

1

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

When the terrible Thirty Years War had only just begun, a young man took up a private struggle, a fearful struggle, of his own. This young man, named René Descartes, had joined the army of Duke Maximilian of Bavaria. The duke was fighting on the side of the German emperor, Ferdinand I, against Protestant forces in Bohemia. A devout Catholic, Descartes was filled with doubt, but not about his faith. Instead, he wondered how he could know the truth about the world, whether what he sensed and experienced was really true or not. He even wondered how, apart from faith, anyone could know if God exists.

The Troubled Philosopher

Descartes was born in 1596 at La Haye, in the region of Touraine in southern France. As a boy, he studied at the Jesuit school of Henri-Le-Grand at La Flèche. During his eight years at the school, Descartes studied Latin and Greek, mathematics, and other classical studies. But the subject he loved most was mathematics.

Though he was a sickly youth, Descartes's physical weakness did not hinder him from continuing his studies. In 1613, at the age of 17, Descartes entered the University of Poitiers, where he earned his law degree three years later. But Descartes did not want to be a lawyer; instead, he longed for military glory and so became a soldier.

While serving as a soldier in Bavaria, Descartes continued to study mathematics and another subject he deeply loved, philosophy. But philosophy introduced him to some troubling questions. How can man come to the truth, he asked himself? How can man know he has come to the truth? These questions deeply troubled Descartes. Only by answering them could he hope to find peace.

Burning for answers to his questions, Descartes shut himself up in what he called a "stove" (probably a small, well-heated room) and prayed for "light." Throughout his life, he had found joy in the study of mathematics, for mathematics offered certain truth. And it was in contemplating how mathematicians come to their conclusions that, on November 10, 1619, Descartes said he found "light."

René Descartes, by Frans Hals



Mathematicians, he knew, begin with very simple, clearly understood concepts and, by deduction, arrive at certain conclusions. In a flash of inspiration, Descartes thought he discovered that if a philosopher followed the mathematical method in any subject, he could find certain truth. In thanksgiving for this discovery, Descartes vowed to make a pilgrimage to the Holy House shrine of Our Lady at Loreto in Italy—a vow he fulfilled in 1624.

Descartes's Method

Jubilee: a holy year proclaimed by the pope, usually every 25 years, in which pilgrims to Rome receive special graces

After visiting Loreto, Descartes remained in Italy for the **Jubilee** of 1625 and then returned to France. Upon settling in Paris, he found that city life distracted him from thinking; and so, in 1628, he moved to Holland. There, in solitude, he hoped he could continue to develop his philosophical ideas and pursue studies in mathematics and natural science. While in Holland, Descartes wrote his *Discourse on Method*—a book he finished in 1629 but did not publish for another eight years.

In the *Discourse*, Descartes described how, beginning in the darkness of doubt, he had come to the light of truth. The truths we think we know, he wrote, are nothing but “prejudices” we learn as children. Only when we realize this, he said, can we understand that we must doubt anything and everything we think we know. “All things must be doubted,” declared Descartes.

But how do we finally escape doubt? We escape doubt, said Descartes, by realizing that only a thinking being can have doubt, for doubt is a thought. Moreover, if I am a thinking being, Descartes continued, I must also exist; for, how could I think if I did not exist? This was the “light” Descartes was seeking—*cogito ergo sum*—“I think, therefore I am.” He had proven his own existence. Everything was not an illusion!

Once he discovered that he existed, Descartes came to other conclusions. One of his thoughts, he noted, was of a perfectly good being, of God—and where does such an idea come from? Descartes knew that such a thought could not come from himself, for he was not perfectly good. But from what, then? Descartes concluded that the idea of God could come only from God himself and, therefore, God must exist. And if God exists and is perfectly good, he cannot lie. Therefore, said Descartes, everything I feel, hear, taste, and see must also exist. From understanding that he himself existed, and that God exists, Descartes concluded that the world outside himself also exists.

Using his method, Descartes decided that the human soul is very different from the rest of the world. Only the human soul is free, said Descartes; only human beings have free will, because the human mind and will are not material. The material world, however, and the human body itself, are not free but operate according to fixed and eternal laws that cannot be broken or changed. The material world, said Descartes, is like a vast machine, set in motion by God. But once God set the world in motion, it continued like a machine without any help from God. Descartes said that God gave the universe its first push, but then left it to run on its own and all by itself.

Descartes thought his method would be helpful to the Catholic Faith by proving the existence of God. But his philosophy actually helped bring about a revolution in European thought. By describing the universe as a machine that operated without God's help, Descartes undermined the Catholic belief in Divine Providence—that God not only created the world but continually keeps it in existence and cares for human beings and all creation. Descartes's **mechanistic** view of the universe, too, did not offer any place for miracles. So it was that most Catholics came to reject Descartes's philosophy. In 1663 (13 years after Descartes's death), the Holy Office placed his works on the **Index of Forbidden Books**.

mechanistic: working like a machine

Index of Forbidden Books: the list of those books the Church considered dangerous to the Catholic Faith and forbade Catholics to read

But the Church's condemnation of Descartes's works did not stop the spread of his ideas. They would continue to influence many in France and all Europe. Though Descartes did not wish it, his philosophy opened the way for *rationalism* and *skepticism*, two doctrines that would undermine the influence of the Catholic Faith and give rise to our modern world.

Skeptics and Libertines

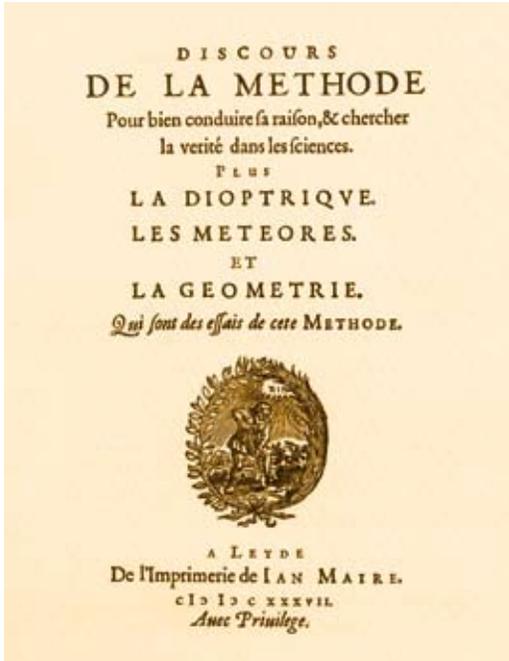
Descartes had not been the first one in his time to doubt if he knew anything—though, maybe, he was the only one who went so far as to doubt even his own existence.

Indeed, Descartes expressed what other philosophers of his age were thinking. These philosophers, called **skeptics**, thought no one, no matter how hard he tried, could come to a certain knowledge of truth. One must doubt everything that people think to be true, said the skeptics, because no one can be certain that what he thinks is true.

Before coming up with his method, Descartes had been a skeptic; he thought his method had saved him from remaining a skeptic. Descartes's method, however, could not overcome skepticism, for not everyone found the method convincing. In fact, by encouraging people to begin their thinking by doubting everything, Descartes was encouraging skepticism.

It would be wrong, however, to blame skepticism on Descartes alone. Europe had long been prepared for it. Indeed, the roots of skepticism go far back into the 14th century, when the Church began to lose the respect of the peoples of Christendom. The Renaissance further weakened devotion to the Church, and then came the Reformation. The Protestant doctrine of private interpretation of Sacred Scripture produced several different versions of the “true religion.” All Europeans no longer acknowledged one church as the source of the truths of the Faith, and this led some to wonder if anyone could come to certain knowledge of religious truth. It was not long before people began to think there was no religious truth at all.

The new interest in experimental science in the 17th century also encouraged a skeptical spirit. It was not that experimental science itself made men skeptics—not at all. Rather, it was because the new scientists began their studies by doubting anything that had not been proven by experiment. Other men besides natural scientists themselves not only began doubting, but never stopped doubting. Nothing can be known for certain, said these thinkers; and because nothing can be known for certain, everyone should be allowed to think or even say openly what he thinks without fear of being silenced or punished by church or state. Because these skeptical thinkers thus called for freedom of thought and expression, they became known as **libertines** and, later, “freethinkers.” Some libertines called for freedom of thought as well as freedom from the moral law. Thus, the 17th century saw the rise not only



Title page of the first edition of René Descartes' *Discours de la Methode*, Leyden, 1637

skeptic: one who advocates *skepticism*, the doubt that anything can be known for certain to be true

libertine: a freethinker, or one who acts without regard to a moral law

of intellectual, but moral libertines—people who thought they could ignore what the churches and social custom said was the proper way to behave.

In the 16th century, libertines and skeptics made up only a very small part of the population of Europe. They were found only in the upper classes and among intellectuals and writers. The vast majority of Europe's population continued to follow the teachings of their religion and to acknowledge the moral law, even if they did not always obey it. But though this would remain the case throughout the 17th century and into the 18th century, the number of skeptics and libertines continued to grow and threaten the civilization of Christendom.

A New “Religion”

As we have said already, Descartes himself saw his method of philosophy as a help to the Christian faith. Others agreed with him, and even faithful Catholics began to adopt Descartes's method. Others thinkers, however, thought Descartes's philosophy made it easy to reject the Christian God. Since Descartes's ideas had made God unnecessary for the day-to-day running of the universe, some people thought they did not have to pay attention to God. If God did not change things in the universe, praying to him is useless, they said. So it was that many followers of Descartes just ignored God, or they came up with ideas of God that differed radically from the Christian teaching about God.

It was in England that a new idea of God took strong hold. Tired of the doctrinal fights between Protestants and Catholics, and between the different Protestant sects, some English intellectuals began to look for a new religion to replace the Christian Faith. The new religion would admit only the existence of God, but not of a God who intervened by his providence in the affairs of the world. The God of the new religion would be the God of Newton's science and Descartes's philosophy—the God who set the machine of the universe in motion and left it alone to continue moving by the laws of nature.

This religion, known as *Deism*, was the religious side of rationalism. Because rationalists thought reason is the only judge of what is true, they said reason must judge religion as well as science. So it was that Deists, while accepting Jesus Christ as a great ethical teacher, did not acknowledge him to be God. Deists thought beliefs such as the Incarnation or the Trinity were irrational. Nor did they accept the resurrection and virgin birth of Jesus, or the possibility of miracles. Such things could never occur, said the Deists, in a world that operates according to unchanging laws.

Those who accepted Deism were not necessarily moral libertines. They did not reject the moral law but held that it had to be rational. Human beings, said the Deists, do not learn how they ought to behave by receiving any divine revelation, but by using their reason to come to a better understanding of the laws of nature. For Deists, in fact, the moral law was the only truly important aspect of religion. Deists did not want formal worship services or a church structure, for they thought such things were irrational. True religion, said the Deists, required men to worship God by living a moral life.

Some Deistic thinkers did not reject the Christian Faith outright; they thought it was a useful tool for controlling the common people. Only educated freethinkers should be allowed to be Deists, they said; everyone else needs to be controlled by means of established churches.

The God most Deists accepted was a spiritual being utterly separate from the universe he created—and that, after its creation, he abandoned. This God was like

a watchmaker who, having made a watch and wound it, left it alone to operate by itself. Other rationalist thinkers, however, came to different conclusions about God. One of these thinkers was Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza, who was born in 1632 to a Jewish family in Amsterdam, Holland. As a youth he discovered the new rationalist and scientific philosophy, which led him to reject many of the teachings of Judaism. In 1656, the leaders of his synagogue in Amsterdam excommunicated Spinoza for “abominable heresies that he practices and teaches.”

Cut off from his people and his past, Spinoza made his living from grinding and polishing lenses. His main occupation, however, was philosophy. In 1670, he began to publish his “abominable heresies” in a work called the *Theological-Political Treatise*. In this work he argued that, because religion is a purely private affair, the state should tolerate the beliefs and practices of all religions. This was a radical idea in a time when governments protected religion and punished heresy. Even the Dutch, though they offered freedom of religion, were still deeply Calvinist and so were shocked by Spinoza’s claim. More shocking still, though, was Spinoza’s claim that one had to accept only the Bible’s moral teachings; everything else in the Bible could be rejected as false. Even worse was Spinoza’s opinion that religion had nothing to do with truth, and anyone looking for truth should turn instead to philosophy.

But Spinoza’s most radical ideas were to be found in his *Ethics Demonstrated In The Manner of Geometry*, which was published after his death in 1677. In this work, Spinoza, like Descartes, said the material universe works like a machine, according to unalterable laws. Unlike Descartes, however, Spinoza said the mind is material and so is not free. Mind and matter in the universe, said Spinoza, are really one thing, and that is God. The universe is God, and the natural laws by which the universe runs are the will of God.

Such rationalist and Deistic ideas could powerfully shake and finally destroy the faith of religious souls. An example of this is Pierre Bayle, who was born in 1647 at the foot of the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France. Though a **Huguenot** minister, Pierre’s father sent him to a Jesuit college at Toulouse. Pierre’s father probably regretted this, for, impressed by his teachers, Pierre decided to enter the Catholic Church. He even tried to convert his father and brothers to the Catholic Faith; but Pierre was so unsuccessful in converting his family that he himself converted back to Huguenotism. Fearing that the French government would punish Pierre for abandoning the Catholic Faith, his father sent him to Calvinist Geneva (in western Switzerland), where he was certain Pierre’s faith could not again be shaken.

If the Geneva Calvinists kept Pierre Bayle safe from Catholicism, they could not shield him from doubts about religion. For, at Geneva, Bayle discovered the works of Descartes and began to doubt not only Calvinism, but the Christian Faith itself.

Having completed his studies, Bayle served as a tutor and then as a professor at a Calvinist seminary in France. When France’s king, Louis XIV, closed the seminary in 1681, Bayle sought refuge at Rotterdam in Holland. There he became a professor of history and philosophy.

The years 1661 to 1665 were a particularly bitter time for the French Huguenots. Since 1598, when France’s King Henri IV issued the Edict of Nantes guaranteeing them religious liberty, the Huguenots had prospered in France. But France, united under one king and one law, needed also to be united under one religion—or so

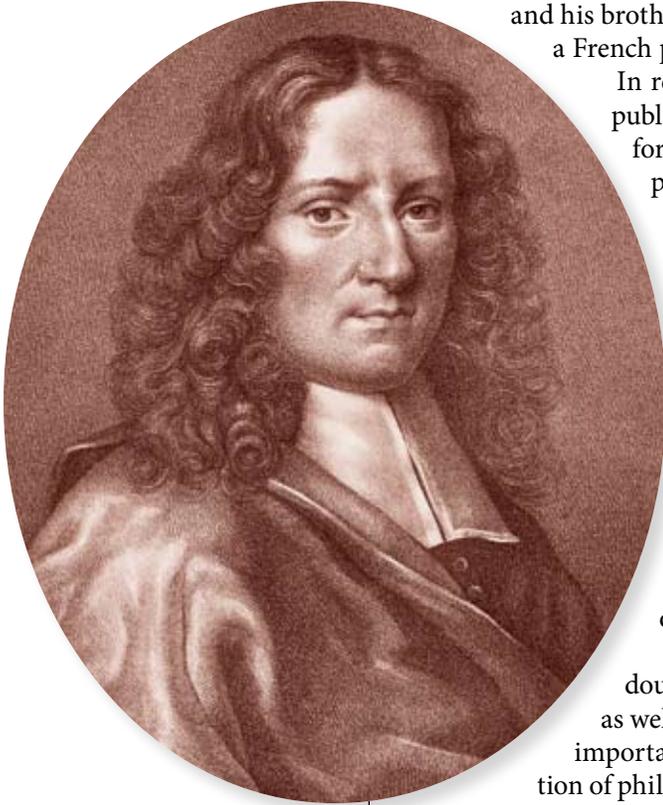


Baruch Spinoza, by Samuel van Hoogstraaten, ca. 1650

Huguenot: a French Protestant who accepted Calvinist beliefs

revoke: to annul, to take back, to rescind

thought King Louis XIV. To bring about religious unity in his kingdom, Louis in 1661 began repressing Protestantism there. Over the next four years, Huguenots suffered bitterly, and thousands fled France to other lands, especially England and Holland. Finally, on October 17, 1685, King Louis XIV **revoked** the Edict of Nantes. From then on, any Huguenot who refused to stop practicing his faith in public could be imprisoned. Huguenots who became Catholic but then returned to Calvinism could be put to death. Bayle's family underwent harsh sufferings during this period. On account of the persecutions, Bayle lost his mother and father, and his brother died in 1685 from the cruel treatments inflicted on him in a French prison.



Pierre Bayle

In response to the persecution of the Huguenots, Bayle in 1686 published a work in which he called for religious tolerance, even for Jews, Muslims, and Catholics, and condemned all religious persecution. Because Bayle argued that no religion really expresses any truth, some accused him of being an atheist.

Whether he was an atheist or not, Bayle was certainly a religious skeptic. This skepticism inspired him to write his most important work, *The Historical and Critical Dictionary*, which he began publishing in Rotterdam in 1696. The *Dictionary* was not a dictionary as we understand it—a catalogue of words and their meanings. It was more like an encyclopedia, offering a collection of articles on history and historical and biblical figures, theology, ethics, geography, mythology, literature, and philosophy. In this work, Bayle did not directly attack religion, yet he gave arguments that could move readers to doubt the truth of Scripture or question religious authorities.

Bayle's *Dictionary* was a powerful tool in spreading skeptical doubt. In Holland, France, Germany, and England, intellectuals as well as refined gentlemen and ladies eagerly read it. Bayle's chief importance, however, lies in the influence he had on the next generation of philosophers, the major figures of what has become known as the "Enlightenment." Men like the French thinkers Diderot, Montesquieu, and Voltaire read the *Dictionary* and took inspiration from it. For this reason, Pierre Bayle has become known as the "Father of the Enlightenment."

The Rise of Liberalism

It is probably not surprising that the Englishman Thomas Hobbes was timid and fearful all his life. He was born prematurely on April 5, 1588, after his mother became frightened by news of the Spanish Armada. His father, an Anglican minister, abandoned Thomas, his mother, and two siblings when Thomas was still a child. Such experiences could well make one timorous and pessimistic in later life.

Following his father's flight, young Hobbes and his siblings were raised by a well-off uncle. At age 4, Hobbes himself was sent to a church school and then attended a private school. At the age of 15, he entered Magdalen College, at Oxford University, where he studied the Greek and Latin classics and ignored philosophy. After graduating at age 20, Hobbes served as a tutor to William Cavendish, the second Earl of Devonshire, and then for a time as secretary to Francis Bacon.

Was it his timidity that moved Hobbes, at the age of 52, to flee England for France? Hobbes was a staunch supporter of King Charles I of England against the

king's Puritan enemies in Parliament. In 1640 (even before the Great Rebellion against the king broke out), Hobbes decided France was a safer place for royalists than England. In France he met French thinkers and read Descartes. For two years he served as tutor to the Prince of Wales, Charles II—who, with other English royalists, was in exile in France after the Great Rebellion.

Hobbes's timid disposition, however, did not stop him from writing a work that could have gotten him into a good deal of trouble—and almost did. This work, published in 1651, was called *The Leviathan, or the Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil*. The word *Leviathan* in the title refers to the leviathan of Scripture—a fearsome serpent that lives in the depths of the sea. *Leviathan* is a fitting name for this work, for it comes to conclusions that most readers would find very terrible. After the publication of this book, though Hobbes became a celebrity in England and Europe, he was widely criticized. At one point, Anglican bishops in England's Parliament wanted to burn him as a heretic. That might have been Hobbes's fate; but his former pupil, Charles II, then reigning as king, decided to protect him.

Despite, or because of, the attacks against it, Hobbes's *Leviathan* was an influential work. In both England and the European continent, it influenced some of the leading intellectuals of the late 17th century, including Pierre Bayle—the Father of the Enlightenment—himself. It was Bayle who called Thomas Hobbes “one the greatest geniuses” of his time.

Leviathan

Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* is a dark work that presents a very pessimistic view of human nature. According to Hobbes, a human being is merely a kind of machine, lacking both an immaterial soul and a free will. Left to themselves, people will do only what pleases them without thinking about morality. According to *Leviathan*, at one time people were left entirely to themselves—a time Hobbes called the “state of nature.” In the state of nature, people had no “notions of right or wrong, justice or injustice,” said Hobbes, and life was “a war of every man against every man.”

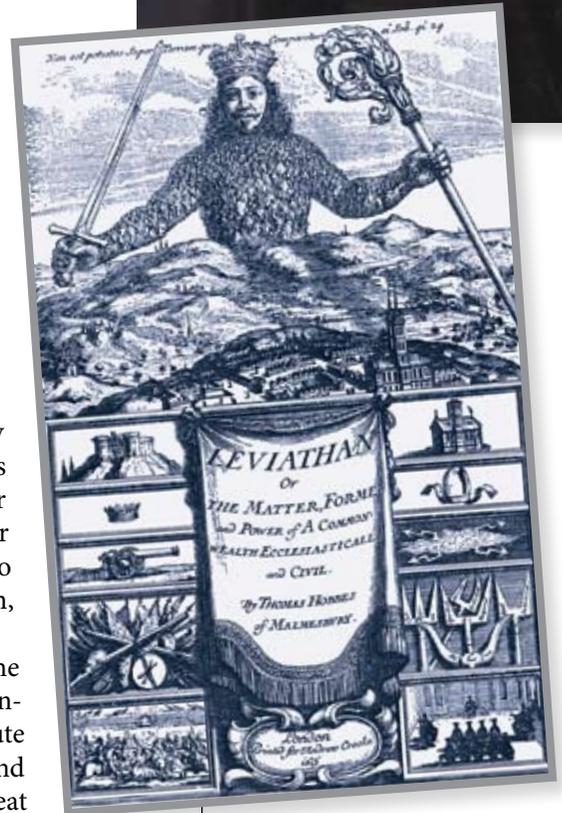
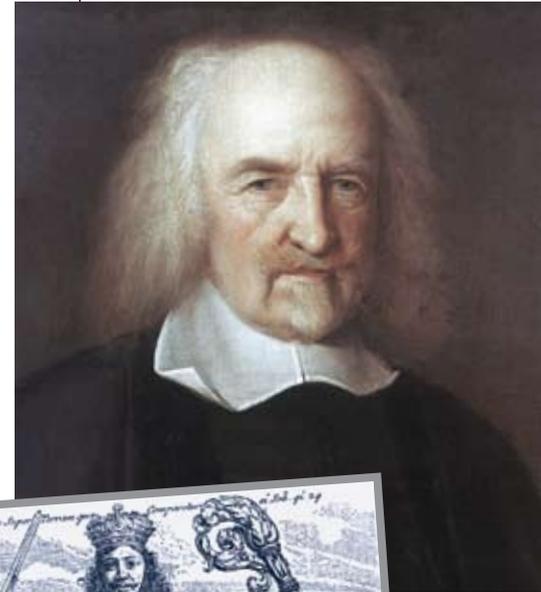
So terrible was the state of nature, said Hobbes, that people decided to escape it by banding together under a common government. To defend themselves against strong and cruel men, they made a “social contract” with a sovereign ruler. They gave up to this ruler all the freedoms they enjoyed in the state of nature in return for peace and security. The social contract gave this ruler absolute power over his subjects and allowed him to do whatever he needed to do to keep order. His subjects were never allowed to disobey or resist him, but must obey him in every particular.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes said the purpose of religion is to help the sovereign ruler keep order. Religion is the servant of the government, according to Hobbes, and must remain under the absolute control of the sovereign, who even can tell people how to worship and what to believe. For Hobbes, the state, or as he called it, “that great LEVIATHAN,” holds unlimited sway both over what belongs to man and what belongs to God.

The Social Contract and Freedom

Thomas Hobbes was not the last philosopher to talk about a state of nature. Many other political philosophers were saying there was a time when individuals lived

Thomas Hobbes, by John Michael Wright



Engraved frontispiece to the first edition of Hobbes's *Leviathan*, 1651

divine right of kings: the doctrine held by some Christians that God places kings on their thrones and gives them absolute power in their kingdoms



John Locke, by Herman Verelst, 1689

meteorology: the science that deals with the atmosphere, with weather and predicting weather

completely free, without law and without any connections to one another. But while some political philosophers agreed with Hobbes that a social contract can give governments unlimited power and control over individuals, other thinkers thought a social contract actually protects the freedoms citizens enjoy.

The foremost defender of the idea of freedom in the late 17th century was an Englishman named John Locke. Locke was 16 years old when Parliament executed King Charles I, who believed in the **divine right of kings** to hold absolute power in government. Locke's father was a small landowner and attorney, as well as a strict Puritan, who had fought with the "Roundhead" forces of Parliament against Charles I. Following in his father's footsteps, Locke was himself a convinced Puritan and Roundhead.

Having entered Christ College, Oxford, in 1652, Locke was a student during Oliver Cromwell's rule of England. Before long, however, Locke found himself at odds with the radical Puritans at Oxford, who did not tolerate people of any other religion. Because of this experience, Locke became a champion of religious liberty and tolerance. Locke continued at Oxford after earning his Masters degree in 1658, and he became a lecturer there.

At Oxford, Locke studied chemistry and **meteorology** and decided on medicine as a profession. During this period, he read Descartes and discovered a new interest—philosophy. After leaving Oxford, Locke got involved with people the government thought were dangerous. In 1683, to escape arrest for treason, Locke fled to Holland, where he joined other English political exiles. Holland at the time was the refuge for all sorts of freethinkers and literary men (including Pierre Bayle). In Holland, Locke's writings first appeared in print in a journal dedicated to radical ideas.

While in Holland, Locke joined other English exiles in support of William, the prince of Orange, and his invasion of England in November 1688. More than a year after William's "Glorious Revolution" drove King James II from the English throne, Locke returned to England—on the very ship that carried William's wife, Princess Mary, who was to share the rule of England, Scotland, and Ireland with her husband.

One of John Locke's most important works, the *Two Treatises on Government*, was published in London in 1690. He had written the work, he said, to "establish the throne of our great restorer, the present King William, to make good his title in the consent of the people."

In his *Two Treatises*, Locke—like Hobbes—said that mankind originally lived in a state of nature in which individuals were completely free to do as they saw fit. Each person in the state of nature possessed three natural rights, according to Locke—goods that no one could justly take from him. These were life, liberty (one's ability to do what seems good to him), and property (land or other material goods needed for maintaining life and exercising one's liberty.) Unlike Hobbes, however, Locke said that in the state of nature human beings followed a moral law, a "natural law," that required them to respect the rights of others. Locke did not think that people in the state of nature were always cruel, selfish creatures, but he did think that their rights were not entirely secure. They always faced the threat of losing their life, liberty, or property to the more powerful and unscrupulous among them.

To secure their rights, said Locke, individuals made a social contract with each other and formed the state or "commonwealth." In doing so, individuals agreed to

give up only some of their liberties (but not liberty itself) in order to preserve their life and property. The commonwealth, in turn, said Locke, is bound by natural law to respect life, liberty, and property—but, especially, property. “The great and chief end . . . of men uniting into commonwealths and putting themselves under government,” wrote Locke, “is the preservation of property.”

In emphasizing the right to property, Locke was speaking for his social class—the English merchants and businessmen who formed the Whig party in English politics. The Whigs had led the “Glorious Revolution,” placing William of Orange on the throne of England and establishing Parliament as the supreme power in England. For Locke, this situation was perfectly right and proper. Though he did not reject **monarchy** as a form of government, Locke said that the government most likely to protect property is a government controlled by the majority of the free citizens, who rule through a representative assembly, such as Parliament. Further, said Locke, whenever a government violates the rights of individuals, the citizens have the right to overthrow that government and establish a new one in its place.

Just as Isaac Newton had convinced the scientific world that the universe is a material machine, operating according to fixed laws of motion, so Locke provided a theory of government that has become the basis of most political thinking from his time to our own. In doing so, Locke laid the foundations of the system of political thought called Liberalism.

What Is Liberalism?

Before we say what Liberalism is, we must say what it is not. Liberalism is not simply those political ideas held by the people and political parties we today call “liberal.” In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries, Liberalism had a much broader meaning. Indeed, many of those we call “conservative” in our time would have been called “Liberals” in those earlier centuries.

Liberalism, as it developed in the 17th and 18th centuries, was a political and social philosophy that emphasized the freedom of individuals to follow their own desires in their social, religious, and economic life. To the Liberal way of thinking, human beings by nature are individuals who live unconnected to anyone and have no obligation to obey anyone. Since by nature, every person is born completely free, every person is equal to every other person. In the state of nature, no one has a superior who may tell him what to do.

To the Liberal thinker, government exists to make sure that every person may exercise his rights with as much freedom as possible. Indeed, this was why people left the state of nature—because in the state of nature, they could not exercise their rights securely. But, according to Liberalism, no one enters society to become unfree. They certainly give up some of their freedoms when they enter society, but they still want to achieve their own personal goals. So, according to the Liberal way of thinking, society and government exist so that each person can attain the goals he sets for himself without, however, harming the rights of other individuals. As in the state of nature, so in society: individuals first and foremost work for themselves, for their own private benefit. The function of government is to make sure everyone may work for himself and his interests without hindering other individuals from working for themselves and their interests.

Catholic thinkers in the Middle Ages had arrived at very different conclusions about the individual and the society he lives in. To the medieval mind, human beings are persons who are made by God to live in society with others. Only in society, in fact, can people achieve the “common good,” which is the best good for man. The common good includes the ability to obtain the things that sustain life, such as food and shelter, but it is much more than that. Finally, the common good includes

monarchy: government by a monarch or ruler—a king, queen, or emperor

peace, wisdom, virtue, and, ultimately, the greatest common good of all: everlasting union with God in heaven. The common good includes those good things everyone needs to live a fully human life. It is *common* because all share the common good together.

Liberals tended to think of government as a necessary evil—if we could live without it, we would. But the medieval ideal said that government is a positive good. It does not exist just to keep individuals from hurting one another but to help form the type of society where everyone can together achieve what is necessary to make him fully human.

Medieval thinkers thought governments were supposed to help people achieve the greatest of all goods—eternal life. Because of this, medieval thinkers held that rulers had to protect and foster the one true religion by actively supporting the mission of the Church, on the one hand, and fighting immorality and heresy, on the other. Medieval rulers did not think false religions should have full public freedom; to the medieval mind, false religions threatened the common good of society by spreading error. Religious error, it was believed, kept men from achieving the common goods of truth and virtue. It ultimately destroyed the very purpose of human society.

Because Liberals tended to deny that religions teach truth, they treated religion as if it were just a matter of private opinion. Governments, said the Liberals, should not be in the business of forcing one group's private opinions on other people. Liberals, therefore, insisted that governments should permit freedom of thought and expression. Individuals should be permitted to speak and to publish their opinions, no matter what they were.

Believing as they did in freedom of thought, not all Liberals held the same set of ideas. Some thought that individuals gave up their liberty entirely when they formed a social contract; others, like Locke, insisted that people gave up only some of their liberties but not others. Some Liberals spoke of a right to revolution, while others said that no one had the right to resist the power of government.

Liberalism was in some ways a very mixed bag of ideas, and Liberal freedoms often were applied quite selectively. But a common thread of all Liberal thought was to replace the idea of the common good with the ideal of individual liberty. The only just society, according to Liberals, is one that allows the individual the greatest scope to achieve his personal goals and desires.

The “Enlightenment”

On September 1, 1715, King Louis XIV of France died. With his passing, the “Great Century” (the age of Louis XIV) came to an end. During that monarch's reign, France became not only the most powerful nation in Europe but the undisputed leader of European culture. Throughout Europe, aristocrats took on French ways and spoke the French language. They built houses and public buildings in the French style, and the artists and writers they patronized imitated the patterns of French art and literature. Louis XIV may have been the most feared ruler in Europe, but he was also the most envied and imitated.

Louis XIV gave Europe the example of a successful absolute monarch. Believing as he did in the divine right of kings, he tried to bring every French institution under the control of the crown—including the Catholic Church in France. In Louis's mind, the Church had to do the king's bidding. Yet, even though Louis used the Church in France to advance his political goals, he was a true believer in the truths of the Catholic Faith. He fought against heresy in his dominions, using

a police force and the courts to crush opposition to the Church. Authors of heretical books, and even the readers of these books, could be imprisoned or condemned to serve in the galleys. In his personal life, Louis XIV attended to his devotions and even heard daily Mass as often as he could.

But Louis XIV was a contradictory character. Though devout, he appointed unfit men to serve as bishops in the French Church, and he himself lived an immoral life. And while he actively suppressed heresy and the spreading of anti-Catholic ideas in his kingdom, many of the nobles of his court were skeptics and moral libertines.

Not much changed under Louis XIV's successor, King Louis XV. Like his grandfather, the new king suppressed bad books and punished **dissenters** against the Church. Yet, despite these measures, anti-Catholic books continued to be published in France and were even promoted by government officials. Members of the nobility avidly read these books, while elegant ladies formed **salons** where Liberal and irreligious ideas were openly and enthusiastically discussed. Paris itself had Liberal discussion clubs, and societies in the **provincial** French towns offered lectures on the new ideas.

The Paris salons drew more than just aristocrats. Middle-class intellectuals who promoted Liberalism found their way into these gatherings, where they earned the friendship and support of the aristocracy. With the support of the ruling classes, these thinkers, called *philosophes* (or philosophers), spread **irreligion** and Liberalism into the middle class.

Among the Parisian *philosophes* was a notary's son who, by wit and cunning, became the age's greatest popularizer of Liberal thought, not only in France, but across Europe and even into Europe's American colonies. His name was François Marie Arouet, but he came to be known more commonly by his pen name—Voltaire.

“Crush the Infamous One!”

In the Paris salon of the Duchess of Maine, François-Marie Arouet began the literary career that would make him the most famous *philosophe* in Europe. The year was 1715, and Arouet had just returned to Paris from **The Hague** in the Netherlands. Arouet had mixed with aristocratic freethinkers before going to The Hague; for though he belonged to the middle class, his mother had friends among the nobility.

The duchess of Maine's salon was a distinguished one, but also quite dangerous for a young man like Arouet. The Duchess was a bitter enemy of the Duke of Orléans (the **regent** of King Louis XV, who in 1715 was still only a boy). Under the duchess's influence, Arouet wrote poems mocking the regent—a dangerous thing to do, as Arouet soon learned. Because of his **lampoons**, Arouet was forced to leave Paris in May 1716. Shortly afterward, he was allowed to return; but in 1717 he was arrested and sent to the **Bastille**. Some anonymous lampoons had surfaced, and the government thought Arouet had written them.

Arouet might have gotten on better if he had followed his father's advice and become a lawyer. But the young man loved literature, especially stage plays, and he was eager to earn fame as a writer. While in the Bastille, he spent his time working



King Louis XV of France, by Maurice Quentin de la Tour, 1748

dissenter: one who dissents or disagrees with the ideas of another

salon: a gathering of fashionable notables (such as artists, writers, thinkers, government leaders, and others) in the home of an important person

provincial: belonging to a province

irreligion: the state of being without religion

The Hague: a city in the Netherlands (in Dutch, *Den Haag*)

regent: one who governs a kingdom for a king or queen who is too young to govern. The reign of a regent is called a *regency*.

lampoon: a harsh, bitter literary piece that uses ridicule

Bastille: a fortress tower in Paris; used as a jail

speculation: the buying of property or goods in the hope of selling them at a higher price than when they were bought
creditor: someone to whom one owes money; someone who makes a loan to another person
chevalier: a title for a French nobleman. It means “knight.”



Portrait of Voltaire, by Nicholas de Largilliere

on two plays that he hoped to publish under a pen name he had chosen for himself—Arouet de Voltaire.

Voltaire saw the first of his plays performed at the Théâtre Français after his release from the Bastille in April 1718. The play was a great success. Other plays followed; some successful, others not. But Voltaire did not just rely on his plays and other literary works to make a living. Throughout his life, he engaged in financial **speculation** and investments. He courted aristocrats and used flattery to gain their favor. Voltaire eventually became a wealthy man—wealthier than many a nobleman whose favor he had sought in his younger days. Indeed, many of these noblemen, under heavy debt, would take loans from Voltaire to pay off their **creditors**.

Yet Voltaire, it seems, could not control his often bitter, sarcastic tongue. In 1725, he insulted an important noble, the **Chevalier** de Rohan, who had insulted *him*. Shortly afterward, several men attacked Voltaire and beat him with sticks while Rohan stood by, watching. This was an affront Voltaire could not ignore. He challenged Rohan to a duel, and the chevalier accepted. But on the morning of the duel, police arrested Voltaire and placed him in the Bastille. He remained there two weeks until, at his own request, he was sent from France to England.

The Playwright Becomes a Philosopher

During his stay in England (1726–1729), Voltaire discovered that English society differed in many ways from that of his native France. Unlike France, England offered freedom of religion, at least to Protestants, and the English government was far more tolerant of freethinking than was the government of Louis XV. And the government of England itself, in Voltaire’s mind, offered a superb model of how to keep order and preserve freedom at the same time.

England’s king was not all-powerful, as was the French king; Parliament, a government by representatives of at least *some* of the people, severely limited the power of the then reigning King George II. In England, Voltaire discovered the work of the English scientist Isaac Newton and the English philosopher John Locke. Voltaire came to think that Locke showed the way to remedy France’s political and religious “tyranny.”

Though Voltaire left France as a playwright, he returned as a philosopher. He continued to write poems and plays, but along with these he wrote commentaries on politics and, especially, works against religion. The first of these was *Philosophical Letters on the English*, published in 1732. In this work, Voltaire used his sharp wit to praise England’s government and toleration of religion while he attacked the French Church and state. When on June 10, 1734, the government of Louis XV condemned the *Philosophical Letters* and ordered its author arrested, Voltaire fled Paris to the independent duchy of Lorraine, where he would be safe from French authorities.

Inspired by Newton’s example, Voltaire set up a laboratory at Cirey, his estate in Lorraine, and performed experiments. He continued to write dramas and poetry, but turned more and more to works on science, philosophy, and politics. None of these works offered any original ideas, but they made Liberal ideas more popular and spread Locke’s political ideas among the *philosophes* in France. Voltaire’s clear, witty, and refined style could capture a reader’s attention, and his cruel satire could make the ideas of his opponents appear ridiculous. Voltaire would stop at almost nothing—even outright lies (and he told many of them)—to promote his ideas and

destroy those of others. He stopped at nothing to destroy what he called *l'infame*—“the infamous one.”

What was the so-called infamous one? It was what we call religion; Voltaire called it superstition. Voltaire rejected all traditional religion as foolish. Himself a Deist, Voltaire thought everything, including the human soul, was composed of matter; and so he denied the immortality of the soul. Moreover, Voltaire was a rationalist and a proponent of free thought and moral libertinism. Voltaire’s chief enemy, however (the most infamous of all the infamous ones in his mind) was the Catholic Church. The Church, he said, pretended it was the one, true religion just to fool the masses and keep them under the clergy’s control.

Voltaire thought religion might be fine for ignorant, common people. But, he said, educated men—and especially rulers—should look to science and reason, not “superstition,” for guidance on how to live in and govern society. A rational and scientific society, according to Voltaire, would not try to crush religion, but it would not promote one religion over another.

So it was that Voltaire became perhaps the greatest advocate of religious tolerance in the 18th century. And he proposed other “rational” reforms—abolishing torture, for instance, and ending the death penalty, at least for offenses such as forgery, theft, and smuggling. Yet Voltaire was not a revolutionary. He opposed democracy, for, he thought, the common man (whom he called *canaille*—“the rabble, riffraff”) could never be enlightened. His ideal government was an absolute monarch, rather like Louis XIV, but without that king’s attachment to “superstition” and persecution of those who did not agree with him.

“Enlightenment” in France and Abroad

Voltaire called for “enlightenment.” He thought reason and science should reform all of life, and religion should be allowed to wither and die. Voltaire’s ideas inspired younger writers and thinkers who became famous during the reign of Louis XV. Like Voltaire, these *philosophes* were rationalists and materialists. But unlike Voltaire, they rejected Deism and embraced full-blown atheism.

The leader of these younger *philosophes* was Denis Diderot, a traveling book salesman and translator. Inspired by Bayle’s *Dictionary*, Diderot came up with an idea for a similar work that would give a “general picture” of all the human mind had discovered, created, or conceived in the arts, science, religion, and politics. He called the work the *Encyclopedia*. Like all encyclopedias since its time, Diderot’s *Encyclopedia* was divided into separate articles, written on a variety of subjects. Diderot himself wrote many of these articles, but he also received contributions from the leading *philosophes* of his day, including Voltaire. The first volume of the *Encyclopedia* came out in 1751. When it was finished in 1772, the *Encyclopedia* consisted of 12 full volumes, along with four supplemental volumes, and 11 volumes of illustrations.

Though written by Deists and atheists, the *Encyclopedia* was not obviously anti-Christian. Yet, Diderot was sly; many of the articles in the *Encyclopedia* hinted that religious ideas were foolish or irrational and directed readers to read works by atheistic or Deistic authors. The *Encyclopedia*’s anti-Christian character did not escape the notice of the French authorities



Portrait of Denis Diderot, by Louis-Michel van Loo

both in the Church and state, and in 1757 they forbade the publication of the remaining volumes. But Diderot had friends in high places and so was able to complete the work.

The *Encyclopedia* spread the antireligious ideas of the Enlightenment more widely among the upper and middle classes. Editions of the *Encyclopedia* appeared in Geneva and Italy, and the work was even smuggled into Spain. Diderot's work was instrumental in undermining the influence of religion and tradition among an ever-increasing number of people in Europe.

The Prophet of Democracy

In August 1742, a 30-year-old musician from a French provincial town made his first visit to Paris. He had come to the capital to present to the Academy of Sciences a new system of musical notation he had devised. Though the academy rejected his system, which they said was ingenious but impractical, our musician decided to remain in the city. There he met Diderot and other prominent *philosophes* and was accepted as one of their colleagues and **collaborators**. He was to become one of the most prominent and influential thinkers of the 18th century.

Our musician, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was born in 1712 in Calvinist Geneva, an independent, French-speaking city in Switzerland, on the border with France. Rousseau started life unhappily—he lost his mother when he was only a week old and was abandoned as a boy by his father. When he was 16 years old, he fled Geneva after being beaten by an engraver to whom he was apprenticed. He eventually found refuge with Madame de Warens, a noblewoman in Savoy. Herself a convert to the Catholic Faith, Madame de Warens sent Rousseau to a **hospice** in Turin. There, in 1728, he abandoned Calvinism and became a Catholic.

For the next several years, Rousseau was a wanderer. In 1729, Madame de Warens sent him to a seminary to study for the priesthood. But he could not tolerate his Latin lessons, so he was dismissed. Rousseau then went to work for the organist at the cathedral in Annecy, a town in Savoy. When the organist died, Rousseau no longer had any employment. He began a series of wanderings through the beautiful countryside of northern Savoy, Burgundy, western Switzerland, and Lyonnais. In the city of Lyons, he settled for a time and earned his living by copying music.

In 1732, Rousseau returned to Madame de Warens and was received into her household. Like many noblewomen of her time, Madame de Warens was not a very strict Catholic. She read the works of Deist authors, particularly Voltaire, and was something of a moral libertine. While living in her household, Rousseau not only began to study Latin, but delved into the works of Newton, Bayle, and Voltaire. Voltaire's works, in particular, he said, "Inspired me with a desire to write elegantly, and caused me to endeavor to imitate the colorings of that author, with whom I was so enchanted." It is not surprising, that by 1738, Rousseau's faith began to falter. Since his youth he had conceived a deep love for the beauty of nature, and now he began to think nature was God.

For the first few years after arriving in Paris in 1742, Rousseau lived in poverty. There he formed a relationship with a poor, simple, hotel laundress named Thérèse Levasseur and spent the rest of his life with her. The two had five children together. At each child's birth, Rousseau abandoned the infant to a **foundling** hospital.

Yet, despite his own moral failures—as well as the immorality of others he had known in his life—in Paris Rousseau began to think that human beings are basically good. What, then, makes them bad? Rousseau's answer was that Society makes people bad. Government, laws, religious institutions, even the arts and sciences cor-

collaborator: a person who works together with others

hospice: a lodging for travelers, youth, or the poor, often kept by a religious order

foundling: an infant abandoned by its parents and found by others. A *foundling hospital* is a place where foundlings are sheltered and cared for.

rupt men and make them immoral, he said. The savage, who lives closest to nature, is far superior to the civilized man, he thought. In 1750, Rousseau published these ideas in his first published work, called *The Discourse on Arts and Sciences*.

Inspired by his own ideas, Rousseau abandoned the dress of the upper class, which he had adopted, and donned the clothing and wig of the middle class. In 1754, he even returned to his native Geneva, which he admired for its republican form of government. (In Geneva, 1,600 out of the city's 20,000 inhabitants voted for the members of the "Council of 25," who made the laws and governed the city and its surroundings.) In Geneva, Rousseau abandoned the Catholic Faith and reaffirmed his belief in Calvinism (though, privately, he did not accept the divinity of Christ and other Christian doctrines). Yet, despite his pride in being a Geneva citizen, Rousseau spent only a few months there. In October 1754, he was again in Paris.

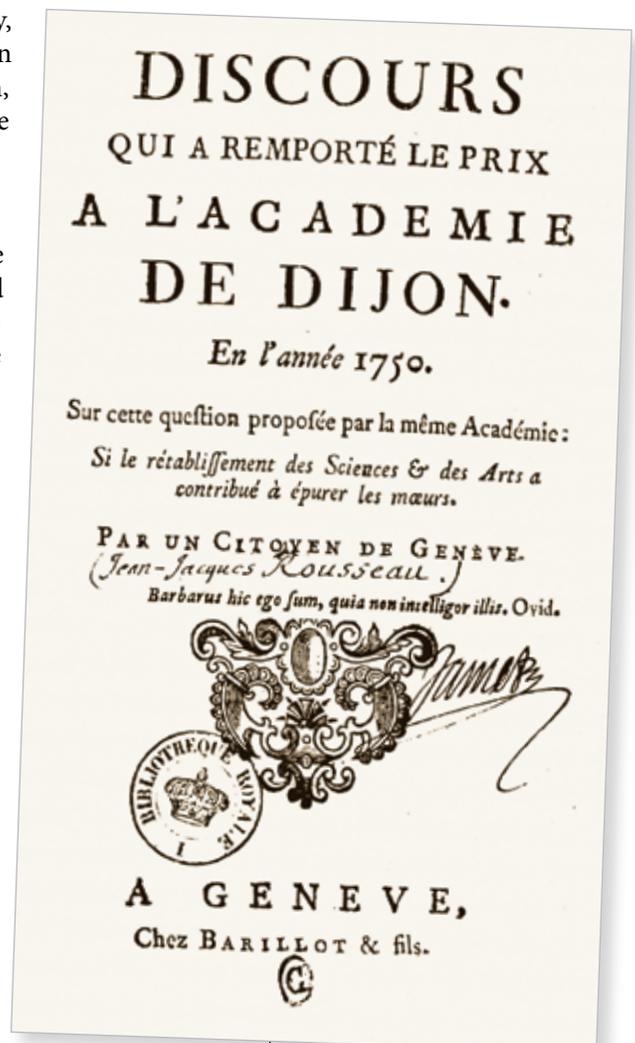
Rousseau the Philosopher

In his first published work, Rousseau had held up the savage life as the ideal life for man. He abandoned this idea in his second work, the *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Human Inequality*, published in June 1755. In this work, instead of the savage, Rousseau praised societies based on the family, which he called the only "natural" society. According to the second *Discourse*, mankind was at its best, and happiest, when people lived in small, family-centered, tribal groups and shared the goods of the earth in common. This was how men had lived in the "state of nature," he said. It was private property, Rousseau said, that made society corrupt and made people unequal and led to the oppression of the poor by the rich. To protect their property, Rousseau said, people began to rely on the use of force. The next step was setting up the rule of law, which the strong in society used to oppress the weak.

In this second *Discourse*, Rousseau said that he opposed revolution because it did nothing to fight evil in the world. Instead of revolting against the government, families, he said, must return to the land and take up farming. Private property must be maintained, but it should be controlled by what he called the "general will" of the families who make up the state. In this way, everyone can obtain an equal share of property.

Rousseau thought religion is important to the state, but he did not espouse any traditional Christian religion. The state's religion (which, Rousseau said, had to remain under the control of the "general will") should insist only that people hold a few doctrines. These doctrines are that God exists, that by his providence he cares for the world, and that those who act well will receive rewards in an afterlife (and punishments if they do ill.) Rousseau rejected the Catholic Faith because it placed the state under the Church.

The ideas of his second *Discourse* moved Rousseau farther from his friends, the *philosophes*. Voltaire thought Rousseau's two discourses were raving nonsense. Still, for a time, Rousseau remained friends with Diderot and other *philosophes*; he even contributed articles to the *Encyclopedia*. But in the end, his difficult temperament undermined these friendships. Rousseau eventually made Voltaire his bitter



Title page of the first edition of the first *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Human Inequality*, by Jean Jacques Rousseau, Geneva, 1750

enemy. After 1757, Rousseau became more and more isolated from all those who had ever shown him friendship and support.

Two Philosophers

Voltaire also had something of a difficult temper. For a time, he lived at the court of King Friedrich the Great of Prussia, but the philosopher's bitter tongue and dishonesty earned him the king's displeasure. In the end, Voltaire had to leave the Prussian court.

Voltaire eventually found a home in Geneva, where he bought a house close to the French border. There he built a theater where he staged productions of his plays. In 1755, Voltaire published *Pucelle*, a rather nasty poem on the life of St. Joan of Arc. In Geneva, he wrote his most famous tale, *Candide*, a **satire** that bitterly attacked *l'infame*—the Catholic Church. But even in Geneva Voltaire could not live in peace, for the republic had laws against the staging of plays. So in 1758, he bought two estates, four miles from the Geneva border, in France. As part of the purchase price, he became a nobleman, the “Count of Tourney.” He settled at one of the estates, named Ferney. From there, he thought, he could escape into Geneva if the French authorities sought to arrest him.

But no one tried to arrest Voltaire. Instead, his home at Ferney became a center of pilgrimage for nobility and philosophers—all those who honored the old man, who was now in his sixties. He continued to write volumes of letters, plays, poems, histories, stories, and works of social criticism.

During his stay at Ferney, Voltaire became famous for championing the cause of individuals who suffered persecution from Church and state in France. So, more than ever, Voltaire became the toast of Europe. Nor did he neglect his estates. He planted thousands of trees and cultivated the land. He built houses for his peasant workers, loaned them money at low interest rates, fed them in a time of famine at his own expense, and worked to free the serfs in the neighboring province of Gex. He even built a church for his peasants and, at times, attended Mass there. “I am becoming a patriarch,” he boasted. Indeed, he became known as the “Patriarch of Ferney” and was well beloved by his peasants and servants as well as by others who benefited from his generosity.

At one point, Voltaire, hearing of Rousseau's poverty, offered him a home at Ferney. But Rousseau was becoming mentally unstable. In a piece of writing, he revealed that Voltaire had written a tract that could land him in prison if he was identified as the author. This was too much! The Patriarch finally turned on Rousseau. Voltaire could no longer tolerate Rousseau, and he never could tolerate Rousseau's ideas. He called him “a mad dog who bites everybody” and “a Judas who betrayed philosophy.”

By 1757, Rousseau had lost all his friends, except some members of the nobility who respected him as a philosopher. He achieved more fame in 1761 by publishing a sentimental novel—called *Julie, or the Novel of Héloïse*—that glorified faithful, marital love. But Rousseau was not finished with philosophy, and in 1762 he published his most important and influential work, *The Social Contract*.

“Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains”—so Rousseau opened this eloquent and stirring work on the foundations of the social order. In *The Social Contract*, Rousseau developed his idea that the authority of the state comes from the combined will of the citizens. The sovereign power, he said, does not belong to rulers—whether they be kings or parliaments—but to the people. Rousseau said that, to preserve their lives and goods, individuals join together and make a social contract with each other. In doing so, they lose all their liberties and agree to be ruled by the “general will” of all.

satire: a literary work that uses ridicule and scorn to attack human vices

Rousseau's ideal form of government is a republic, but a very small republic, where citizens gather in an assembly to make the laws. Such a republic would have to be very small, indeed; for who could imagine the millions who lived in France gathering in one place to make laws? Rousseau, however, did not want large nations like France, but a republic more like Geneva. "The larger the state," he said, "the less the liberty."

The ideas expressed in *The Social Contract* were not very realistic, given Europe as it was at the time. Even so, *The Social Contract* was destined to become a highly influential book in the years to come. It would make Rousseau a champion not of Enlightened reform, like Voltaire, but of a movement that would shake the monarchies of Europe and change Christendom forever. Although Rousseau did not call for revolution, his championship of the small farmer and craftsman inspired a movement from which Voltaire and all the *philosophes* would have shrunk with horror. That movement is *democracy*.

The Death of Philosophers

In the years following the publication of *The Social Contract*, Rousseau again became a wanderer. In 1762, to escape imprisonment in France, he fled first to Switzerland and then to England. But even in Voltaire's land of freedom, Rousseau found no peace. He suffered a mental breakdown, which became worse when his old friends, including Diderot and Voltaire, attacked him in print. Rousseau eventually returned to France, and with Thérèse (whom he finally married) continued his wandering life, which ended in Paris in June 1770.

In Paris, Rousseau and Thérèse lived in poverty. But dwelling among the poor and suffering bitterly from the guilt of having, years earlier, abandoned his children, Rousseau turned once again to religion. He began attending Catholic services and took to visiting the sick and giving alms. Still, he complained, he could not believe. "Ah, how happy the man who can believe!" he cried.

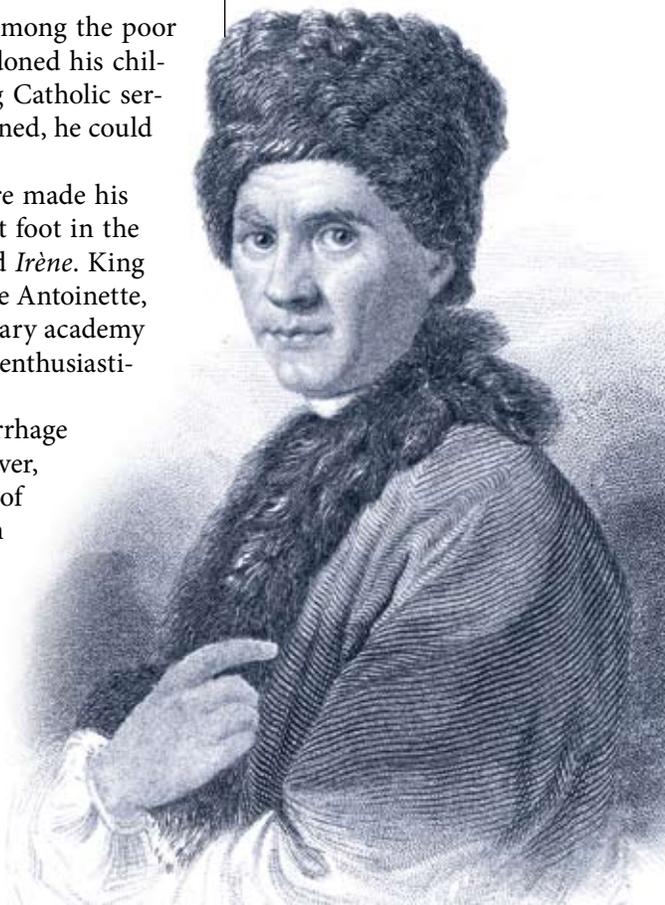
He felt no envy when, in February 1778, the 86-year-old Voltaire made his triumphant entry into Paris. It had been 28 years since Voltaire set foot in the city. He came to see the premiere of his latest play, a tragedy called *Irène*. King Louis XV had died in 1777, and King Louis XVI's wife, Queen Marie Antoinette, was a fan of Voltaire's plays and had become his protector. The literary academy of Paris, the nobility, foreign dignitaries, even the common people enthusiastically greeted the Patriarch of Ferney's arrival in the capital.

But all this glory was too much for Voltaire. He suffered a hemorrhage two weeks after entering Paris. Following this bout of sickness, however, Voltaire recovered and was strong enough to attend a performance of *Irène*, where the crowd hailed him enthusiastically and crowned him with laurels—the way people acclaim a great poet.

In the middle of May, Voltaire again fell sick. This time it seemed he would not recover. Priests were called, and three of them visited the old man's sick room. What happened is unclear. One account relates that when Voltaire saw the priests, he complained, "Let me die in peace!" Another account says he waved them away. The most commonly accepted account, however, says the priests found him delirious and left before giving him last rites. That same night, Voltaire died.

Hearing of Voltaire's death, Rousseau said, "our lives were linked to each other; I shall not survive him long." In this he was

Jean Jacques Rousseau. Engraving by Allan Ramsay, 1766.



prophetic. On July 2, 1778, a little over a month after the death of his former enemy, Rousseau suffered a stroke and fell to the ground, gashing his head open on the tile floor. Shortly after this accident, Rousseau died.

Sixteen years after the deaths of these two philosophers, after a fierce revolution had shaken France's Church and state to its foundations, the remains of Rousseau and Voltaire were buried, side by side, in a former Parisian church renamed the Panthéon. Side by side lay the two men—former enemies, but joined in a common cause. Both had fought a common enemy—Christendom—and inspired a revolution, one that would end, it seemed, in the utter destruction of the Christian order of Europe.

Chapter 1 Review

Summary

- In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes claimed he had discovered a new basis for philosophy. Man could be certain of the existence of God and of the universe, he said, because he is first certain of his own existence. Though he thought he was defending the Catholic Faith, Descartes's work helped pave the way for rationalism and skepticism.
- Descartes's idea that the universe operates like a machine gave support to Deism, the belief that God set the machine of the universe in motion and left it alone to operate by the laws of nature.
- Baruch Spinoza was influenced by Descartes and Deist ideas. Spinoza taught that the universe is God, and the laws by which the universe runs are the will of God.
- The Frenchman Pierre Bayle promoted religious skepticism through his work, *The Historical and Critical Dictionary*.
- In his famous work, *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes said that mankind once lived in a "state of nature" in which people had no "notions of right or wrong, justice or injustice" and life was "a war of every man against every man." To escape this state of nature, people made a "social contract" with a sovereign, to whom they gave up their liberties.
- In his "Two Treatises on Government," John Locke laid the foundation for Liberalism: the social philosophy that emphasizes the freedom of the individual. Locke accepted the idea of a state of nature but thought the social contract did not remove all freedoms from people.
- Irreligion and Liberalism spread throughout the French middle class. One of the most influen-

tial popularizers of skepticism, irreligion, and Liberalism was the French playwright, Voltaire.

- Denis Diderot's *Encyclopedia* attacked the Christian Faith and helped spread Liberal ideas throughout Europe.
- In his various works, Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that the authority of the state comes from the combined will of the citizens. Rousseau thus inspired the movement toward democracy.

Key Concepts

Descartes's mechanistic view of the universe: the belief that God created the world like a machine, to run without divine help. This idea undermined the Catholic belief in Divine Providence.

Divine Providence: Catholic belief that God created the world and continually cares for it.

skeptic: one who doubts that anything can be known for certain to be true. Skeptics who wanted freedom of thought and expression became known as *libertines*.

Deism: the religious idea that God set the machine of the universe in motion and left it alone to continue moving by the laws of nature. Deists did not acknowledge the teaching that Jesus is God, because they believed it to be irrational.

Liberalism: the political idea that individuals should have the freedom to work for their own benefit in any way they see fit as long as they do not harm the rights of others

state of nature: a theoretical time of human history in which people lived without government and each person possessed all rights and complete liberty

Chapter 1 Review (continued)

social contract: an agreement by which people give up some or all of their liberty and rights to a government in return for peace and security

Dates to Remember

1598: Edict of Nantes issued, guaranteeing French Huguenots religious freedom in France

1629: Descartes completes his *Discourse on Method*.

1651: Hobbes publishes *The Leviathan*.

1685: The Edict of Nantes is revoked in an effort to unite France under one religion.

1690: Publication of Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*

1696: Bayle began publishing *The Historical and Critical Dictionary*.

1751: Publication of the first volume of the *Encyclopedia*

1762: Publication of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*

Central Characters

René Descartes (1596–1650): a Frenchman whose passion for philosophy and mathematics inspired him to look at philosophy in a mathematical way. He wrote *Discourse on Method*.

Pierre Bayle (1647–1706): a French philosopher who wrote the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, an encyclopedia of historical, biblical, and mythical events that spread antireligious ideas. He became known as the “Father of the Enlightenment.”

Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679): an Englishman and author of *The Leviathan*. In this work, Hobbes claims that humans operate like a machine, without a soul or free will. Left to themselves, people have no morality. To escape the state of nature, said *The Leviathan*, people form a social contract with a sovereign ruler.

John Locke (1632–1704): an Englishman and author of *Two Treatises on Government*. In this work, Locke argues that man has three natural rights: life, liberty, and property. When they enter into a social contract, persons do not lose these rights. Unlike Hobbes, Locke said humans have a moral law that requires them to respect the rights of others.

Voltaire (1694–1778): the penname of Francois-Marie Arouet, perhaps the greatest popularizer of Liberal

ideas in the 18th century. Voltaire wrote revolutionary satire, plays, and poems mocking the traditional society of his time and religion, especially the Catholic Church. Voltaire wanted greater freedom and tolerance of different religions in society and favored the English government over the French system.

Denis Diderot (1713–1784): the leader of a group of atheist philosophers. He published the *Encyclopedia*, which spread antireligious views across Europe.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778): a musician accepted into Diderot's atheist group. He wrote *Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Human Inequality*, where he praised small, family-based societies. He later wrote *The Social Contract*, which inspired the movement toward democracy.

Questions for Review

1. Why did Descartes's view of the mechanical universe undermine the Catholic Faith?
2. How did Hobbes's and Locke's philosophies of government differ?
3. What is the function of government, according to Liberalism? Whose theory of government inspired Liberalism?
4. In what ways does Rousseau's “natural society” differ from modern American society?
5. Why were people in France so divided in their worldview and politics?

Ideas in Action

1. Look at the portraits of the people who lived at the time of the Enlightenment. Discuss what work would have been required to wear a wig, heavy makeup, dresses for women and costumes for men, shoes, hat, and accessories.
2. Research and discuss what a school of the Enlightenment period would have looked like in structure, size of classroom, and subjects studied.
3. Listen to 18th-century music from Europe and England. Does any of it have the “Enlightenment spirit”?

Chapter 1 Review (continued)

4. Research and deliver short presentations on European architecture, painting, drama, and poetry of the Enlightenment period.
5. Discuss the differences between the Enlightenment in England and the Enlightenment in France and the rest of Europe.
6. Imagine that you were a physician to one of the Enlightenment thinkers who had fallen ill. Write a diary of your patient's illness, progress, and frame of mind as regards medical treatment and the possibility of death. (Comment on the medicine available and the sort of medicine or treatment you would administer to your patient.)

Highways and Byways

Good Eats in the 17th Century

Beginning in the 17th century, the people of Europe, from royalty to peasant, saw an amazing increase in the amount and variety of food they could enjoy. Spices, tea, and coffee began to be available. General

prosperity through worldwide trade created general affluence and demand for luxury goods and foods. Fine wines from France, Spain, and Italy made their way to celebrations everywhere.

Europeans of the time were amazed at the amount, variety, and novelty of foods the trading empires of England, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, and France brought them. Local farming and fishing were a part of every culture, but exotic fruits and vegetables, along with meats of every sort, inspired a fever to cook the most delicious and unusual dishes. In Protestant England and Northern Europe, the lost Catholic religious feast days were soon replaced by secular celebrations of human life—weddings, births, funerals—as well as more materialistic celebrations—a successful business venture, the purchase of property, the arrival of a merchant ship. Painters began to immortalize the banquets of the time, giving rise to a new subject for art. Still life paintings, portraits, and genre scenes became the order of the day, as in this painting titled *Banquet Piece*, by the 17th-century Dutch artist Abraham van Beyeren.

