

## **A Comprehensive Study of the Age of Enlightenment**

**By**

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### **Abstract**

The Enlightenment was a philosophical concept that dominated Europe's intellectual landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries. In this ideology, concepts like as independence and development were advocated, as well as the distinction of religion and government, based on the belief that rationality is the power source and authority. However, the actual beginning of this Enlightenment period is a hotly discussed topic, with some arguing that it began as early as the mid-seventeenth century. According to French historians, the period is commonly dated around 1715 until 1789.. In most cases, historians choose either the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars in 1805 or the French Revolution around 1791 as the turning point in history that marked an end to the Age of Enlightenment. The Enlightenment was welcomed by most European countries, albeit with a regional concentration. During the Enlightenment era, there was a lot of cultural exchange between Europe and the United States. Enlightenment discourse and thought started to place a greater emphasis on science. Many people have held that Western civilization was founded with in Enlightenment. It was the driving force for the modernization of Western politics. In matters of beliefs, Enlightenment critique was a response to Europe's prior century of religious conflict. After reviewing the related studies regarding Age of Enlightenment, the researcher concluded that in future one can be enlightened and expand their awareness by living in present moment, expanding their understanding of life as well as the world around them.

**Keywords:** Age of Enlightenment, Enlightenment, Ideas, Philosopher, Progress.

### **Introduction**

A shift in thinking in Europe throughout the 18th century, age of reason of Enlightenment, dominated the realm of ideas. In this organization, concepts like as liberty and development were advocated, as well as the segregation of religion and government, based on the belief that reason is the primary source of power and authority. The Enlightenment was marked by a growing interest in rational inquiry and scientific moral relativism. Fundamental

democratic principles, such as representative government, individuals, civil rights, or the judicial independence, have their origins in the Enlightenment. The Enlighten also laid the foundations for the sciences and academic areas, which are tested empirically methods. Some historians have referred to the Enlightenment also as beginning of the European Epoch in World History that began with European discovery and colonization and the growth of European presence in Asia but also Africa. period of European global supremacy that lasted many centuries and was often horrific (Koncar et al., 2020).

The beginning of the 18th century or possibly the middle of the nineteenth century is often accepted as the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment. Historians typically place the time from 1720 and 1791 between the reign of Louis Xiii and the French Revolutionary. When Descartes released his Discourse on the Method in 1637, it was the beginning of the Enlightenment. The Principia Mathematical by Isaac Newton, written in 1687, is often cited as a foundational work in France. For others, the Enlightenment started with Cartesian' ergo sum sum, since it shifted the epistemological base from an independent event to an internal source of knowledge and certainty. The French Revolt of 1789 or perhaps the outbreak of the Boer War, according to most history, marked the end of the Age of Enlightenment (Albertini, 2018).

The Enlightenment was welcomed by most European countries, albeit with a regional concentration. Generally pro as well as generally pro radicalism got associated with it in France, but in Deutschland, middle-class spiritualism and patriotism were associated with it without presenting any threat to authorities or existing churches. Reactions within the executive branch of government were a mixed bag. Enlightenment intellectuals were frequently imprisoned or exiled by the French government as they fought back against its restrictions. Enlightenment leaders in Great Britain and Ireland were mostly ignored by British authorities. Transatlantic Enlightenment's future growth was aided by the Scottish Reformation's and Scientific emphasis, while in Italy, the decline of the Church's influence led to a period of great thinking and creativity, such as scientific breakthroughs. Since before 1750, Russia's government has been vigorously supporting the expansion of the arts and sciences. During this time period, Russia established its first university, bookshop, theatre, public museum, and independent press. Americans like Ben Franklin and Jefferson were essential in bringing Enlightenment principles to the United States, and inspiring the intellectuals of France and England. Cross-Atlantic cultural exchange occurred throughout the Enlightenment era. European and American philosophers relied on American Indian cultural practices and beliefs in developing their notions of natural freedom (Domínguez, 2017; Kaur, 2019). Figure 1 shows the Age of Enlightenment started with the last revolt in England.



**Figure 1:** The Age of Enlightenment started with the last revolt in England and ended with the French Revolution. It included three revolutions: Industrial in England, Political in France, Philosophical and Aesthetic in Germany [Scmillhills].

### ***Main Enlightenment Ideas:***

Philosophical and technical activity in Europe exploded in the pre century, challenging long-held beliefs and dogmas. Philosophers like Voltaire and André Rousseau advocated for a society established on reason instead than theology and Catholic orthodoxy, a new urban order that was formed from natural rights, and science that was founded on observations and experiments. It was political scholar Montesquieu's idea of a separation of powers in democracy that inspired the authors of the U.s Constitution. In the era of the Enlightenment, there were two major philosophical movements. Spinoza's radical enlightenment advocated for the eradication of religious authority and democratization, as well as freedom of speech and personal liberty. Those like Democritus, Christian Wolff, John Stuart mill, and Isaac Newton favored a more moderate approach that sought a middle ground between radical change and the preservation of traditional institutions of authority and religion (De Baar et al., 2005; OConnor, 2020).

Enlightenment discourse and thought started to place a greater emphasis on science. They saw the rise in free speech as a result of the downfall of traditional authority, and several Enlightenment writers and philosophers had scientific credentials. Empiricism and logic were central to Enlightenment physics, and it was imbued with the Enlightenment's belief in advancement. Like other Enlightenment notions, science's benefits were not broadly acknowledged. The Enlightenment is also recognized with establishing the basis for Western political and social culture for a significant duration. Political modernization was introduced to the West by the focus on democratic principles and systems and the emergence of current, liberal democracies. All genuine political electricity should be "symbolic" and based on prior consent from the people according to European progressive ideology core assumptions, such as individual rights but also natural equal rights for everyone, separation of leadership, democratic president's artificial existence, and liberal explanations (Burson, 2019; Kötting et al., 2010).

Enlightenment-era theology was a response to Europe's religious turmoil of the preceding century. Philosophers of the Enlightenment sought to minimize the political role of organized religion in order to avert a new age of intolerant religious wars. Deism and nihilism were two of the new ideas that evolved during this period. While the latter was a hot topic of discussion, it gained very little support. There are a lot of individuals like Voltaire who feel that if we don't have faith in a just God, societal social order will be at risk. The rising popularity of a wide range of extensive reading was one of the hallmarks of the "human" Renaissance. Consumer items were mass produced at lower prices because to the Industrial Revolution, which made it easier for books, posters, newspapers, and journals to be distributed. From metal prices to Latin poetry, Cave's plan was to provide a monthly overview and commentary on any area of conversation to the educated public (Margo, Harman, & Smith, 2013).

### ***The Best Books About the Enlightenment:***

Enlightenment age, often called the age of Logic, is an intellectual movement that began in the 18th century with the aim of ending church and governmental abuses and replacing them with development and tolerance. The authors that were a part of the movement, which started in France, gave it their names i.e. Voltaire and Rousseau. It eventually included British authors like Locke and Hume, and also Americans like Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Washington, and Benjamin Franklin. The Enlightenment as well as its participants have been the subject of many works. Here are a few books that can help you understand more about the 'Enlightenment' movement.

***Encyclopedia:***

Alan Charles Kors, a history professor at the University of Pennsylvania, has compiled a list that goes beyond the typical hubs of the movement, like Paris, to include lesser-known sites of activity including such Edinburgh, Philadelphia, Geneva, and Milan. It's well-researched and well-written. There are more than 700 signature articles and a holistic cross-reference schema, a sequential outline of components, an extensive relevant index that allows easier access to related stories, and top class illustrations, including photographs, line drawings and diagrams. These are just some of the special features planned and organized for ease of use.

***Portable Enlightenment Reade:***

Issac Kramnick, a Cornell professor, has compiled easy-to-read choices from the Age of Reason's best authors, demonstrating how the idea influenced not just literature as well as essays, but also other aspects of society. In this book, more than a hundred works by Husserl, Voltaire, Diderot, Leibniz, Locke, Benjamin, Rousseau, Thomas, Madison, and Paxton reveal the significant impact of Enlightenment ideas on philosophy, psychology, political, society, and economic frameworks.

***Creation of the Modern World:***

The majority of literature about the Enlightenment concentrates on France, with Britain receiving relatively little attention. Roy Porter convincingly demonstrates that discounting Britain's contribution to this movement is a mistake. He cites the writings of Pope, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, and Daniel Defoe as proof that the new methods of thinking generated by the Age of Reason had a significant impact on Britain. Beyond the many histories focused on France as well as Germany, renowned social researcher Roy Porter shows how major shifts in British thought impacted global events.

***A Sourcebook and Reader:***

The inclusion of authors such as Hobbes, Rousseau, Diderot, and Kant in a single book allows for comparison and contrast of the many works produced during this time period. To further demonstrate the Enlightenment's far-reaching impact on all areas of Western civilization, the articles are arranged topically, with chapters on political philosophy, religion, art, and nature. The Enlightenment Reader pulls together the work of key Enlightenment philosophers to demonstrate the period's entire significance and accomplishments.

***Domestic Revolution:***

Bannet investigates the effect of the Enlightenment on women and female authors in the eighteenth century. The author claims that its impact on women can be seen in social, political, and economic spheres, and that it started to question conventional gender roles such as marriage and family. 'Matriarchs' along with Maria Edge worth, Eliza Haywood, as well as Hannah More, believed that women used to have a superiority of reason and morality over males and ought to assume leadership of the household.

***The Enlightenment in America:***

This book focuses on Enlightenment-era American authors, demonstrating how they, too, were inspired by revolutionary ideas emerging from Europe, even while American society as well as identity were still being established. American Enlightenment illustrates the numerous and conflicting voices of economic or religious thought in the years leading to the founding of a new nation in this short text New light is shed on this pivotal period in American history by Ferguson's insightful analysis.

***Enlightenment and Race:***

Much of this collection contains passages from works that aren't generally accessible and look at the impact of the Enlightenment on racial views. Eze brings together the most major and influential texts on racism from the European Renaissance into an one easily accessible and contested volume.

***Scientific Exploration:***

Science, which was founded on the principles of empiricism and logical thinking and was infused with the purpose of development and expansion, started to dominate the lexicon and concepts of the movement after the Enlightenment. In the debates and ideas of the Enlightenment, science eventually came to dominate. The Enlightenment fostered empiricism and logical thinking as a consequence of its belief in change and progress. The same ideas were used in the social sciences. Building on the discoveries of Kepler, Copernicus, as well as Newton, astronomers of the 18th century developed telescopes, produced star catalogues, and attempted to explain the motions of celestial objects and the implications of the theory of universal gravitation. When amateur astronomer “William Herschel” discovered a new planet in 1781 that was subsequently given the name Uranus, he made what is perhaps the most significant discovery in the history of physics in the 1830s. It was during the eighteenth century that the early modern novel formulation of physics did occur, which resulted primarily in the rule of law of conservation and also the oxygen assumption of combustion (Jacobs, 2020).

A ‘science of man’ was created by “David Hume as well as other Scottish Enlightenment philosophers”. David Hume, a philosopher, fought against philosophical intellectuals by claiming that emotion, not reason, governs human behavior. In addition, he argued against the concept of intrinsic ideas, contending that experience is the ultimate source of all human knowledge. These ideas are largely responsible for the development of contemporary sociology. The Wealth of The country, written by Adam Smith, is generally recognized as its first book on contemporary economics and is readily available online. It had an immediate impact on British monetary policy, and the consequences have persisted far into the twentieth century today. Changes in the law that occurred during the Enlightenment era continue to have an impact on legal systems today. Additionally, the Age of Reason saw the establishment of the first intellectual and literary publications. These books were meant to be a source of information obtained via science and reason, and when they were first published, they acted as an implicit challenge to the prevailing notions of universal truth, which were monopolized by monarchs, parliaments, and religious organizations. While the Revolution could not have been founded on a single ideology or set of concepts, science was a key element of the movement's objectives and served as its inspiration. Since so many authors and philosophers of the Enlightenment had scientific backgrounds, they made the link between scientific advancement and the abolition of religion and established customs in order to support the growth of free speech and expression. Enlightenment science, which was founded on the concepts of growth and progress, placed a strong value on empiricism and logical reasoning. The same ideas were used to social sciences (Rodriguez & Watkins, 2009).

***Astronomy:***

Building on the discoveries of Kepler, Copernicus, and Newton, astronomers of the 18th century developed telescopes, produced star catalogues, and attempted to explain the motions of celestial objects and the implications of the theory of universal gravitation. Astronomer Edward Halley made a precise connection between historical records of unusually dazzling comets and the return in 1705 based on his calculations of comet paths. What is

regarded as the most significant discovery in the history of astronomy during the 18th century was made by a German scientist in 1781. Following Herschel's funeral, the name Pluto, offered by Johann Bode, gained widespread acceptance. In 1783, the English practical philosopher John Michell proposed the existence of dark stars as a theoretical hypothesis in astronomy, which was accepted by the scientific community (Sicard, 2004).

Among the most spectacular scientific findings of the eighteenth century casts a pall over most of the period's astronomy activity. With his magnificent reflecting telescope, amateur scientist "William Herschel" discovered a new planet on March 13, 1781. After Herschel's death, the name Uranus, originally suggested by Johann Bode, became popular.

### ***Chemistry:***

After this time period, the chemical revolution was eventually termed. An earlier theory proposed that burning combustible materials created a substance known as phlogiston. The resulting substance, known as Calx, was considered to be a dephlogisticated substance in its original condition. The discovery of numerous gases that make up air by "Joseph Priestley, Joseph Black, and Henry Cavendish" offered the first conclusive evidence against the phlogiston concept. When Antoine Lavoisier discovered that both phosphorus and sculpture were heavier when burned, the phlogiston theory began to crumble. Lavoisier later discovered and labelled oxygen, detailing its roles in mammalian respiration as well as the photo-activity of metals exposed to air, between 1774 and 1778. In 1783, he realized that water is a combination of hydrogen and oxygen (Malila, 2018).

### ***Social Sciences:***

A science of person was created by authors like James Perry, John McDowell, Adam Henderson, and "William Thompson", who combined a research of how living beings handled the issue in prehistoric but instead ancient cultural contexts with a robust awareness of the assessing troops of modernity to create a scientific knowledge of man that was demonstrated historically in writings by "David Ricardo and other Scottish Spirituality" thinkers. In opposition to philosophical realists, Hume asserted that emotion, rather than reason, governs human behavior. Additionally, he denied the existence of intrinsic concepts, contending that all human knowledge is ultimately built on memory and experience learning. According to Hume, knowledge must be obtained from abstract reasoning about connections between concepts acquired through experience or it must be directly related to things seen in practice in order to be real (Peters & Besley, 2020).

The Country's Economy, written by Adam Smith in 1776, is generally recognized with the first text on mainstream economics and is widely read today. It had an early impact on British economy, and the consequences have persisted far into the 21st century today. The book was written in the immediate aftermath of Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot's and Baron de Laune's observations on the Creation the Division of Resources, which were both immediately prior and influencing the book. Changes in the law that occurred during the Enlightenment era leave a lasting impact on legal systems today. Known as one of the outstanding Enlightenment writers, Cesare Beccaria authored his opus, Crimes and Prison sentences, in 1764 while working as a lawyer in Milan. Baccarat is regarded as a key person since he was one of the founding founders of traditional criminal theory. His work, which established the field of criminology, condemned both the death penalty and torture. Additionally, it supported the advancement of criminal justice. Famous philosopher Francesco Mario Pagano battled against the death sentence and torture in his book Saggi Politici and advocated for more forgiving criminal laws (Vogt & Weber, 2020).

## Discussion

During the Age of Enlightenment, the first scholarly and literary publications were also created. The first journal was published in 1665 by the Parisian Journal des Sçavans. On the other hand, it took until 1682 for periodicals to start being published more often. “French and Romance” were the two languages that were published in the most, yet there is still a demand for literature in other languages, such as German and Dutch. The lack of interest in French-language publications in Europe generally indicated that there was little demand for English-language publications on the Continent. Languages with a smaller international market, like Danish, Spanish, and Portuguese, had a harder time being published in journals and frequently utilized an international language rather. French gradually replaced Latin as that of the lingua franca of educated societies. As a result, the publishing sector in Holland, which generated the overwhelming bulk of such French language magazines, gained prominence (Rydell, Eklöf, & Sánchez-Navarro, 2017).

During the Enlightenment, scientific organizations and academies predominated, with universities largely replaced as centers of scientific inquiry and advancement. Scientific academies and organizations emerged from the Scientific Revolution as knowledge sources, in opposition to the scholasticism of the university. National scientific organizations emerged in Europe's urban centres of scientific expansion during the Enlightenment. Numerous provincial and regional organizations, as well as some smaller private alternatives, did the same. The activities included experiments, partnership projects between other societies, essay contest funding, and research.

Academies and Societies that published the works of its members helped the spread of Enlightenment science. The publishing schedules were sometimes irregular, with gaps between volumes sometimes lasting months or even years. The bulk of academic publications were scientific articles, but independent journals also included book reviews, abstracts, evaluations of literary translation, and sometimes republished or derivative content. Beginning in antiquity and continuing through the Enlightenment, dictionaries and encyclopedias evolved from basic lists of meanings to very in-depth analyses of the terms in issue. An excellent example of an encyclopedic dictionary from the eighteenth century is Encyclopedia, sometimes referred to as a Thorough Dictionary of an Arts, Arts, and Crafts. Science gained popularity during the Enlightenment as more people became interested in it. The printing culture and the dissemination of scientific information via coffeehouses, public lectures, and popular periodicals rose in popularity as a result of a more literate populace seeking information and instruction in both the arts and sciences. Women were not allowed to join scientific societies, organizations, or educated professions during the Enlightenment. Despite these restrictions, numerous female mathematicians made significant contributions in the seventeenth century (Day, 2016).

Scientific organizations and academies dominated science during the Enlightenment, and colleges were largely supplanted as institutions of scientific study and progress. In contrast to the university's scholasticism, these institutions sprang from the Scientific Revolution as producers of scientific knowledge. Some organizations established or maintained connections with universities during the Enlightenment. In contrast, universities were separated from scientific organizations by contemporary writers who claimed that the value of universities lay in the distribution of information, while a value of societies lay in the generation of knowledge. As universities' significance in institutionalized research began to wane, learned societies have

emerged as the cornerstone of organized science in its current form. After 1700, a large number of formal academies and organizations were created across Europe, with over 70 government scientific bodies in operation by 1789. In allusion to this growth, Bernard de Fontanilla coined the name 'the Age of Academies' to designate the 18th century, which is still in use today.

A large number of Enlightenment thinkers are credited with developing governance principles that were critical to the formation and progress of the present civil-society-driven democratic state. Enlightened totalitarianism, also known as divine right, was one of the first conceptions to arise from the political ideals of the Enlightenment. It was one of the worst types of tyranny. The idea was initially put up by a German professor named "William Roscher" in the nineteenth century, and scholars are still debating it now. Enlightened despots believed that the foundation of a tyrant's ability to rule in the absence of any legitimate governments was a social covenant. Enlightened absolutist kings were able to increase their authority by increasing the welfare of their citizens. According to this school of thought, the king was more equipped than the populace to understand the needs of his or her country. They couldn't participate in political issues since the monarch was responsible for his subjects. A tyrant and an enlightened dictator may be distinguished from one another based on how fully they embraced the Enlightenment. On the other hand, historians dispute over the actual implementation of enlightened dictatorship. They distinguish between the "enlightenment" of the monarch and that of their government.

## Conclusion

History's Age of Enlightenment is a crucial era. It promoted a wide range of ideas, including scepticism, modernity, reason, and liberty, all of which eventually sparked the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the American Revolution. People's minds were changed by this revolutionary movement, which enabled them to envision possibilities beyond what was immediately in front of them. If not for this endeavor, the world as we know it now would be quite different. The practice of slavery has been abolished, people now have the freedom to use their inherent rights as well, governments now divide their powers, and women are treated equally. Prominent intellectuals of the Enlightenment inspired each of these ideas. Since technology has changed how we connect with one another and with our surrounds, we need to reflect philosophically on how we now view the new environment we are a part of. The future of civilization has been defined by the scientific and technological revolutions, and it calls for a distinctive moral and philosophical perspective. After reviewing related studies, the researcher came to the conclusion that by embracing a lifestyle that allows them to better experience the present, learn new things, and expand their perception of life and the world around them, people can become more enlightened as well as increase their knowledge and understanding in the future.

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