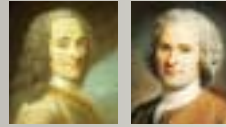


## The Enlightenment

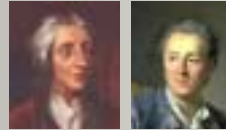
### 18<sup>th</sup> Century Intellectual Movement

## Intellectual Movement



Voltaire

Rousseau



Locke

Diderot

- During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, certain thinkers and writers, primarily in London and Paris, believed that they were more enlightened than their compatriots and set out to enlighten them.

## Enlightenment Thinkers

- These thinkers believed that human reason could be used to combat ignorance, superstition, and tyranny and to build a better world.



## Enlightenment Targets



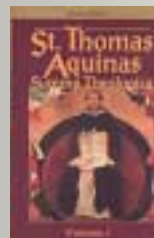
- Their principal targets were religion (the Catholic Church in France) and the domination of society by a hereditary aristocracy.

## Background in Antiquity

- The application of Aristotelian logic by Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century set the stage for the Enlightenment.



## Used Logic to Defend Dogma



- Aristotle's logical procedures were used to defend the dogmas of Christianity.
- Unfortunately for the Catholic Church, the tools of logic could not be confined to Church matters.

## The Renaissance Humanists

- In the 14th and 15th centuries, "humanists" celebrated the human race and its capacities.
- They argued they were worshipping God more appropriately than the priests and monks who harped on original sin and asked people to humble themselves.



## Focused on Man's Creativity

- Some of them claimed that humans were like God, created not only in his image, but with a share of his creative power. The painter, the architect, the musician, and the scholar, by exercising their intellectual powers, were fulfilling divine purposes.



## Challenged Church Authority

- In the 16th century, various humanists had begun to ask dangerous questions.
- François Rabelais, a French monk and physician influenced by Protestantism, challenged the Church's authority, ridiculing many religious doctrines as absurd.



## The Scientific Revolution

- In 1632, Galileo Galilei used logic, reinforced with observation, to argue for Copernicus' idea that the earth rotates on its axis around the sun.



## Church Opposition

- The Church objected that the Bible clearly stated that the sun moved through the sky and denounced Galileo's teachings, forcing him to recant what he had written and preventing him from teaching further.



## The Advance of Science

- However, the Church could not prevent the advance of science – although most of those advances would take place in Protestant northern Europe out of the reach of the pope and his Inquisition.



## Anti-Dogmatism



- Michel de Montaigne asked a single question over and over again in his *Essays*: "What do I know?"
- He realized that we have no right to impose on others dogmas which rest on cultural habit rather than absolute truth.

## Moral Relativism

- Influenced by non-Christian cultures in places as far off as Brazil, Montaigne argued that morals may be to some degree relative.



## Cannibalism v. Persecution



- Who are Europeans to insist that Brazilian cannibals, who merely consume dead human flesh instead of wasting it, are morally inferior to Europeans who persecute and oppress those of whom they disapprove?

## Skepticism

- René Descartes, in the 17th century, attempted to use reason to shore up his faith.
- He tried to begin with a blank slate, with the bare minimum of knowledge: the knowledge of his own existence – "I think, therefore I am."



## Repression



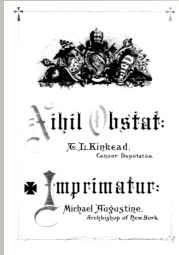
- The 17th century was torn by witch-hunts, wars of religion, and imperial conquest.

## Religious Intolerance

- Protestants and Catholics denounced each other as followers of Satan and people could be imprisoned for attending the wrong church or for not attending any.



## Censorship



- All publications, whether pamphlets or scholarly volumes, were subject to prior censorship by both church and state.

## Slavery

- Slavery was widely practiced, especially in the colonial plantations of the Western Hemisphere, and its cruelties frequently defended by leading religious figures..



## Despotism

- The despotism of monarchs exercising far greater powers than any medieval king was supported by the doctrine of the "divine right of kings," and scripture quoted to show that revolution was detested by God.



## Economic Change

- During the late Middle Ages, peasants had begun to move from rural estates to the towns in search of increased freedom and prosperity.



## Political Change



- As trade and communication improved during the Renaissance, the ordinary town-dweller began to realize that things need not always go on as they had for centuries. People could write new charters, form new governments, pass new laws, begin new businesses.

## Social Change

- A new class of merchants brought back wealth from Asia and the Americas, partially displacing the old aristocracy whose power had been rooted in the ownership of land.



## Agents of Change

- These merchants had their own ideas about the sort of world they wanted to inhabit, and they became major agents of change, in the arts, in government, and in the economy.
  - They were naturally convinced that their earnings were the result of their individual merit and hard work, unlike the inherited wealth of aristocrats.
  - The ability of individual effort to transform the world became a European dogma, lasting to this day.



## Obstacles to Change

- The chief obstacles to the reshaping of Europe were absolutist kings and dogmatic churches.



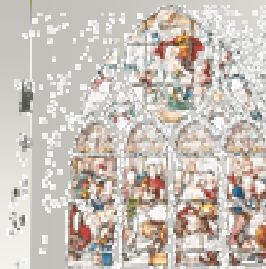
## New Core Values

- The general trend was clear: individualism, freedom and change replaced community, authority, and tradition as core European values.



## Resistance

- Europeans were changing, but Europe's institutions were not keeping pace with that change.
  - The Church insisted that it was the only source of truth and that all who lived outside its bounds were damned.



## Middle Class Resentment

- The middle classes-- the *bourgeoisie*-- were painfully aware that they were paying taxes to support a fabulously expensive aristocracy which contributed nothing of value to society.



## Impoverished Masses

- They were to find ready allies in France among the impoverished masses who realized that they were paying higher and higher taxes to support the lifestyle of the idle rich at Versailles.





## Role of the Aristocrats

- Interestingly, it was among those very idle aristocrats that the French Enlightenment philosophers were to find some of their earliest and most enthusiastic followers.



## Voltaire's View of Aristocracy



- Voltaire moved easily in aristocratic circles, dining at their tables, taking a titled mistress, corresponding with monarchs.

## Opposition to Tyranny

- He opposed tyranny and dogma, but he had no notion of reinventing democracy.
  - He had far too little faith in the ordinary person for that.
  - He thought that educated and sophisticated people could, through the exercise of their reason, see that the world could and should be greatly improved.



## Rousseau v. Voltaire



- Voltaire's chief adversary was Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
- Rousseau opposed the theater which was Voltaire's lifeblood, shunned the aristocracy which Voltaire courted, and argued for something dangerously like democratic revolution.



## Rousseau v. Voltaire (2)



- Whereas Voltaire argued that equality was impossible, Rousseau argued that inequality was unnatural.
- Whereas Voltaire charmed with his wit, Rousseau always claimed to be right.
- Whereas Voltaire insisted on the supremacy of the intellect, Rousseau emphasized the emotions.
- And whereas Voltaire repeated the same handful of core Enlightenment ideas, Rousseau sparked off original thoughts in all directions: ideas about education, the family, government, the arts, and whatever else attracted his attention



## Rousseau v. Voltaire (3)



- For all their personal differences, Rousseau and Voltaire shared more values than they liked to acknowledge.
- They viewed absolute monarchy as dangerous and evil and rejected orthodox Christianity.
- Rousseau was almost as much a skeptic as Voltaire: the minimalist faith both shared was called "deism" and it was eventually to transform European religion and have powerful influences on other aspects of society as well.

## Enlightenment in England

- Great Britain developed its own Enlightenment, fostered by thinkers like John Locke and David Hume.
  - England had deposed and decapitated its king in the 17th century. Although the monarchy had eventually been restored, this experience created a certain openness toward change.
  - English Protestantism struggled to express itself in ways that widened the limits of freedom of speech and press. Radical Quakers and Unitarians challenged old dogmas.



## England v. France

- The English and French Enlightenments exchanged influences through many channels.
  - Because England had gotten its revolution out of the way early, it was able to proceed more smoothly down the road to democracy.
  - But English liberty was dynamite when transported to France, where resistance by church and state was fierce.



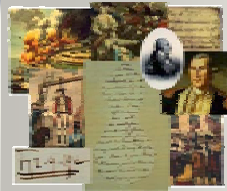
## Enlightenment in America

- Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, many of the intellectual leaders of the American colonies were drawn to the Enlightenment.
  - Jefferson, Washington, Franklin, and Paine were powerfully influenced by Enlightenment thought.
  - The God who underwrites the concept of equality in the Declaration of Independence is the same deist God Rousseau worshipped.



## American Revolution

- The language of natural law, of inherent freedoms, of self-determination which seeped so deeply into the American grain was the language of the Enlightenment.
- Separated geographically from most of the aristocrats against whom they were rebelling, their revolution was to be far less corrosive than that in France.



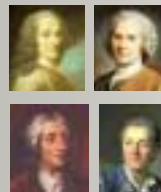
## Struggle in Europe

- Voltaire and his allies in France struggled to assert the values of freedom and tolerance in a culture where the twin fortresses of monarchy and Church opposed almost everything they stood for.
  - To oppose the monarchy openly would be fatal.
  - The Church was an easier target: Protestantism had made religious controversy familiar. Voltaire could skillfully cite one Christian against another to make his arguments.



## Philosophes

- Voltaire was joined by a band of rebellious thinkers known as the *philosophes*: Charles de Montesquieu, Pierre Bayle, Jean d'Alembert, and many lesser lights.
- Because Denis Diderot commissioned many of them to write for his influential *Encyclopedia*, they are also known as "the Encyclopedists."



## Heritage of the Enlightenment

- Today the Enlightenment is often viewed as a historical anomaly – a brief moment when a number of thinkers infatuated with reason vainly supposed that the perfect society could be built on common sense and tolerance, a fantasy which collapsed amid the Terror of the French Revolution and the triumphal sweep of Romanticism.



## Heritage of the Enlightenment (2)



- Religious thinkers repeatedly proclaim the Enlightenment dead.
- Marxists denounce it for promoting the ideals and power of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the working classes.
- Postcolonial critics reject its idealization of specifically European notions as universal truths.

## Heritage of the Enlightenment (3)

- Yet in many ways, the Enlightenment has never been more alive.
- It formed the consensus of international ideals by which modern states are judged.
  - Human rights
  - Religious tolerance
  - Self-government

