

# 4 – The 18th Century: Expansion of Europe and the Enlightenment

---

## Key Terms

Mercantilism

Adam Smith

Francis Bacon

René Descartes

*Discourse On Method*

Nicolaus Copernicus

Galileo Galilei

Isaac Newton

Johannes Kepler

Seven Years' War

Capitalism

Deism

Scientific Revolution

The Enlightenment

Madame Geoffrin

Voltaire

Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Baron De Montesquieu

Denis Diderot

Francois Quesnay

Physiocrats

Middle Passage

Triangle Trade

Plantation System

Mary Wollstonecraft

---

## OVERVIEW

An agricultural revolution took place during the later years of the seventeenth century and through the eighteenth century. The traditional “open-field” system, an utterly inefficient method of agricultural production, was replaced by “enclosure,” and despite the social cost, productivity increased dramatically. New foods and a disappearance of the plague fostered rapid population growth. An Atlantic economy, built on trade between Europe (primarily England, France, and Holland) and the Americas benefited both Europe and the colonies, economically and socially. A series of conflicts over imperial possessions broke out among the leading European competitors during the eighteenth century, culminating in the French and Indian War in North America (the Seven Years’ War on the continent) and the American Revolution.

From the end of the fifteenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth, the newly acquired interaction between Europe and the New World and the opening of the Atlantic to exploration and colonization changed the economy of Europe. Mercantilism became the prevailing economic system of the growing nation-states. Inflation, brought about by the stores of gold and silver expropriated from the New World, led to an increase in trade and manufacture that encouraged the growth of early capitalism. As economic activity shifted from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, the Italian city-states declined as trading middlemen between Europe and the near and Far East

that they had controlled through their interaction with the . Byzantine empire and later the Ottomans. Portugal and Spain became the major powers of the sixteenth century-the Netherlands, France, and England of the seventeenth.

The impact of science on the modern world is immeasurable. If the “Greeks had said it all” two thousand years earlier, the Renaissance Europeans rediscovered, evaluated, and elaborated or contradicted the ideas of Aristotle, Ptolemy, and other thinkers. Observation took precedence over tradition. To find out how many teeth a horse had, medieval academics scoured ancient texts to appeal to authority; modern thinkers opened the horse’s mouth.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the fruition of Renaissance individualism in religion and thought. Luther and the Protestants questioned the traditions of the Catholic Church and rebelled; Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton subjected the theories of Aristotle and Ptolemy to the inductive method and redefined the natural world. The habit of skepticism, which the Renaissance re-introduced and the Reformation strengthened, was science’s driving force.

This skepticism gave rise to rationalism, the concept that human reason could uncover the natural laws that govern the universe and humankind itself. Inspired by the revolutionary theories of sixteenth and seventeenth century astronomy and physics, European thinkers ceased to be swayed by medieval superstition, by a belief in miracles, and by blind acceptance of tradition. Rationalism gave rise to the eighteenth century Enlightenment, whose philosophers or *philosophes* argued that humans could discover the immutable laws of the universe through the light of reason, and therefore human progress was inevitable. Critics of the status quo, they commented on the political, economic, and social ills of society and offered designs for the betterment of humanity. Their optimism and impatience aroused the forces for change and contributed to the French Revolution.

---

# The Expansion of Europe

(Abbreviated version also found in Chapter 3.)

The open-field system, used during the Middle Ages (400 BCE-1450 BCE), divided the arable land available to a farming community into narrow strips, which were designated to the individual families of the community. Due to a lack of chemical fertilizers and ignorance about nitrogen-fixing crops, a large portion of the community's land lay fallow.

- The Enclosure movement in England, during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, fenced off the open fields to enable large landowners to employ crop rotation.
  - By planting nitrogen-fixing crops, such as beans and certain grasses, in soil that had been used for other crops, the soil remained fertile and little land lay fallow.
  - Many small or inefficient farmers were displaced to the towns and cities, but ultimately, food production rose dramatically.
- This Agricultural Revolution included selective breeding of animals, utilization of fertilizer, rotating crops, and generally improving the land for farming.
  - It resulted in huge crop yields and surpluses of food, which freed up labor and allowed population to rise.
- A greater variety of foods and the introduction of foods from the New World, specifically the potato, improved general nutrition and contributed, along with the disappearance of the plague, to a dramatic increase in population.
- Except for the development of the smallpox vaccine in the late eighteenth century, the crude and often dangerous medical practices of the day contributed little to the health and longevity of the people.
- The disappearance of the plague combined with better food production encouraged the emergence of consumerism and leisure activities for the masses such as coffee houses and the theater.
- The Enclosure movement and increased agricultural production led many to move to cities to look for economic advancement, starting the trend of urbanization that continued to build into the twentieth century.
  - This increased urbanization, changed marriage patterns, and led to more illegitimate births toward the end of the eighteenth century.

- As people became more crowded, they developed a new sense of privacy and built homes and read books that reinforced those ideas.
- Labor and trade in commodities were increasingly freed from traditional restrictions imposed by governments and corporate entities through the advent of market-driven wages and prices.
- Mercantilism was a system developed by various European states to guarantee a favorable balance of trade with other European nations or with their American colonies.
  - By creating an imbalance of exports over imports, the difference was made up in gold or silver payments.
  - Mercantilism was pursued as an attempt to get precious metals from indigenous peoples to pay for the costs of maintaining standing armies and government bureaucracies.
- Competition for colonies and for hegemony on the continent culminated in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) fought by Britain and its allies against France and its allies.
  - The Seven Years' War was the first war that the Europeans fought on multiple continents with battles in North America, Europe, and Asia.
  - The British won a decisive battle against the French in India at the Battle of Plassey in 1757, which led to British dominance of India until after World War II.
  - The war resulted in the loss of France's North American possessions and in the growing independence of the British North American colonies.
- Mercantilism was largely discredited by the economic liberalism of Adam Smith, who argued that free competition, limited government regulation, and individual self-interest expressed through a supply-and-demand market system would foster economic growth.

# Mercantilism and the Rise of Capitalism

## The Commercial Revolution

For over 150 years after Columbus “discovered” the Americas for the Europeans, thousands of tons of silver and nearly two hundred tons of gold came to Spain from the riches of the conquered Native Americans and from the mines established by the Spanish colonials. Inflation, “too much money chasing too few goods,” resulted because while the money supply had vastly increased, productivity had remained stable, giving money reduced purchasing power.

- The inflation stimulated production, though, because craftsmen, merchants, and manufacturers could get good prices for their products. The middle class, the *bourgeoisie*, acquired much of this wealth by trading and manufacturing, and their political influence and social status increased.
- Peasant farmers benefited when their surplus yields could be turned into cash crops. The nobility, whose income was based on feudal rents and fees, actually suffered a diminishing standard of living in this inflationary economy.
- The rise in population and the flight of entrepreneurs and industrious people to the New World further exacerbated this inflation as industry in Spain declined and new opportunities for the middle classes to make money emerged.
- The transatlantic slave-labor system expanded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as demand for New World products increased.
  - Examples of this system include the Triangle Trade, Middle Passage, and the Plantation system developed by Europeans in their colonies.
  - The Middle Passage was the brutal journey by ship from Africa to the New World that killed as much as 50 percent of the slave cargo.

## The Rise of Capitalism

“Capital” is another term for money used as an investment; instead of investing labor, an individual invests capital in some venture in order to make a profit. The bourgeoisie, having accumulated more money than was needed

to maintain a subsistence standard of living in seventeenth and eighteenth century society, used money to make money.

- They invested in chartered companies that were given a monopoly on trading rights by nations such as Britain and the Netherlands within a certain area.
- Joint-stock companies (forerunners of modern corporations), which sold shares of stock publically in order to raise large amounts for various ventures, provided limited liability to the shareholders, and offered a profitable return for the original investment.
- In the bourse, a kind of stock exchange, profit made from investment enabled more investment.
- Private banks were able to turn private savings into venture capital that allowed investment in overseas trade and other capitalist ventures such as the first factories.
- New definitions of property rights such as limited liability for owners of stocks and protections against the confiscation of property due to bad stock investments encouraged greater investment.
- Insurance companies emerged to make overseas trade less risky.
- The Bank of England was founded to provide venture capital for English firms.
- The expansion of money created prosperity, advanced science and technology, and supported the growth of the nation-state.
- The rise in wealth led first to the emergence of a market economy and eventually to the emergence of a consumer economy, then a consumer society after World War II.
  - Overseas products such as silk, sugar, tea, tobacco, rum, and coffee led to the emergence of a consumer culture.

## **Mercantilism**

The monarchs of the early modern period needed money to maintain the standing armies that would dominate the powerful nobles of the realm and protect the state against foreign enemies. The commercial revolution and the growth of capitalism enriched a sizable segment of the population; personal riches translated into good tax revenues.

Mercantilism prevailed in the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century as an economic policy, because it seemed to offer a way for the monarchs of Europe to consolidate their centralized authority.

## **THE THEORY**

- √ A nation's wealth was measured by the amount of precious metals it had accumulated (bullionism) rather than by its productivity.
- √ Idea is often credited to Jean Baptiste Colbert, the finance minister of Louis XIV.
- √ A favorable balance of trade (exports exceed imports) increases the flow of gold and silver into the national economy, and therefore increases the store of precious metals.
- √ Overseas colonies supplied the mother country with essential raw materials for manufacture and trade.
- √ Essential industries: manufacturing for the national defense or making a product unique to the nation and valuable in trade, were encouraged through subsidies and tax credits.
- √ The goal of mercantilism is national economic self-sufficiency.

Overseas colonization (old imperialism) was encouraged by the policy of mercantilism.

- Spain and Portugal, following up on the momentum of their early explorations to Asia around the African continent and to the Americas across the Atlantic, monopolized colonization in the sixteenth century.
- By the seventeenth century, the balance had shifted to the Dutch, French, and British, whose internal disorders of the previous century had stabilized and whose inroads in Asia and North America overcame the supremacy of the Spanish and Portuguese.
- The British colonial empire far surpassed that of any other European nation because its colonies attracted proportionately more of its subjects for settlement.
  - Later, a number of them became powerful independent states: the United States, India, Canada, Australia, and a number of other nations in Asia and Africa, but for a time, all of those modern nations were a part of the British empire.

# The Enlightenment

The towering giant of the Scientific Revolution was an Englishman who wrote, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants,” referring to Galileo (1564-1642) whose work before his made scientific investigation into astral physics possible. If Copernicus (1473-1543) shook the medieval conception of Christianity to its foundations, the work of Isaac Newton (1642-1727) not only tested the notion of God’s intervention in human affairs, but also established the ascendancy of science in the modern world.

- Newton demonstrated that natural laws of motion account for the movement of heavenly bodies and earthly objects.
  - These laws are unchangeable and predictable.
  - God’s active participation is not needed to explain the operations of the forces of nature, a repudiation of medieval belief.
  - Newton went on to chair the Royal Society of London where his status as the preeminent thinker of his day made England the center of scientific thought for a short while.
- Newton’s work in astronomy and physics convinced European thinkers that human reason, unaided by the tenets and rituals of religion, could uncover the immutable laws of nature.
- An Englishman, Newton, inspired the Enlightenment; a group of Frenchmen, the *philosophes*, shaped it.
  - The *philosophes*, who were actually literary figures more than academic philosophers, argued that once the natural laws that governed nature and human existence were discovered, society could be organized in accordance with them and progress was inevitable.
  - Leaders of French culture, which dominated Europe, they lauded Newton, borrowed from John Locke, and flooded Europe with radically optimistic notions about how people should live and govern themselves.
  - Ideas created that were to shake the old order to pieces and build in its place the democratic, pluralistic, humanistic Western World.
- While Newton’s theories served as the inspiration for the natural law philosophy of the Enlightenment, John Locke’s political writings translated the natural law assumption into a conception of government.



- Locke (1632-1704), an Englishman, provided a philosophical apology for the supremacy of Parliament during the Glorious Revolution with his *Two Treatises on Civil Government*.
  - In the state of nature, before governments existed, humans lacked protection.
  - Governments, once instituted, replace individual action with the rule of law.
  - However, they rest upon the consent of the governed.
  - The social contract, the agreement between a fair government and responsible individuals, is not unconditional.
  - If government oversteps its role in protecting the life, liberty, and property of its citizens, the people have the right to abolish and replace it.
- These conceptions of the consent of the governed, the social contract, and the right of revolution spearheaded the *philosophes'* criticism of the absolutist *ancien régime* or old order.

## The Philosophes

**Voltaire** (1694-1778) personified the Age of Reason. Born François Marie Arouet in Paris at the height of Louis XIV's reign, he lived until two years after the American Declaration of Independence. Although he was more writer than philosopher, he wrote in many formats. As a poet, essayist, dramatist, and most importantly, as a satirist, his genius for social criticism helped ignite a desire for change and set the stage for the Age of Revolution.

- He preached against injustice and bigotry and for human rights and science.
- “*Ecrasez l'infame*” (“Crush the infamous”) was his rallying cry against religious zealotry, governmental abuse, and vestiges of medievalism.
- Imprisoned briefly in the Bastille, he visited England, lived in the court of Frederick the Great, (r. 1740-1786) Enlightened Despot of Prussia.
- Like most of the Enlightenment thinkers, he was raised as a Christian but came to reject organized religion as corrupt in its leadership, and remote from the urgent message of Jesus.
- He was a staunch advocate of deism, the theological offshoot of natural law theory.
  - Believed that prayer and miracles violated the perfect natural order God had created and that the world's evils are caused by man's

straying from the natural law.

- The social reforms that he called for fit the Deist notion that human reason alone . could uncover the natural law and guide humans to comply with it.

**Jean-Jacques Rousseau** (1712-1778) is often considered a *philosophe*, a man of the Enlightenment, but he is more accurately the founder of the Romantic Movement. After the excesses of the French Revolution, the Enlightenment's emphasis on the rule of reason gave way to a glorification of emotion.

- Despising, intellectually and personally, the rigid and inequitable class structure of the *ancien régime*, he developed the idea of the noble savage: that civilization corrupted humankind and that life in the state of nature was purer, freer, and more virtuous than “civilized” man.
- The goal of the individual, he argued in his many writings, was to attain full expression of natural instincts by stripping away the artificial restraints of society and returning as far as possible to nature.
- Believed that the goal of a people was to achieve self-determination.
  - A call to the nationalism that the French Revolution awakened across Europe.
- In *The Social Contract*, he wrote, “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains,” meaning that property, when regarded as more important than people, causes social injustice.
- The general will, a kind of consensus of the majority, he thought should control a nation. This was intended to support a democratic view of government, but because it does not recognize minority viewpoints and since it has no clear way to show itself, it could be used to rationalize extreme nationalism and repression.
- Whatever the flaws in his philosophy, Rousseau is considered one of the most influential thinkers of his day.
- His distrust of civilization and its institutions led him to criticize rigid educational practices and the strict discipline of children.
  - In his treatise *Émile*, he argued that children have to be understood as individuals and that they need caring from their teachers as well as from their parents.
  - He and other Enlightenment critics helped to change the educational and child-rearing practices of eighteenth-century

Europe.

**Baron de Montesquieu** (1689-1755) in his work, *Spirit of the Laws*, argued that the powers of government (legislative, executive, and judicial) must be separated in order to avoid despotism. When these functions are divided among various groups or individuals, each checks and balances the powers of the others. His theories served as a blueprint for the governmental structure outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

**Cesare Beccaria** (1738-1794) published his *On Crimes and Punishments* in 1764, which added to Montesquieu's ideas by outlining proportions between crimes and punishments, and arguing against torture. He focused on deterring men from committing crimes.

**Denis Diderot** (1713-1784) published the writings and popularized the ideas of many of the *philosophes* in his Encyclopedia, a collection of political and social critiques rather than a compilation of facts.

**Francois Quesnay** (1694-1774) led the physiocrats whose motto was *laissez-faire*, and who believed that government should remove all restraints to free trade, such as tariffs, so that the natural laws of economics were free to operate for the good of society.

**Adam Smith** (1727-1790), a Scotsman, refined and expanded the *laissez-faire* philosophy of the physiocrats in his *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. Published in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, it is the book that defined capitalism. In it, he stated: the economy is governed by natural laws, such as **supply and demand**; in a free economy, competition will induce producers to manufacture most efficiently in order to sell higherquality, lowercost goods than competitors; government regulation only interferes with this natural selfgoverning operation. He also railed against mercantilism as the embodiment of foul government intervention in the economy.

It is important to remember that these new ideas existed alongside the traditional ideas that Europeans had held dear for centuries. Alchemy and astrology continued to appeal to elites and some natural philosophers, in part because they shared with the new science the notion of a predictable and knowable universe. Most peasants and urban folk continued to believe that the cosmos was governed by divine and demonic forces.

**Salons** were the sites for meetings of the great minds of the day in the houses of the prominent women of the day such as **Madame Geoffrin** (1699/1777) or **Madame Stäel** (1766/1817). The salons supported a discourse of ideas without the censorship that was so prevalent in the writing of the day,

and which Voltaire rebelled so strongly against. They also functioned as a means for women to attain an education on the cutting edge of knowledge and thought of the time.

The **coffee houses** of France and much of Europe at the time served as further meeting places for conversation. Some have theorized that the advent of tea and coffee was a factor that led to the Enlightenment. Caffeine had recently replaced alcohol in daily beverages and people thought with much more clarity and had more energy for thoughtful discourse.

During the Enlightenment, the rational analysis of religious practices led to natural religion and the demand for religious tolerance. Intellectuals, including Voltaire and Diderot, developed new philosophies of deism, skepticism, and atheism. Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789) was the primary proponent of an atheistic world at the time and he disrupted the salons of the day by his insistence on publicly and ardently advocating his belief that God was just an illusion in salons. Religion became increasingly a private rather than a public concern, and by 1800 most forms of Christianity were tolerated by most European governments who also gave civil equality to Jewish people in many cases.

# Gender and Ethnicity During the Enlightenment

This era saw the emergence of feminist ideas for the first time in earnest. Women like Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and Madame Geoffrin made it clear to society that women could do anything that men could do mentally. The first women graduated from many European universities, and intellectuals discussed openly the idea that women should be equal before the law. The Enlightenment ideals of natural rights and just laws made people reexamine their preconceived notions of gender roles, and women's rights made some grudging progress despite the protests of many men in the field. The same Enlightenment ideals that made men such as Rousseau and Voltaire question how they treated women had them examine how they treated slaves and the peoples of other nations too. White men would still be the prominent power in western society and the other societies of the world that they would dominate, but they began to examine the morality and the consequences of these perspectives during this era through the works of people such as Rousseau, such as Emile, and others such as Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793). Reform came slowly, with England outlawing slavery in all British holdings first, and France and the United States eventually following the European trend. Religious intolerance also began to be reduced, leading to more social harmony.

# Great Thinkers of the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment

This chart is designed to help you comprehend the ideas that may be tested with specific items or used as evidence in essays about the era.

**Copernicus** (1473-1534), Poland/East Prussia

He was responsible for spreading the heliocentric (sun centered) theory of the solar system throughout Europe. His *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* was published posthumously.

**Anton van Leeuwenhoek** (1632-1723), Netherlands

He invented and used microscopes to create a basis for modern biological science; his drawings of blood corpuscles, sperm, and bacteria began the science of microbiology.

**Michel de Montaigne** (1533-1592), France

He was a skeptic and inventor of the essay. He stated that he knew nothing decades before Descartes wrote, "Cogito ergo sum." (I think therefore I am).

**Francis Bacon** (1561-1626), England

He is often cited as the codifier of the inductive method. He believed "Knowledge is power," and should be put to practical use.

**René Descartes** (1596-1650), France.

He was an ardent advocate for the deductive method. His *Discourse on Method* defined two kinds of matter: thinking substance (everything within the mind) and extended substance (the objective world or everything outside the mind). This division of reality is known as Cartesian dualism. He invented analytical geometry and wrote the famous line, "Cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am).

**Tycho Brahe** (1546-1601), Denmark

This eccentric astronomer collected vast amounts of data and hired a mathematically gifted assistant named Johannes Kepler.

**Johannes Kepler** (1571-1630), Germany

Brahe's assistant. He discovered three laws of planetary motion that helped Newton later understand gravity, and proved that the orbits of planets are ellipses.

**Galileo Galilei** (1571-1642), Italy

Perhaps the best example of the Enlightenment emerging from the Renaissance, Galileo was a master of many sciences and tried to know everything he could. His astronomical observations of the moons of Jupiter proved that Earth was not the center of the universe, getting him put under house arrest by the Roman Catholic Church. His experiments with inertia proved that objects of different weights fall at the same rate.

**Vesalius** (1514-1564), Belgium

His anatomical drawings from dissection of corpses were the first detailed anatomical maps of the human body.

**William Harvey** (1578-1657), England

He was the author of *On the Movement of the Heart and Blood*, which explained the circulation of the blood through arteries and veins.

**Isaac Newton** (1642-1727), England

He synthesized Kepler's and Galileo's ideas together in his laws of motion. His definition of physics defined what scientists knew about the universe until Einstein conceived of relativity. He developed calculus to measure and predict curves and trajectories. Newton also explained the laws of universal gravitation. He said he "stood on the shoulders of giants," in deference to Galileo.

**Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz** (1646-1716), Germany

He invented calculus simultaneously with Newton.

# Philosophes of the Enlightenment

## Bernard de Fontenelle

He was influential in bringing scientific matters to educated people who were not scientists themselves. He also was among the first to think that science contradicted religion, and caused people to think about the nature of religious truth.

**Major Works:** *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*. It is a truly liberal book because it focuses on the concept that humans can make progress, and marvels at the progress already made. It also made scientific progress up to this point available to many people presented on their level of understanding.

## Pierre Bayle

Leading skeptic, his conclusion foreshadowing that of Heisenberg, was that there is basis for doubt in absolutely everything.

**Major Works:** *Historical and Critical Dictionary* in 1697 about past religion and persecution.

## Baruch Spinoza

Equated God and nature and believed in an impersonal mechanical universe. He also denied free will. He was Jewish by birth but became one of the first ardent atheists.

**Major Works:** *Ethics*, *Tractatus TheologicoPoliticus*, *Tractatus Politicus*, and *Premiers ecrits*

## Denis Diderot

Best known as the editor of the first European *Encyclopédie*, which was supported by Voltaire and Catherine II (the Great) of Russia. He was a writer and member of prominent salons in Paris.

**Major Works:** *Encyclopedia or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Crafts*

## JeanBaptiste le Rond d'Alembert

Famous philosopher, physicist, mathematician, scientist, and writer. Coedited the Encyclopedia with Diderot. **Major Works:** *Encyclopedia or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts and Crafts*

## Baron de Montesquieu (CharlesLouis de Secondat)

Defined the theory of separation of powers of the three branches of government. He outlined a system of checks and balances by which a government could be controlled. He also discussed what conditions were favorable to liberty and greatly admired the English balance of power.

Satirized European Society as well in *The Persian Letters*. His work helped



design most of the governmental systems in the world today.

**Major Works:** *Spirit of the Laws*, *The Persian Letters*

### **Voltaire (FrancoisMarie Arouet)**

- Jailed and had many books censored, but wrote over seventy books.
- Vehemently tolerant of all religions but was a deist.
- A biographer summarized his ideas by saying, "I disagree with what you say, but would defend to the death your right to say it."
- He was a minister to Frederick the Great of Prussia.
- He did his best work while living with Madame du Châtelet, who translated Newton's *Principia Mathematica* and cared for Voltaire with her husband's tacit approval.
- In 1745, Voltaire was appointed the Royal Historiographer of France. Voltaire believed that monarchy was the best form of government because he did not trust people to rule themselves.

**Major Works:** *Candide*, *Zadig*, *The Maid of Orleans*, *The Age of Louis XIV*

### **Thomas Paine**

Advocated deism and progress, the idea of an improved society through natural laws. He moved to the British Colonies in America and advocated for American Independence.

**Major Works:** *The Age of Reason*, *Common Sense*

### **Marquis de Condorcet (Marie Jean Caritat)**

He was the chairman of the French Academy of Sciences. He stated that human progress would eventually lead to its perfection. Ten stages of the mind, nine have occurred, the tenth will lead to perfection. He was against gradual, hard won progress and wanted catastrophic change, much as Karl Marx later would. He committed suicide to avoid the guillotine of the French Revolution.

**Major Works:** *Progress of the Human Mind*, *Essay on the Application of Analysis to the Probability of Majority Decisions*

### **Baron Paul D'Holbach (PaulHenri Thiry)**

- He was a staunch atheist who refused to compromise on anything. Known for his financial support of Diderot and Rousseau.
- People were machines controlled by outside forces.
- Free will, God, and immortality were myths.
- Seen as dogmatic and intolerant due to rigid atheism. It broke the unity of the Enlightenment by dividing thinkers.

**Major Works:** *System of Nature*, contributed to the *Encyclopédie*

### **David Hume**

Scotsman who emphasized limitations of human reasoning and stated that the human mind is nothing but a bundle of impressions. Later he became dogmatic skeptic who undermined the Enlightenment. He was the best friend to Adam Smith.

**Major Works:** *A Treatise of Human Nature, Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*

### Jean Jacques Rousseau

- He believed rationalism and civilization were destroying rather than liberating the individual.
- He emphasized nature and passion and influenced the early Romantic Movement.
- He was surly and paranoid in his later years and had a bowel problem.
- He was against the culture of the Enlightenment.
- Believed, the “general will” reflects public opinion, and the people (as assessed by the majority of the legislature) displaced the monarch as the holder of sovereign power.
- *Émile* called for greater love and tenderness toward children, do not use wet nurses, no swaddling showed the growth of humanitarianism and potential from the Enlightenment.

**Major Works:** *The Social Contract, Émile*

### Immanuel Kant

He argued in 1784 that freedom of the press will result in Enlightenment. He separated science and morality into distinct branches of knowledge. He believed that science could describe natural phenomena of the material world but could not provide a guide for morality.

**Major Works:** *Critique of Practical Reason, The Metaphysics of Morals, and Critique of Judgment*

### Mary Wollstonecraft

She was the first true feminist. She was a defender of the *Declaration of the Rights of Men*. Her daughter was Mary Shelley. She believed marriage was legalized prostitution. She engaged in a public debate with Edmund Burke about the French Revolution, and a private debate with Rousseau on the rights of women.

**Major Works:** *A Vindication of the Rights of Man, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*

### **Olympe De Gouges**

Another early feminist, she was the daughter of a bilker and rose to run her own salon. She was an abolitionist. She was executed during the Reign of Terror.

**Major Works:** *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*

### **Adam Smith**

- He wrote the original statement of capitalist views. It basically created modern economics.
- It stated that mercantilism was stifling and government regulations and granted privileges made the marketplace not only unfair but also inefficient.
- He thought free trade would limit government to three duties: defense, civil order, and public institutions.
- The individual competition in the market led to balance.
- Believed in the invisible hand of supply and demand to control the marketplace and keep competition free and fair.
- He was a professor in Scotland, traveled to France with a tutee, and met Quesnay, the first economist there.
- Explained how division of labor makes work more efficient.
- Thought profit was stolen from the laborer.

**Major Works:** *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), *Theory of Moral Sentiments*

### **Madame de Geoffrin (Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin)**

She was one of the leading Enlightenment personalities. She used her husband's money to host the liveliest salon in France at the time. Her guests included most of the people mentioned above. Other prominent *salonnières* include Louise de Warens and Julia de Lespinasse. In these salons women were treated like thinking people here and only here in society; it was the only place for a woman to learn about the world and the issues of the day.

According to gender theory, women played an important role in organizing salons. She created an independent setting free from censorship where diverse educated people could form their public opinion.

**Major Works:** Supported the publishing of *The Encyclopedia*

# The Evolution of Political Thought of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau

This chart is designed to compare the ideas of the great political thinkers of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

	<b>Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) English</b>	<b>John Locke (1632-1704) English</b>	<b>JeanJacques Rousseau (1712-1778) French</b>
State of Nature: What is life like for the uncivilized?	Life is nasty, brutish and short." Hobbes believed that in a state of nature, might makes right, and that we agree to be governed to protect ourselves from living in a state of nature.	People are born good and corrupted by society. People are created equal not in ability but in rights. All people have the rights to life, liberty, and property.	People are inherently unequal in ability, but this inequality only matters for the corrupted civilized man who deviated from the nobility of savagery.
Natural Law: Defines what the basic human rights are in all societies	The natural law that Hobbes focuses on is survival. He states that in nature every being is so concerned with survival, that any idea of rights includes only what one can physically protect.	All humans are endowed at creation with rights to life, liberty, and property. These are the basic rights that all people have.	Rousseau describes the state of nature as noble, and explains that we only deviate from natural law, in which the needs of each individual are met by the group, because the corrupting force of civilization induces to do so.
Social Contract	People give up some of their rights in order to gain some protection provided by the government.	People give up some of their rights in order to gain some protection provided by the government, but if the government does not do its job, the people must change it.	The social contract is between the people, not the people and the government. Each person gives up all rights to the "general will," which then incorporates every individual through the legislature.

Role of the State	The state prevents people from taking each other's property and killing each other.	The state protects a person's right to life, freedom, and property.	The state enacts the "general will" of the people as expressed through the legislature.
Property	Seen as a limited resource that people compete for.	Ownership of property is among everyone's natural rights.	Property is one of the worst inventions of society; used to manipulate the masses.
Religion	Believed that the state must have only one religion for	Believes in religious toleration by the state.	Abhors organized religion, especially unity. Christianity, but does not reject God.
Favored form of Government	Absolute monarchy	Any representative government: constitutional monarchy, democracy or republic	Complete consensus based on dictatorship of the General Will
What was his essential question?	How can society prevent chaos and violence?	How can government protect the citizen and his/her possessions?	How can society combat inequality?

# Absolute Monarchs of the Late 17th and Early 18th Centuries

## Louis XIV: The Ideal Monarch Who Domesticated the Nobility

Louis XIV (r. 1643-1715) was four when he ascended the throne of France. His mother was his regent, and she chose Italian Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) as prime minister.

- Like Richelieu, Mazarin was a capable administrator, and he protected Louis's claim to the throne during the tumultuous Wars of the Fronde, which reached their height from 1650 to 1652.
- The Frondeurs were nobles who sought to limit the powers of the monarch and to decentralize the government in order to extend their own influence. With the support of the bourgeoisie and the peasants, who had little to gain in a return to the feudal order, Mazarin was able to subdue the Frondeurs and their ally, Spain.
- When Mazarin died in 1661, Louis declared himself as his own prime minister .
  - **"L'Etat, c'est moi"** ("I am the state") became the credo of this most absolutist monarch during the age of absolutism.
  - **Bishop Jacques Bossuet** (1607-1704) provided the philosophical justification for the **divine right theory of rule**.
  - He claimed that Louis, like any absolutist monarch, was placed on the throne by God, and therefore owed his authority to no person or group.
- According to feudal tradition, French society was divided into three Estates, made up of the various classes.
  - The First Estate was the clergy, up to 1 percent of the population.
  - The Second Estate was the nobility and comprised 3 to 4 percent of the population.
  - The Third Estate included the great bulk of the population: the bourgeoisie or middle classes, the artisans and urban workers, and the peasants.
  - Since France was, as were all European nations at this time, predominantly agrarian, 90 percent of its population lived on

farms in the countryside.

- Louis XIV reigned over the Golden Age of French culture and influence:
  - With a population of 17 million (about 20 percent of Europe's total), France was the strongest nation on the continent.
  - Its industry and agriculture surpassed that of any other European country.
  - Jean Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), "The Father of French Mercantilism," revitalized trade as Louis's finance minister by abolishing internal tariffs and creating a free trade zone in most of France.
    - He stimulated industry by subsidizing vital manufacturing and by building up the military.
    - He hoped to make France self-sufficient by building a large fleet that would rival that of the English and Dutch and enable the French to acquire an overseas empire.
    - Since even France could not afford both a powerful army and navy, Louis opted for the army.
- The result was the global supremacy of the British, whose navy ruled the seas of the world for over a century over an empire so large that the sun literally did not set on it.
- French became the "universal tongue," spoken by diplomats and in the royal courts of all Europe.
  - Louis patronized artists and especially writers such as Corneille, Racine (1639-1699), Moliere (1622-1673), de Sevigne, de Saint-Simon (1607-1693), La Fontaine, De La Rochefoucauld (1613-1695).
  - French literature and style (in dress, furniture, architecture) became standards by which all Europeans measured their sophistication.
- France developed Europe's first modern army.
  - Continuation of the military revolution begun by France during the Habsburg-Valois Wars.
  - Artillery, usually supplied by civilian private contractors, was made a part of the army.
  - The government, instead of officers, recruited, trained, equipped, and garrisoned troops.

- A chain of command was established, and the army was increased from 100,000 to 400,000, the largest in Europe.

## War Was an Instrument of Louis's Foreign Policy

For two thirds of his reign, France was at war.

- **The War of the Devolution** (1667/1668): France's unsuccessful attempt to seize the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium) as part of a feudal claim.
- **The Dutch War** (1672/1678): Revenge for the Dutch role in defeating France in the War of Devolution and an attempt to seek France's "natural boundary in the west," the Rhine River – largely unsuccessful.
- **The Nine Years' War** (1688/1697): Also called the War of the Grand Alliance or the War of the League of Augsburg was a major war of the late seventeenth century.
  - France, was opposed by a European-wide coalition, the Grand Alliance, fought primarily on mainland Europe and its surrounding waters.
  - A campaign in colonial North America between French and English settlers and their respective Indian allies, called "King William's War" by the English colonists was a part of this war.
  - Although France retained Luxembourg, most of Louis's ambitions were frustrated.
- **The War of the Spanish Succession** (1702/1714): Louis threatened to upset the Balance of Power (the theory that no single state should be predominant on the continent) in Europe by laying claim to the Spanish throne for his grandson.
  - The Grand Alliance, which included the major states of Western Europe, fought to prevent this union of the French and Spanish thrones.'
  - **The Treaty of Utrecht** (1713/1714): Restored the balance of power by allowing Philip V, Louis's grandson, to remain on the Spanish throne as long as France and Spain were never ruled by the same monarch.
    - Also awarded to the victors various European and overseas possessions of the Spanish Empire.

## Summary of Louis XIV's Reign

Although his reign solidified the central government and marked the high point of absolutism in France, his many wars exhausted the treasury. This left



the bourgeoisie and the peasantry with an enormous tax burden since the clergy and nobility were exempted from most taxes. His personal extravagances aggravated the situation: The Royal Palace at Versailles cost over \$2.3 billion in 2015 U.S. dollars to build, and added to that was the money spent on his elaborate entertainments for the “captive nobility” at court. He defanged the nobles by making participation in court life a social requirement. He suppressed religious dissent, outlawing Jansenism, a form of Catholic Calvinism, revoking the Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed toleration for the Huguenots, and made Catholicism mandatory.

#### Accomplishments of Louis XIV

- The central government that developed in France from the era of the religious wars to Louis’s reign was efficient.
- The power of the nobles was weakened.
- Tax collection was systematized.
- Royal edicts were enforced.
- The bourgeoisie was given a role in administration.
- The economic system was successful.
  - Agriculture and trade were stimulated.
  - The seeds for revolution were sown in the national debt that had to be paid off by the Third Estate, which bore many responsibilities and enjoyed few privileges.

## Prussia

Prussia was an army before it was a nation, it has been said, because its origin was as an outpost of the Holy Roman Empire and its Hohenzollern rulers cultivated a superbly trained and well-equipped army drawn from all areas of their domain. Local loyalties were transferred to the army, which then served as the focal point for Prussian nationalism. Brandenburg, an electorate of the Holy Roman Empire, was able to gain a degree of independence as a result of the weakening of the Habsburg rule during the Thirty Years’ War.

- The Hohenzollern, Frederick William I (r. 1713-1740), solidified autocratic rule over Brandenburg, Prussia, and the Rhine territories with a strong army and an efficient bureaucracy, and with a policy of weakening the nobles (Junkers) and suppressing the peasants. The Junkers served as elite officers in the army, and absolutist rule was established in Prussia.
- Frederick William, Elector of Brandenburg (r. 1640-1688) and his son and grandson, Frederick I (r. 1688-1713) and Frederick William I (r.

1713-1740) of Prussia, centralized the government and encouraged industry in order to support the state's relatively large standing army.

## Russia

Russia became a state in the fifteenth century when the Duchy of Muscovy, under Ivan the Great (r. 1462-1505) overcame subjugation by the Central Asian Tartars. After the Fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, Russia became not only the inheritor of Byzantine culture and the center of the Orthodox Church, but an empire with Moscow as “the third Rome” and a czar (Caesar) or tsar on the throne.

- Under **Basil (Vasily) III** (r. 1505-1533) and the much maligned but very capable **Ivan the Terrible** (1533-1584), expansion and consolidation of the new empire continued in a sporadic fashion with some advances and some reversals.
  - In order to attain soldiers, the empire gave aristocratic landowners, the Boyars, control over their peasants, who gradually fell into **serfdom**, a condition of being bound to the land that had ended in virtually all of Western Europe.
  - The Boyars influenced government policy through a council, the Duma.
- A theme common in most nations with a monarchy, there was a continuing battle for supremacy between a strong central government and a powerful aristocracy.
- **Peter the Great** (r. 1689-1725), a Romanov and a contemporary of Louis XIV of France, gained vast territories from the Baltic Sea in the north, to the Black Sea in the south, and eastward toward the Pacific Ocean. Probably his greatest contribution was the **Westernization of Russia**.
  - Peter the Great expanded the power of the state and of the czars by establishing a powerful standing army, a civil service, and an educational system to train technicians in the skills developed by western science and technology. He imposed economic burdens, Western ideas, and social restrictions on the peasants to further his power, erected the planned city of St. Petersburg on the Baltic, and built magnificent, ornate baroque palaces, churches, and public buildings to glorify his reign. Russia became one of the major powers of Europe during this period.

- Although he could not be considered an Enlightened Despot, he recruited hundreds of Western artisans, built a new capital on the Gulf of Finland, **St. Petersburg**, his “window to the West,” reformed the government bureaucracy and the Russian Orthodox Church, reorganized and equipped the army with modern weapons, and encouraged commerce and industry.

# Enlightened Despotism

The ideal Enlightened Despot was a ruler who aimed for the advancement of society by fostering education, aiding the economy, and promoting social justice. Since Voltaire and most of the *philosophes*, and certainly most of Europe's monarchs, believed that the mass of people were incapable of self-government, Enlightened Despots stayed in power while promoting the good of their people.

In the seventeenth century, **Russia** and **Prussia** rose as powerful states, challenging Poland, the ancient **Habsburg state of Austria**, and the declining empire of the Ottomans. In Prussia and, ironically, in Russia whose culture often lagged decades, even centuries, behind that of the West, Enlightened Despotism held sway during important periods of the eighteenth century. Such rule helped slow the decline of Austria, whose monarchs still held the title of Holy Roman Emperor. In Western Europe, Enlightened Despotism manifested itself in Sweden, Spain, and Portugal, but it shone most brilliantly in the East such as in Prussia, Russia, and Austria.

## Prussia

Prussian Enlightened Despotism reached fruition during the rule of Frederick I's grandson, **Frederick II** or **Frederick the Great** (r. 1740-1786). "First servant of the state," as he called himself, Frederick the Great was a military genius who made Prussia a major power in Europe, an urbane and educated man who patronized the great Voltaire, a domestic reformer who improved education, codified laws, fostered industry, invited immigration, and extended religious tolerance. Twenty years after he died, although Napoleon was able to defeat his army on the battlefield, they remained the strongest institution within the state; the remnants of the Junker (landowning aristocracy) officer corps rebuilt the army and fostered German Nationalism to create a strong German state.

## Russia

**Catherine the Great** (r. 1762-1796), a German who succeeded to the throne after the murder of her husband, **Tsar Peter III** (r. 1762), was a patron of many of the French *philosophes* and considered herself an Enlightened Despot. When a rebellion of the Cossacks, the **Pugachev Rebellion**, gained some ground with the peasantry, Catherine at first tried to dismiss the rebellion; later she took it much more seriously and ended her enlightened reforms. She did continue Peter the Great's work of territorial expansion by annexing both Polish and Ottoman land.

## Austria

In Austria, during the eighteenth century, **Maria Theresa** (r. 1740-1780) and her son, **Joseph II** (r. 1780-1790), qualify as genuine Enlightened Despots. **The War of the Austrian Succession** (1740-48) was fought over the issue of whether or not she could inherit her kingdom, and gave Silesia to Prussia. The **Habsburg Dynasty** had been weakened by the time Maria Theresa inherited the throne under a cloud of counterclaims, and she was determined to strengthen the realm by centralizing the government, promoting commerce, and limiting the power of the nobles. Joseph furthered his mother's reforms by guaranteeing freedom of the press and of religion, reforming the judicial system toward greater equality for all classes, making German the official language for the empire's many ethnic minorities in order to foster centralization, and especially **abolishing serfdom**.