

Chapter 8

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

8.35 THE PHILOSOPHES—AND OTHERS

Study Questions

1. From what sources was the thought of the Enlightenment drawn? What elements are suggested as basic to the spirit of the Enlightenment? Of what significance was the idea of progress?
2. Describe the currents of thought and practice contradictory to Enlightenment attitudes that were also prevalent in this age. How did these differences reflect the gap between popular and elite culture?
3. Describe the development of Freemasonry in the mainstream of the new intellectual culture.
4. What general observations may be made about the philosophes and the audience for whom they wrote? What effect did censorship have upon them?
5. Describe the role of the salons and of the individuals who participated in them. How does the painting reproduced on p. 315 depict such a salon?
6. Discuss and compare the contributions made to the thought of the Enlightenment by (a) Montesquieu, (b) Voltaire, and (c) Rousseau.
7. What contributions to the Enlightenment were made by Diderot, the Physiocrats, and Adam Smith?
8. Explain the attitudes held by thinkers of the Enlightenment toward (a) religion and the churches, (b) the function of the state, and (c) the problem of liberty.

Key Discussion Sentences

1. The spirit of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment was drawn from the scientific and intellectual revolution of the seventeenth century.

2. The main currents of thought in the eighteenth century in France and Europe were divergent and inconsistent, but there was a general belief in reason, science, civilization, and progress.
3. Although the thought of the Enlightenment was secular, the first half of the eighteenth century was also a time of continuing religious fervor.
4. Although the French word *philosophe* means philosopher, it is also used to denote a group of writers who were not philosophers in the technical sense of the word.
5. The salons that women organized in Paris played a crucial mediating role in the mingling of people and ideas.
6. For Voltaire and most philosophes the ideal form of government approached that of enlightened despotism.
7. Rousseau was probably the most profound writer of the age and certainly the most permanently influential.
8. France was the main center of the Enlightenment.
9. The main agency of progress in the Enlightenment view was the state and many Enlightenment thinkers believed that the rightly ordered government was the best guarantee of social well-being.

Identifications

| | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Ancients and Moderns | <i>Écrasez l'infâme!</i> |
| <i>Arts and Sciences</i> | <i>The Messiah</i> |
| <i>Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i> | <i>salonnières</i> |
| Germaine de Staël | Condorcet |
| <i>Origin of Inequality Among Men</i> | Pietism |
| John Wesley | <i>The Spirit of Laws</i> |
| <i>Social Contract</i> | Mesmer |
| <i>Philosophical Letters on the English</i> | <i>Considerations on Poland</i> |
| Sophie Condorcet | Freemasonry |
| <i>Émile</i> | Illuminati |
| Physiocrats | Philosophes |
| Jean Calas | Laissez-faire |

Encyclopedists
Sketch of the Progress of the Human Mind
Madame de Geoffrin
Essai sur les moeurs

La Barre
Wealth of Nations
Diderot

8.36 ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM: FRANCE, AUSTRIA, PRUSSIA

Study Questions

1. What characteristics distinguished the enlightened despots from earlier monarchs? How did the wars of the mid-eighteenth century contribute to enlightened despotism?
2. Assess the successes and failures of enlightened despotism in France. How did the attempted abolition of the parlements illustrate its weakness? How does the illustration on p. 330 depict the failure of this attempt at reform?
3. Compare the changes introduced by Maria Theresa and by Joseph II in the Austrian Empire. Would you characterize both as enlightened despots?
4. What were the limitations of Joseph's reforms and what did it signify?
5. Discuss the nature and results of enlightened despotism in Prussia under Frederick the Great. Why did the stratification of Prussian society represent a challenge for Frederick?

Key Discussion Sentences

1. The typical enlightened despots differed from their unenlightened predecessors mainly in attitude and tempo.
2. The typical enlightened despot set out to reform and reconstruct the state in order to make it more rational, efficient, and centralized.
3. In France, enlightened despotism had less success than elsewhere.
4. Most of the practical difficulties of the French monarchy could be traced to its methods of raising revenue.
5. Maria Theresa proceeded with caution in her attacks on serfdom.
6. Joseph II was a pure representative of the Age of Enlightenment, and it is in his brief reign

of ten years the character and limitations of enlightened despotism can best be seen.

7. Frederick the Great's fame as an enlightened despot rested more on his intellectual achievements than on any sweeping reforms in Prussia.

Identifications

Après moi le déluge

Maria Theresa

Hereditary subjects

Cameralism

Corvée

Free gift

Maupeou parlements

Taille

Joseph II

Turgot

8.37 ENLIGHTENED DESPOTISM: RUSSIA

Study Questions

1. How did the intellectual currents of the Enlightenment affect Russia?
2. Describe Russia after Peter the Great's reign.
3. Describe the personality and personal qualities of Catherine, and assess her reform program. What seems to have thwarted that program? What qualities does her portrait on p. 336 seem to convey?
4. Describe Catherine's foreign policy and the territorial growth of Russia during her reign. What did Russia gain in the partitions of Poland?
5. What does the illustration on p. 337 tell you about Russia in this age?
6. What were the major accomplishments, shortcomings, and limitations of enlightened despotism in Europe in this age?

Key Discussion Sentences

1. The Enlightenment in Russia furthered the estrangement of the Russian upper classes from their own people and their own native scene.
2. Pugachev's rebellion was the most violent peasant uprising in the history of Russia, and the most formidable mass upheaval in Europe in the century before 1789.

3. Territorially, Catherine was one of the main builders of modern Russia.
4. Even at the end of her reign, Catherine continued to recognize the standards of the Enlightenment.
5. Enlightened despots attempted to revolutionize society by authoritative action from above, but often faced obstacles to their reforming initiatives as well.

Identifications

Legislative Commission
Potemkin villages

Pugachev's rebellion
Muzhik

8.38 THE PARTITIONS OF POLAND

Study Questions

1. How did Austrian and Prussian concerns about the balance of power in eastern Europe lead to the first partition of Poland? What territory did each of the three participating powers gain?
2. What effect did the partition have on the Poles? Why did they not develop a more effective national resistance?
3. Evaluate the various interpretations or debate over the partitions of Poland.

Key Discussion Sentences

1. Poland fell into ever deeper anarchy and confusion in the eighteenth century and was finally absorbed by its expanding neighbors.
2. Polish kings were chosen in elections that became an object of regular international interference.
3. The partitions of Poland, however extenuated, were nevertheless a great shock to the old system of Europe.
4. The partition of Poland, while maintaining the balance of power in eastern Europe, profoundly changed the balance of power in Europe as a whole.

Identifications

Stanislas Poniatowski
Constitution of 1791

Liberum veto
Thaddeus Kosciusko

Partitions of Poland

Map Exercises

1. Study the map on p. 342, Poland since the Eighteenth Century, in your text. What was Poland's ethnic composition in 1772? Describe Polish boundaries before and since the eighteenth century.
2. What territory did Russia, Austria, and Prussia each gain in the first partition of Poland? Which countries gained territory in subsequent partitions?

8.39 NEW STIRRINGS: THE BRITISH REFORM MOVEMENT

Study Questions

1. What observations may be made about political developments in the European world beginning about 1760? What arguments may be advanced for and against the thesis that the revolutionary movements of the age were aspects of one great revolutionary wave?
2. What common demands were raised by the revolutionary movements of the age? Which could be characterized as democratic and which were not?
3. How did the Enlightenment in Britain differ from the Enlightenment on the Continent?
4. Why was there political and social dissent in England? What factors served as barriers to reform?
5. What relationship developed between reformers in England and the American colonials?
6. How was the trend toward centralization in the British Empire in this age reflected in developments in Scotland, Ireland, and India?
7. Describe how the process of centralization was slower in Ireland.
8. What does the portrait by Gainsborough (p. 347) suggest about social class in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world?

Key Discussion Sentences

1. An important era of revolutionary disturbance opened about 1760 that did not end until after the revolutions of 1848.
2. Even if the reform movements were not part of a single great revolutionary wave, the revolutionaries or reformers shared much in common.
3. The middle classes were the great beneficiaries of this revolutionary age.
4. Although Parliament was supreme in England, and constitutional questions were apparently settled after 1688, there were undercurrents of discontent.
5. The reform movement in England was closely associated with events in America.
6. Scotland proved a source of weakness in the War of the Austrian Succession.
7. The trend in the British world in the eighteenth century was toward a centralization of the empire under the authority of Parliament.

Identifications

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|------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Atlantic Revolution | Dissenters | Placemen |
| Democratic Revolution | Commonwealthmen | Act of Union of 1801 |
| Patriot king | John Wilkes | Warren Hastings |
| Regulating Act of 1773 | Tory | Edmund Burke |
| India office | | |

8.40 THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Study Questions

1. How would you characterize the actions and attitudes of the American colonists in the years preceding the American Revolution?
2. How did events connected with the East India Company lead to the Boston tea party? What retaliatory measures did the British government take?
3. Describe the significance of the Quebec Act.

4. How did the War of American Independence become part of the European struggle for empire?
5. How did the principles announced in the Declaration of Independence reflect the influence of the Enlightenment?
6. What advances toward democratic equality were made in connection with the American Revolution? What were the limitations of these advances?
7. What were the political consequences of the American Revolution for Europe and the world? How did it affect older European political attitudes?
8. How do the illustrations on p. 354, 357, and 360 illuminate aspects of the American Revolution?

Key Discussion Sentences

1. It was the participation of the French army and fleet that made it possible for Americans to defeat the British.
2. The upheaval in America was a revolution as well as a war for independence.
3. In the new states democratic equality made many advances.
4. The democratic advances of the American Revolution were subject to limitations.
5. The Americans drew heavily on the writings of Locke and on ideas that went back to the English Puritan Revolution.
6. The establishment of the United States was taken in Europe to prove that many ideas of the Enlightenment were practicable.
7. The American Revolution made the older ideas of constitutionalism, federalism, and limited government, once associated with feudalism and aristocracy, progressive and democratic.

Identifications

Revenue Act of 1764

Common Sense

American Tories

Stamp Act

Townshend duties

Virtual representation

Treaty of 1783

Intolerable Acts

Continental Congress

Thomas Paine

Federalism

Articles of Confederation

Quebec Act

GENERAL ESSAY QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTER 8

1. What relationships do you see between the seventeenth-century age of genius and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment? How did the philosophes embody the skeptical, rational, and scientific spirit of both centuries?
2. Discuss the main currents of Enlightenment thought with respect to (a) science, (b) government, (c) economic policies, (d) religion, and (e) education. Why did the attitudes of the age reinforce faith in the idea of progress?
3. How were the ideas of the Enlightenment applied in their respective countries by (a) enlightened monarchs on the Continent, (b) the British reform movement, and (c) the American Revolutionaries? In what sense did the American Revolution transform older ideas of constitutionalism, federalism, and limited government?

GENERAL DISCUSSION PASSAGES FOR CHAPTER 8

1. There had never been an age in which Europeans were so skeptical toward tradition, so confident in the powers of human reason and of science, so firmly convinced of the regularity and harmony of nature, and so deeply imbued with the sense of civilization's advance and progress. (p. 310)
2. The idea of progress has often been described as the dominant or characteristic idea of European civilization in the modern era, or since the late seventeenth century. It is a belief, a kind of nonreligious faith, that the conditions of human life become better as time goes on, that in general each generation is better off than its predecessors and will contribute by its labor to an even better life for generations to come, and that in the long run all humankind will share in the same advance. (p. 310)
3. The Ancients held that the works of the Greeks and Romans had never been surpassed. The Moderns, pointing to science, art, literature, and invention, declared that their own time was the best, that it was natural for people of their time to do better than the Ancients because they came later and built upon their predecessors' achievements. (p. 310)
4. The symbol of divinity that occurred to people of scientific view was the Watchmaker. (p.

310-311)

5. The Physiocrats were the first to use the term *laissez-faire* (“let them do as they see fit”) as a principle of economic activity. (p. 320)
6. Adam Smith’s purpose, like that of the Physiocrats, was to increase the national wealth by the reduction of barriers that hindered its growth. The motivation for all production and exchange was to be the self-interest of the participants. To those who might object that this was a system of selfishness Adam Smith would reply (being a professor of moral philosophy at the University of Glasgow) that a free market system was at least realistic, describing how people really behaved, and that a free market system was morally justified because it ultimately produced a maximum both of freedom and of abundance. (p. 321; 323)
7. Although the Physiocrats and others had begun to advocate “*laissez-faire*” economic theories, the state was widely viewed as the main agent of social progress. But if they relied on the state, they were not nationalists in any later sense of the word. As “universalists,” they believed in the unity of humankind under a natural law of right and reason and thus they carried over the classical and Christian outlook in a secular way. (p. 324)
8. In England there was general contentment with the arrangements that followed the English Revolution of 1688—it has often been remarked that nothing is so conservative as a successful revolution. (p. 345)
9. In the new states democratic equality made many advances. It was subject, however, to a great limitation, in that it long applied only to white males of European origin. But application of the principles of liberty and equality without regard to race or gender went far beyond the political and cultural assumptions of even the most enlightened white Americans at the time. (p. 356-357)
10. The Americans came to believe, more than any other people, that government should possess limited powers and operate only within the terms of a fixed and written constitutional document. (p. 358)
11. Federalism, or the allocation of power between central and outlying governments, went along with the idea of written constitutions as a principal offering of the Americans to the wider world history of political theories and institutions. (p. 358)
12. The United States, as its later history was to show, bore a heavy load of inherited burdens

and unsolved problems, especially slavery and pervasive racial discrimination. But in a general way, until new revolutionary and radical social movements set in a century later, America stood for many Europeans as a kind of utopian opportunity for common people, a “new world” not only for the millions who emigrated to it but for other millions who stayed at home. (p. 361)