

# The Enlightenment Philosophes

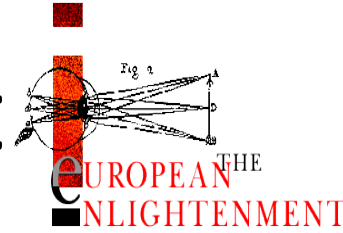
Reason in Service of Humanity

Primary Sources Review

Mr. Oberholtzer

K-212

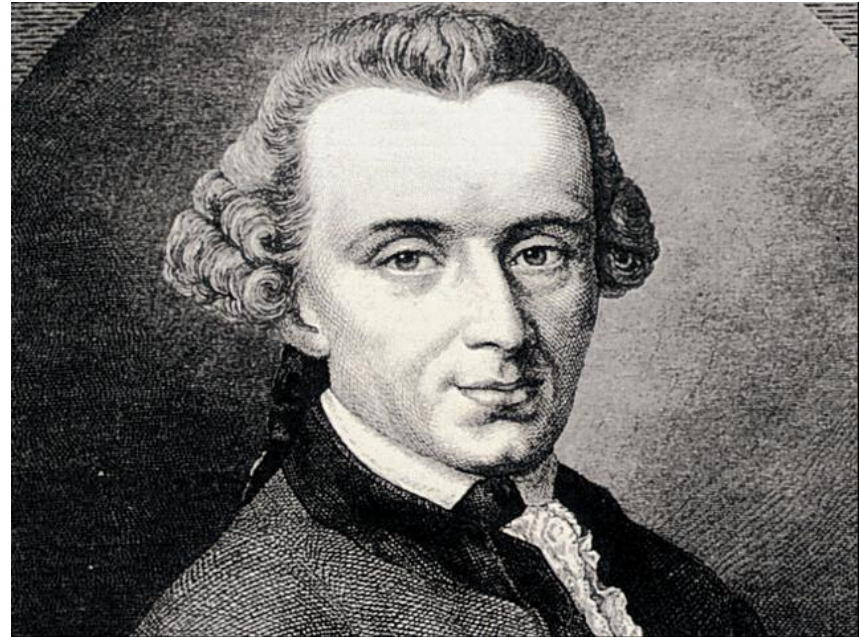
# The Age of Enlightenment



- **Reason** is basis of understanding
- **Rationality** began in Ancient Greece, carried over to the Renaissance and continued with the Enlightenment
- **Humanism** influenced the Enlightenment focus on individual and mankind
- **The Scientific Revolution** influenced the Enlightenment by **employing the methodology of science to the study of human beings** and their problems.
- Enlightenment philosophes articulated basic principles of the modern outlook: **reason, natural rights of man, reform of society according to rational principles.**
- Enlightenment philosophes believed in the ability of rational, enlightened and humanist people to **engineer a better world for mankind.**
- Enlightenment philosophes believed there was **no limit to what human beings could achieve when they properly used their reason. Optimistic Outlook!**
- The cultivation of the mind and the civilization of the person is the responsibility of the individual. *Many are called, few are chosen!*
- **Age of Enlightenment or Enlightened Age: which one are we living in?**

# Sec. 1 Immanuel Kant

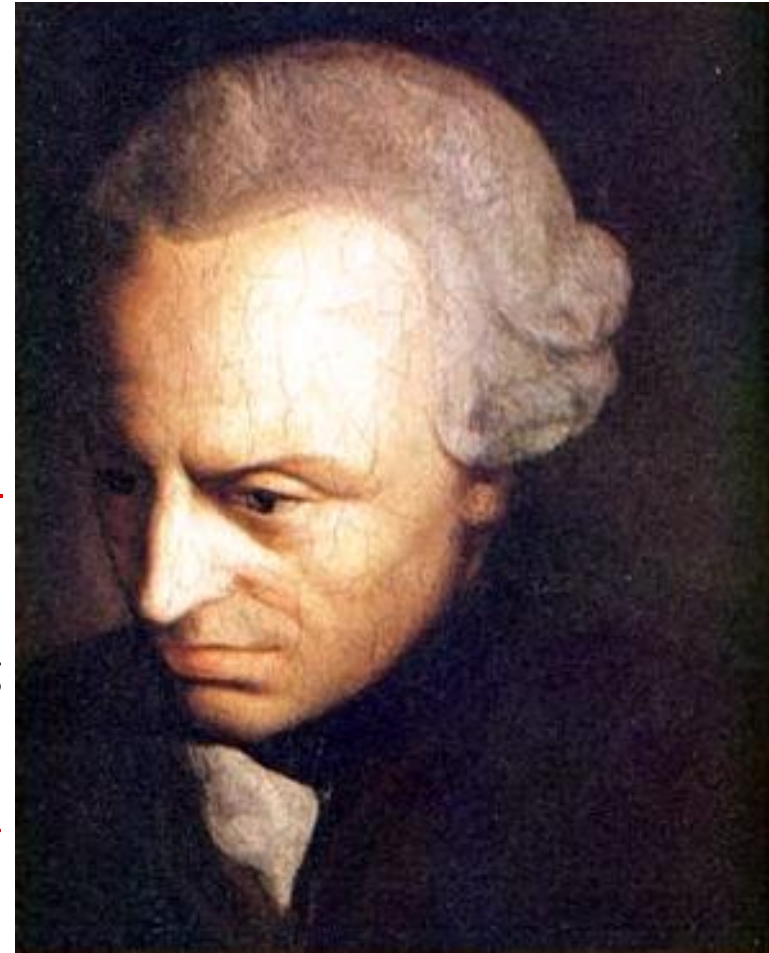
- German Philosopher (1724-1804)
- Categorical Imperative-moral choice=universal law
- Kant believed that the Enlightenment represented a new way of thinking
  - Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's intelligence without the help of others
  - Laziness and cowardice keep people lazy and childlike
  - *Only a few escape immaturity*
  - All that is required for enlightenment is the FREEDOM to make public use of reason in all matters.
  - *We do not live in an enlightened age, but in an age of enlightenment, hence we have a lot of work to do!*



# Primary Sources Assessment

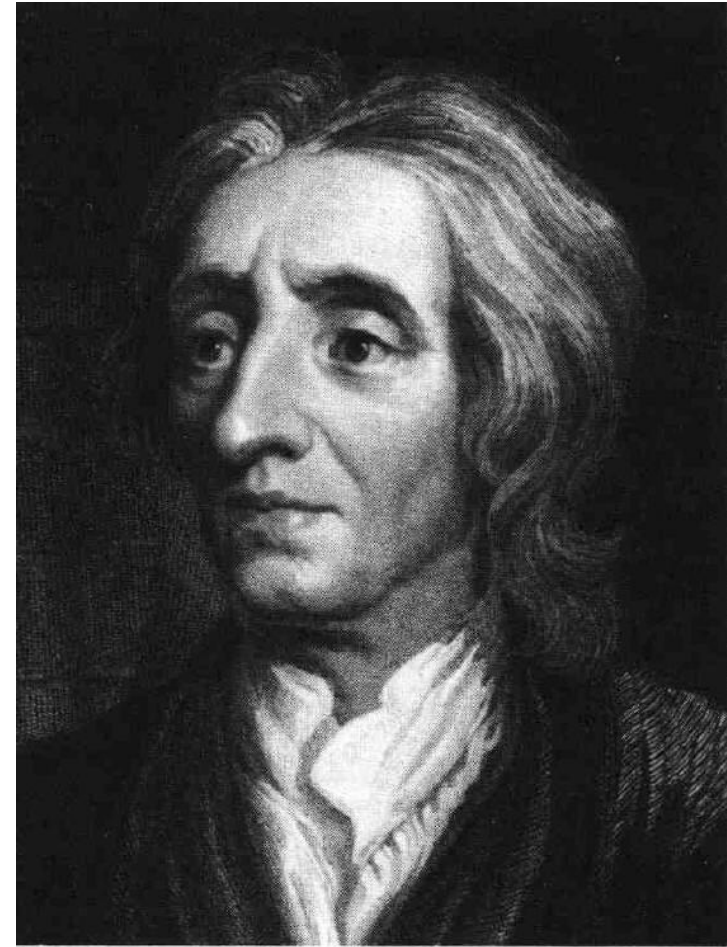
## Questions Sec 1

- 1. **a) Enlightenment** according to Kant means leaving self-caused immaturity and **embracing the concept Sapere Aude! (Dare to Know)**. Enlightenment requires having the courage to use your own intelligence. **B) Freedom is the public use of reason in all matters.**
- 2. Factors that delay the progress of human enlightenment are: **self-caused immaturity (incapacity to independently use one's intelligence)**, lack of **courage** to use one's reason publicly, laziness and a social structure that encourages the above. **Cultivation of the mind is the only way out of this trap.**
- 3. The political implications of this point of view are immense. People can think critically, reason for themselves and act on their conclusions without being guided by the authorities. **With this sort of self-determined intellectualism, there is no need for church authority, political authority or any other type of oppressive power to dictate to people.** People can work things out for themselves, which is the basis for the empowerment of the individual and the people that we see in the Enlightenment.



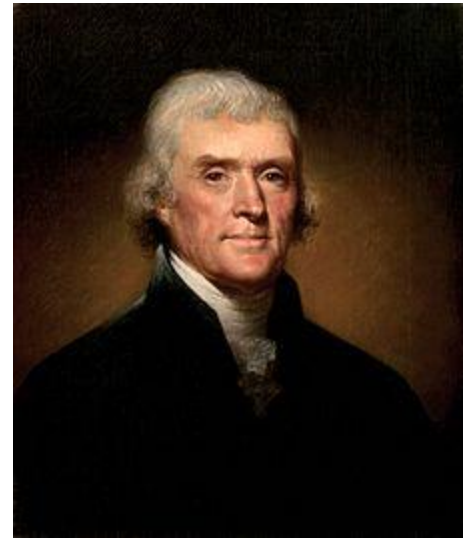
# Sec 2 .John Locke

- John Locke (1632-1704) British statesman, philosopher and political theorist
- Experience is the source of knowledge and liberty is the utmost concern for the individual
- **People have natural rights of life, liberty and property that cannot be taken away by government.**
- Locke endorsed constitutional government as a way to restrict the power of government and protect individual liberty.
- Rationale for government is to protect life, liberty and property=natural rights!
- Oppressive governments may be overthrown and a new social contract created.
- Provided rational and secular attempts to improve mankind and the human condition.
- Locke's ideas form the basis of the American Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights.



# Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)

- Wrote the Declaration of Independence
- Borrowed extensively from John Locke
- Changed Locke's phrase to "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" in the Declaration of Independence in order to get it adopted by Congress.
- Articulated clearly Locke's idea that humans have natural rights that cannot be denied or removed.
- Held the Enlightenment beliefs in the goodness of man, the equality of human beings and the social contract between the government and the governed.
- Jefferson was a Deist, one who believes in God who created and set the universe in motion like a machine. Like other Enlightenment thinkers, he did not subscribe to orthodox Christianity!
- Jefferson Bible—Jefferson's interpretation of the New Testament based on reason alone.



# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions 2

- Hobbes
  - Human Nature is wicked, humans are born bad.
  - An enlightened monarch is preferable for keeping order (like Plato's Philosopher-King)
  - The people have no right to rebel
- Locke
  - Human beings are born like a blank slate (tabula rasa), neither good nor bad.
  - Sovereign power is in the hands of the people, who are bound to their representative government in a social contract.
  - When the social contract is broken by a government that enslaves people, takes their property and tramples on their natural rights, they have the right to rebel and form a new government in a new social contract.

# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions 2

• 2. Locke's theories of natural rights are almost the same as the principles laid out in the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson.

- Political power possessed by all men
- All men have natural rights
- Political power is given up in a social contract to a representative government to rule benevolently for all.
- Government is limited in size and power
- No taxation without representation
- Social Contract is cancelled with government attempts to seize or destroy private property, oppress the people or neglect to care for the body politic.
- The people have the right to rebel and form a new political compact when government fails to keep its part of the social contract
- Everyone has the right to “life liberty and property” (Locke) Jefferson changed the last term to happiness, probably reflecting the problem over what to do with slaves in the new United States of America





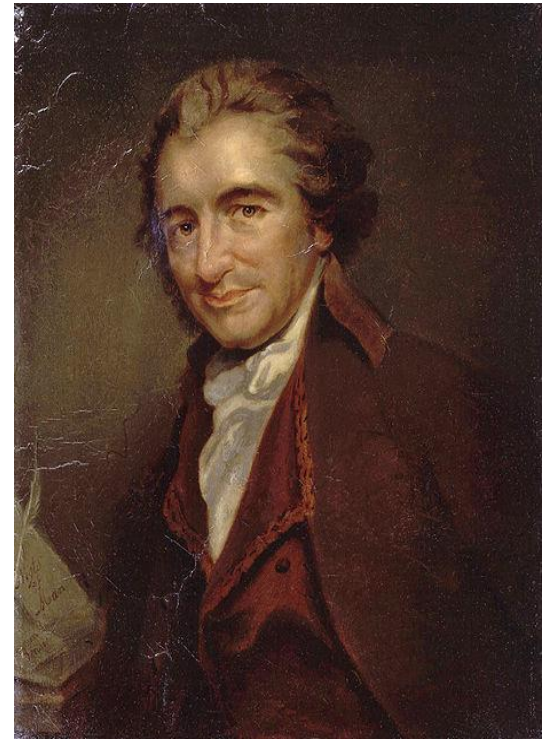
# Section 3 Attack on Religion

- Christian Doctrines and teachings were counter to reason & fostered ignorance, violence and death
- Deism taught that religion should accord with reason and natural law, uplifting mankind.
- **Deists** believe in God, but in a **limited way**
  - God constructed the universe, set it in motion and walked away (clockmaker)
  - Nature is God; natural law over all!
  - Jesus was not divine, but was a teacher of morality and a philosopher.



# Thomas Paine (1737-1809)

- Propagandist of the American Revolution, author of “Common Sense”, a pamphlet outlining reasons for independence from Britain.
- Paine was a **Deist** who believed in reason above all and the supremacy of natural law
- He denounced Christian miracles and prophecies, saying that religion based on reason and natural law that accorded with scientific principles was the best.



# Voltaire

- Francois Marie Arouet (1694-1778) known as Voltaire.
- Voltaire was a **Deist** who attacked religious superstition, fanaticism and church authority.
- Voltaire rejected censorship, religious persecution and Christianity
- Voltaire taught that tolerance and reason were required to build an enlightened society.
- Voltaire is often referred to as the leader of the Enlightenment!



# Baron d'Holbach

- Paul-Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789) French/German author, essayist, philosopher and salon proprietor
- d'Holbach was a prominent **atheist** who rejected the idea of God as the product of ignorance, fear and superstition.
- D'Holbach supported the core ideals of the Enlightenment, reason and freedom (liberty) and rejected tradition and superstition as antithetical to human advancement.



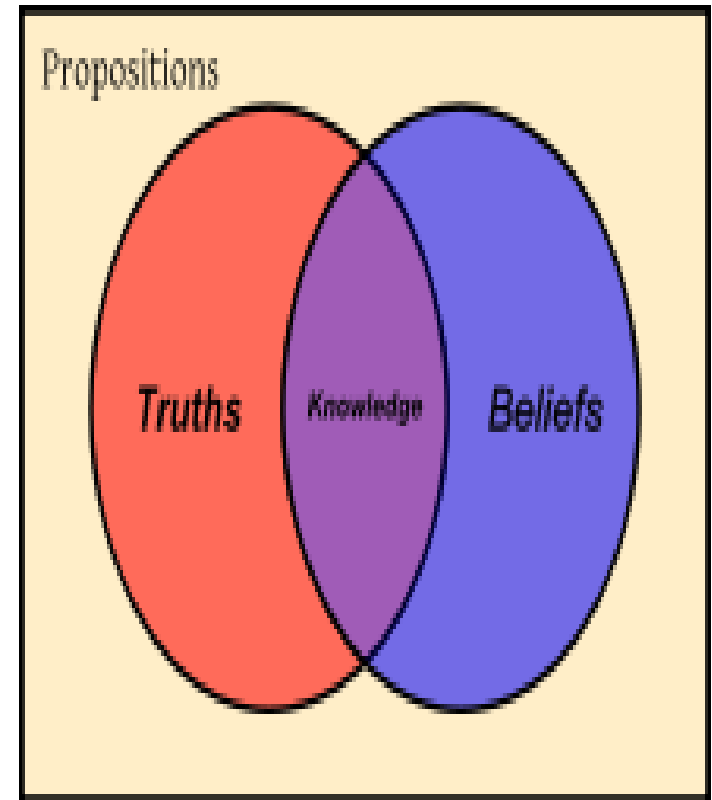
# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions 3

- 1. Voltaire's arguments for toleration
  - All men are created by the same God according to Christianity, so all are brothers
  - Tolerance never caused war or killed people
  - Christianity needs to live up to its ideals and set the example for all
  - Intolerance produces only hypocrites and rebels
- 2. Voltaire ridiculed Christian theology (Dogma)
  - Christian theology is contradictory, confusing and incomprehensible to everyone, including the leaders of the Church
  - Christian dogma has led to wars, hatred and division in the faith
- 3. Fanaticism
  - **Fanaticism is superstition taken to extremes**— it is the antithesis of reason.
  - **Fanaticism is like a disease of the mind and it is infectious, destroying the body of society if left to run its course.**
  - St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre of protestants in France is the example.
  - Remedy= philosophical spirit of reason and inquiry
- 4. Thomas Paine rejected (1) the creed of the Christian Church (and all other faiths (2) rejected the story of the 10 commandments and religion as source of moral authority (3) rejected the story of virgin birth, resurrection of Jesus (4) rejected all supernatural elements of Biblical stories as nonsense. Only accepted what could be proved or reasoned.
- 5. **d'Holbach believed religion was used by the powerful to keep people fearful and obedient.** "Ignorance and servitude are calculated to make men wicked and unhappy". To discover the true principles of morality (right v. wrong) you need only apply common sense (reason), not theology. Ignorance leads to unhappiness while enlightenment leads to understanding and a meaningful existence.

# Epistemology and Education Section 4

- Philosophes sought a naturalistic understanding of the human condition; explainable by natural law.
- Philosophes believed that education could be used to shape an enlightened person and engineer a better world.
- **Cultivation of the intellect is the responsibility of the individual.**



# John Locke

## Essay Concerning Human Understanding

- Human mind is a blank slate, tabula rasa; people are neither good nor bad, they are born with a blank slate, education and experience shapes the individual.
- Experience informs the mind and educates the man.
- **Experience + Reason=Ideas!**
- Process of acquiring knowledge
  - Senses inform the brain of perceptions of things
  - Reflection
  - Constant repetition of sensory input and reflection on ideas leads to knowledge.**Experience is the basis for all human understanding!**



# Claude Helvetius (1715-1777)

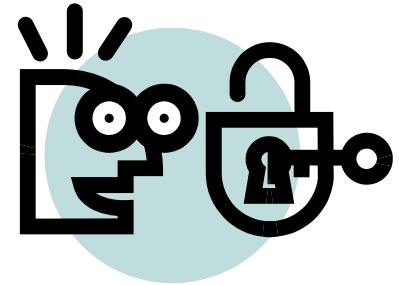
- French-German
- Environment shapes the human mind; **nurture over nature!**
- **Human beings are malleable and perfectible; moral and intellectual growth depends on proper conditioning.**
- “Education makes us what we are”
- **Genius is common, the circumstances to unfold it are rare.**  
Many are called but few are chosen.





# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions Section 4



- 1. The senses inform the brain and deliver the data obtainable in the environment while reflection represents the mind analyzing its own processes. We experience directly through the senses and indirectly through reflection.
- 2. It is similar, but not the same. (1) Descartes believes that the mind is imprinted with logical relationships, mathematical principles and specific concepts of shape and size that allow us to see order in the world. This is independent of experience. (2) Locke believes that these sorts of principles are gained as a result of experience. Further, Descartes sees the human mind as being already formed, while Locke sees it as a blank slate ready for experience to shape and develop.
- 3. Human nature is neither good nor bad, but is malleable and changeable; it can be engineered through education. Morality does not need religion; it can be taught.
- 4. Helvetius agrees with Locke and goes further, writing about the conditioning of the student for a proper education. He says that the circumstances will dictate the effectiveness of education; human beings are infinitely malleable and can be engineered to be enlightened intellectuals. **Nurture over nature, anyone can be turned into a genius although few are.**

# Sec. 5 Compendium of Knowledge

- Denis Diderot (1713-1784) writer, essayist, editor & philosophe
- Interested in science and technology, rejected superstition and ignorance; wanted to empower the individual with knowledge.
- Published the first Encyclopedia (1772); collected submissions from all the major philosophes of the era! Wikipedia of its day!
- Was condemned by the Pope for teaching unauthorized doctrines and challenging the authority of the church.
- Diderot and the other Enlightenment thinkers won the battle for the minds of Europeans as the church and state lost some of their moral authority and influence!



# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions Section 5

- 1. (1) The publication of the Encyclopedia put the knowledge of the world into the hands of regular people, empowering individuals (2) spread Enlightenment ideas that challenged and ultimately replaced those of the old order (3) provided a framework for the mass cultivation of intellect and the further civilization of the masses.
- 2. (1) in the section on Government, the purpose of government, the use of the laws of nature and reason in promoting liberty (2) In the section on political authority Diderot spreads the ideas of Locke concerning liberty, political association and private property in the social contract.
- 3. Freedom of the press allows for the free exchange of ideas. Any limitation or censorship of material would reduce the scope of the intellectual discourse. An enlightened society is one where there is a free market of ideas and a free exchange of opinion. The freedom of the press and the elimination of censorship enlightens and empowers humanity.



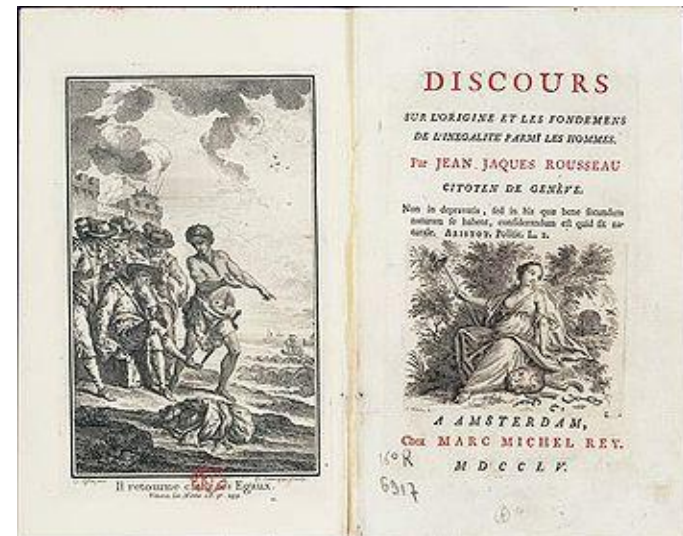
# Primary Sources Section 6 Political Reform

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) political philosophe who perfected the concept of Social Contract
- Question: How can humanity be made moral and free? A: by emulating the polis of Ancient Greece (Athens), a small, state populated by enlightened citizens.
- Authored “The Social Contract” (1762) to explain his plan for the foundation of political liberty.
- Thesis: A just and moral society can elevate, enlighten and empower the individual. The environment for enlightenment is key to achieving it!



# Rousseau and the Social Contract

- Objective of Social Contract– to find a **form of association that will defend using the common force the rights and property of the individuals in that association.**
- Rousseau believes that the interest in the common good should prevail over private gain. We are elevated when we care for the larger community over our private interests.
- Rousseau objected to political factions, which would divide the body politic and the community. He said “there should be no partial society within the state . . .”



# Primary Sources Assessment

## Questions 6

- 1. **The general will is a plainly visible truth that is easily observed using reason and common sense.** The general will is always right and is always best for the community. Since the general will is good for all, it is also good for individuals, who are transformed into enlightened people by bowing to the general will. **The general will is the guiding principle upon which the state is run and it is that to which the civil population is dedicated.**
- 2. Critics have opposing views of Rousseau:
  - **Pro-democracy:** advocates the greater good over the community, the liberty of the people.
  - **Pro-dictatorship:** hates political parties, opposition to the state and favors almost absolute authority by the sovereign ruler (as long as he follows general will in the social contract)



# Primary Sources Section 7

## Humanitarianism

- 1. Beccaria says torture leads to false confessions and is an unreliable source of information.
- 2. Beccaria's arguments against torture echo the Enlightenment attacks on any violation of human dignity or the natural rights of man. Cruel torture is obviously a violation of the natural rights of man, as is the death penalty.
- 3. Abuses John Howard found in British prisons:
  - Disease, Lack of Sanitation
  - Lack of Food, starvation
  - Hard labor (forced)
  - Lack of medical care
  - No potable water
  - Crowded, filthy conditions
  - Mentally ill housed in prisons, no treatment
  - Moral Depravity (crime, violence)

# Primary Sources Section 8: Critiques of European Society

- Criticism in the Enlightenment purview is necessary for identifying problems to be rectified.
- Criticism often took the form of satire.
- Critics of European society were intent on changing the attitude of cultural superiority on the part of Europeans and making them more amenable to change.
- Philosophes are interested in engineering a better world for humanity, one rooted in natural law.





# Voltaire & Diderot

## Critics of European Culture

- Voltaire's "Candide"-work of literature that expresses the criticism of European society
- **"The best of all possible worlds" famous phrase from book, expressed philosophical optimism, which Enlightenment philosophes rejected.**
- Criticized European societal attitudes regarding the superiority of European culture.
- Denis Diderot "Supplement to the Voyage of Bouganville"—work of literature that criticized European cultural attitudes, especially relating to other peoples.
- **Diderot criticized and rejected European Imperialism, Colonization, and the exploitation of non-Europeans, who in the Enlightened view were fellow human beings with natural rights.**
- Took the view that European culture was diseased, contradictory and evil in the treatment of non-Europeans.

# Montesquieu and Swift

## Critics of European Society

- Montesquieu—"The Persian Letters"  
anonymous work published in Holland, attacks French Absolutism, praises English parliamentary government and attacks religious persecution
- Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) social satirist, wrote Gulliver's Travels (1726), which criticized humanity and human systems in general, taking the view that humanity is not as lofty and advanced as it thinks.

# Primary Sources Section 8 Assessment Questions

- 1. Voltaire believes that human existence is improvable, that the quality of human life can be improved and that acceptance of things as unchangeable is ludicrous. The way to promote change is through honest inquiry and criticism, purposeful and honest work and the deliberate pursuit of virtue (that which is good) on a continual basis.
- 2. Diderot used the less constrained and naturalistic behavior of the Tahitians to criticize the overly rigid, Christian morality and prudish behavior of the Europeans and their culture, p.430, criticizing European concepts of ownership, the abuses of colonialism, European consumerism, excessive work and the relative harshness and unhappiness in European life.
- 3. According to Diderot, **(1) Europeans introduced venereal disease** that sickened Tahitians. Diderot said **(2) Christian missionaries introduced shame and guilt** on the Tahitian people, teaching them to be ashamed of their bodies and ashamed to be the human beings they are. Diderot argues that **(3) this is against natural law and violates the natural dignity of human beings, so of what value is this Christian morality? It is of no value at all and is destructive to the natural dignity of man.**
- 4. Montesquieu characterizes the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitors as religious buffoons who presume guilt and utilize nonsensical “evidence” of a superstitious nature, while accepting testimony from people of higher social class as true and correct. Montesquieu says that the holy religion brought by the angels trusts truth alone for its defense, and does not need these violent means for its preservation. If it truly was worthy, no violence would be necessary.

# Jonathan Swift (1667-1745)

- 5. Jonathan Swift said that war is often caused by ambition, corruption, difference of opinion, religious differences, an imbalance of power, greed, jealousy, alliance; almost any reason except a rational reason! Swift implies that the outcome for people in this context is never good. War is really fought by the common people for the sole benefit of the aristocracy and the elites.
- 6. Swift's view of law, lawyers and judges is very negative. Swift believed that law caused the ruin of people. Lawyers do not use reason to arrive at truth, but "proving by words multiplied for the purpose that white is black and black is white . . . according to as they are paid." Judges are lawyers grown old and lazy, biased against truth. Precedent is used to ensure that decisions made against reason stand forever. The law (man made law) is a tool to keep men down, dehumanize individuals and strip humanity of the natural rights accorded under natural law, the supreme everlasting law.
- 7. The Yahoos, according to Swift, are vicious, disgusting human beings with no rational sense employed in menial service at the behest of superiors. This is how he views the common population of England and by extension the bulk of humanity. Swift always claimed that human beings were not the paragons of virtue and reason they claimed to be. His view of humanity is darker and the need for humanity to improve itself is evident.