide* (1759), by the French man of letters, Francois-Marie Arouet, better known as Voltaire (1694-1778). Another famous satirist, England's Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), ridiculed the pettiness of human concerns in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), wherein Captain Gulliver, in visiting the fictitious land of Lilliput, found two opposing factions: the Big-endians, who passionately advocated opening eggs at the big end, and the Little-endians, who vehemently proposed an opposite procedure.

The novel became a major literary vehicle in this period. It caught on first in France during the preceding century and was then popularized in England. *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), by Daniel Defoe (1659-1731), is often called the first modern English novel. The straight prose of the novel satisfied a prevailing demand for clarity and simplicity; but the tendency in this period to focus on middle-class values, heroic struggle, and sentimental love foreshadowed the coming romantic movement. Writing along these lines Samuel Richardson (1689-1761) produced *Pamela* (1740-1741), the story of a virtuous servant-girl, and Henry Fielding (1707-1754) wrote the equally famous *Tom Jones* (1749), the rollicking tale of a young man's deep pleasures and superficial regrets. Each novel, in its own way, defined a natural human morality.

In both France and England women found a uniquely promising outlet for their long-ignored talents in the romantic novel, with its accent on personal feminine concerns and domestic problems. Two among the multitude of able French women novelists were Madame de Graffigny (1695-1758), whose *Lettres D'Une Peruvienne* (1730) became a best-seller, and Madame de Tencin (1682-1749), who wrote *The Siege of Calais*, a historical novel of love and danger. In England, Fanny Burney (1753-1840) was universally acclaimed after publication of her first novel, *Eveline* (1778), about "a young lady's entrance into the world." Aphra Behn (1640-1689) was an early playwright whose novel, *Oroonoko* (1688), was a plea for the natural person, long before the works of Defoe and Rousseau.

The Enlightenment And The Age Of Reason In Philosophy

Western Europe's worship of reason, reflected only vaguely in art and literature, was precisely expressed in a set of philosophic ideas known collectively as the Enlightenment. It was not originally a popular movement. Catching on first among scientists, philosophers, and some theologians, it was then taken up by literary figures, who spread its message among the middle classes. Ultimately, it reached the common people in simplified terms associated with popular grievances.

The most fundamental concept of the Enlightenment were faith in nature and belief in human progress. Nature was seen as a complex of interacting laws governing the universe. The individual human being, as part of that system, was designed to act rationally. If free to exercise their reason, people were naturally good and would act to further the happiness of others. Accordingly, both human righteousness and happiness required freedom from needless restraints, such as many of those imposed by the state or the church. The Enlightenment's uncompromising hostility towards organized religion and established monarchy reflected a disdain for the past and an inclination to favor utopian reform schemes. Most of its thinkers believed passionately in human progress through education. They thought society would become perfect if people were free to use their reason.

Before the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment was confined to Holland and England. Its earlier Dutch spokesmen were religious refugees, like the French Huguenot Pierre Bayle (1674-1706), whose skepticism and pleas for religious toleration were widely known in France. Baruch Spinoza (1632-1687), a Jewish intellectual and Holland's greatest philosopher, was a spokesman for pantheism, the belief that God exists in all of nature. Spinoza's influence, along with Newton's, profoundly affected English thinkers. Mary Astell (1666-1731), perhaps the earliest influential English feminist, lauded rational thinking and cited Newton as proof of an ordered universe. Such ideas were given more credibility by John Locke (1632-1704), the famous English philosopher. Back home from exile in Holland after the Glorious Revolution of the 1680s, Locke applied Newton's recently published principles to psychology, economics, and political theory. With Locke, the Enlightenment came to maturity and began to spread abroad.

After the Peace of Utrecht (1713), the Enlightenment was largely a French Phenomenon. Its leading proponents were known as the philosophes, although the term cannot in this instance be translated literally as "philosophers." The philosophes were mostly writers and intellectuals who analyzed the evils of society and sought reforms in accord with the principles of reason. Their most supportive allies were the salonnières, that is, the socially conscious and sometimes learned women who regularly entertained them, at the same time sponsoring their discussion of literary works, artistic creations, and new political ideas. By 1750, the salonnières, their salons, and the philosophes had made France once again the intellectual center of Europe.

A leading light among the philosophes was the Marquis de Montesquieu (1688-1755), a judicial official as well as a titled nobleman. He was among the earliest critics of absolute monarchy. From his extensive foreign travel and wide reading he developed a great respect for English liberty and a sense of objectivity in viewing European institutions, particularly those of France. Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (1721), which purported to contain reports of an Oriental traveler in Europe, describing the irrational behavior and ridiculous customs of Europeans, delighted a large reading audience. His other great work, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748), expressed his main political principles. It is noted for its practical common sense, its objective recognition of geographic influences on political systems, its advocacy of checks and balances in government, and its uncompromising defense of liberty against tyranny.

More than any of the philosophes, Voltaire personified the skepticism of his century toward traditional religion and the injustices of the Old Regimes. His caustic pen brought him two imprisonments in the Bastille and even banishment to England for three years. On returning to France, Voltaire continued to champion toleration. He popularized Newtonian science, fought for freedom of the press, and actively crusaded against the church. In such endeavors, he turned out hundreds of histories, plays, pamphlets, essays, and novels. His estimated correspondence of 10,000 letters, including many to Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great, employed his wry wit in spreading the gospel of rationalism and reform of abuses. Even in his own time, his reputation became a legend, among kings as well as literate commoners.

Voltaire had many disciples and imitators, but his only rival in spreading the Enlightenment was a set of books - the famous French *Encyclopedie*, edited by Denis Diderot (1713-1784). The *Encyclopedie*, the chief monument of the philosophes, declared the supremacy of the new science, denounced superstition, and expounded the merits of human freedom. Its pages contained critical articles, by tradesmen as well as scientists, on unfair taxes, the evils of the slave trade, and the cruelty of criminal laws.

More than has been widely understood, the *Encyclopedie*, and many other achievements of the philosophes were joint efforts with their female colleagues among the salonnières. Madame de Geoffrin (1699-1777) contributed 200,000 livres (roughly \$280,000 equivalent) to the *Encyclopedie* and made her salon the headquarters for planning and managing it. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse (1732-1776), the friend and confidential advisor of Jean d'Alembert (1717-1783), who assisted Diderot in editing the work, turned her salon into a forum for criticizing prospective articles. Most of the philosophes relied upon such assistance. Voltaire was coached in science by Madame du Chatelet; and the Marquis de Condorcet (1742-1794), the prophet of progress and women's rights among the philosophes, was intellectually partnered by his wife, Sophie (1764-1812), who popularized their ideas in her own salon. Even Madame de Pompadour aided the philosophes in 1759, when she persuaded Louis XV to allow sale of the *Encyclopedie*.

Perhaps the best-known of all the philosophes was that eccentric Swiss-born proponent of romantic rationalism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Although believing in the general objectives of the Enlightenment, Rousseau distrusted reason and science. He gloried in human impulse and intuition, trusting emotions rather than thought, the heart rather than the mind. His early rebuffs from polite society encouraged his hatred for the Old Regime. He also professed admiration for "noble savages," who lived completely free of law, courts, priests, and officials. In his numerous writings, he spoke as a rebel against all established institutions. The most famous of these works, *The Social Contract* (1762), was Rousseau's indictment of absolute monarchy. It began with the stirring manifesto: "Man is born free, but today he is everywhere in chains." ^6

[Footnote 6: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. by W. Kendall, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1954), p. 2.]

The French Enlightenment exerted a powerful influence on English thought. Many young upper-class Englishmen visited France to complete their education. Among them were three leading English thinkers: Adam Smith (1723-1790), the Scottish father of modern economics; David Hume (1711-1766), the best-known

English skeptic; and Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), the founder of utilitarian philosophy. Another famous English rationalist was the historian, Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* markedly criticized early Christianity. Among English political radicals after 1770, Joseph Priestley, Richard Price (1723-1791) and Thomas Paine (1737-1809) were also very much affected by French thought. Paine, who figured prominently in the American and French revolutions, was also a leader in English radical politics.

The Enlightenment also affected English women. Hannah Moore and a coterie of lady intellectuals, known as "bluestockings," maintained a conservative imitation of the French salons after the 1770s. One atypical "bluestocking" was Catherine Macaulay (1731-1791), a leading historian who published eight widely acclaimed volumes on the Stuart period. A republican defender of the American and French Revolutions, Macaulay exerted a decided influence on Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), whose life symbolized the Enlightenment and the emerging English feminist movement. Born in poverty and burdened by a dependent family, Wollstonecraft became a teacher and a successful professional writer. She was personally acquainted with leading English radicals, including Richard Price, Thomas Paine, and William Godwin (1756-1836), whom she later married. Her *Vindication of the Rights of Man* (1790) was the first serious answer to Edmund Burke's diatribe against the French Revolution, which Wollstonecraft personally observed and ardently supported.

The reforming rationalism of the Enlightenment spread over Europe and also reached the New World. A leading spokesman in Germany was Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), who wrote against dogmatism and in favor of natural religion. In Italy, the Marquis of Beccaria (1738-1794) pleaded for humanitarian legal reforms. The Enlightenment was popular among the upper classes in such absolutist strongholds as Prussia, Russia, Austria, Portugal, and Spain. French ideas were read widely in Spanish America and Portuguese Brazil. In the English colonies, Locke and the philosophes influenced such leading thinkers as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814), and Abigail Adams (1744-1818).

The Reaction Against Reason

The eighteenth century was primarily an "Age of Reason," but in the latter decades there was a general reaction against rationalism. One form of the reaction came in philosophy with a new idealism, in opposition to the materialism of the early Enlightenment. Another form was an emotional religious revival, which won back many wavering Protestants and Catholics. A third form of reaction replaced reason with religion as the justification for humanitarian reforms. These movements stressed emotion over reason but continued the Enlightenment's accent upon individual liberty.

Idealistic Philosophy

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a kindly and contemplative professor of philosophy at the German University of Königsberg, was thoroughly aroused by the skeptical and materialistic extremes of the Enlightenment. While appreciating science and dedicated to reason, he determined to shift philosophy back to a more sensible position without giving up much of its newly discovered "rational" basis. His ideas, contained primarily in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), ushered in a new age of philosophic idealism.

Kant agreed with Locke on the role of the senses in acquiring knowledge but insisted that sensory experience had to be interpreted by the mind's internal patterns. This meant that certain ideas - the mind's categories for sorting and recording experience - were "a priori", that is, they existed before the sensory experience occurred. Typical innate ideas of this sort were width, depth, beauty, cause, and God; all were understood yet none were learned directly through the senses. Kant concluded, as had Descartes, that some truths were not derived from material objects through scientific study. Beyond the material world was a realm unapproachable by science. Moral and religious truths, such as God's existence, could not be proved by science yet were known to human beings as rational creatures. Reason, according to Kant, went beyond the mere interpretation of physical realities.

In Kant's philosophic system, pure reason, the highest form of human endeavor, was as close to intuition as it was to sensory experience. It proceeded from certain subjective senses, built into human nature. The idea of God was derived logically from the mind's penchant for harmony. The human conscience, according to Kant, might be developed or be crippled by experience, but it originated in the person's thinking nature. Abstract reason, apart from science and its laws, was a valid source of moral judgment and religious interpretation. Thus Kant used reason to give a philosophic base back to mystical religion. ^10

[Footnote 10: See Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Collier, 1902.)]

The Religious Reaction

Religious rationalism, despite its appeal to intellectuals, provoked considerable religious reaction. Part of this came from theologians such as Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752) and William Paley (1743-1805) in England, both of whom defended Christianity and challenged deism on its own rational grounds. Even more significant was a widespread emotional revival, stressing religion of the heart rather than the mind.

The new movement, known as pietism, began in England after 1738, when the brothers John (1703-1791) and Charles (1708-1788) Wesley began a crusade of popular preaching in the Church of England. The Anglican pietists discarded traditional formalism and stilted sermons in favor of a glowing religious fervor, producing a vast upsurge of emotional faith among the English lower classes. "Methodist," at first a term of derision, came to be the respected and official name for the new movement. After John Wesley's death in 1791, the Methodists officially left the Anglican church to become a most important independent religious force in England.

On the continent, Lutheran pietism, led by Philipp J. Spener (1635-1705) and Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), followed a pattern similar to Methodism. Swedenborg's movement in Sweden began as an effort to reconcile science and revelation; after Swedenborg's death it became increasingly emotional and mystical. Spener, in Germany, stressed Bible study, hymn singing, and powerful preaching. The Moravian movement sprang from his background. Under the sponsorship of Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), it spread to the frontiers of Europe and to the English colonies in America.

The "Great Awakening," a tremendous emotional revival sustained by Moravians, Methodists, Baptists, and Quakers, swept the colonial frontier areas from Georgia to New England in the late eighteenth century. Women played prominent roles in this activity, organizing meetings and providing auxiliary services, such as charities and religious instruction. Among the Quakers, women were often ministers and itinerant preachers. One was Jemima Wilkinson (1752-1819), leader of the Universal Friends; another was Ann Lee (1736-1784), who founded Shaker colonies in New York and New England.

By the 1780s, religious rationalism and pietism stood in opposition to each other. Proponents of each disagreed passionately on religious principles though they agreed on the issue of religious freedom. Both rationalists and pietists were outside the state churches, both feared persecution, and both recognized the flagrant abuses of religious establishments. The two movements were therefore almost equally threatening to state churches and the old regimes.

The New Humanitarianism

One dominant characteristic of the early Enlightenment - the concern for individual human worth - received new impetus from religion in the reaction against reason. The demand for reform and the belief in human progress were now equated with traditional Christian principles, such as human communality and God's concern for all people. Religious humanitarianism shunned radical politics and ignored the issue of women's rights, despite the movement's strong support among women. It did, however, seek actively to relieve human suffering and ignorance among children, the urban poor, prisoners, and slaves. This combination of humanitarian objectives and Christian faith was similar in some ways to the Enlightenment but markedly different in its emotional tone and religious justifications.

Notable among manifestations of the new humanitarianism was the antislavery movement in England. A court case in 1774 ended slavery within the country. From then until 1807, a determined movement sought abolition of the slave trade. It was led by William Wilberforce (1759-1833), aided by Hannah Moore and other Anglican Evangelicals, along with many Methodists and Quakers. Wilberforce repeatedly introduced bills into the House of Commons that would have eliminated the traffic in humans. His efforts were rewarded in 1807 when the trade was ended, although he and his allies had to continue to struggle for twenty-six more years, before they could achieve abolition in the British colonies.

Religious humanitarians enforced other movements that originated in the Enlightenment. For example, the movements for legal reform and prison reform were both supported by religious groups before 1800. Education, extolled by rationalist thinkers, also aroused interest among the denominations. The Sunday School movement, particularly in England, was a forerunner of many private and quasi-public church schools. Finally, concern for the plight of slaves, coupled with rising missionary zeal, brought popular efforts to improve conditions for native peoples in European possessions overseas.

While it was not as openly political as other aspects of the

Enlightenment, the new humanitarianism played a significant part in weakening absolutism. In general, it contributed to a spirit of restlessness and discontent and encouraged independent thought, particularly as it improved education. Its successful campaign against the slave trade also struck a direct blow at the old mercantilist economies, which depended heavily on plantation agriculture overseas. In time, the missionaries would also prove to be the most consistent enemies of colonialism.

The West By 1750

The three great currents of change - commercialization, cultural reorientation, and the rise of the nation-state - continued to operate in the West after 1700, along with the growing international influence of the West. Each strand, in fact, produced new ramifications that furthered the overall transformation of the West.

Political Patterns

On the whole, during the middle decades of the 18th century political changes seemed least significant. During much of the century English politics settled into a rather turgid parliamentary routine, in which key political groups competed for influence without major policy differences. Some popular concern for greater representation surfaced in the 1760s, as a movement for democracy surged briefly, but there was as yet no consistent reform current. Absolute monarchy in France changed little institutionally, but it became progressively less effective. It was unable to force changes in the tax structure that would give it more solid financial footing, because aristocrats refused to surrender their traditional exemptions.

Political developments were far livelier in central Europe. In Prussia Frederick the Great, building on the military and bureaucratic organization of his predecessors, introduced greater freedom of religion while expanding the economic functions of the state. His government actively encouraged better agricultural methods, as in promoting use of the potato as a staple crop. It also codified its laws toward greater commercial coordination and greater equity; harsh traditional punishments were cut back. Later in the 18th century an Austrian emperor, Joseph II, tried a similar program of state-sponsored improvements, including a major effort to roll back the power of the Catholic church. Rulers of this sort claimed to be enlightened despots, wielding great authority but for the good of society at large.

Enlightened or not, the policies of the major Western nation-states produced recurrent warfare. France and Britain squared off in the 1740s and again in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763); their conflicts focused on battles for colonial empire. Austria and Prussia also fought, with Prussia gaining new land. Wars in the 18th century were carefully modulated, without devastating effects, but they demonstrated the continued linkage between statecraft and war characteristic of the West.

Enlightenment Thought

In culture, the aftermath of the scientific revolution spilled over into a new movement known as the Enlightenment, centered particularly in France but with adherents throughout the Western world. Enlightenment thinkers continued to support scientific advance. While there were no Newton-like breakthroughs, chemists gained new understanding of major elements and biologists developed a vital new classification system for the natural species.

The Enlightenment also pioneered in applying scientific methods to the study of human society, sketching the modern social sciences. The basic idea here was that rational laws could describe social as well as physical behavior, and that knowledge could be used to improve policy. Thus criminologists wrote about how brutal punishments failed to deter crime, whereas a decent society would be able to rehabilitate criminals through education. Political theorists wrote about the importance of carefully planned constitutions and controls over privilege, though they disagreed about what political form was best. A new school of economists developed. The Scottish philosopher Adam Smith set forth a number of invariable principles of economic behavior, based on the belief that people act according to their self-interest but, through competition, work to promote general economic advance. Government should avoid regulation in favor of the operation of individual initiative and market forces. Here was an important specific statement of economic policy and an illustration of the growing belief that general models of human behavior could be derived from rational thought.

More generally still, the Enlightenment produced a set of basic principles about human affairs. Human beings are naturally good and can be educated to be better. Reason was the key to truth, and religions that relied on blind faith or refused to tolerate diversity were wrong. Enlightenment

thinkers attacked the Catholic church with particular vigor. Progress was possible, even inevitable, if people could be set free. Society's goals should center on improvements in material and social life.

Enlightenment thinkers showed great interest in technological change, for greater prosperity was a valid and achievable goal. Coercion and cruelty could be corrected, for the Enlightenment encouraged a humanitarian outlook that was applied in condemnations of slavery and war.

Though not typical of the Enlightenment's main thrust, a few thinkers applied the general principles to other areas. A handful of socialists argued that economic equality and the abolition of private property must become important goals. A few feminist thinkers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft in England, argued that new political rights and freedoms should extend to women, against the general male-centered views of most Enlightenment thinkers.

The Enlightenment, summing up and extending earlier intellectual changes, became an important force for political and social reform. It did not rule unchallenged. Important popular religious movements, such as Methodism in England, showed the continued power of spiritual faith. Many writers, particularly those experimenting with the novel as a new literary form in the West, rebelled against Enlightenment rationality to urge the importance of sentimentality and emotion. These approaches, too, encouraged rethinking of traditional styles.

The popularization of new ideas encouraged further changes in the habits and beliefs of many ordinary people. Reading clubs and coffeehouses allowed many urban artisans and businessmen to discuss the latest reform ideas. Leading writers and compilations of scientific and philosophical findings, such as the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, won a wide audience and, in a few cases, a substantial fortune due to the sale of books. Groups and individuals formed to promote better agricultural or industrial methods, or bent on winning new political rights, referred directly to Enlightenment thinking. Some groups of artisans and peasants also turned against established churches and even withdrew from religious belief, as secular values gained ground.

Other changes in popular outlook paralleled the new intellectual currents, though they had deeper sources than philosophy alone. Attitudes toward children began to shift in many social groups. Older methods of physical discipline were criticized, in favor of more restrained behavior that would respect the goodness and innocence of children. Swaddling began to decline, as parents were interested in freer movement and greater interaction for young children; no longer were infants tightly wrapped during their first months. Among wealthy families, educational toys and books for children reflected the idea that childhood should be a stage for learning and growth. At the most basic level, parents became increasingly likely to give young children names at birth and to select names different from those of older relatives - a sign of a new affection for children and new belief in their individuality. These changes were gradual, and they involved more adult control of children as well as a more humane outlook. The idea of shaping children and instilling guilt-stimulated consciences gained ground. Unquestionably, the net effect was to alter parent-child relations and also to produce novel personality ideals for adults themselves.

Family life generally was altered by a growing sense that old hierarchies needed to be rethought, toward somewhat greater equality in the treatment of women and children within the home. Love among family members gained new respect, and an emotional bond in marriage became more widely sought. Parents, for example, grew more reluctant to force a match on a son or daughter if the emotional vibrations were not right. Here was a link not only with Enlightenment ideas of proper family relations but with the novels that poured out a sentimental view of life.

Ongoing economic change, finally, paralleled the ferment in popular culture and intellectual life. Commerce continued its spread. Ordinary Westerners began to buy processed products, such as refined sugar and coffee or tea obtained from Indonesia and the West Indies, for daily use. Here was a sign of the growing importance of Europe's new colonies for ordinary life and of the beginnings of mass consumerism in Western society. Another sign of change was the growing use of paid, professional entertainment as part of popular leisure even in rural festivals. Not accidentally, circuses, first introduced in France in the 1670s, began to redefine leisure to include spectatorship and a taste for the bizarre.

Agriculture began to change. Until the later 17th century Western Europe had continued to rely largely on the methods and techniques characteristic of the Middle Ages - a severe economic constraint in a still agricultural society. Now, first in the Netherlands and then elsewhere, new procedures for draining swamps added available land. Nitrogen-fixing crops were introduced to reduce the need to leave land fallow. Stockbreeding improved, and new techniques like seed-drills or simply the use of scythes instead of sickles

for harvesting heightened productivity. Some changes spread particularly fast on large estates, which was one reason that in England more and more land was enclosed, with ordinary farmers serving as tenants or laborers rather than owners. Other changes affected ordinary peasants as well. Particularly vital in this category was the spread of the potato from the late 17th century onward. A New World crop, the potato had long been shunned because it was not mentioned in the Bible and was held to be the cause of plagues. Enlightened government leaders and peasant desire to win greater economic security and better nutrition led to widespread adoption of this efficient crop. The West, in sum, improved its food supply and also its agricultural efficiency, leaving more labor available for other pursuits.

These changes, along with the steady growth of colonial trade and internal commerce, spurred increased manufacturing. The 18th century witnessed a rapid spread of household production of textiles and metal products, mostly by rural workers who alternated manufacturing with some agriculture. Hundreds of thousands of people were drawn into this domestic system in which capitalist merchants distributed supplies and orders and workers ran the production process for pay. While manufacturing tools were still hand operated, the spread of domestic manufacturing spurred important technical innovations designed to improve efficiency. In 1733 James Kay in England introduced the flying shuttle, which permitted automatic crossing of threads on looms; with this, an individual weaver could do the work of two. Improvements in spinning soon followed, as the Western economy began to escalate toward a full-fledged Industrial Revolution.

Finally, agricultural changes, commercialism, and manufacturing combined, particularly after about 1730, to produce a rapidly growing population in the West. With better food supplies, more people survived - the potato was a crucial ingredient here. More commercial motives helped prompt landlords and some ambitious peasants to acquire more land and to push unneeded labor off, heightening proletarianization but also reducing the restraints some parents could impose over the sexual behavior of their children: In essence, as some groups grew unsure of inheritance, they sought more immediate pleasures and also hoped to use the labor of the resultant children. Finally, new manufacturing jobs helped landless people support themselves, promoting in some cases earlier marriage and sexual liaisons. Growing population, in turn, promoted further economic change, heightening competition and producing a more manipulable labor force. The West's great population revolution, which would continue into the 19th century, both caused and reflected the civilization's dynamism, though it also produced great strain and confusion.

Western society was still essentially agricultural by the mid-18th century. Decisive new political forms had yet to be introduced, and in many ways government policies failed to keep pace with cultural and economic change after 1700. Established churches were forces to be reckoned with still. Even new developments, such as the spread of domestic manufacturing, functioned because they allowed so many traditional habits to persist. Thus while new market relationships described this growing system, the location and many of the methods of work as well as the association of family with production were not altered. Western society hovered between older values and institutions and the full flowering of change. Decades of outright political and economic revolution, which would build on these tensions and cause a fuller transformation, were yet to come.

Conclusion

The Enlightenment brought a new vision of the future, which forecast the end of absolute monarchy. Philosophers of the Enlightenment thought they had discovered a simple formula for perpetual human happiness. They sought to deliver individuals from restraints so that they could act freely in accordance with their natures. On the one hand, the formula promised that pursuit of self-interest would benefit society; on the other, it promised that a free human reason would produce sound moral judgments. In other words, individual freedom permitted the operation of natural laws. Believing they had learned these laws, eighteenth-century rationalists thought they had found the secret of never-ending progress.

Rational philosophy undermined absolutism in all of its phases. Deism questioned the necessity of state churches and clergies. The physiocrats, Adam Smith, and other early economic liberals demonstrated the futility of mercantilism. Political theory in the Enlightenment substituted the social contract for divine right and emphasized natural human rights of political freedom and justice. Each of these ideas denied the absolute authority of monarchs.

Respect for rational philosophy was largely derived from the successes and popularity of science. The surprising discoveries of astronomers produced a new view of the individual's place in the universe; in his law of gravitation, Newton supplied mathematical evidence for their perspective. His laws, along with the other laws of science, suggested that human reason

operated effectively only when it was interpreting sensory experience. Material reality was accepted as the only reality. Therefore, the natural laws affecting human society were also considered as basically materialistic.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, a reaction against reason countered this materialism without affecting the fundamental objectives of the Enlightenment. Idealistic philosophy and pietism both challenged the scientific view of the individual, emphasizing that intuition and faith are human qualities as essential as reason. These new movements merged with the humane concerns of rational philosophy to produce a new humanitarianism, which accented both reason and sentimentality but also continued the eighteenth-century concern for human freedom. Together with the rationalism of the Enlightenment, the reaction against reason before 1800 also challenged absolutism's domination of the human body, mind, and spirit.

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